



## **Rebranding Math: Keeping up with the KarMathians with Vanessa Vakharia**

**Nerdin' About Podcast Transcript, Season 2 Episode 5**

### **Michael**

Hey everyone welcome to Nerdin' About, I'm Space Michael, and with me as always is someone who loves fanny packs, just had one delivered, and that is Dr Kaylee Byers. Hey Kaylee.

### **Kaylee**

Oh hi. They're just practical Michael, and you know me, I'm all about practicality. Like if I'm going to be out there knitting, I just want to have it tied around my waist, no problem.

### **Michael**

You know as a kid I was very against fanny packs, but when I would go to baseball card shows they were so useful. I'd see these baseball card nerds with their fanny packs, and they were filled with cards, and now that I'm back into baseball cards, maybe I need a fanny pack again.

### **Kaylee**

Well, you better get one, because I'm about to tell you that I've got one, and our guest has one as well. So, today I am pleased to introduce to you another fanny pack owner.

### **Vanessa**

Fan! A fanny pack fan.

### **Kaylee**

Triple F! That's Vanessa Vakharia. Vanessa is the founder and director of the Math Guru which is a boutique math and science tutoring studio in Toronto. She's also the author of Math Hacks, a new book that makes math fun, stress free, and relatable for young kids and parents. On top of all that she's also the host of Math Therapy a podcast that works through guest's math trauma, and one that I desperately need. Hi Vanessa, how are you?

### **Vanessa**

I'm great I am so great. I'm so glad to be here, I'm so glad we are all fanny pack fans.

### **Kaylee**

Well, we're overjoyed to have you here with us today. First question, you're kind of like a math education superhero, so speaking of being a superhero can you please give us your origin story? How did the Math Guru come to exist?

### **Vanessa**

Okay well I've never been called that before. I'm so flattered that I'm kind of shocked, I don't even know what to say, but I will still give you my origin story, basically here's the vibe. So, there I was in High School failing Grade 11 math, not once but twice, and I really just wanted to be the next Britney, marry



Keanu Reeves, call it a day, you know move to the Hollywood Hills. So, I was failing math, and the weird thing was no one thought it was weird. Do you know what I mean? Like my friends and teachers were like "oh well you're just not a math person", and I was like "oh my god yeah totally. Britney Spears? Hi that's what I'm going to be, I'm not a math person. Britney doesn't need math blah blah blah." Anyways so my parents who were super supportive were also "yeah that's so cool that you want to hike to LA and find Keanu Reeves who's like unreasonably older than you but whatever."

### **Kaylee**

Okay my celebrity crush is Sam Neill, so you're doing a lot better than me.

### **Vanessa**

I am, and quite frankly he's more age appropriate. Not the point of the story at all, even though that does require math to calculate that. So, my parents are like "you need to graduate high school". So, they sent me to this alternative school, and this school was like nowhere I'd ever been. It was a super chill vibe, there were 100 kids in the whole school, there were no cliques, we called teachers by their first names. I walked into math class, and I had passed Grade 11 math finally on the third try with a 57 in summer school. So, I went into my Grade 12 math class, and I said to the teacher "you know you're going to have a really tough time with me I'm not a math person", and she was like "what are you talking about?" and I was like "oh I'm not a math person." Then she looked at me and said the words that would forever change my life and said "that's not a thing." Then she was like "also please sit down I'm about to teach a lesson." I was like "okay wow", but it really changed everything for me. It's not about math, it's not about being "oh great now I can get a 99 in calculus", which I did by the way, such a humble brag. (laughs)

### **Kaylee**

No big deal.

### **Vanessa**

It was about the fact that at the age of 17 I realized I've been told I wasn't capable of something my whole life, and it was like the veil was lifted. That's the origin story, then one thing led to another and I started tutoring peers in my class and friends, because I was like "oh my god, I've got to show you this thing! It's a lie, I can show you, you're good at math!" I never meant to start a tutoring centre; I don't know if anyone is at 17 thinks they'll start a tutoring centre. One thing led to another, and I was tutoring, and I was super busy, and I was getting more and more students, and I just hired people, and now we have 40 in this amazing tutoring studio, and we are global because we're online as well as brick and mortar. So, it really honestly started with a love of showing people what they were capable of, just being like, "wow, this math teacher taught me that anything in life is possible, and I want to do that for everyone."

### **Kaylee**

That is super cool. I want to talk a little bit more about this "not a math person" thing, because I started following you this year, and you were talking on a panel for ComSciConCan, and you talked about this "not a math person". I started reflecting because I definitely identify or did identify up until that point as



"not a math person". I was like, "when did that start?" Because when I was just a little kid, I remember lying in bed, adding up rows and rows of numbers for fun. Like, just lay there, adding up the numbers, look at me, so fun. But at some point, along the way, I put myself into a category of "not a math person", and it stopped me from taking certain courses in university because I was scared to take them. Why do you think so many of us put ourselves into that category of either being a math person or not being a math person?

**Vanessa**

Whoa, okay, hold on. Now I want to give you math therapy. Like what happened? Why did that happen to you?

**Kaylee**

I honestly cannot put my finger on it. I don't know when it started. There are moments I can think of in physics class struggling, where I had a teacher who would put equations and things on the board, then erase them and be like, "No, wait, that's not right", then look in the book, and be like, "what was the answer? Oh, yeah, I'll put up yeah, this Oh, no, wait, that's not right, either." And I was like, "Well, I don't understand this." No idea what's happening. That was when I decided I was no longer going to do physics.

**Vanessa**

What sciences are you in right now? Like you're a scientist.

**Kaylee**

I'm in biology.

**Vanessa**

So just to say, so many biologists will almost self-select out of math and be like, "I picked the non-math science." I actually think that's such an interesting way to say it, because the truth is that math is the language of science.

**Kaylee**

Totally.

**Vanessa**

Like, truly, what underpins science is math as the alphabet. So, it is interesting when I meet scientists who don't identify as math people. I know I'm not supposed to interview you for the podcast, but...

**Kaylee**

You, do you!

**Vanessa**

I am curious, because one of the big things I've discovered in my podcast is this idea of math trauma, but also, more importantly, the idea of sneaky trauma. You're kind of going into the back of your head being like, "well, was it that time in physics class? Was it this or was it that?" Often, we're trying to point



to a specific event to be like, "Oh, this is the time, I got bullied by a teacher, or my parents told me I sucked." But sneaky trauma just means it could be something as simple as saying, you know what, "honestly, I was really into Hollywood, and I just never saw anyone that was like me, who was also good at math. Oh, you know what? I was really into cheerleading, and I never saw a single movie where the cheerleader was good at math." Getting those messages is sneaky trauma, being told you're not the type of person who could ever be good at something, is what I would call sneaky trauma. Nothing happened "to you", but it's kind of happening to you every day.

**Kaylee**

So, there's all of these things that are influencing us all the time that are causing us to think of ourselves within this context of either being a math person, because maybe it was positively reinforced, or we had these messages saying that we could do math. Then we had these other sneaky things that maybe make us say that we're not a math person.

**Vanessa**

Sure, and I didn't answer your actual question about being "not a math person." So, let's say you say you're "not a math person". Can I ask you what you mean by that?

**Kaylee**

Yeah, I think I would say that I wasn't comfortable doing it.

**Vanessa**

Okay, so what does that mean? You're not comfortable doing math? So, for example, when you go to the store, are you uncomfortable giving change?

**Kaylee**

It would be like I would think of math as being very complex, acknowledging that I do math all the time, but I would see huge equations that I don't understand and I say "Oh, nope."

**Vanessa**

So, I think that's really important, because when you ask them what they mean by not being a math person, they'll normally say exactly what you said, "Well, I can't do complicated math", or "I can't do math mentally really quickly in my head", or "I can't do math when I'm under pressure", or "it actually just takes me a lot of work to understand math, and that's why I'm not a math person". So, I think what's really happened is society has defined what it means to be good at math in such a narrow way, that it really excludes most people at the end of the day. So, let's just bring it back to Hollywood because it's my favorite topic. Whenever you see a mathematician portrayed in Hollywood, what are the characteristics they have? They're normally like a whiz, a genius, they don't have to work hard, crazy equations just come to them naturally. They also are usually really bad at relationships, right? They also like don't have time for anything else, but math. So, when we define math, or being a math person in that way, not very many people fit into that mold. So, I think the important thing with the idea of being a math person, and we should just get rid of that term once and for all, but if you're going to use it, then it needs to be widened to be like, "do you like solving problems?" "Do you like spotting patterns?" "Are



you really good at identifying trends?" "Are you good at reading a map?" "Can you find directions without reading a map?" Like broaden the term so that most people can be like, "Oh, yeah, well, of course, I'm a math person." That whole area of being a math person is very patriarchal. It's been defined in such a narrow way that it excludes most people that we have traditionally pushed out of power, and as a result, most people don't identify as being a math person.

**Michael**

Well, I want to dig more into this math trauma. You're sort of like a therapist for us right now. Vanessa.

**Vanessa**

I'm not qualified at all. I just want to say to everyone, I'm not a legitimate therapist.

**Michael**

So, I dyed my hair purple, and I remember my math teacher in grade 11, just literally bullied me because of the purple hair, and needed a scapegoat to be like, "you know, this kid is going to be the one that I can pick on, and not going to be the one that I'm going to call on for answers." So, in your podcast, which I love, "Math Therapy", you've listened to a lot of different perspectives on math trauma. What have you learned along the way in listening to all these people's stories, in understanding the broader picture of math trauma in the world?

**Vanessa**

I think we've been talking about math anxiety for a while now as a society. I started realizing that the people I was talking to were having classic trauma responses. So, for example, when you think about when you mentioned math to your friends who don't identify as math people, they don't just say, "oh, not for me", there's revulsion instead. The story will be like, "oh, my God, no, absolutely can't, it makes me sweaty, makes me panic." Or they'll immediately launch into a story about how they have this horrible teacher. So, I started realizing that people were having very emotional responses when it came to math, and started finding common threads between those responses and how, as adults, many of those people deal with failure or mistake making, or confidence.

**Michael**

In your podcast, what really helps is you tell your own story. You call yourself the Math Guru, but you're not someone on the pedestal, you are a real person that has gone through all of this stuff that we've all gone through. So, I'm curious to hear more of your story. Like how did you overcome the math trauma in your life?

**Vanessa**

Okay, so first, it is important to note, it's not like my math teacher was like, "oh, there's no such thing as a math person", and then I was like, a genius. That's not what happened. It's more that my mindset around it changed. I think I was in a really weird point, to be honest, where I had not only failed math twice, but I hated school. I really didn't like school, I really didn't know what I was doing, I was probably an emo teenager as well. I think when she said, "Look, there's no such thing as a math person. I'm about to teach this lesson, pay attention and take notes." I was like, "you know what? Fuck it. I'm at a



new school, I've got nothing to lose at this point. I've got nothing else going on." I think I made a bit of a pact with myself to be like, "I'll try her way. I'm going to try believing I can do it and see what happens." And I liked it, I liked learning, I like taking notes. Part of this thing at the school was, I had this community of friends who were kind of like me, every night we'd go to this coffee shop called Sweet Surrenders, we would sit there, and we would all do our homework together until it closed at midnight. So another thing with the Math Guru, I really wanted to create a space where socially it was cool to work hard at math. I wasn't this lone wolf trying to do well at math. Everyone in the school was a misfit, we were all in it together. I guess I felt like I was a part of something bigger than me, and then especially when I started helping people with math. I had never been in a role where academically I was smart and helping people. It just gave me a sense of meaning and purpose, it was all those things combined. Honestly really having this teacher who it did not even cross her mind that I wouldn't be good at math. She really was like, "I'm sorry, what are you talking about? Like that makes zero sense." No teacher had ever had that belief in me before.

### **Kaylee**

I think it really highlights the value of having mentors who believe in you when you aren't seeing your own value. That honestly makes so much of a difference in so many areas, not just math, right? Everywhere.

### **Vanessa**

Absolutely. When I'm talking to educators, I tell them, "kids know if you believe in them or not, they can feel that." When you're teaching your kid to walk, at no point are you like, "you know what, Johnny's really struggling, I don't think he's going to be a walker. I just don't think it's going to happen for him." Like, no! Like, Johnny can fall 400 times, and it's never going to occur to the parent, except in certain circumstances, that they couldn't walk. The kid knows that, so they keep trying, until they do it. Whereas with math so easily, adults write kids off, and be like "that's probably not their thing." Kids feel that and they really internalize that, and that also is a form of sneaky trauma.

### **Kaylee**

Yeah, totally. So, you work in a lot of different areas, you've got your podcast, you've also got this book called Math Hacks. So, thinking about making math fun, and relatable for kids and their parents. I'm interested to know what your number one math hack is. I have a math trick; I don't know if it's a math hack. It's for nine times tables where you use your fingers.

### **Vanessa**

Oh, that's my favorite. It is a hack, that's the best party trick. I have another one though. Okay, so the nine times table hack is my favorite, and you don't need anything visual for it. The digits of any multiple of nine will always add to nine, which I think is the coolest thing. Wait, are you surprised? Like do you not know this?

### **Michael**

I didn't know it.



**Kaylee**

No, I didn't know that!

**Vanessa**

I'm so excited. Oh, so how to know if you can divide a number by nine is: do the digits add up to nine. So even if you had a three-digit number, like 108.  $1 + 0 + 8 = 9$ . But let's say it was a three-digit number, and you add the digits together, and you got a two-digit number. 684. So, what is  $6 + 8$ ?

**Kaylee**

Fourteen

**Vanessa**

Plus four.

**Kaylee**

Eighteen. Wow! One and eight is nine.

**Vanessa**

So, because the digits always add up to nine, you always know what the other digit is.

**Kaylee**

Oh, yeah!

**Vanessa**

So, for example, nine times five, if you weren't going to use your fingers. What's one digit less than five?

**Kaylee**

Four.

**Vanessa**

So, the first number is four. So, what does the second digit have to be? If they add up to nine?

**Kaylee**

Gotta be five.

**Vanessa**

So, what's nine times seven? Okay, the first digit is one less than seven. So, it's six. So, what's the second digit?

**Kaylee**

Michael?



**Michael**  
Oh, three.

**Vanessa**  
So, 63.

**Michael**  
Ohhh.

**Vanessa**  
Well, here's the final one. So, like nine times eight. The first digit is one less than eight. So, what is it?

**Michael**  
Seven.

**Vanessa**  
And then seven plus what equals nine?

**Michael**  
Two.

**Vanessa**  
So, it's 72.

**Kaylee**  
That's super cool. I did not know that one.

**Vanessa**  
Show him the finger one. It's so crazy.

**Kaylee**  
So, the finger one is if you're looking at your two hands out in front of you with your digits up. You start in your left hand, and you say nine times three, you put down your third finger, your fun finger, and you have two and seven, right? Two on one side, seven on the other, twenty-seven. If you do say nine times six, you put down your pinky finger on your right hand, you've got five on the left hand and four on the other, fifty-four.

**Michael**  
Whoa, that's crazy.

**Kaylee**  
Wild right? I still do it all the time.





**Vanessa**

I also have a really good five times table trick. So, to multiply anything by five, the strategy you're going to use is divide it by two and add a zero. So, 32 times 5. What's 32 divided by 2?

**Kaylee**

Sixteen

**Vanessa**

Add a zero.

**Kaylee**

One hundred and sixty.

**Vanessa**

Wow, that's a good one. Right?

**Kaylee**

I like it.

**Vanessa**

Michael, do you want one? 46 times 5. What's 46 divided 2?

**Michael**

23?

**Vanessa**

Then add a zero.

**Michael**

Wow, that's nuts.

**Vanessa**

That's a good one.

**Kaylee**

So, wait, are these math hacks or are they math tricks?

**Vanessa**

I would say a trick would be something that like almost fooled you.

**Kaylee**

Yeah, that's a good point, and these are more of a treat. (laughs)



**Vanessa**

A hack is a shortcut to get to the right answer, I would say.

**Michael**

There's one more thing I want to bring up Vanessa. So, let's talk about the STEM acronym. Science, Technology, Engineering and Math, and Math is always at the end. As an educator, I'm always trying to infuse each of those letters into a lot of my programming, and math is always forgotten about. It's always sort of the last thing, kind of tacked on.

**Vanessa**

It is!

**Michael**

What have you discovered in your line of work to help reverse these trends? What are you finding out there?

**Vanessa**

It's so funny, I was just thinking about how M is totally left out. I was like, "there's science communicators why aren't there math communicators?" I think all of the other acronyms in STEM have very directly associated careers with them. In science, you're a scientist, engineering, you're an engineer, whereas math everyone's like, but what are we doing in it? Like the only thing people think of is like being a crazy mathematician or a math teacher? So, I think, number one, people have no idea where you would use math in a job.

**Michael**

Really, what we're talking about here is an image issue. Because we're talking about something that is a language. It's embedded in everything that we do, but we don't give it enough credit for everything that it does in our lives.

**Vanessa**

Well, my favorite thing to say is that math needs the biggest PR makeover.

**Kaylee**

It needs a rebrand (laughs)

**Vanessa**

It fully does, like math has a bad rap. It needs someone to give it a makeover. That's what I try to do, my work is to give math culture a makeover, but it's more than just an image issue. I think the culture surrounding math is probably the snobbiest of STEM. I think it's one of the most archaic institutions and one of the most uninclusive. I really think that one of the main things that we need to do in terms of the we need to do to make it more inclusive, and get women more involved, is to point this stuff out. So we need to show women why this is relevant, and all the cool things that can be done with math, just like we want to do with any career path. I think even more than that, we need to show women that they don't have to shut off their identities just to be good at math. I would say that math is one of those



things that people really create an identity around. Like when you say you're good at math, they assume all sorts of things about you. I don't think the same is true with science. So, I think that we need to help girls notice this, and show them that it's all bullshit, and really help call them to action in terms of changing that myth. I think we do that with all of this stuff, representation, showing them people like them, who are also mathematicians is going to be really, really important.

**Michael**

Should we get to those audience questions?

**Kaylee**

Oh, yeah! That's my Kool-Aid throwback.

**Michael**

So, if you want to get in on our questions, we post them on our social media @NerdNiteYVR. Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. Our first one comes from Armin, who asks, "Why are people afraid of math?"

**Vanessa**

I mean, do we have another hour? (laughs) Okay, really great question. I think a lot of things but really, the PR issue is one of the biggest ones. We love to say things like "math is scary, math is hard, only some people are math people." I think right off the bat, it sets kids up to be really intimidated by math. We don't say that about reading, right? When we teach a kid to read, we're like, yeah, everyone can read. We don't do that with math. So, at a very young age, kids are taught that it's something that's going to be intimidating and scary. I mean, in how many other subjects does the teacher start a class by being "alright, most people fail this unit", or like, "oh, this is really hard?" We're always using words like hard and scary and complicated when we talk about math. We're not using nice words, to be honest. You know, the people who use nice words are like mathematicians, but most kids don't get to the point where they're ever going to be taught by someone who's a legit mathematician, like someone with a math degree who would describe math as elegant or beautiful, like, your everyday math teacher is not using those words in math.

**Kaylee**

Well, speaking of things that are beautiful, we have a second question. This one comes from Amy, and they ask "In what ways is math like art?"

**Vanessa**

Oh, my God. Okay. Well, I think the number one thing I would say, Amy, great question. I would respond sassily with: in what ways is it not like art? The shining light on both is creative thinking, you know, and the truth is that the cool part about math is coming up with a way to solve a problem that no one's thought of before, or coming up with multiple ways to get to the same solution. You know, we really don't emphasize that enough in STEM, which is that creativity, especially now in 2021. One of my podcast guys said, "We don't need kids to think like calculators. We need them to think like the people who build calculators." That's really it, it's all about creativity and creative thinking.



**Michael**

Our final question comes from Ashley who asks that she "needs confidence to even get to the point where she is going to take a math course or even a tutor.

So, what's a good first step as an adult in regaining that confidence so that you can even get to that step where you're maybe retaking a course?"

**Vanessa**

I would like Ashley right now, if you're listening, to get a piece of paper, and I want you to write down what you're afraid of for five minutes, free write, I would like to know what you're even scared of to be honest. I often find with the fear of math it usually goes back to failure, it's a fear of failure, and when you peel back layers of a fear of failure, I think that's where things are really interesting. So, Ashley are you scared someone's going to make fun of you, laugh at you, that you're going to feel like shit that you're going to feel like you're not good enough. What are the things you're scared of and then I would look at that piece of paper, and see how realistic those things are, and how bad they are. If people make fun of you, like who gives a shit about them, that's insane if someone's going to do that, and does it really affect your life or matter? If you're banging your head against the wall, getting an answer wrong over and over, who cares? I'm not trying to belittle and be like "oh my god who cares?" These things matter, but I'd be interested to see why Ashley feels like they matter so much. When we write our fears down surrounding math on paper, I think it's so illuminating, and you often see that it's not really a big deal, or that it doesn't have much to do with math, but with something else entirely.

**Michael**

I don't know why you say you're not qualified to be a therapist.

**Vanessa**

Definitely not qualified oh my god. No one sue me! (laughs)

**Kaylee**

I pretty much have gone through this process of sitting down, and writing down all my fears, but it is a good process. I think one of the big things that came to me through doing this for other things is just like I don't want to live my life based on fear.

**Vanessa**

I'm so glad you said that because that is like my thing. I think like I'm not scared of math, but I'm scared of other things. It always comes back this idea of living our lives based on fear seems like the biggest waste of time. I think I started this because I was doing CBT, cognitive behavioral therapy with my own therapist, and she was talking about how normally when you're scared of something especially where failure is involved it always comes back to security. I get my students to do this, they'll be panicking and don't want to write the test and crying, and I'll be like "hey what are you scared of? They'll be like "well I'm going to fail the test." "What's going to happen if you fail the test?" "I won't get into university." "What happens if you don't get into university?" "I won't get a job." "What happens if you don't get a job?" "I'll be homeless." Then you're like "okay is any of that realistic?", and they're like "well no." It's like they realized they started spiraling really far down the line, if they fail a math test, first of all, it doesn't mean they're not going to get into university, but it certainly doesn't mean that by the end of the



consequence spiral of failing a test they're going to be jobless. I think my therapist had been saying that those fears of failure normally stem from a deeper fear of security, of having a roof over your head, and having a place to live, and having enough money, and we just get so quickly from failure all the way to rock bottom so quickly in our mind. So back to Ashley, if you were to write down what you're really scared of, I'd be interested to see if halfway through writing it you're like "wait a second this is completely unrealistic." Get back to me, send me a message Ashley.

**Michael**

Now that we face our fears should we nerd out?

**Kaylee**

I want to nerd out!

**Michael**

If you want to nerd out with us, you can send us your nerd outs again at our socials @NerdNiteYVR, Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. You can also email us at [vancouver@nerdnite.com](mailto:vancouver@nerdnite.com). Our first one comes in from Amy who told us "did you know there's something called crypto art? I just learned about it, it's kind of surreal." I just googled it, and it looks wild it looks very culty. Vanessa, do you know anything about crypto art?

**Vanessa**

Okay seriously this NFT thing is insane. You honestly want me to tell you what it is?

**Kaylee**

Yeah, tell us what it is, I don't know.

**Vanessa**

So NFT stands for a non-fungible token. It's something that can't be copied without a digital trace. So, artists are creating NFT's, or crypto art. For example, they'll make an animation, and they'll only make one version of it. So, it'd be like buying a Van Gogh, but this is a digital piece of art that is embedded with all the NFT stuff, I don't know the terminology. What happens is once it's sold it always has this digital trace. So, let's say for example somebody bought that piece of art today for \$10. What would normally happen, let's say in Van Gogh days, someone would buy the thing for \$10. Twenty years later they would sell it for a million dollars, Van Gogh would see none of it, like too bad for Van Gogh he sold it for \$10. So now what happens is an artist can embed their digital art with certain things, for example it can say something like "forever from now on anytime this is resold I get 15% of the sales price". So, if an artist sells a piece for \$10 today, and it goes up in value to a million dollars next year they will get whatever percent, it's embedded in the artwork. The thing is the only way you can buy any of these things is with cryptocurrency that's basically what it is.

**Michael**

Vanessa what are you nerding out about?



**Vanessa**

So, we're nerding out about a lot of things over here, but I would say my latest thing I'm really into right now is cults. So, a lot of people don't know this about me, but I am obsessed with cults. In fact, I will say when I was 17 Scientology was really big, and I don't know if you guys remember there used to be like store fronts, and I went into one and even took the survey. So, me and my friend both took the Scientology survey to see where we would place, and they told me that I was a natural born leader, and only now am I realizing they meant cult leader. (laughs) I feel like everything is cult – I feel like Donald Trump is a cult, I feel like every MLM is a cult. I just watched all of Nxivm, and I'm obsessed, because I honestly think I could be easily brainwashed to join a cult.

**Kaylee**

Me too, well that's really interesting, and you were saying off-air that there was one TV show or documentary you'd particularly recommended for Nxivm, which one is it?

**Vanessa**

I would watch Seduced. There's also the Vow but it's too much, it's 10 episodes, it's just kind of unnecessary. Seduced follows India's story, she's one of the members, but it explains a lot more. Not that I'm doing promo for Sarah Edmondson from Nxivm but their podcast A Little Bit Culty is out, and I just saw that yesterday an episode came out with the famous girl who escaped Scientology Leah Remini. So, I mean if you're looking for a cult podcast theirs is pretty good.

**Kaylee**

Get on it. Who's not looking for one? Michael, aren't you looking for one? What are you nerding out about?

**Michael**

Well, I'm nerding out about the cult of mythology. I just finished Blood Zeus, the new animated series on Netflix, and I reminisced how I briefly had a mythology phase when I was young, and even back then it wasn't connected to astronomy it was really just about the stories. I'm constantly amazed at the power of storytelling, and how we can hook young minds into learning. So, the other day I was giving a private tour at the Space Centre, and we haven't been open very much, so we're doing these small groups, and they're really weird because when I'm in the gallery I'm interpreting stuff, but obviously it's a small group so I'm just staring at people letting them linger, I see what they're interested in, and then maybe I'll jump in with some knowledge. So, I saw this boy, and he was lingering around the Artemis exhibit, and he was looking at this panel of text that was not that interesting visually, and literally right beside him is this giant rocket engine, and on the other side is a Lego Apollo rocket. But he's on this panel and I was just about to jump in to tell him all about Artemis, who is the sister of Apollo and how that's going to be the name of the new human mission to the moon, but before I could, the boy called his Dad over to tell him the exact thing that I was just going to tell him, because he's a Greek mythology nerd, and he knows all about Artemis and Apollo, and he knows all about how Artemis is Apollo's sister, and how the next human to walk on the moon is going to be female. I was just blown away by all of this, and it brought me back to these ancient stories and the power of storytelling. I don't know if Vanessa or Kaylee if either of you had a mythology phase when you were young?



**Vanessa**

When I was younger, I read fairy tales, it's interesting you bring that up only because one of the people I interviewed for my podcast in Season One of Math Therapy was super into storytelling and math. Honestly, it was so fascinating. He was spilling the tea on Pythagoras and all of his girlfriends. If they told us this stuff in math class kids would be so into learning about the guy who invented the Pythagorean Theorem. I think you're right; the power of storytelling can really change things for people.

**Michael**

There needs to be a math superhero, like you, but in comic book form.

**Vanessa**

How do I phrase this? I am not as disinterested in anything as I am in comics, sci-fi, and jazz. So, I mean, I'm sure kids do need a math superhero. I would want a math reality show.

**Kaylee**

You want the Kardashians, but math.

**Vanessa**

Yes! That's exactly what I want. I don't know what that would be, but that's what I want.

**Kaylee**

While they're selling those detox teas. They could also be doing some kind of math, like adding up how much money it would cost to buy them.

**Vanessa**

Thank you. Like maybe that's what I want, you're right. I want gossip, but math.

**Kaylee**

I want that to.

**Michael**

Kaylee. What have you been nerding out about?

**Kaylee**

Truly, I've just been nerding out about self-care. Like the last few weeks, I've been making a real effort to do things that I like to do in my downtime, and I've made a few life changes that have been really enjoying. Every morning for the last month, I've got up and I'd done 30 minutes of yoga, which has been delightful, and make myself some of my favorite tea. I've been going paddle boarding, because how else can one be physically distant, but like out in the middle of the ocean away from everybody else? So, I've been doing that, and one of the other things I've been doing is taking time to cook. I actually love cooking, but I sometimes resent it because I find that there are times when I don't want to do anything, and I have to prepare a meal and I'm just like, "Oh, am I really going to spend all this time?" I've been finding some joy in it, and I'm actually going to plug my favorite cookbook. I've had it



for a few months, I absolutely adore it. It is called "Milk, Spice and Curry Leaves: Hill Country Recipes from the Heart of Sri Lanka" by Ruwanmali Samarakoon-Amunugama. I was living in Sri Lanka back in 2018. I was actually living in the Hill Country doing some work with the Sri Lanka Wildlife Health Center. I loved the food so much; the cookbook is beautiful. It's honestly the first time I've bought a cookbook in years. Why would I need one when the internet is right in front of me? This book is fantastic. It's got excellent recipes, I've been making chicken and eggplant, and potato curry every weekend, and I've been absolutely loving it. So, I highly recommend it for anyone interested in some delicious recipes.

**Vanessa**

Oh my god. Curries are just so cozy. I also love that you're nerding out about self-care. Like that's a great thing to nerd out about, being really intentional about it. Also sorry, you go paddle boarding in March?

**Kaylee**

Oh, I go open water swimming in March. (laughs)

**Vanessa**

Okay, so hold on a second here. So, you're getting into the ocean and in a wetsuit? Isn't it cold?

**Kaylee**

It is cold. I do find it a little hard to be swimming for a long period of time now mostly for my hands and my feet, because the neoprene on my hands and my feet isn't quite thick enough, but on a paddle board, it's totally fine. I wear wool socks inside my boots.

**Vanessa**

What if you fell in with your boots and socks?

**Kaylee**

I'd climb back out onto my paddle board, and I also have a whistle in case something bad happens.

**Michael**

Well, you'll just have to come visit us, Vanessa. Kaylee will take you paddle boarding; I will not be joining.

**Vanessa**

I love paddle boarding, I haven't paddle board in years, but it's like my favorite thing. So maybe I'll just move there.

**Michael**

That'd be great. We'd have our math therapist to help us out. Thank you so much Vanessa for joining us on Nerdin' About, where can people learn more about the Math Guru, Math Therapy, and all of your creative endeavors including your band?



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**Vanessa**

Okay, so number one place to find me is @themathguru. I'm more of an Instagram girl you can find me on Twitter if you need to, but IG is my home. Math Therapy is my podcast. You can find it anywhere that you listen to podcasts, and my band is Goodnight Sunrise. So, feel free to look us up.

**Kaylee**

Go follow Vanessa, this was an absolute delight. Thank you so much for spending time with us and telling us about all of your endeavors. If you want to hear more from us, you can follow us on our socials @NerdNiteYVR on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. We'll be back in a couple of weeks but until we meet again, divide by two and just add zero,

Transcribed in part by <https://otter.ai>