



Transcript – Owning Your Testosterone with John Romaniello - #340



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Dave Asprey: Are you ready to take your life to the next level, especially in the realm of professional networking, dating, and relationships? You need to check out the Art of Charm podcast. In a recent episode, this inspirational podcast talked about mentorship and how you have to be a good mentee in order to be a good mentor. To take your life to the next level, go to podcastone.com, or download the free mobile app to listen now.

Speaker 2: Bulletproof Radio, a state of high performance.

Dave Asprey: You're listening to Bulletproof Radio with Dave Asprey. Today's cool fact of the day is that micro-estrogens are Kryptonite for your testosterone, just like xeno-estrogens found in plastics and personal care products. Fungi and mold from foods, like produce, can make these estrogens. It can be found in the environment around you because of water damage in houses, which is why I made a documentary called "Moldy" about it. The biggest source of these estrogens is actually corn, wheat, rice, barley, and sorghums. These can be thousands of times more potent estrogens than what your body would naturally make if you turned your testosterone into estrogen.

If you're like me right now walking around with a bigger than normal case of man boobs, I actually spent a night in a moldy hotel room and woke up the next morning with some interesting swelling. They'll go away in a couple days. I don't know if you can see, but I'm looking somewhat muscular, but I'm a little bouncier than I ought to be. This is an issue I've always had, because I grew up fat in a basement. Anyway, you don't want mold or estrogen in your environment, and particularly not the combination of the two.

I totally appreciate you listening to Bulletproof Radio, and I want to do something to say thanks. I contacted my friends at dollarshaveclub.com and arranged for them to give new members a month of the executive razor for free, just for trying a tube of Dr. Carver's Shave Butter. Anything that says butter is going to get me kind of excited, but this is not the kind of butter you put in your coffee, just so we're clear. This is shave butter. I'm really excited that they agreed to do it for you.

Let me remind you why millions of others have joined as proud members of the club. Dollarshaveclub.com delivers amazing razors right to your door for a third the price of what the greedy razor companies will charge. That means when you join DSC, you can afford to shave with a fresh blade any time you want, which feels fantastic. I get a first class shave when I use the Executive Blade, and that's without even hurting my wallet. When I use the executive with Dr. Carver's Shave Butter, the blade just gently glides for the smoothest shave ever.

Shave butter isn't your average shave cream. It's a unique conditioning formula with high quality natural ingredients, leaving your skin unbelievably soft and smooth. Now is a great time to join Dollar Shave Club. New members who buy a tube of shave butter get a month of the executive razor for free. Take advantage of this special offer today. It's available by going to dollarshaveclub.com/bulletproof. That's dollarshaveclub.com/bulletproof.



Before we get going on the show all the way today, check out Bulletproof Upgraded Whey Protein. I'm actually not a big fan of whey protein, because it's inflammatory when you get too much of the amino acid cysteine. A little bit is good. Too much is bad, but I make a whey protein which is made from grass fed milk, not a cheese byproduct. It's low temperature processed. It's 20% colostrum, and it's got some of the XCT powder built into it. You get a little bit of boost from it. It's one of the more creamy, satisfying, and biologically active whey proteins that I can manufacture. I tell you even then, even though I sell the stuff, two tablespoons a day, no more, because there are other proteins that can be better.

By the way, today's guest may completely disagree with me, and he knows a thing or two about this kind of stuff. I have no idea what his perspective is. Pretty well known guy. His name is John Romaniello. John, I just realized something. We've hung out a few times, and I always just called you "Romanello", but there's an "I" in there that I never noticed. Have I been saying your name wrong this entire time and just being a dick?

John: No, no, no. No, we don't use the "I". It's a silent I. I assume many generations back it was "Romaniello", but we're particularly Americanized, and we just say "Romanello". The "I" is-

Dave Asprey: "Romanello". Okay, that's what I've always said, and I just noticed the "I". I'm like, "My God." It'd be kind of embarrassing. People call me "ass spray" all the time, so I'm pretty resistant to that.

John: That "I" has plagued me since elementary school. For whatever reason my teachers would always take it and throw it at the end of the name, and it would become "Romanelli", which it's not my name. It's very strange. Yeah, the "I" has caused all sorts of trouble, as "I's" tend to do.

Dave Asprey: Are you Italian?

John: I am what we call miscegenous. I am quite racially mixed. I am probably more Italian than anything else, but I'm not as Italian as my name implies. My birth name is Giovanni Vincenzo Romaniello the Third for no good reason, except now it's tradition. This is just of interest, if you like history, but my father's mother, she was a beautiful woman named Willy Ellen Barrow, and she was from Buckaloo County, Alabama. She was half black, a quarter Irish, and a quarter Native American. Then she married my grandfather, who was Italian and Polish. I think I present to most people as a Guinea from Long Island, but I'm actually this mixed race guy with southern roots.

Dave Asprey: You're quite mixed with some redneck in there, too. Wow, I'm impressed.

John: Oh yeah.

Dave Asprey: I'm not quite redneck, but I'm from New Mexico.



- John: That's sort of redneck.
- Dave Asprey: Kissing cousins. We don't have enough water to be real rednecks, and we make tequila, not moonshine, but otherwise ...
- John: Otherwise it's the same.
- Dave Asprey: For people who don't know your name, you're a fitness expert, pretty well known. I keep coming across your stuff, so when I finally met you, I was like, "Oh, this is really cool." John, you write for Men's Health and Fast Company. You're an angel investor, advisor to a bunch of fitness and tech companies. Your company Roman Fitness Systems is one of the top rated sources for online information, particularly around exercise and fitness, and you're sort of a walking wall of muscle, but not a balloon animal. You've got that think down about right. Where I think most people have seen your name is because you wrote "Engineering the Alpha," which is a book that I've definitely talked about before. I've seen some really good information in the book. Welcome to the show.
- John: Thank you. Thank you so much. I appreciate that introduction.
- Dave Asprey: Let's talk a little bit about hormones. This is going to be a short episode for people today. Tell me about how men produced estrogen. I kind of opened up with my story about my man boobs. Tell me what's going on with estrogen, because you've really looked into this.
- John: Yeah, so obviously the hormone that we talk about most with regard to men is testosterone. I think that there's probably this misconception that more is better. There's a point where that's true, but obviously there's a line of diminishing returns. With regard to estrogen, men produce it naturally, and it gets naturally produced in our bodies, but it also gets produced in response to heightening testosterone. Really what I talk about is the balance, because I work with a lot of professional athletes, and I have over the course of my career. A lot of those guys use performance enhancing drugs, particularly testosterone derivatives. If they're not careful, what can happen is as they inject exogenous testosterone, some of it will convert directly to estrogen through a process called aromatization. Then there can also be an increase in endogenous production of estrogen.
- Really what I talk about is maintaining that balance. Obviously it's impossible to quantify like you want a four to one balance of testosterone to estrogen, but in general, you do want to keep natural estrogen production stable. You don't want any of these massive spikes. Spikes of testosterone are typically not going to harm you in any way, whereas spikes of estrogen, as you mentioned, even some short term environmental exposure to mold or dietary exposure to phytoestrogens like soy or sorghum or xeno-estrogens in our plastics, that can have some acute physiological effects, in your case, you had the swollen breast tissue or anything surrounding the chest. For a lot of people it results in some sort of emotional instability. For others it can result in sexual dysfunction. These are things that we need to be really aware of.
- With regard to sex, I personally view sex drive and typical sexual function as probably the



most reliable barometer of health. If you are a guy who typically has a normal or a very high sex drive, and then you wake up one day and you're not interested, that is particularly telling that something is wrong. Then also in terms of sexual performance, if one day out of absolutely nowhere you are struggling to achieve or maintain an erection or achieve orgasm, those things are very, very telling that something could be wrong hormonally. Obviously it could be any number of things, physiologically or psychologically, but I just find that in general, if there's one thing you walk away from this podcast with, it's that for men, I think sexual function is the most reliable barometer of general endocrinological health.

Dave Asprey: My first book was about fertility, and it involved men and women. What do you do before you get pregnant and during pregnancy to have really healthy kids? One of the biggest things that tells you whether your mitochondria are working or not is whether your sperm can swim. I looked at that as well. If people are having fertility problems, whether they're men or women, but if you're a guy and your little guy's can't swim, your brain can't think either, because the same thing that makes them swim makes you think. That's how you make electricity in your head.

When I was 26, I used to weight 300 pounds. I had already lost some of the weight by the time I was 26, but I went and I got my first full anti-aging hormone panel. This was going back, jeez, 17 years or something. I came out of it sort of shocked, because my testosterone was very low, and my estrogen levels were higher than my mom.

John: Goodness, wow. At the time, I assume your mom was post-menopausal.

Dave Asprey: Yeah, she was.

John: Her estrogen was slightly suppressed, relative to what it would have been during the prime of her fertile years.

Dave Asprey: Absolutely.

John: Yeah, no. Yeah, it's amazing. I see guys who have all sorts of elevated estrogen and suppressed testosterone. There's this sort of drive, I think, it's like, "How do I fix it?" For elevated estrogen, a lot of times the immediate response is aromatase inhibitors, going on clomiphene or arimidex or nolvadex or something like that. Those things are fine, although clomiphene is not technically an aromatase inhibitor. Those drugs are great, and they work really, really well for a lot of people, but I think that in general, the first response should be to try and address those things, in terms of lifestyle, diet, nutrition, and environmental factors.

Dave Asprey: By the way, for listeners, that's pretty much what you talk about in your book, "Engineering the Alpha." You go through all this. If you're a guy or you're a woman with a guy who's got man boobs or any of these other dysfunctions, it's worth a read.

John: Thank you.



Dave Asprey: It was one of the ... I say that as a compliment, because there's a lot of just testosterone good, eat eggs good. It's a little more complex because of this dynamic with the environment coming in and feedback loops. I thought you nailed it in a way that was pretty approachable.

John: Thank you. I appreciate that. Yeah, the book thankfully was very well received. Again, I think that because it was a book intended for men, it is a little heavier on the testosterone than the estrogen stuff, but I think that one of the main things that we really focused on in that book, which is it's both the easiest to do and the hardest to execute is sleep. That's this massive thing. As an entrepreneur you know. If you get nine hours, it's like the best day ever. To get those nine hours is very difficult, to carve nine hours away.

It really is important, particularly for men with regard to testosterone production. What people don't realize is that if you sleep ... First of all, let's establish this. After the age of 30, testosterone drops about 10% per decade, in terms of natural endogenous production. That's about 1% per year. That quantify is that 1% per year testosterone will drop after the age of 30, but regardless of age, if you sleep six hours per night or less for as little as two weeks, testosterone production can drop up to 15%. If you think about that, it's getting six hours of sleep a night or less for two weeks. You're physiologically, endocrinologically aging your body by 15 years, in terms of its ability to produce testosterone. That is something that we harp on all the time.

I know that people want all of these fixes and they're willing to spend money. Sleep is free is the great thing. Sleep is a free thing that you can do. It's ideally a third of your life, but it is also the hardest thing to execute, because we've got all these other things going on. We have stresses. A lot of people suffer from anxiety-induced insomnia where they are actually, even when they're sleeping, their anxiety is working, their brains are working over time, and they actually get pulled out of REM sleep because their autonomic nervous system is massively stimulated from whatever stresses are happening in their life. That's a very, very different thing from purse physiological insomnia where you can just take melatonin. As long as you can fall asleep, you'll stay asleep.

Addressing those things through other means is interesting, and also we're very busy people. I'm not going to touch on the ... I'm not going to be your dad. I'm not going to tell you don't look at your cell phone before you go to bed, because the blue light is going to ... Just try to get to bed earlier. It's that simple. 15 minutes a night, and just start. You'd be surprised that you can go to bed at 10:00 and wake up at 6. It's hard, I know, particularly, listen, when you're a parent. Dave, you have three kids now?

Dave Asprey: Two, yeah.

John: Two kids, okay. They go to bed at probably 7:00, 8:00.

Dave Asprey: Sometimes, yeah.

John: Ideally, right? My kid is 10. My son is 10 years old, and he goes to bed at 9:30. If I'm going

to go to bed at 10, that leaves me a half hour of alone time with my wife. That is obviously a challenge, in terms of fostering our intimacy and really spending quality time building our relationship. I understand that there are all of these factors, in terms of things that prevent you from getting eight or nine hours of sleep, but it really comes down to what else can I cut out? A lot of times it's as simple as maybe we're not going to watch that hour of TV that we love at night until the weekend. Instead we're just going to go in bed and read together, and talk, or have sex, or whatever it is. You'd be surprised, if you and your wife go to bed a half hour earlier, how the frequency of sex goes up.

Dave Asprey: It's amazing what laying in bed together does.

John: It's like, "While we're here, what else are we going to do?" We don't have a TV in the bedroom, so I guess. Yeah, so there's all sorts of things around sleep that I think it's this really interesting thing. I work with a couple of mattress companies, and I've been very fortunate to ... A company called IntelliBED recently sent us this unbelievable mattress. It's really great. What stuck out to me is that I am a health professional, and I have never spent more than \$2,000 on a mattress. Even that seemed like a lot. I know guys who they're saving money so that they can buy that Tesla, which is a great car and an amazing thing to have, but I think that the ... This comes from Tesla directly. I think Elon put out that the average automotive owner uses their car less than 10% of the time, less than 5% for most people. You own this \$150,000 car that you use 5% of its life time, and then you spend a third of your life in bed, and you're going to skimp on your mattress.

It's this interesting thing. Invest in your sleep, your time, your energy, your money. Make sure that you get quality sleep. It's been this massive thing that has been hugely helpful to me, because if I can get really great sleep and my clients can get really great sleep consistently, then those high stress periods where you are working on a launch, or a new book, or a product, or you have a new baby, you can absorb those a little bit more easily.

Dave Asprey: Yeah. Have you looked at chronotypes? Michael Breus was just on the show, who is a sleep doctor for Doctor Oz, and just wrote a book talking about how 15% of the population is night owls, and they actually do better going to bed after 11. There's a number of people, I think 55% of them go to bed with the sun basically. Then there's the early riser crowd. I was interested in that, because it seems like testosterone production, which is circadian, it goes on a daily basis, it may shift, depending on what your type is.

John: Yeah, it's interesting to talk about. I became very interested in that, because I have always classified myself as a night owl, in terms of not only when I feel best, but also when I'm most productive. When I was living in New York City, I found that my best hours for writing were from around 11pm until 4am.

Dave Asprey: That's what I did last night, exactly that.

John: Yeah, and the great thing was at that time I was a New York City bachelor, and I could go to sleep at 4 or 5am, and I could wake up at noon and it was fine. Now obviously having a child who has a school schedule, he has to be there at 7:30 no matter what. That's just how

it goes. I have adapted to a more traditional life of going to bed when the sun is gone. I think that you can adapt. I think that there are certain ... Like everything, you have proclivities and things that maybe you gravitate towards, but you can adapt. It took about a year and a half, maybe two years for me to be able to have the same level of production from noon to 5pm as I used to from 11 to 4. I can do it now, and it's fine. It just took a while to adapt.

Dave Asprey: That's impressive. For about 2 years I taught myself to wake up at 5am every morning, and wake up and meditate and all that. I finally realized at the end of it that I had adapted, but that it was just not natural. It's not working for me.

John: Now is it? When do you wake up?

Dave Asprey: I actually go to bed at 2, and I wake up when I get ... During the summer I wake up at 8:50 so I can start calls at 9. My average amount of time in bed is 6 hours and 1 minute for the last 3 years. I didn't used to require that much sleep, and I'll wake up without an alarm clock that way. It's not an insomnia thing. It's like I'm good to go. That shifted by about 2 hours as I improved my mitochondrial function as I basically got rid of stuff that wasn't working biologically for me. I've seen some data, and it's really interesting, because my testosterone was absolutely in the shit, but I wasn't following any of that advice.

There's a study of 1.2 million people that found the ones who lived the longest were sleeping 6 and a half hours a night, that people who slept 8 hours, they were dying more of all causes of mortality, including diseases and all that than people who slept 6 hours. It was really weird. That's not to say that this is prescriptive. I think it's just that people who are abnormally high performing biologically, they just require less maintenance at night, because things are working.

John: Yeah, I agree. I can do 8 hours if everything is dark and I have a mask on and I take some supplements to facilitate that, but in general, yeah, no, I'm a 4, 5, 6 hour guy.

Dave Asprey: You are, too?

John: I'm fine. I function. Here's an interesting thing. I don't know that I've ever admitted this on a podcast. When I was a kid I was a bed-wetter, which is a horrible thing to-

Dave Asprey: Weren't we all?

John: Until I was 10.

Dave Asprey: Oh wow. Okay.

John: It was late. I was a bed-wetter. I had some issue where I could not, when I was sleeping, realize that I had to go to the bathroom. I went on what was then an experimental drug that eventually got approved by the FDA called DDAVP. This was a drug. It was a nasal drug that you take. After 2 weeks it stopped. I was able to wake up and go to the bathroom.

However, I have not slept through the night since then, because my bladder is so sensitive that the moment I need to use the bathroom, I wake up and I go to the bathroom. I probably get up to pee 4 times a night, 3 times a night, because I drink a lot of water.

The interesting way that this has affected me is that I slip in and out of sleep like nothing you've ever seen. I wake up. I go to the bathroom. I hit the mattress, and I am out immediately. I've done sleep studies where how quickly it takes me to get into REM sleep, it's phenomenally quick. That is really interesting, because it also allows me to be very, very high performing and high functioning when I'm awake, but if I want to take a nap, I can close my eyes and fall asleep pretty much instantly and wake up without any ... I always wake up with the same amount of energy. I can get 3 hours of sleep or 8 hours of sleep, and I wake up. I'm always in the same mood. I'm always ready to go, happy. I'm very confident that this will be pushed to the limit when my wife and I, should we have biological children of our own, where now I've got this baby that's up at all hours. I came in as a stepfather, and he was 5. I missed all of that.

Dave Asprey: John, from that perspective, I did an experiment with sleep where I'm like, "I'm going to get 5 hours or less every night to actually trigger obesity." I could eat stupid amounts of calories. I was just going to do it for a month or 2, and 4,500 calories a day on average, just to sort of prove I didn't gain as much weight as I should have from eating all this fat, and just because I'm curious. I felt amazing, but what I haven't really told people is that experiment started the day after my second son, because I'm not going to sleep more than 5 hours a night anyway.

John: No matter what, yeah.

Dave Asprey: It's a great time for a study, 2 birds with 1 stone. You're absolutely right. Your sleep will be wrecked for the first 9 months, no matter what you do..

John: Yeah, and I think I'm probably better equipped to deal with it than most, but no matter what, it's going to be hard.

Dave Asprey: Yeah, you are.

John: In terms of the testosterone stuff-

Dave Asprey: Yeah, let's go back to that.

John: I was always very, very naturally high. I got my testosterone tested for the first time when I was 22 or 23 years old, because I was a data driven guy. I was really into Charles Poliquin at the time. He talked about that.

Dave Asprey: Yeah, smart guy.

John: I got tested, and I was close to 1,100, like 1,070, so very, very naturally high testosterone levels. Then I was 23, and I was building a business. Things were going well, and then I hit a

wall. I was 25 years old, and I was in this relationship with this woman, and she approached me and she's like, "Hey, do you know we haven't had sex in like 2 months?" "That's weird." I had gained all this weight, and things were just not going well for me at 25. Eventually that relationship ended as things do if you don't have sex with someone for 3 months. They'll leave. I've detailed it elsewhere, but I got my testosterone levels checked, and I was at 540, which is still reasonably high.

Dave Asprey: Yeah, but not for that age.

John: Not for that age, and not for some ... My testosterone levels were roughly half of what they had been.

Dave Asprey: Yeah, around 1,000 in your mid 20s is a reasonable number, from memory, or maybe 950 I think is-

John: Yeah, for high testosterone guys, around 1,000. Most guys could be at 7 or 8 and be fine. I was experiencing all of these ill effects from being in the ... Depending on when I got tested, it was the high 400s, low 500s. The range for testosterone, for anyone who doesn't know, is about 230 nanograms per deciliter to 1,150 nanograms per deciliter, depending on the lab you go to. Being in the 500s, I was still high enough that I was in the normal range and could not get any medical treatment. I had to figure this out myself. At the time, listen, I was 25 years old, and I was being an idiot. It was when I first started social ... I didn't drink alcohol until I was 25. I didn't have that high school and college experience. Now I'm 25, I'm drinking on the weekends.

Dave Asprey: Yeah, beer estrogen, huh?

John: I never drank beer.

Dave Asprey: Okay, smart.

John: I never acquired the taste. I dove right into whiskey, because-

Dave Asprey: Better choice

John: Yeah, something about the way brown liquor looks in a glass, it looked really cool to me, so I dove in. I was drinking on the weekends. I was not getting a lot of sleep, because I was building my business. I was running around chasing girls after that relationship ended, but honestly I just wasn't taking care of myself. I was training probably 10 hours a day, training clients, and wasn't making time for my workouts. My diet went to crap because I just kept eating less and less, because I noticed I was getting fatter. I was trying to maintain low body fat. Eventually I got my testosterone levels checked, and it was in the 500s.

Now I reversed course. I started sleeping more, start trying to stress out less, eat a lot more fat, made sure that my carbohydrate intake was where it needed to be. I wasn't overindulging on carbs. It was whatever I needed to recover from workouts, but the sleep

made the biggest impact. Inside of 6 weeks my testosterone was back in the 900s. Then 6 weeks after that it was back over 1,000. This became this very interesting thing to me where I realized lifestyle really does affect this. Alcohol is probably not something that most people are willing to cut out, but lowering it, pretty significant impact there.

I noticed that as I was on this increase, the estrogen did go up, but I had no ill effects. Then after my testosterone remained elevated for about 6 months, the estrogen levels dropped naturally. I think there was just some biological feedback where it's just like, "All right, testosterone goes up, estrogen needs to go up." My testosterone has stayed very, very high since that point. However, I'm 34 now. I get my testosterone checked every 1 to 2 years. When I was 28 it was at around 1,100. Then when I was 30 it was 900. Then when I was 31 it was 850. Then I recently got it tested at 33, and it was 690-ish. That's still high, but I notice the downward trend, and I know that I'm doing everything right, in terms of lifestyle. There was nothing else that I could do, so I made an educated decision to get on some low-dose testosterone replacement therapy.

Dave Asprey: High 5, by the way. Thank you for just putting it out there.

John: Sure.

Dave Asprey: I went on it when I was 26. I went off it for several years and measured my levels, went back on when necessary. How did it feel when you went on there? What did you notice?

John: This is, I guess, it was right before my 34th birthday, which was in April. I want to say this is probably 2nd week of March of this year. It is now July, so it's been close to 6 months. What I noticed immediately was how much better I felt, just overall feeling of well being. Again, by the way, very low does, 200 milligrams a week it's enough to keep me back up where I was in my late 20s, but I'm-

Dave Asprey: Are you injecting or cream?

John: Yeah, I'm injecting. Yeah, but I'm not in super physiological ranges. The first thing overall quality of life, recovering from workouts more quickly, generally feeling a lot more happier. I sleep better. Sex drive is a littler higher. I did not notice anything in terms of physique or body composition until I went on a family vacation. We took Isaac to Italy for his 10th birthday. I was gone for I guess 11 days. I have a prescription, so I was able to take my stuff with me. What I noticed is that I was eating gelato and pizza and being in Italy for an extended period of time, and not really ... The only gym that we could find was at a train station in Rome. I think I got to work out 3 times in 10 days.

What I noticed is that I made the decision to under eat on calories, because I knew my food choices weren't going to be great. I normally was eating around 2,800 calories, so I dropped down to around 2,400. I was in Italy eating pizza and gelato and not training, and I lost body fat. I think that's because obviously when you're on higher levels of testosterone, you can under eat and not sacrifice lean body mass. For me, that was the first time I noticed anything, in terms of my physique. That was when I had been on for about 9 weeks.

Then since then, I decided to, "Let me get a little bit more dedicated with tracking my macros and training a little harder." My body composition has continued to improve, not drastically. I don't look like I'm about to step on stage, but I'm leaner than I would be without it. Overall, honestly, David, for whatever reason, I had this thing in my head where I was going to wait as long as possible to go on TRT. Having now been on for several months, I'm just like, "Man, why did I wait so long." I think that it's freeing.

Dave Asprey: It's life. It's life-changing. It's like your zest for life comes back. Even if you didn't really not have a zest for life, it's just better. I know Mark Sisson, who's been on the show a couple times, he's older than I, though. He's in his early 60s. I'm 43. You're basically 10 years younger than I am. I think you did the wisest thing you could do, and I would encourage everyone who is listening, men and women, get your hormone levels tested, even if you're 25.

John: That's the key. Yeah.

Dave Asprey: Even if you're 30. Know your numbers, what's natural for you.

John: Right, exactly. That's the most important thing. Tell all guys, "Get your levels checked," and women, too, because here's the thing. Even if you're not experiencing any ill effects right now, and that may continue, and hopefully it will for you, the important thing is that getting tested, it establishes that baseline. For me, had I not gotten tested when I was 22, 23 on a whim, then when I was 25, if I had gotten tested and I was in the 500s, I would have been like, "I'm fine. This is not the issue." Having had that baseline from three years prior allowed me to see that normally I'm at 1,000, and now I'm at 500. My testosterone had dropped 50%. There was no way that couldn't have deleterious effects.

For me, I think that there's this really interesting conversation that goes on where everything around testosterone is like steroids. Then TRT is generally a little bit more positive. There's this middle ground where there's no good information. I'm really trying to help fill that void. I think everyone will come to the point where they get to make that decision. If you have the knowledge and the supervision of a doctor and the means and the will to do it, listen, I'm not going to tell you injecting 4 times a week isn't a pain in the ass, a literal pain in the ass of where you're injecting, but the trade-off is fine. I feel great.

I have an apartment in New York, and our house here in California. I have a supply in both places so that no matter where I am, I can keep my levels steady. It's made me really, really interested in experimenting with other things. I talked to my doctor, and I'm like, "I've got this nagging lower back injury." I'm like, "All right, maybe if I did a 3 month course of growth hormone while I was going through aggressive treatment, like muscle activation therapy and active release therapy, maybe that would really help fix the issue."

Dave Asprey: It's absolutely worth trying. I did growth hormone when I hit my head as a way of working with TBI. There's good data for it, and it's not an admission of weakness. It's just controlling your biology. There's this weird puritanical thing like, "Someone in the '70s used a

derivative of testosterone had liver problems. Now if you use it to stay young, you're somehow cheating." I'm like, "Okay, I'm cheating. Whatever. I just want to feel lie this all the time."

John: Yeah, if you're not competing it's not cheating. For me, I'm fine with it. For me, one of the interesting things about having build the muscularity that I have, and having the types of pictures of me that are on the internet is that for the entirety of my career, I've been accused of using steroids. I was always very vocal. I was like, "Listen, I don't think anything is wrong with steroids. I have plenty of friends who use them. I'm not currently, but, and this is the most important thing, if I ever decide to start injecting shit into my body, I will tell you."

Dave Asprey: There you go.

John: I put it out there, and it's really interesting. The response has been universally positive. Not one person has pushed back.

Dave Asprey: Good.

John: It's crazy I thought I was going to get all sorts of hate, but everyone just has ... I came at it from a very objective, scientific, and very honest perspective. Here's why I did it, because I noticed a downward trend. I didn't want that. I'm good. Now instead of people hating, I just get all these great questions about it. The interesting thing is that when you come out about using at 34, any question about using when you were 24 sort of goes away. I thought that there might be something about it potentially damaging legacy, but it's been universally great.

Dave Asprey: What about ball shrinkage? After 5 years of testosterone, I went off of clomid and arimidex because I didn't appear to need them anymore, which my physician had me on. I wasn't cycling, even though I probably should have been. Eventually I noticed that the guys were a little smaller than they should have been. What are you doing to protect yourself from that?

John: I'm on low does clomid. I think I'm on 50 milligrams every other day.

Dave Asprey: Smart.

John: I have not noticed any testicular shrinkage yet. I think it's more of a long term thing, but again, a lot of it is dose dependent. I was talking to a friend of mine who works with a lot of body builders and professional athletes. He says, "Everyone has different genetic responses to everything. There are some people like myself who are genetically predisposed to putting on a lot of muscle," but he's like, "What people don't realize is that the same things happens with steroids, with testosterone replacement. There are people who respond like crazy to 200 milligrams. Then there are people who can be on 3 times that dosage and not have the same results. Everything effects everyone a little bit differently.

I feel like I am getting a lot out of the dose without any ill effects. Yeah, I'm very curious to see how it goes, but obviously the main thing is even at this dose, once you cross the 8 to 12 week threshold, sperm production drops dramatically. Should my wife and I decide that we do want to have another child, I will need to come off for 3, 4, 5 months and allow sperm production to come back up.

Dave Asprey: You could probably turn up your clomid and have no problem with that.

John: Yeah, you know what? I've thought about that, except I've just spoken to a lot of guys who say they just get a lot of emotional damage from clomid where they just find they're very weepy. Right now I'm good. I'm not interested in adding another emotional hiccup to the mix.

Dave Asprey: I hear you there. All right. Next question. I know you've got another call after this.

John: Yeah. No, no, it's good. I got a couple more minutes.

Dave Asprey: You got a couple more minutes? All right, cool. Next question is the question I've asked everyone who's been on the show, and it's if someone came up to you right now and said, "Look, given everything that you've learned in your life, what 3 pieces of advice would you have for me if I want to kick more ass at everything I do? I just want to perform better as a human being. What matters most?"

John: Environmental exposure is the number one thing. Just surround yourself with awesome people who are doing awesome things. If you want to get stronger, hang out with strong people. If you want to make more money, hang out with people who are making more money than you. Yeah, and that goes for everything. I think environment and community are everything. That would be the number 1. Number 2 is data. Track as much as you can as often as you can without it becoming inhibitive to your enjoyment of life. For me, that means journaling. I'm a writer first before I'm anything else. For me it means journaling and taking stock of the day, and really trying to see if I've grown as a person year over year. For a lot of people it's like tracking the quantifiable data, like testosterone levels and whatever else. I think keeping a record of your life is important. Who knows? Maybe your biographer will need those notes one day.

Then the third thing, I think you need to know what your guiding pillars are, and the things that guide your decision making processes. I think it's worth writing those down and also vocalizing them. I think that so many times we get caught up and we don't know how to make the right decision, or we don't know how to make the decision that's right for us. I think that for me, if all other things are equal, just do the right thing.

I think that I don't like to talk in absolutes. There's not always a right thing and a wrong thing. Everything is shades of grey, but usually there's one that's less douche. There's a decision that's just like it's going to ... Usually it's the harder decision, but if you can't figure out how to make the decision, then just choose the option that is going to allow you to ... If people told the story about you, you'd feel the best about it. Do the right thing. Always be

above board. Always go out of your way for other people. Exhaust every possible avenue before cutting ties. Just leave it all on the field.

For me, it's very important, before I end any relationship, whether it's business or otherwise, that I'm able to walk away, and knowing that no one can say I didn't try. I think that in business, and I've always gone out of my way to try everything before I shut something down, because I like to know that I tried everything. I like to know that when the story of my life is told, the thing that will be said about me is he always tried to do the right thing. That, for me, is huge.

Dave Asprey: That shows a lot of integrity. I can tell you out of more than 300 episodes, you're the first guest to ever say, "Choose the least doucheb option."

John: Thank you. There you go.

Dave Asprey: Great tweet right there.

John: Put a little feather in the cap there.

Dave Asprey: Truly funny. Let's see. We already mentioned "Engineering the Alpha", which is one of the books that I absolutely endorse. You're working on a new book about the hero's journey and kind of superheroes. Certainly there's a superhero vibe with what I do. Do you have time to talk about that?

John: Sure, sure. For those who are not familiar with the work of Joseph Campbell, I highly suggest that you read a couple of his books. The most well known of which is his seminal work, "The Hero with a Thousand Faces," which is the introduction to his thesis of the monomyth, or the hero's journey, which is a storytelling cycle that is apparent in all great stories, whether it's the Messianic myth of Jesus or Krishna or Buddha, or the more recent tales of Luke Skywalker, Harry Potter, King Arthur, any. They all follow this same 17 stage cycle. I became introduced to Campbell in college, and it's been very, very helpful to me, in terms of writing, but I believe that the hero's journey is portable and applicable to any great change we go through in our lives.

My next book basically takes the hero's journey and applies it to life, both in terms of personal development as sort of a thesis for self-directed growth, but also as a tool set for problem solving. I think if you look at the hero's journey and you're experiencing something difficult right now, for some people it's building a business, for some people it's going through bankruptcy or divorce. For some people it's becoming a father, or mother, or anything, or jumping into this health transformation. One day your doctor gives you this wake-up call, and they say, "You need to make this change or you're going to die." That is what Campbell calls the call to adventure, or the inciting event.

Now at first you're resistant to that, because you're like, "It's too hard." That's refusal of the call. That's stage 2. Then eventually somebody comes along who makes you believe you can do that. Maybe you listen to Bulletproof Radio. Maybe you pick up "Engineering the

Alpha". Maybe you find one of our websites. Maybe it's Doctor Oz. Maybe it's Tim Ferriss or whomever. There's this character that appears in every great story. Whether it's Obi-Wan or Mr. Miyagi, or Morpheus in the Matrix, there's this mentor figure. That is the person that you learn from as you begin to go through this journey

Then it just goes on from there, crossing the first threshold to the ordeal, all the way to the master of two worlds and return with the elixir. I think that every major endeavor in your life and many of the smaller ones, again, marriage, divorce, writing a book, starting a business, they all follow this step-by-step plan of the hero's journey. I highly recommend that everyone read "The Hero with a Thousand Faces", but I will mention it is a little dry. It's very cumbersome, in that Campbell makes most of his points through analogy and comparison. In order to really get that, it's better to have a strong basis in mythology, which most of us don't.

For the time being, the book that I would recommend is one called "The Writer's Journey" by Christopher Vogler. This is a great introduction to Campbell. Vogler makes these same points using comparison and analogy, but rather than using these myths that you've never heard of, he uses movies and TV shows that you have heard of, and books that you're more likely to have heard of, everything from "The Lion King" to "Beverly Hills Cop" to "Romancing the Stone" to "Zoolander" and things that are just a little bit more pop culture oriented and more part of the zeitgeist to which you are probably accustomed. You don't have to go and try and figure out which version of "The Red Knight" to read and which one has all the shit that's been expurgated. Vogler's work is really, really fantastic.

Then my goal for my book is twofold. First, I think it will help a lot of people, but my big, hairy, audacious goal as we say in the marketing world is I would like my book on The Hero's Journey to be the book that Campbell scholars and Campbell devotees recommend to people who have never read Campbell in much the same way that I say, "Hey, you should read Vogler before you read Campbell. It will help," my goal is 5 years from now, people who love Campbell will be like, "Oh you should read Romaniello, that will be a good entry point to Campbell. Then you can read Campbell." It's really a big goal.

Dave Asprey: What an awesome goal, though, and very clearly delineated. I love that.

John: Thank you.

Dave Asprey: Also, John, I appreciate just having had a chance to ride on a bus with you at Master My Talks with Jason Ganard. Just to sit in and chat, you think about a lot of stuff, and you're totally willing to go there on the personal development front. There's always been a perspective that that's not masculine to do it. You're definitely a masculine guy, and you're totally like, "No, I'm going to own this. I'm just going to look at it, and it's just part of the whole equation." Tim Ferriss is similar. There's just a lot of people. Maybe it's because I'm old at 43. My generation, we didn't do it that way. The shift is really cool, because if you get your testosterone up and you're feeling really good and you're still anxious and unhappy and you haven't done that level work, you're still going to act like jerk all the time, right?

- John: Yeah. I think that I feel very fortunate to be part of the generation to which I belong, in that I think there's a lot of negative talk around millennials. I'm right on the cusp of pre-millennial, but I will say this for millennials. They're generally working really hard to establish equality. I think that it's really interesting. I was raised by women, and so I have a really strong feminist bent. I have been very, very fortunate in my male friendships that I have never been made to feel weird for feeling very, very strongly or projecting very vocally in terms of women's rights or rights for the LGBT community. This is stuff that I feel very passionate about. I'm aware that as a white male, I don't really have a lot of problems. I've never had an issue getting pulled over. I really am very dedicated to using the platform that I built to helping people.
- To that end, I'm running an event in Austin, Texas September 16th to 18th with a friend of mine named David Dellanave called Man Camp. We are going to have more traditional ... We're going to eat steak and shoot guns and talk about sex, but it's also we're going to have deep, deep conversations about what it means to be a man in sort of the modern world, in the current environment, and how we can be masculine, while at the same time promoting feminism. I'm really excited about it. I think that there's deep conversations worth having.
- Dave Asprey: Are you sold out on that event? Do you want to drop a URL for people?
- John: Yeah, honestly it's austinmancamp.com. I think we have 6 spots left, but yeah, if anyone is interested in coming, we'd love to have you. It's going to be great.
- Dave Asprey: That is right before the Bulletproof Conference September 23rd.
- John: Is that also in Austin?
- Dave Asprey: No, that's in Pasadena.
- John: Oh, okay. That's right. I knew that
- Dave Asprey: I was just thinking, I don't know if it will be helpful, you may have sold those spots out already, but I'm willing to knock 50% off the Bulletproof Conference rate for anyone who goes to Man Camp.
- John: I am willing to knock 50% off for Man Camp for anyone who is coming in through Bulletproof, just let us know when you're at the URL, and we will give you 50% off. If you go to both, it's like going to 2 events for the price of 1. I'd be happy to do it.
- Dave Asprey: Beautiful, awesome.
- John: We have 7 spots left. David, I know that you're going to be busy planning your event, but if you can make it to Austin, we'd love to have you.
- Dave Asprey: I would absolutely love to be there. Maybe next year. This year I don't think I'm going to



make it, but I appreciate the invitation. It would be great fun.

John: Awesome. Thank you for your time, man. I really appreciate you having me on and letting me just chat with you. Means a lot.

Dave Asprey: Great fun. See you soon.

John: Bye-bye.

Dave Asprey: Thanks for watching. Get tons more original info to make it easier to kick more ass at life when you sign up with the free newsletter at bulletproofexec.com. Stay Bulletproof.