

Speaker 1: Bulletproof Radio. The state of high performance.

Dave Asprey: You're listening to Bulletproof Radio with Dave Asprey.

Today's cool fact of the day is that there's a direct relationship between the bacteria in your gut and the myelin, this is the insulation on the nerves in the front of your brain called the prefrontal cortex. The more insulated the nerves are the better they work, and it appears that some gut bacteria actually inhibit neuron function and basically, they can make you stupid.

Today's guest is none other than James Altucher. James is a successful entrepreneur, an angel investor, chess master, prolific writer, he's started and run only like 20 companies, which jeez, only 20. Of those, 17 have failed and 3 have made him tens of millions of dollars, so he's a global playboy ... Oh, okay maybe not, but-

James Altucher: No, I stay home.

Dave Asprey: Yeah, exactly. Well, one of really interesting guys' that I know, and his writing's been all over the place, like Wall Street Journal, New York Observer, Tech Crunch, Financial Times, Yahoo Finance, and he runs the well known podcast, "The James Altucher Show", and if you haven't heard the show, you owe it to yourself to check that out. It's a good show.

James Altucher: Particularly the three episode that a young man named Dave Asprey has been on.

Dave Asprey: Yeah, those were my favorite episodes, I have to say.

James Altucher: Yes.

Dave Asprey: It's ... You should also read his blog, James Altucher dot com, which has had about 20 million readers. You're the author of 18 books, including the Wall Street Journal's best sellers, "The Power of No", "Choose Yourself", and "Reinvent Yourself".

James, welcome, and this is not your first time on Bulletproof Radio.

James Altucher: Well, Dave, thanks for having me on the show. I'm so excited. I'm a big fan, obviously.

Dave Asprey: Well, and likewise. I appreciate what you've done and what you're doing; just the way you think about stuff. You're very purposeful in what you do, and today, I want to interview about something that is intriguing to me. We'll call it the "Anti-minimalism Podcast".

James Altucher: Okay.

Dave Asprey: I just did an interview with The Minimalist Guys, and it went really, really well. It's fascinating.

James Altucher: Good guys, and I like them. I'm not ... When I say anti, it's not a judgment, right.

Dave Asprey: Yeah, not at all.

James Altucher: Everybody has their own philosophy of life that makes them happy, and I think rather than subscribe to any one other person's philosophy, you should sort of choose the one that fits you.

Dave Asprey: Okay. What you did over the last year is a little bit nutty, I would just say, where you got rid of most of your belongings and you started living out of Airbnb's.

James Altucher: Right, so a little over a year ago I threw out, not some or most, I threw out all of my belongings, maybe I left myself with ... What I did was, I was away and I had a lease coming up on two different apartments that I was renting, one in the city, one in the town by my kids, and while I was away I had a friend of mine I paid to go to both places and either sell, keep, donate, or throw out 100% of the items.

I don't want to ever go to those apartments again. I don't want to deal with the almost fatigue of trying to figure out, once again, how to manage all of these objects and possessions, and most people don't realize ... Most people don't realize how many object they have.

Dave Asprey: It's crazy.

James Altucher: Like, if you take all of your object and kind of put them in garbage bags, and I know this 'cause I've seen the photos now of my own objects, it's like a hundred garbage bags worth of stuff. I wasn't really living a Maximalist life before, but you just accumulate over years and decades all of this stuff.

So, I got rid of everything, and I didn't want to deal with renting again because renting also is kind of extra work I don't want to do.

Dave Asprey: It's high friction.

James Altucher: It's high friction. It's all these credit checks and references and last time I rented I had to do five references. I had to call people and ask them to write letters, five people, and then I had my lawyer write a letter, then my accountant write a letter. Then because I've never been in debt in my life, I've never had a credit card, my credit score was wacky so I had to meet every single person in the building and explain why I didn't live life the normal American and accumulate all this debt that I would then pay off for years for-

Dave Asprey: Here's the companies I've sold, you know, wave your bank account balance. Like, how do you even have that conversation? That's hilarious.

James Altucher: It was hilarious, and everything went fine, but I just ... And then of course because of that I still had to put down two months security deposit, first month's and last month's rent, and then you have the normal thing where when you rent a place you have to buy all sorts of furniture and maintenance and all this ... So, I figured, "You know what, I'm just gonna do Airbnb's." So I could experience other lifestyles whenever I want or I could stay in places for longer if I want, and I can vary it up a little and see how other people live and not worry about all of the maybe hundreds mini decisions that used to kind of follow me around from place to place.

I've been doing this now almost a year. A year almost to the day.

Dave Asprey: I've written a lot in Headstrong and the Bulletproof Diet about decision fatigue, and just how making dumb decisions takes your life. I religiously avoid as many of those decisions as I can. Like, I don't know what day of the week it is. I don't know where I'm going next, it's all on my phone. Like, anytime I can outsource that, but I got to say running a house is a pain in the ass, whether is rented or even purchased, which is another huge amount of friction.

You adjusted your life to just reduce friction rather than to be minimalist.

James Altucher: Right. In many of your books, you talk about your story and how you were sensitive to these mycotoxins. These small toxic materials in the environment. I will say I wanted to avoid kind of almost the decision equivalent of mycotoxins because-

Dave Asprey: They float around everywhere and each one makes you a little bit weak, right.

James Altucher: Right, like of course there's big decisions like, "Who should I be in a relationships with? Where should I live?" And all that stuff, but then there's just thousands of mini decisions where, "My wife is down, who do I call to fix it?" Or little things like, "I gotta buy a chair for this." Or "I've gotta maintain this." There's all these little decisions you have in maintaining possessions and maintaining a house and I wanted to avoid all of them.

What I wanted to do was make a larger percentage of the day ... Every day let's say we make ten thousand choices, big and small, so I wanted to make a bigger percentage of my choices about what I really want to do as opposed to things that I have to do or choices that I have to make. You can't be 100%, but you can get fairly close or you can get higher and higher.

For instance, this podcast is something I wanted to do. I choose to do it. I wake up in the morning, I didn't have to buy the bed, I didn't have to buy a place with my view, I picked an Airbnb and picked the ideal place, there for two weeks, and

this is where I'll be. It's an easy decision. I can change views later. Change furniture later.

Dave Asprey: What about packing up all your crap?

James Altucher: I have three outfits in one bag, and I have another bag with a computer and a tablet and a phone, and I have right in front of me your book *Headstrong*, and I have a pen and a waiter's pad.

Dave Asprey: Wow. What do you do with my book when you're done reading it?

James Altucher: Oh, I'll give it away.

Dave Asprey: Cool.

James Altucher: Because I read a lot of books for my podcast and I have to give them away, unless I get them on my Kindle, but I have to give away-

Dave Asprey: The physical copy, right?

James Altucher: Yeah. By the way, I love physical copies of books. This is not about being 100% happy. People kind of think, "Oh, I need a philosophy that's gonna make me 100% happy." I love physical books, but I-

Dave Asprey: It's not worth it.

James Altucher: I'm making a philosophy that I'm just gonna have my books on my Kindle so that I can minimize the things I carry around. I miss things. I'm sentimental for some of the things I've thrown out, but it's not about being perfectly happy all the time. It's about, today, making as many choices as possible that I want to make.

Dave Asprey: I absolutely love what you're saying. In my travels, especially with *Bulletproof*, I've had a chance to meet some fantastically wealthy people with tens to hundreds to even billions of dollars, and to help them with their cognitive performance by hiking stuff, and one thing that a lot of them have is nice houses, but they also have like a household manager. This is someone who makes between 40 and probably 100 thousand dollars a year whose job it is to do, probably more in New York or something, but their job is to run the house. So, "I don't know where groceries come from. The grocery fairy bring them. The smoke detector has a problem? I don't know, the smoke detector fairy does it." This is the fairy conjurer person.

James Altucher: Yeah, so the first time I sold a company ... Sorry to interrupt, but it just reminds me ... The first time I sold a company, this is 1998-

Dave Asprey: This was *Reset*, right?

James Altucher: Yeah, yeah, and then all of a sudden I bought a house and I bought a really nice place, and suddenly the next thing I realize I was never alone in the house, there was always people there. I wouldn't even know who they were. There was always people around doing things, and that's a stress also, like, I don't need to deal with any of that right now. I really wanted to avoid it.

Another thing I wanted to mention is the groceries. So, I never shopped for groceries. I'm gonna call it the Airbnb diet, maybe you'll appreciate this, but I have no food in the house, and the reason is I ... You can't order delivery from a restaurant and say, "Okay, I'll have a bag of Doritos for dessert." Like, there's no restaurant menu will have a bag of Doritos on the dessert menu, so the worst I can do is a slice of cake; is the worst thing in my diet.

In general, I won't order the desserts then 'cause I know ... I won't be exposed to anything that I know I won't have the will power to avoid, particularly at night. I'll just order what I think is healthy so I'm not exposed to the things that are not necessarily healthy. In the past year I've probably lost between 50 and 20 pounds just from doing this.

Dave Asprey: Nice. Even though you're eating out all the time?

James Altucher: Even though I'm ordering delivery all the time. I don't really like to leave ... Once I'm in these beautiful apartments that I'm Airbnb-ing, I don't like to leave them too much.

Dave Asprey: Okay. You're a bit of an introvert.

James Altucher: Bit of an introvert.

Dave Asprey: All right. Now, I was gonna say why didn't you consider a household manager. Did you have one when you made all your money? I know you lost it, but that's part of what we have in common. I made six million and lost it. You made like ten of fifteen and lost it.

James Altucher: Yeah, yeah. I had ... You know, I had everything under the sun. It's just crazy. It's crazy what you can do with money, and then you do it. Now, the other thing is that I have a discipline in the sense that, "Oh, okay. I thought ..." The other day I thought about getting a new kind of camera so I could do Facebook live easier, but then it was like, "Okay, it's not in my discipline to have an extra device." So, I don't buy it. It's an easy decision. All the time I want new things, but it's an easy decision. I don't buy anything new.

Dave Asprey: Wow, just don't buy anything new. It's pretty different from what I do. I'll run an organic farm. I just say it more accurately-

James Altucher: You're a farmer.

Dave Asprey: More accurately, I live on an organic farm that provides all of my food, and I fund the organic farm. I'll pull weeds on weekends with the kids, but for the most part we have gardeners and my wife is kind enough to organize all that stuff. She does some of the management and I have another guy that helps me out, and like, between running a company where you have assistants all the time and running a complex, a farm, it basically is another business ... Yeah, there's always people around and things like that.

Then, because I'm a professional buy-backer, I have a giant laboratory full of huge things. There is a cognitive burden just having all this crap that needs maintenance, even though it's useful crap. I like the idea of being able to just use what you want when you want to use it, even if it's someone else's and they manage it. This [inaudible 00:12:46] like health clubs. You can buy a universal machine at home, it's a clothes hanging rack, or you could just go to the gym the once a month you're actually gonna go do it.

You're sort of doing this with everything in your life.

James Altucher: Right, so we sort of live in this ... Let's not call it the sharing economy, let's call it the access economy. What you just described with the universal health machine or universal fitness machine is that you don't want to own it, but you want to have access to it. That's why you get a gym membership to have access to what you need for health.

What I want to do is have access to anything I need to make a living, to live, to be productive, and so on, but I don't want to own anything. I kind of feel, in general, we're moving towards that as an economy where the need ... Unless you kind of have a fetish for luxury, which of course many people do, you don't really need to own as many things. You can just have access to them.

For instance, why would I spend let's call it 100 thousand dollars for a nice SUV when every day I can take a 10 dollar Uber when I need one. Why would I buy let's say New York City a two million dollar, one bedroom apartment, which is what they cost in New York, when for 300 bucks I could stay in one without putting down 200 thousand dollars and getting into massive debt.

All of these decisions become a lot easier. Like, scary financial decisions become easier, and then the smaller ones as well, like what we were saying about the groceries.

Dave Asprey: Do you think that what you're proposing is something that someone with a normal paycheck could even consider?

James Altucher: Yeah because I would say ... You know, the Airbnb's a little more expensive than renting, but A, Airbnb often ... Many apartments on Airbnb offer a significant monthly discount if you stay for a month, which translate to almost rent. Second, you're not buying furniture, you're not buying any kind of renter's

insurance, you're not paying extra electricity bills or air conditioning bills or whatever. Now, presumably that's baked into the price, but that's fine; it's baked into the price. So, I just don't have to think about all these things. It's like consolidate into one price on Airbnb. Usually, when someone's renting an Airbnb for a month or more, they're living someplace else and they just want to kind of break even on the Airbnb or make a little bit of money, which is fine. I'll pay for that, for them to make a little bit of money so I can avoid all these extra hassles.

Dave Asprey: You don't have to pay your bills, and that's actually worth a lot.

James Altucher: Yeah, like who wants to sit down once a month and write 10, 15, 20 checks out. For me, that's a stress. I have-

Dave Asprey: Oh, huge stress.

James Altucher: I have all this stress about money. I don't want to deal with it, so this is like ... Everything happens through ... And this doesn't have to be Airbnb, although that's what I use, but there's many different websites and ways to do this. Sometimes if a friend's going out of town for a month, I get a month free in their apartment. Nice or not nice; doesn't matter to me. I just need to ... I like to write as much as possible. I like to do my podcast. I run a business, but I work with somebody who manages the employees, and so I don't have to deal with the day to day business decisions. Unlike you, you're more involved day to day in your business, and so you have to be there, but I focus on the writing and the content part.

Dave Asprey: Yeah, I'm working on focusing more on podcast and writing and content because that's where I add some unique value, and just hiring really good operators to help scale stores.

James Altucher: If you hire really good operator, not only does your business become better, like, I'm not the best operator, I know this-

Dave Asprey: Yeah, neither am I.

James Altucher: It's better for me to hire a better operator, who is someone whose passionate about operating, and for me to focus on the things I love and I'm good at. Again, it's about what percentage of your day are you making choice that you like. Now, if you have ... I divide time with my kids with my ex-wife. If you have kids ... When my kids are with me, they travel around with me from Airbnb to Airbnb.

Dave Asprey: I was about to ask you that. How old are the kids?

James Altucher: 18 and 15.

Dave Asprey: Okay, so they're old enough they can totally chill, they can take an Uber by themselves and that works.

James Altucher: Right, and I think if they were babies I wouldn't be able to live this lifestyle. That's why I'm saying I'm not recommending this for anybody, and you know, there's two branches of minimalism. There's the minimalist you've spoken to who-

Dave Asprey: Yeah, good guys.

James Altucher: They have a documentary on Netflix. Good guys and they're ... They buy few things, they keep simple lives, and they're very good guys. Then there's the kind of Marie Kondo branch, which is like, "Oh, I'm gonna put every object on the ground, and then I'm gonna hold it to my heart and if I love it, I keep it." That's a lot of work. I can't do that.

Again, it's not about being, like, just having around all these objects that I love. Why is she so much in love with all these objects?

Dave Asprey: Have you had her on your show?

James Altucher: I haven't, no.

Dave Asprey: I want to interview her, and maybe she won't want to interview me or she won't want to do it 'cause I just have to say this, so I read her book and I found her book fascinating-

James Altucher: Yeah, it's a great book.

Dave Asprey: It's really well written, and she deserved to be on the New York Times list for like a gazillion years because the book is worth a read. Unfortunately, my wife Lana read the book and I have now renamed Marie Kondo to Marie Komodo, as in Komodo dragon because it caused my wonderful wife Lana to try and hide my coffee maker and all of my coffee paraphernalia under the counter, which is unacceptable as a human being to not be able to make coffee every morning. Pretty soon I'm like, "Our house is a beautiful, expansive living emptiness, and I can't find anything I do." So, the amount of time it takes me to do anything just quadrupled. I was wasting all my time making sure the house looked all empty, and it just made me want to bang my head on the wall.

James Altucher: Right. That's a stress.

Dave Asprey: It totally was.

James Altucher: I find some kind of minimalism to be stressful. I'm not criticizing them, it's just not me.

Dave Asprey: Yeah, it's what works for you. Right. I hear you.

James Altucher: I call it more choicism. I'm-

Dave Asprey: I love that name.

James Altucher: You know, make ... Eliminate as many difficult choices, even minor difficult choices, as possible, and just make it as easy as possible. Life is hard in general, like every day of life is hard and make it as easy as possible to make the choices to do the things you love to do. It's not always possible to do that, but you just want to increase your odds.

Dave Asprey: That is ... It's a very interesting way of looking at it and you're the first person I've come across whose taken it to this extreme, and I share your absolute aversion to making useless decisions. I find things like self-service to be irritating, like, "I'm sorry, you should have someone to handle that because that's your job; you're the company." Like, "Don't ask me mister credit card company to make me do extra work because you didn't want to pay your people to do it." Like, how bout this, "I'm not gonna do it."

James Altucher: Right ... Or I don't have voicemail, for instance, on my phone.

Dave Asprey: What's voicemail? It's like a fax, right?

James Altucher: But a lot of people do have voicemail on their phone and you call ... They would call and then I'd have some message, "Don't worry, I'll call you back soon." I'm not calling them back ever.

Dave Asprey: Yeah.

James Altucher: Now, nobody can leave message. I don't pick up the phone either.

Dave Asprey: Same here.

James Altucher: They can text me, but you're not necessarily obligate to return texts, but voicemail I feel like there was that obligation.

Dave Asprey: Wow, I went through this, maybe I was an early adopter of "the voicemail is evil" and when I was working in Silicon Valley I did this, I'm like, "I'm spending two hours a day checking, transcribing voicemail." Before they had transcription services, like, "This is horrible." So, first it was, "Please, just send me an e-mail. Really, like, here's my e-mail address. I probably won't check this very often." And now, where I live I'm in a relatively small town and Canada is a little bit technologically behind the U.S., to be perfectly honest, and I love Canada ... I'm grateful to be living there-

James Altucher: Are you from Canada originally?

Dave Asprey: No, I just ... I'm a permanent resident, I've been living there for eight years.

James Altucher: Okay.

Dave Asprey: And I live on an island in a small town, and it's lovely. Bald Eagles and I look out over Salisbury Island and grow my own food and I'm close to an airport, like, it's perfect for young kids. The problem is everyone wants to call you and leave you a voicemail, and finally, I had to turn ... They didn't know what to do when they didn't get a voicemail, so I turned it back on and was like, "Listen, there is no chance ever that I will listen to or return this voicemail. You must not leave a voicemail. You have to send a text message or I will never get this."

James Altucher: Yeah, it works.

Dave Asprey: That strong of language, and it works half the time. The rest of the time they're like, "I tried to leave you or I left you a voicemail." Like, "I don't know." You can never pay me enough, you will never get me to check my voicemail for the rest of my life because anything I do has higher value to me than checking voicemail.

James Altucher: Here's another thing related to that and people are, particularly given the recent election cycle, people are somewhat critical of this, but I never read the news. I don't read any newspapers, I don't go to CNN dot com-

Dave Asprey: That's worth a high five right there.

James Altucher: Because like what are you going to read today in the news that will make your life better? There's almost nothing. I'd rather read a book. We have your book "Headstrong" right in front of me, I'd rather spend ... You only have limited amount of time, so I'd rather read a book that ... This was two or three years or twenty years of your curated thoughts boiled down into 400 pages or 300 pages that I could read and learn from, as opposed to reading about, I don't know ... Whatever, Kim Kardashian and Kanye West might get a divorce, which I hope they don't, but you know ... I don't read, and you know, the same goes for the Twitter feed and the Facebook feed. I don't go down that at all.

Dave Asprey: It's an interesting one, there's a plug in for Facebook now that you can get on your browser that actually takes out the newsfeed-

James Altucher: Oh, interesting.

Dave Asprey: You can still use Facebook to communicate, but you don't ever see the feed, which is kind of cool. I'm not remember it's name right now, but if you Google for it you'll find it. It's like "Don't bother me" or something like that.

James Altucher: But I just don't hit home on the Facebook page.

Dave Asprey: Yeah.

James Altucher: I'll see my timeline and I'll see my messages on Facebook, but that's actually the main way people message with me right now is on Facebook.

Dave Asprey: Is on Facebook.

James Altucher: But I don't use ... I don't look at the newsfeed because, again, I'd rather read a book. I'm very ... We're both 49 years old, so there's only-

Dave Asprey: I'm only 44, I just look 49 ... I'm just kidding.

James Altucher: I figure-

Dave Asprey: We're about the same.

James Altucher: I've, give or take, 15 thousand days left to live.

Dave Asprey: Yeah.

James Altucher: A third of those-

Dave Asprey: We could give you more if you wanted.

James Altucher: I know you're trying to live to be 180, I don't even want to live to be 180. I'm fine with 90.

Dave Asprey: I hear ya.

James Altucher: 5000 ... A third of my life I'll be asleep, so I-

Dave Asprey: Live on less sleep, man. Come on.

James Altucher: I know, I gotta-

Dave Asprey: I'm just kidding.

James Altucher: You do 5 to 6 hours, I sleep 8 hours. Maybe I'll get down to-

Dave Asprey: I keep interrupting your point, I'm just giving you a hard time. Keep going.

James Altucher: No, maybe you're right. Maybe I'm gonna start taking the advice in "Headstrong" and I wouldn't mind sleeping 5 to 6 hours, but right now I need 8.

Dave Asprey: Yeah, I hear ya.

James Altucher: And you only have limited time. Do you read Donal Trump's Tweets or do you read a good book?

Dave Asprey: I've struggled. I'm glad we're talking about this, this is more of like a two way thing than I often times do in these interviews. I've struggle with that thing, I don't watch the news. It is toxic to your nervous system. You want to put yourself in fight or flight, have your mitochondria tweaking all the time, it's like a constant barrage of threats and bad things that happen to other people that make you think they could happen to you.

James Altucher: And by the way, they specifically do the news to trigger fight or flight.

Dave Asprey: Yeah.

James Altucher: Right, because it's really fight, flight, or freeze. They want you to freeze, just keep staring at the news.

Dave Asprey: Yeah, it's good for selling ads. There might be valuable stuff in the news, but the signal to noise it terrible. What I ended up doing is a little different than you on Facebook, I spend time training the Facebook algorithm, so I go through, "Show me less posts like this" and I managed to get all the political crap out of my feed. Like, it's just gone.

James Altucher: That's good.

Dave Asprey: And yeah, it takes whatever, a couple hours of, "No, no, no, never show me this person's random rants again. No, no, no." And now, I actually rely on my friends, and to a certain point, a couple other algorithms because there's the program on Facebook mentions the influence or ... You have to have a lot of followers or they don't even give it to you, but what it does is it intelligently let's my friends tell me what matters.

So, when I post on my Dave Asprey page, I'm finding all this amazing, cool research and stuff, but I'm not the sole source of that. It's all the people who are my friends who talk about cool stuff, and then algorithmically it's filtered. For me, that serves as the equivalent of news because it's carefully curated.

James Altucher: I could see that. I mean, what I typically do is ... 'Cause people say, you know, "It's shameful if you're uninformed about what's going on with politics." Particularly today's day and age-

Dave Asprey: It's not shameful. It mean that you have a life.

James Altucher: Right, and also, the way I view it is the news, at best, is the rough draft of history. I would rather see kind of a more final form, like there's this whole debate on what's fake news, what's real news, we don't even know-

Dave Asprey: It's all fake news.

James Altucher: Right.

Dave Asprey: Every single bit of it, whether it's partisan or not, it's all fake news. It was crafted for you to listen to it and not necessarily based on what happened.

James Altucher: I mean, I used to go on a lot of news shows, particularly when I was running a hedge fund, I was more involved in the financial space and I remember a producer once telling me, "All we're trying to do is fill the space between ads." And that's coming from the producer of a major news show.

Dave Asprey: Wow.

James Altucher: It just ... Kind of right there and then I stopped with TV news, and then later on I decided, "You know what, I could be reading the New York Post or I could be reading like a great short story and book." And I'd rather read the book.

Dave Asprey: Do you read some of the more longer, more thoughtful New Yorker articles or Atlantic or the ...

James Altucher: I don't, but I might read what comes out once a year, The Best American Essays, of the prior year, and then I'll get ... Or is someone really says, "You have to read this one essay." And these things, but in general I just stick to books that I think are gonna both educate and entertain me.

Dave Asprey: Interesting. You're really on the extreme there. I'm thinking like, I said I don't watch news, I don't watch unfiltered news, but because I have the friend filter set up I'll watch ... And I'm totally nonpartisan, I'm like, "Whoever's in office, if you're attracted to be in political office you're probably a bad person."

James Altucher: Demented.

Dave Asprey: Right, so like I don't really care what flag you wear or whatever, like you felt a need to do this so whatever, and sorry if you're a politician listening, you might be a good person, I just have never met you. Just kidding. I'm pissing-

James Altucher: That was ... A little bit of humor in that. That's funny.

Dave Asprey: I know, but now I'm pissing on ... I have friends in all sorts of things, but I don't think they're all bad people, I'm just ranting. What I do know if I will see clips from Fox News, I'll see clips from CNN, I'll see clips, but they're usually one minute clips and usually filtered by someone and said, "This is totally interesting." And at that point, someone else spent 100 hours looking at news just to find the clips, so I don't want to throw it all out entirely, but I'm not willing to search for the occasional nugget. As long as someone else does the search, and if their nugget detector isn't very good, like, "Never follow that again." And so rapidly you get to see the one minute clip of like, "Oh, that was inspiring."

James Altucher: Yeah, and I think that's a good way to go. Again, I probably take an extreme.

Dave Asprey: I like your extreme.

James Altucher: Which to relieve that kind of decision stress, I just know I'd rather read a book than ... I just always default to that, I'd rather read a book than watch the rough draft of history, but often I write, I want people to read my things, but again, a book, like you say, it's so curated. Like, how many decades of knowledge went into the "Bulletproof Diet" and "Headstrong"? Like, four decades of knowledge.

Dave Asprey: It's been ... I just look back at the amount of time and [inaudible 00:28:45] field and it's been my life's work in addition to all like building early Internet infrastructure that mattered greatly at the time, but now I'm like, "This is what matters to me." Yeah, and "This is my best work that I can possibly do 'cause if a hundred thousand people read this book and I fill it with crap, I'm a mass murderer." Like, four hours times a hundred thousand that's like multiple human life times, right?

James Altucher: Right, so I'll take it one step further. People say if you're uninformed about the news you won't be able to vote. Now, let's say you lived in California, for instance, the votes already, for President at least, is already predetermined. Like, California is going one way, Texas is going another way. Like, that's predetermined, but, I guess in general ... I don't even know.

Dave Asprey: Do you vote?

James Altucher: I don't vote at all. No, I have never ... I have never voted, but-

Dave Asprey: You just pissed off everyone, right?

James Altucher: I know, but here's the thing. You spent your time doing something ... Here's how I would argue if I were you, and I had never voted, I would say, "I spent these decades doing something that's gonna impact millions ..." How many people have had a Bulletproof cup of coffee? How many cups of coffee have you sold?

Dave Asprey: Last year was 48 million, yeah.

James Altucher: Okay, how many million cups of coffee do you have to sell to out weigh, "Oh, I didn't make one vote in California?" Like, probably 10 cups of coffee is enough to out value, to out weigh one vote. You sold 48 million.

Dave Asprey: There's people who say, "People died for the right to vote and you're not even using it."

James Altucher: People also died so that you could write any book you want. People died so that you can create a company that can solve massive health problems. People dies so I could write and focus my energies where I could have the most impact, positive impact on people. Voting ... People kind of say ... They kind of

outsource their positive impact to a vote once every four years. I'd rather every day try to have positive impact.

Dave Asprey: I think it takes a lot of balls to say that.

James Altucher: I get hurt by it. Like, I get hate mail.

Dave Asprey: You're inspiring me to get hate mail because I'm gonna talk about something I really haven't talked about publicly, but what the hell.

All right, when I was 18, I studied all of the political stuff. I was like every ballot, measure, all this stuff-

James Altucher: Why?

Dave Asprey: Well, because I thought it was my civic duty. I'm like, "I have a right to vote." All this stuff, "I should go exercise this." Besides, I was 18 what the hell did I know? I went out and I voted. Every single person I voted for, the first thing they did when they got in office was the exact opposite of what they promised to do, and it didn't matter whether I voted for a ballot measure or not because your vote is essentially lost in a huge sea of votes. So, I looked at that and said, "You know what, there's no point to this." I spend probably 20 hours preparing to become an informed voter, and it didn't matter because there were liars who I voted for and because the ballots, they're also poorly written and they're all specialized groups, and I just said, "This is a huge waste of time. I'm not gonna do it anymore."

And I resolved at that point I'd rather do something that matters, and it could matter to me or, at this point, matter to someone else. See, I don't vote either, and I don't vote either because also I'm a computer hacker by training and I can show you which major elections were hacked and exactly how, and God dammit we know that. This isn't a conspiracy theory or anything like that, it's just math.

James Altucher: So between hacked elections and lying politicians, I don't understand why people get so upset about the voting thing. Again, there's so many ways ... Help an old lady across the street every day for a year and you've done much better than that vote.

Dave Asprey: One meaningful act of kindness does more to shift the country than voting. It does. I mean, one. If you do one every day, you have completely moved the needle in a way that you will never do in a lifetime of voting.

James Altucher: Plus, there's all sorts of evidence that doing that is healthy.

Dave Asprey: It helps you to help other people. It feels good, and acknowledging that you help other people as a selfish act is not a bad thing either, but it makes the world a better place. Like you, I just fundamentally believe I can do more with that time

to serve others or just to be a good father, to be a good husband, than worrying about that. Thinking and worrying and stressing, and I know some amazing people who are top of their field who are losing sleep and like experiencing true anxiety, whether they're liberals or conservatives, just over this election. I'm like ... you never had control.

James Altucher: Yeah, people getting depressed.

Dave Asprey: Yeah.

James Altucher: People getting angry, you know, friend versus friend. Like, it's a Civil War in the streets.

Dave Asprey: Right, and it's not like there's only two decisions, like there's tens of thousands of variables and just lumping it into two things so you can be black or white, I just don't get it. I share values with people on all sides of political fences, and so just to decide, "I'm not gonna be stressed about that. I'm not gonna be unaware, but I'm going to focus on the things that deliver the most value and I'm gonna be okay with what happens, and if it's really not okay, they'll be many other people with pitchforks in line ahead of me." Like, "It's okay."

James Altucher: I have to ask you one piece of advice before we close this podcast, and it's related to your "Headstrong" book, even though I know you're probably tired of speaking about it now-

Dave Asprey: It's a great work of many hours. I'm happy to share it, what is it?

James Altucher: In my approach of I want to make as many fun and good choices for myself as possible, I decided this very evening I'm gonna do stand up comedy to get myself out of my comfort zone-

Dave Asprey: Did you really?

James Altucher: Yeah.

Dave Asprey: Good.

James Altucher: I knew a guy who runs a club and I'm going up and I'm not Tweeting about it or Facebooking, I'm just going up like all the rest of the comedians, not like a talk based around me, and but now, I'm starting to get scared about it. What headstrong thing should I do between now and 9:00 p.m. to get my energy levels high, to be calm, and to be good?

Dave Asprey: I'm going to answer this for you, and as part of the answer, I gotta tell you, I did exactly this for "Headstrong" because pushing limits is important. I recorded my first rap.

James Altucher: Okay. That's good.

Dave Asprey: I have zero skills and my friend Craig Handley from ListenTrust was like, "Dave, I was invited to go on tour to 300 cities with a really big rapper." He goes, "You wouldn't guess that I'm a power lifter, but I can rap." So, we went down ... He laid down lyrics and like I ... I have no skills at all-

James Altucher: That's pretty cool. I want to do that.

Dave Asprey: It was a little stressful, but it was also like really kind of fun because I dealt with the stress, so I wasn't feeling anxiety when I did it, it was just like joy and a little bit of mirth and self deprecating humor, but we're putting a video out for "Headstrong" and it's one of the lines is, "You got muffin top in your crop" and like it's the most ridiculous thing I've ever done, there's a video and all that stuff.

This was way outside my comfort zone because I'm like more of a university lecturer by training. Like, I could give a good speech, but ... I feel what you're doing is, literally over the month I've been like, "Did I really just do this?" So, first thing you want to do is you want to do some deep breathing exercises. Do you ... Have you ever done the heart rate variability stuff that we've talked about before?

James Altucher: No.

Dave Asprey: All right. Normally I would tell you ... In fact, you have an iPhone, right?

James Altucher: Yeah. No, I have an Android.

Dave Asprey: An Android. Oh crap, that's not gonna work. I was gonna say I could loan you my heart rate variability thing, but if we have time at the end of this I'll actually hook it up to your ear and you can do this, and I'll tell you, for 99 bucks you can get a heart rate variability sensor. It's very small. It will fit in one of your three outfits pockets. You need to do this for 20 minutes a day for 6 weeks until you learn how to get conscious control of your fight or flight response. 'Cause what I do before I go on stage ... And I was on Tony Robbins' stage two weeks ago in front of 9000 screaming people. It was really epic. Not a drop of stress, not even a little bit.

The way you do that is you take a deep breath, and I'll walk you through this, but it's easier when you have a sensor telling you, you got it right. What you're gonna do, you're gonna do this before you go on stage, you can do it a couple times before then. Close your eyes and you take a deep breath in for about five seconds and you focus on the center of your chest, like, right in your sternum. Imagine what it feels like there, not what it looks like, but actually the sensations, the tingling, like someones almost touching it, you might want to

touch your chest when you do it, and as you breathe in focusing right there and then fill a balloon. It could be as big as your body, as big as the world.

James Altucher: While your inhaling?

Dave Asprey: While your inhaling, so like you filling this balloon. When the balloon is full, then you imagine puppies. It could be puppies, it could be the first time you met your wife, you know, a hug with your mom, the most emotionally joyful, amazing experience, like maybe the first time you held one of your kids, like really intense, but imagine what it felt like on your skin, in your body, it's the felt sense that gets deep in your tissues.

As your balloon is full, you just breath up and out, and let that just come down around you. Do that over and over, five or six times. Do it for even 10 minutes. What that does, that turns on that deep sense of just gratitude and joy, and it absolutely pummels the anxiety, the fear, and the stress. When you do that it actually can help other people and train their nervous system to you, and this is something I do before I go on stage.

James Altucher: You inhale for five seconds, you do the various visualization ...

Dave Asprey: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Then you breathe out for five second.

James Altucher: How long do you hold the breathe in?

Dave Asprey: You can ... If you're doing a box breath, you do five seconds, but with this kind of breathing just breath in for five, release, and as you release just breath out for five. Doing it through your nose is better.

James Altucher: Now, you say six weeks. I'm talking about tonight, will this work for tonight?

Dave Asprey: Yeah, this will work for tonight, but if you do this every day with a sensor for six weeks you'll actually develop a new control system for your nervous system that allows you to feel when you switch out of this mode, which is now my native space. This is the native gratitude and just openness. This is a parasympathetic dominant mode, so you can think on your feet and still be funny and still connect with people without bypassing your thought and going straight to your amygdala. This is gonna really help you.

The other thing you want to do is you want to have lots of energy when you do it, but not like jittery, cranky energy. If coffee helps, fine. It's gonna ruin your sleep if you do that, so I would say you want to have to brain octane, you want to have some mitochondrial stimulants. What do you normally have for dinner?

James Altucher: Fish.

Dave Asprey: Fish. Okay, cool. Do you feel better after you eat or before you eat?

James Altucher: I don't know. I'm not really that-

Dave Asprey: You're not really that sensitive. Okay, cool. Then have a light meal with fish and lots of veggies, and do it probably an hour before.

James Altucher: All right.

Dave Asprey: If you do that, you're gonna have some energy there and I would, before you go on stage, a few short term energy enhancers, whatever works for you.

James Altucher: What's a-

Dave Asprey: I'll give you some unfair advantage, like ...

James Altucher: All right.

Dave Asprey: Like, literally that is the best stuff before stage.

James Altucher: I need an unfair advantage.

Dave Asprey: I'm not trying to pitch my stuff at all here, I'm just telling you that's what I do before I go on stage. Just be calm and before you walk out there, this will sound goofy, but just feel love for the audience. Don't think about love, feel love, and just send it out of you and connect with them that way. Like, you'll do well.

James Altucher: Excellent. All right. Well, thank you, Dave.

Dave Asprey: That was fun.

James Altucher: Yeah.

Dave Asprey: If you like this episode, you know what to do. Head on over to iTunes and subscribe to the James Altucher Show because you can tell this guy is really, really amazing, even though he doesn't vote, which makes him a bad person. Let's see, you should also leave him a five star review, leave me a five star review, pick up a copy of "Headstrong" if you don't have it yet. It just hit number, I think, it was number six of all books on Amazon this week, and it's on number one of the new releases, so I appreciate your support if you guys pick up a copy of the book it's really, really meaningful.

Thanks James.

James Altucher: Yeah, thank you, Dave.