



## **Transcript of “Life as an Experiment with AJ Jacobs”**

Bulletproof Radio podcast #112



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Dave: Hey everyone, it's Dave Asprey with the Bulletproof Executive. It's been over two years since this podcast first started, and just recently we published the 100<sup>th</sup> episode with an amazing coffee expert named Dan Cox. If you haven't had a chance to download that on [iTunes](#), please do. It's totally worth your time. This guy spent 30 years, he was the first employee of a \$5,000,000,000 coffee roaster. Check it out and leave a review while you're at it. I really appreciate your support.

Today's cool fact of the day is most of us share nearly identical genetic material. If you compared two different individual's genetic blueprints, only about .1% would be different. We humans also share about 7% of the same genetic structure as E. coli, 21% with worms, 90% with mice and up to 98% with chimpanzees. From a purely personal perspective, I am more than 4% Neanderthal. It shows right here in my forehead; see?

I'm pretty excited about today's podcast. It is going to be a lot of fun, because we have a human guinea pig on, a human guinea pig who happens to have written four New York Times bestsellers, who's an editor-at-large at [Esquire Magazine](#), a commentator for NPR, which means he must have a sexy voice, and he's a columnist for [Mental Floss Magazine](#), and he's a New Yorker, of course.

I am talking about none other than AJ Jacobs. AJ, welcome to the show, man.

AJ: Great to be here, Dave. Thank you. I think I share like 92% of my DNA with guinea pigs, but so do you. So do you. So everyone is a human guinea pig.

Dave: That's a really good point. We all are guinea pigs whether we like it or not. It's just a question of whether you pay attention to your experiments or they just happen to you.

AJ: Exactly. Good point.

Dave: Now, your three domains, I love the way you do this. My bio-hacker sort of blueprint explaining the definition has these domains on it, and you talk about body, mind, and spirit. Why are those the three domains for hacking that you look at?

AJ: I started this just because I love self-improvement, and I needed a lot of self-improvement. I still do. I still do. I was definitely a fixer-upper. I thought, yeah, why not focus on ... there you go.

First, I started with the mind. I spent two years on that. Then I spent two years on the spirit and then two years on the body, so each of my books sort of was a deep dive into hacking one of those areas.

Dave: I really like how you and I guess other guys, like Tim Ferriss, has done the same thing. You find something you really want to do and then, like, I'm going to explore it and I'm going to make a book out of it. That's such a powerful way to tell your story, but by living it instead of just sort of being the anthropologist observing from a bubble and just getting immersed in it. It's pretty amazing.

You have that photo of you that we'll probably put in the show notes online if we're allowed, of you, you have this giant, you make ZZ Top look kind of like wusses with this beard compared to how you look now. You're clean-shaven and you look like a New York guy, whatever that looks like.

AJ: You've got a little beard, not a biblical one, but I see you, not bad there, not bad.

I definitely do commit to my projects and I love them. I feel very lucky that I can make a living like that. The beard was for a book about the bible, and my wife hated it. She would not kiss me for four months, and it was just a disaster, but it was a fascinating experience, trying to live by the rules of the bible.

Dave: I have to ask, I've grown ... not nearly as impressive as that beard ... just because I end up getting frustrated or I have some PR thing, I have to look

halfway civilized for. Did you shave your mustache, or did you let that grow too? Did you trim?

AJ: No, I let the whole thing grow. It was crazy. There are some advantages. It keeps your chin warm. In the winter it's like a sweater, and you do get mixed reactions. Some people cross the street to avoid you because you look like a crazy person, and you do spend time at airport security, but you also get quite a bit of attention. It's like being pregnant. People come up and they want to touch the beard.

Dave: That's too funny. Mine's been maybe an inch long, and I grow a really full kind of fluffy manly beard, probably similar to you from your photo. It's really funny. Some women are, oh my God, you're so hot, and others are kind of like, oh my God, you must be dirty. It's very polarizing.

AJ: It is extremely polarizing. It's like Hillary Clinton.

Dave: Your beard was like Hillary Clinton. That's a great tweet there.

AJ: Some love it. Some hate it.

Dave: Now, I'm sure your beard wasn't your greatest experiment so far. What do you think is your best experiment?

AJ: Well, I love all of them. I'll just tell you the background on the beard one was not all about the beard. It was because I wanted to work on my spirit. I grew up with no religion at all. As I say in the book, I'm Jewish, but I'm Jewish in the same way the Olive Garden is Italian.

Dave: Ouch. Ouch for Olive Garden.

AJ: Poor Olive Garden. It's a wonderful restaurant. I've got nothing against it.

I thought one way to explore the bible and learn about my heritage would be to dive in and actually live it. That's what I do with all my experiments. I try to live it. So I wrote down every single rule I could find in the bible and I decided to follow them all, from the famous ones, the Ten Commandments, and love your neighbor, but also the less well-known

ones, don't shave the corners of your beard. As we discussed, I didn't know where the corners were so I just let the whole thing grow.

It says, stone adulterers, so I figured I'd at least try to stone an adulterer. I used pebbles. I used very small stones.

Dave: How did you target the adulterer to choose?

AJ: Well, this guy, actually, he approached me. I was very much into the character, so I had on my robe and my beard and sandals. I was in Central Park.

Dave: [Crosstalk 00:06:39]. You're awesome.

AJ: I try to commit. He came up to me, and he said, "Why are you dressed like that?" I explained, "I'm trying to live by the bible, from the Ten Commandments to stoning adulterers." He goes, "Well, I'm an adulterer. Are you going to stone me?" That's when I said, "Yeah, that would be great. Thank you for the offer."

I took out a handful of stones that I had been carrying around for months, waiting for this opportunity. He actually grabbed them out of my hands and threw them at my face. I thought, an eye for an eye, I can throw one back at him. That is how I ended up stoning an adulterer.

Dave: That is maybe the coolest story that's ever occurred on Bulletproof Executive radio.

AJ: Thank you, Dave. I'm trying to think of how they did some hacking back in the bible. They kind of did, though, actually. It did teach me about hacking my brain and my emotions, weirdly enough.

Dave: I want to dig in more on that. There's another, call it a bio-hack, in the bible. I think it's on Leviticus if memory serves. It's about, if you have black mold in your house you should burn it actually.

AJ: That's true.

Dave: They knew something back then.

AJ: Very concerned about mold; you're right.

Dave: I know that mold in consciousness, it messes with me and causes weird dreams if you live in a moldy house; you have nightmares a lot. It's just weird stuff that I don't think we have full explanations for yet.

When you lived by the rules in the bible for one of your four books on pursuing all these different explorations, what happened to your consciousness and your awareness and things like that when you started following these rules?

AJ: Well, one of the big lessons I learned was just how much your behavior affects your thoughts, how much the exterior affects the interior. There's a great quote I love. I wish I'd made it up. It's by the guy who created Habitat for Humanity. You know him?

Dave: No. Just I know his work. Those guys are legit.

AJ: Right. He said, "It's easier to act your way into a new way of thinking than to think your way into a new way of acting." I love that. That's what I found doing this. The bible says you can't lie or gossip or covet. I'm a journalist and I live in New York City. That's my job. I was like, how do I do this moral makeover? How do I become a better person? That's what I decided to do, is pretend to be a better person. The more I pretended, eventually I became a little bit of a better person.

I still lie and covet and gossip a huge amount because I'm human but I do it a lot less. It's all because I just forced myself to do it. That's a big lesson from the bible and from cognitive behavioral therapy. They talk about this a lot. Even something as simple as forcing your face into the shape of a smile will make you in a better mood. Your brain sort of catches up with the behavior.

Dave: Is part of this because in order to do the experiment you had to actually think about what you were doing, so you just became more aware because

you're running a little filter that's like, am I lying or coveting right now? Am I lying or coveting right now? Was that part of your process?

AJ: Well, that is true. It's fascinating to see how much, for instance, you lie without realizing it. Once you start to pay attention to it, you're lying 50, 60 times a day, at least I was.

Dave: Wow.

AJ: The same with gossip. Gossip, you can't believe the percentage of talk that is negative when you break it down. Yes, being aware, this whole idea of metacognition, I love. I'm a huge fan of thinking about thinking. Anytime I can do that, and that's what this forced me to do. It made me think, what am I thinking about? I only have 16 hours a day to think. Am I using these 16 hours wisely?

Dave: I've done this electronic meditation thing called [40 Years of Zen](#), where you spend seven days with a lie detector hooked up to your head telling you when you're deceiving yourself. It's really intense and actually very difficult and sort of painful, but it drove me to have a little process running, like, am I lying to myself with what I'm doing right now, and am I lying to the external world?

Now my nervous system or something automatically flags it. Like, it's not normal to consciously choose to lie. There's times with my kids where I might simplify a situation, like, no, I'm sorry, we're not going to talk about what murder is today. It's when a person is less kind to another. Was it a lie or just ... I don't know. A six-year-old doesn't need to know about killing like that.

AJ: That's true.

Dave: Otherwise, though, I really strive, and I haven't thought of it from a biblical perspective, but I really strive to speak precisely so that my words mean what I say they did.



In the company, and for the Bulletproof company, we're still tiny, but we have a no gossip rule. If you're going to say something bad about someone, you actually call the person up so that you can say something bad about them and we can work it out rather than just talking behind their back.

We have this weasel word policy. I haven't even announced it to employees yet, but every time I use weasel language, where I say, I'm going to try to do something, which means I'm not going to do it ... I'm either going to do it or I'm going to choose not to do it. Trying is wussing out.

Every time I do that, they're going to get credit to get more Bulletproof stuff, like more coffee and everything else, so I'm going to be personally accountable.

AJ: I love it. That's a great idea.

Dave: What you just said there, you grew that skill just through trying to live it for two years. So trying there ...

AJ: That's true. Well, you know, what you bring up was ... That brings up another experiment I did, and this one was not part of a book. This was actually for Esquire Magazine. It was I experimented in something called a radical honesty.

Dave: Oh, cool. What did you do?

AJ: The movement was started by this guy, a psychologist in Virginia named Brad Blanton, and he believes you should never lie, but he goes further than that. He says that whatever is on your brain should come out of your mouth; no filter.

I was like, that's interesting. I tried that for a month, and that was the craziest, probably the most horrible month of my life.

Dave: Did you get punched?

AJ: I did not get punched. I thought I would, but ... I'll give you one example. My wife and I were out at a restaurant and we saw some friends of hers

from college and they were like, oh, we should all get together. I had to say what was on my mind, which was, I said, you seem like nice people but I just really don't want to get together with you. I mean, I don't get to see my own friends, so I'd rather not see you again. That was just so awkward and horrible. My wife was furious and with good reason.

I did learn that the no-filter rule is probably not a great rule, but I will say I learned one very valuable lesson from that. I do try to practice what I call sustainable radical honesty, and I am much more honest than I used to be, especially in positive things.

Like, for instance, during this month of radical honesty I would think about my mentor and that I hadn't spoken to him in months. So I'd call him up and tell him how much he meant to me and how he really helped my life and career. It was a little awkward because we're men and we're not supposed to be so expressing of our emotions, but I think he appreciated it. I know it certainly helped me.

This idea of really expressing the positive emotions on your mind, really telling people how much you appreciate them, that has made my life better. So radical positive or sustainable radical honesty.

Dave: Do you go out of your way to not say unkind things about other people now, either in front of them or behind their back, sort of like that no gossip thing?

AJ: Well, I do try not to, yeah, behind their back, I try not to, although it's very tempting. There are ways to tell people the truth but to couch it in terms that are much gentler than, "I never want to see you again."

Dave: It costs us something to say negative things about other people. I feel less energy. I'm just less happy if I'm bagging on someone to their face or in public. I'd rather, this is how I'm going to behave, or this is what I'm going to do versus, "You're a poopy head," as my six-year-old would say.

AJ: Exactly.

Dave: This is already just so fascinating, but you've done the bible book, you've done radical honesty, which, that wasn't a whole book; right? That was ...

AJ: That was a chapter in one of my books. It was originally an article in Esquire.

Dave: Okay, cool. What about the other two? You outsourced your life. I really want to zoom in on this because I'm picking your brain. Next week at sxsw, Maneesh Sethi, the guy who created [Pavlok](#), that cool wristband thing that helps you with habit forming, he's hosting a panel on automating your life. Tim Ferriss was slated to speak and he got double-booked, so at the last minute they asked me to step in. I don't know that I can fill his shoes. He knows more about automating his life than I do, but you might know as much as he does because you've done more of it than I have.

Give me the down-low on how to automate your life so I can pick up all the tricks from you and I can share them with an audience at South by Southwest. Educate me, man.

AJ: I don't know if I know everything. Well, I've known Tim for many, many years. He actually called me after my first book came out and told me he was writing a book. I had written a piece in Esquire about outsourcing my life, where I hired a team of people in Bangalore, India, to do everything for me. They answered my phone, answered my email, they argued with my wife for me.

Dave: That was brilliant.

AJ: Oh, it's great. It was the best month of my life.

Dave: And the best article ever, by the way. I was rolling on the floor when I read it.

AJ: Thanks, Dave. You are kind.

Yeah, I am a big fan of automating. You know what I've discovered is an interesting twist, is automating your conscience. There are these apps ... I

tested out Google Glass, and you can send yourself little messages. What I like to send myself a message is like, are you using your mind wisely?

A lot of the times I'll be in the line at the drugstore and I'll be so angry at this woman because she doesn't know how to swipe her credit card. Then I'll get a little ding from myself, a little email saying, what are you thinking about right now? That sort of snaps me out of it. I'm, you know what? This is such a waste of my mental energy. I could use this time to do something productive.

You don't actually have to ... You can use your downtime to think of interesting thoughts. I do like that idea. It's sort of the outsourced conscience.

Dave: You were wearing Google Glasses and you had them set up to ding and remind you to think positive thoughts basically?

AJ: Yeah, exactly. You don't need a Google Glass. You can do it with an iPhone. There are many apps, or you can just program your email to send yourself messages throughout the day, whatever you want to say. "Be kind to others." "Give people the benefit of the doubt." You know. "You only live once." "You're going to die."

I'm a big fan of the whole momento mori, reminding myself that I'm going to die. It's a little bit creepy, but it's also very soothing, because you realize it's true. We really don't have that long here so stop it with obsessing about little things.

Dave: It's funny to hear you tie those things together, the desire to think poor thoughts about the person, the cashier going slow in front of you or something.

In my view of the consciousness and of the way our brains are wired, that comes from the meat operating system. The ego is another name for that. But the part of you that's there to keep you alive. It's always worried about just one thing. It's always worried about dying, right?

At the end of the day, that person is a bad person. When you really dig down through your thoughts, oh, yeah, somehow in there it was, if they don't serve me fast enough, I won't have enough food, if I don't have enough food, mommy won't love me and then I'll die. It's some weird irrational thing that's like, it's not about what you think of because you understand here but you're feeling it down here in your heart.

AJ: Right.

Dave: Hacking that is honestly the most important thing you can do, better than eating a [Bulletproof Diet](#) or any of these other things I've ever found. If you could just do that, you'll always be better off. Part of that is just becoming comfortable with the fact, yeah, yeah, you're going to die sometime.

AJ: It's true. Yeah. I like what you say about if you look deep down, the amount of cognitive biases we have is astounding. I did an article on that about how we're programmed to think in a certain way because of our caveman roots and how it doesn't apply to today.

I've heard it said, we've got caveman hardware and space age software. It's really a mix there. I like what you're saying about when you really go deep, we're using our brains quite wrong.

Dave: It's, I think, a lifelong task to continue to do that. Even if you talk to Buddhist monks, in my understanding, the Buddhists were some of the first people to figure out this, oh, it's a fear of death thing. Even with all of that, they're still practicing a lifelong, the most exalted people there who are the most enlightened, and still say, oh, I made a mistake there, I had a bad thought. Then they do whatever they do about.

It's that building a process that matters, and what you've done that's really unique here is that you're saying, well, part of that process doesn't have to be an internal burden, it can be an external burden by having your iPhone remind you to think a positive thought. How cool is that really?

AJ: Well, I'm a big fan of it. I'm a big fan of, as you know, automating, because I don't trust willpower. I just think willpower is totally overrated and we

don't have much of it, and what we do have, we spend in the morning. It's a fixed quantity during the day. By the end of the day, if there's food lying ... Unfortunately, I have jelly beans in my house right now and I know at about 6:00 it's just going to go to hell.

I am a big fan of preparing against, trying to battle my willpower by preparing for it and knowing I'm going to be weak. The Odysseus Strategy ...

You're probably heard that phrase, where they ...

Dave: Talk about that.

AJ: Well, that's in the Odyssey. Odysseus knew that he was going to go with his boat and hear the sirens, which were these beautiful mermaids, and they sing so beautifully that you jump in to the water and die. So he knew that was going to happen, so he got his sailors to tie him to the mast so that he couldn't jump in. He was preparing. He was doing sort of pre-willpower. He was saying I know this is going to happen.

That's what I find incredibly helpful, the Odysseus Strategy now, you don't have to lash yourself to your chair but there are lots of steps you can take to sort of outsource your willpower.

One of my favorites is just putting my iPhone in another room and even on the top shelf in a closet so you really have to climb up there, and you kind of, while you're doing that, you're so embarrassed that you're like, I can't do this. Then you go back to work.

Yeah, for me, and same with putting food on the top shelf, put the junk food away on the top shelf so it's not at eye level so you're not tempted. There's the small plates idea. I love that because then you're not tempted to just fill it up with all this food. There's lots of ways you can sort of tweak your environment to make yourself healthier.

Dave: One of the things that interests me around that is the [Pavlok device](#), which is just coming out. Maneesh is kickstarter for it. This is a wristband but it locks on software-wise. You can say, I'm going to do this thing, and the

wristband won't come off until you complete whatever amount of time you do it, and it has GPS awareness. If you say, I'm going to the gym for X number of minutes, for X number of days, it's not coming off. If you don't go to the gym, it can actually, your friends can remotely shock you to remind you to go to the gym.

AJ: Oh, wow, that is funny. I haven't heard of that. That's a whole other level of accountability.

Dave: It sounds over the top, but it's got a social side of things, where people are, okay, I want support from my friends, but we're talking about willpower, so all of a sudden now you're tackling that meet operating system. You're harnessing that and saying, all right, you want to not feel pain? Then you better do what my conscious brain wanted me to do in the first place.

I'm intrigued at just the ways of hacking willpower there.

AJ: Yeah, that's a great one. I hadn't heard of that.

I did try wondering ... One of my books, where I was trying to eat more healthfully, and I was addicted to these dried mangos, which you think might be healthy but they're really just packed with sugar.

Dave: They're candy.

AJ: Yeah, they're candy that grows on a tree. There's this one pact that a guy, it was a University of Chicago professor, Nobel Prize winner, came up with, which is sort of the carrot, I mean the stick instead of the carrot, that if you break your pledge, then you will pay monetarily. You will lose money. You sign a contract that you're going to give money to a charity.

But here's the twist to make it even more powerful. It's you give money to a charity you hate because then ... right? I would pledge, I'm not going to eat any of these dried mangoes, and I told my wife, if I do, you give \$100 to, I believe it was the American Nazi Party that I said.

Every time I looked at a mango, I'm like, there is no way I am going to eat that because I do not want to be funding the American Nazi Party.. It was

incredibly effective. I've heard people use the strategy for stopping smoking or any of these really hard habits to break.

Dave: You've harnessed the power of aversion to do that, but going back to what we talked about earlier, living biblically and all that, when you're thinking those thoughts of aversion or something you hate, every time you do that it's like thinking those negative thoughts about the cashier in line. The old North American story about, "Grandpa, which wolf will survive, the mean one or the nice one," and the answer is, "Well, whichever one you feed."

I'm questioning whether using aversion as a way to get things done is spiritually a good move for you, just to feel good about yourself in the morning. Do you benefit more from fighting against something or working toward something?

AJ: Well, it's true. I do prefer the carrot to the stick if you've got a choice, but sometimes if it's such a hard habit to break, you break out the stick.

Dave: Getting it done, getting the right thing done in the right way is so terribly important, but getting it done first and foremost. I get you there.

AJ: As a parent, you're always trying to do, reward them instead of threaten them. I am all for that. I'm with you on that. But in this case, nothing was working so I went for the extreme.

Dave: Cool. I want to go back to outsourcing.

AJ: Yeah.

Dave: I still need to be schooled on this so I can drop some knowledge bombs at sxsw. The three most effective life automation kind of outsourcing yourself, things that you came across?

AJ: I actually read a very interesting article in the New York Times by these two economists who talk about, it's actually a much better economic decision to outsource these tasks because that frees up time for you to think more strategically, whether to come up with an idea that's going to make you a



lot more money. It's not a waste of money to be spending money to have people do the smaller tasks.

Then the other part is I feel a little guilty about making other people do these boring tasks. You have to wrestle with your conscience about that. I also wrestle with my conscience, because the whole idea of outsourcing, if by hiring people in India, am I depriving people of jobs here in North America? That was a big problem.

My favorite solution was a guy who wrote me and he said, you know what? I lost my job to outsourcing so I hired an outsourcer to look for a new job for me and the outsourcer found me a new job. I was like, that is brilliant. Maybe that's the solution.

Dave: That is the coolest thing. It's almost like our economy. You can only create money by creating debt, so you can only create outsourcing by outsourcing to create outsourcing. We can create a pyramid scheme of outsourcing where none of us have to do anything. I'm intrigued.

AJ: Exactly. I like it.

Dave: That's really funny. Okay. I'm a supporter of that, by the way. I don't do most of my own shopping on Amazon. I ask my amazing and wonderful executive assistant to do it, also because Amazon is going to tempt me with all this other crap I don't really need. So then I'm going to look at it and then I'll probably end up, oh, I should research that and I should click that, and I might buy it, I might not. I'm going to spend all that time ...

If I'm like, this is the thing, please make it appear at the right place at the right time and pay for it for with the right card.

AJ: Right. Exactly.

Dave: You talk about willpower. All that decision-making fatigue of all those little micro decisions, I don't have to do those. I feel kind of like I'm a big baby because there's all these things I could do that I don't do, like, could I outsource someone putting food in my mouth? I wouldn't.

The psychology of it there, if I'm going to share the most information I can and do the most good with the Bulletproof Executive, I shouldn't be spending time on those things, so I make this kind of little bargain, I better be doing my very best to serve others in the context of what I'm doing with this information. In order to do that, it's okay to let people do things that I'm capable of doing that I sort of even like doing but just to focus on being a dad and doing the research and the writing and the things like that, and recording interviews with guys like you. It's so impactful.

AJ: I agree. Yeah, you've got to get over that initial guilt and realize you're just trying to do the best in the world you can, and this actually will help you do more good things.

Dave: What other outsourcing things worked really well for you?

AJ: Let's see. Well, I don't know if this counts, but it's sort of in the same ballpark, but I'm very into the whole quantified self, which I know you like as well, the keeping track of everything.

I'm still am a big fan of ... I'm still on the [Fitbit](#) and one of them works. I just got stuck with a [Fitbit](#) because I've been on it for years. But that, going on the social sites and seeing how many steps your friends take and they're comparing it to you and they're making fun of you if you don't take enough steps. That I think is good because that's outsourcing. That's a little bit of outsourcing because the peer pressure. You're using peer pressure for good. I'm all for these quantified steps.

You know, another site that I recommend, is ... Have you been on any sites like [charitymiles.com](#) or .com? I love them because they link up to your [Fitbit](#) or Fuel Band or Jawbone, and they give you credit for your steps. A corporate donor will give money to a charity of your choice. So you take 10,000 steps and then a corporation will guarantee that they'll give 50 cents to help feed the hungry.

Then, if you're sitting on your butt, you feel like, oh my God, I'm such a bastard. I could be out there earning money for hungry people. So that is some serious. That plays on your guilt.

Dave: Wow, I love that idea.

If you noticed a change in audio quality, that's because we just switched over to using a land line to get audio so you can get the best experience as you're commuting in traffic to hear what AJ has to say, because, well, I'm learning some cool stuff.

AJ: I'll tell you, that was quite a technical snafu but we got through it and, you know, what we were talking about before is not getting annoyed, not using our 16 hours of thoughts to have these waste of time negative thoughts.

When we first got cut off, I was like, oh my God, and then I was like, you know what? Why am I getting so upset? Who cares? We'll get through this and it's not the worst ... It's quite a first-world problem.

Dave: It is indeed. We're not doing a live broadcast, which would have been a little more stressful, so if I had to call you tomorrow, maybe in the middle of the video it would look like we've both changed clothes, and that would be that. There are worse things.

AJ: Exactly.

Dave: No wardrobe malfunctions allowed on this show except with certain guests.

We were still talking about automating your life. I want to know what do you still automate. After you went through your whole outsourcing experiment that led to that amazing article, what do you still, aside from shopping, what else is on the list?

AJ: Well, I'm a big fan of ... I do a lot of interviews for my work, so I definitely have other people transcribe them, even though it can be embarrassing because sometimes when you're interviewing someone, not you, but when I interview people, sometimes I sound like an idiot, but you just have to get over that ego and let other people do it.

I'm doing a lot of just instead of, I come up with a list of little things to research that I could do with a Google search, and it would take me five minutes, but those five minutes add up. I sometimes have a list. I'm doing a

presentation, a TED talk and I want to know how do I get free photos that I don't have to ... free non-copyright photos. So I just added that to the list and someone is going to look those up for me. I do think it's worth paying \$15 an hour to have that done.

Dave: Yeah. It's enlightened laziness maybe is the way to talk about it.

AJ: I like that phrase.

Dave: That guilt thing ...

AJ: Efficient laziness; how's that?

Dave: There you go. One of the things that's motivated a lot of my career, people sometimes don't know this, but I was one of the very early innovators around e-commerce and cloud computing. The first company that, Google's first servers, Yahoo's first servers, Hotmail's first servers, were a company where I was one of the early employees.

I always said that the best people who run computers are the laziest, because they're going to write a little script to automate their entire job away. Then they just sit there and learn new stuff while the computer gets their paycheck for them.

What I never realized was that you could do that with the rest of your life the same way. Anytime you can get something off your plate to let you do what's fun, and for me, it's like, I'm a husband, I'm a father, and I have the Bulletproof Executive. Of course self-care is part of all that. But if it's not on that list, really ... I suppose I have friends and all that ... but all of those are valuable, but the little things, get them out of there. It is lazy, I guess.

AJ: That's true. It's lazy in a good way.

You know, when I did this, I tested out Google Glass for a couple of months for Esquire, and one of the things was automating ... I don't know if you'd call it automating as much as getting a guru or a concierge or almost like a caddy for life. For instance, I decided to try to ... I used the Google Glass to

do things I shouldn't be doing with it just for the article. I would not do this in real life.

I decided what if you tried to cheat at poker. So I got my cousin, who's a professional poker player in Las Vegas, and we synced up my Google Glass so that he could see what I saw, so he could see my cards and the expressions on the faces of other people.

In my little Google Glass video screen, I could see him. I would be playing and then he would hold up a little sign saying "Raise," or he would say "Fold." He would say, bluff here and bet \$20. It was just hilarious and a joy and it actually worked. I gave the money back to my friends at the end of the night because I didn't want to be a total asshole, but it was fantastic to see that these things actually worked.

That, I think, in the future there will be people that you can hire to be in your ear telling you ...

To give you one other example of this, I've been married for 13 years so I'm not going out to any single bars, but I got this young guy who's 25, good-looking, and I have him wear the Google Glass. I was at my computer, so I could see what he saw and I could say, all right, go over to that woman and here's what you should say. Can you imagine if you're a single guy and you can wear this Google Glass without getting beaten up, which is a big caveat. He could put this on and have some really slick guy telling you what to say to women, how hilarious, fantastic little treat.

By the way, I'm not saying that I was a very good Cyrano. I have no game because I've been married for 13 years, so I did not help him at all. He did not see any action, but it was a fun experiment.

Dave: It sounds like, number one, we've got the world's best reality show planned, and number two, the idea that you could have Neil Strauss in your ear, the author of *The Game*, or someone like that, that's really funny. In fact, it would be really funny if the men and the women in a bar all had those on, then you wouldn't know who was getting guidance.

I'm telling you TV producers. I know we have a few listen to the show.

AJ: There you go. Sign it up right now.

Dave: I love that idea.

AJ: I felt a little bad because there was some deceit involved. At the end of every conversation, he would say, by the way, I've got this guy in my ear, and that actually produced far more interaction. The women were much more interested in that fact than in that he has these pre-set lines.

Dave: That is hilarious. Speaking of Google Glass, if you're watching on video, this is what an unopened Google Glass looks like.

AJ: Oh, look at you.

Dave: I have one and it's been here for two months and I haven't had the time to open it and configure literally. On my calendar my EA has booked me to talk to someone or to do something every single waking minute to the point that I'm dying to do this.

I took it out, I tried them on once and said, these look cool, and I haven't plugged it into my computer.

AJ: You've got to outsource someone to do that for you.

Dave: I'm thinking about it. I live kind of in the sticks. I would outsource the setup of my Google Glasses, because even though I'm a tech geek from Silicon Valley, I don't have the time and the focus, which maybe would stress me out but it doesn't. It just makes me realize I need to find someone who can do my tech stuff that I kind of like. It's a funny connection back to this.

Well, we're running towards the end of the show and I feel like I only asked you half the cool things. I want to learn a little bit more about the quantified self stuff that you do because we share that a lot in common and a lot of our listeners are and do, how do we track and measure the results of the bio-hacking we're doing.

What are the other big quantified self things? Do you do heart rate variability? Do you wear a Basis wristband? I was one of the early executives at the company that makes those.

AJ: Oh, really?

Dave: Yeah.

AJ: I do the Wii blood pressure, but to me the one that really works is the Fitbit, just the steps, because I do believe and I talk about this book I wrote on health is that the more you quantify, the healthier you will act, and that we have really compartmentalized exercise and movement in our lives. If we're good, then we go to the gym for an hour and then we sit on our butts for 15 hours. That's just not good for us.

As you know, I've heard you on other podcasts that you've done, talking about how that just undoes all the good that the gym does.

This helps me to try to incorporate movement into every part of my day. The usual, taking the stairs instead of the elevator ... One of my favorite is, I have kids about the same age as yours, and they're short, so when I talk to them, I squat down to their eye level. Then I have a little conversation. Then I pop back up, so I'm doing like 60 squats a day just talking to my kids.

Any way you can incorporate movement, and the quantified self helps with that a huge amount.

Dave: You just taught me something really cool there. I'm going to start doing that, and since I'm taller than you probably, being 6, 4, I'll actually get more burn.

AJ: I'm sad they're going to grow up to be teenagers and then it will look weird if I start squatting while talking to them. They'll be like, what are you doing?

Dave: That's hilarious.

Tell me a little bit about the [Global Family Festival](#), this mega-reunion you're putting together in June of 2015. This is an interesting idea. What's the genesis of it?

AJ: I am so excited about this, I can't tell you. My next book, I'm trying to build the largest family tree in history and to encompass all of humanity, all 7,000,000,000 members of the family. There are actually sites now that will help you do this. There's one called [Geni.com](#) and another called [WikiTree](#), and they have crowd-sourced genealogy. You merge your tree with someone else's and by the end ...

I'm on something on [Geni](#) called The World Family Tree, which has 75,000,000 people on it. So I'm probably cousins with you on this. I'm cousins with. I've got 18 steps to Gwyneth Paltrow, not that she's returning my calls, and 22 steps to Albert Einstein.

Everyone has this. We're all so interconnected. I'm so excited, and I'm on this [World Family Tree](#), and I thought wouldn't it be interesting to hold a reunion where you get thousands of interesting people who are related and they can come and converse. There will be talks. It will be like a TED conference. There will be games, lots of activities for the kids. It's going to be in June of 2015, and I encourage everyone to come.

If I could just tell people, just email me or go to my website and tell me your grandparents' names and I'll figure out how we're related so that you can join us at this reunion.

Can I plug my email in there so that people know where to go?

Dave: Oh, yeah.

AJ: It's [aj@ajjacobs.com](mailto:aj@ajjacobs.com) just go to my website, [ajjacobs.com](http://ajjacobs.com), and just tell me your grandparents and we will take it from there, and it will be ... I'm just so excited. Weirdly, I think I'm more excited about this than any other project I've ever done.



Dave: AJ, just so you make sure you have your outsourcing arrangements in place, the first week this show is likely to get between 50- and maybe 70,000 listens and another 3- to 10,000 a week after that, depending on lots of variables. So you might get a few emails.

AJ: I want emails. I want to be flooded. I want to be flooded. And you're all my cousins out there.

By the way, everyone, all 50,000 or 70,000 of you, are invited. The people we can find a link to will get a bracelet and be part of the world's biggest family photo, but everyone is invited. Morgan Spurlock is making a documentary about it, so it's going to be ... I'm really excited. So please, flood me. Flood me with emails.

Dave: This is a worthy effort and your books are awesome. For people who wanted to read more about your books, the mind book is called [The Know It All](#); the spirit book is [The Year of Living Biblically](#), and body was [Drop Dead Healthy](#).

Was the fourth one, [My Life as an Experiment](#)?

AJ: Exactly. That's it.

Dave: We'll put links to all of your books in the show notes and people can, I'm sure, find them on your website, which is [ajjacobs.com](http://ajjacobs.com).

AJ, there's one question that everyone answers on the show.

AJ: Yes.

Dave: Top three recommendations for people who want to kick more ass. It doesn't have to be anything you've written about. Just what have you learned as a human being that other people should know about?

AJ: All right. I'll do it really quickly. One, just the idea of gratitude and being thankful for every little thing. One of my books was about reading the encyclopedia, so I read about all of history and I realized the good old days were not good. They were terrible. They were smelly. They were disease-

ridden. You died when you were 35. We've got our huge challenges now, but at least we live now as opposed to in the 1800's. All right. That would be one.

My second would be, like we talked about, quantifying yourself, trying to keep track of the minimum, your steps, because the more you are aware of what you're doing, the better you will act.

Then I guess my third would be, we often discuss it, the whole idea of act your way into a new way of thinking. If you don't feel like you're confident, just pretend you're confident. That's what I do when I'm writing my books. I just say, what would a confident person do, and I start making phone calls and I call the publisher and say, we've got to have this massive party when the book comes out.

Then after a couple of hours, my mind catches up and I start to become confident. So that is my other secret, the idea of "need before creed" or "fake it till you make it." Choose whatever rhyme you prefer.

Dave: Wow. Great advice.

AJ, I appreciate that advice, speaking of gratitude, so thank you for it. Thank you for being on the show.

AJ: Oh, my pleasure. Thanks for having me on.

Dave: It's been an amazing pleasure. I love the way you think and I love what you're doing.

Everyone, check out this family reunion idea. It's really cool. It's simple to do. Just send an email to [aj@ajjacobs.com](mailto:aj@ajjacobs.com) and help him out on what is going to be a really cool documentary.

AJ: Thank you so much, Dave. I'm going to figure out how we're related because I've got to have you there.

Dave: All right. I hope I'm your second cousin's girlfriend's best friend.



AJ: Probably. No doubt.

Dave: Peace.

AJ: All right. Thanks, Dave.

## Featured

[AJJacobs.com](http://AJJacobs.com)

[World Family Tree](#)

Send an email to AJ to find out who you are related to: [aj@ajjacobs.com](mailto:aj@ajjacobs.com)

## Resources

[Charity Miles.org](http://CharityMiles.org)

[Pavlok.com](http://Pavlok.com)

[Fitbit.com](http://Fitbit.com)

[Geni.com](http://Geni.com)

[Wikitree.com](http://Wikitree.com)

[The Know-It-All: One Man's Humble Quest to Become the Smartest Person](#)

[The Year of Living Biblically: One Man's Humble Quest to Follow the Bible as Literally as Possible](#)

[Drop Dead Healthy: One Man's Humble Quest for Bodily Perfection](#)

[My Life as an Experiment: One Man's Humble Quest to Improve Himself](#)

## Bulletproof

[40 Years of Zen](#)