

recording: Bulletproof Radio, a state of high performance.

Dave: Today's guest is a guy named Joe Polish. If you haven't heard of Joe Polish, it's probably because you don't do marketing. Joe's one of the most sought after and experienced marketing guys out there. As a marketing guy, you're probably imagining some Click Funnel, do something online sort of thing, but Joe has helped literally hundreds and hundreds of entrepreneurs reach hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue, including me. He's been a friend and advisor for five years. Introduced me to Richard Branson and Tony Robbins and John Mackey the CEO of Whole Foods and Arianna Huffington.

One of these people you might not have heard of, although Joe runs Piranha Marketing and has been very, very active in the business press, but if you're a biohacker or you're just listening about what do high performance people do, Joe is a rare human being, incredibly impactful in the work he's done in the world and has been incredibly open about his own challenges. Going from a guy with a mullet cleaning carpets, which is a true story.

Joe: Yeah, it's relatively true.

Dave: His last name is Polish, which is just hilarious because you actually polished floors, you've never heard that before. But anyway-

Joe: People had actually thought I changed my name for the cleaning niche that I was originally in. But no, I was born with that name. I got made fun of as a kid, but then when I got into the carpet cleaning business, one of my first businesses, everyone thought I did it on purpose. So, it worked out.

Dave: Yes. But one day, Joe had just a business awakening, he could hit really help people with marketing, and has given away lots of exotic super cars and just had this story that's unbelievable. I asked him to come on Bulletproof Radio today to talk about his path from basically humble beginnings and really some pretty hairy addiction stories that you just wouldn't believe you're going to hear them. All the way to being an incredible influential person in many, many people's lives, and the work he's doing today around addiction. So, if you're wondering how do you go from literally rags, well, rags and coke to riches, this is the man who did it and is now living a life of just incredible service out there.

So Joe, welcome to the show.

Joe: Thank you Dave, it's my pleasure to be here and we've been looking forward to doing this for a long time because it's been a while. And by the way, I have to excuse my voice for anyone listening right now, because I've been running an event all day. So, my voice is little tired, but I'm super happy to be here.

Dave: Let's talk about this event. Joe runs an event called Genius Network or also known as 25K. This is something that entrepreneurs at a certain level of success write a check every year for \$25000 to come to this. A friend of mine, a JJ [inaudible 00:03:00] has

been on the show as well, so, Dave, you have to do this. I'm like, "Are you nuts? Do you know how much money that is?" I started Bulletproof, I bootstrapped it and all that. I'm like, "This is the single biggest check I've ever written. But someone I love and trust said you got to do this." So, I stepped up and I did it and came to this event and literally Joe, your work just changed my life. You introduced me this whole universe of people who understood the mission that I was on and we're just incredibly willing to help. I'm truly grateful for that, and in five years later I write my check every year with absolute gratitude and the return investment on that, which you promised everyone is you get 10 times return or your money back. And it's actually like that. I don't know how to put it another way. So, thank you for that.

Joe: But totally, thank you.

Dave: How did you get here? Just give me your background story, you've shared it over dinner but where were you when you started all this?

Joe: Well, you said something, you said we'd connect you with other people here. It's interesting because it's funny that a lot of people now, I don't call myself this, a lot of people call me a connector. I connect people and I really do. I get a joy out of it. It is interesting because I grew up one of the most disconnected people ever. My real quick story of my childhood, my mother died when I was four years old. My mother was a former nun. She left the convent because she had gotten ill, she met my father in church, they ended up getting married. I was raised Catholic, that instilled a tremendous amount of guilt in me. Without going into all the horror stories, lots of bad stuff happened in my childhood. Bad stuff related to physical, mental, sexual abuse. I was raped and molested as a kid a few times and I was just this lonely, shy, scared kid because my father never remarried after my mother had passed away when I was four.

So, I had an older brother who was four and a half years older than me and my father was a broken guy. He tried to do the best he could, he was a locksmith, never made a lot of money but he took care of us as best as he could, but he was very heartbroken. He lost the love of his life. So, every two years in my entire childhood, we would move to a different city. As soon as I just started establishing some relationships, we would uproot and go somewhere else. That happened pretty much my whole childhood.

Then things like my sports as an example, when I was around 10 years old in the small town Alpine Texas when all the bad stuff was happened to me sexually, I had a sadistic literally baseball coach who would try to force me to hold the baseball bat straight up. I was not some smart ass kid, I was just a shy kid. He just singled me out for the best of my memory and I've very few memories of my childhood, and a lot of it was blacked out. I just couldn't play the game. That episode ruined my liking to sports. I was never into sports until this day. I know a lot of professional athletes that are friends, but I've never been a person that really follows sports.

I also came home one day during around that time, and the only dog I ever had, the only pet ever had was a black Labrador Retriever named Panther. My father had just given my dog away that I had had for over a year. I didn't realize until later in life when I look

back at all of these dysfunctional coping mechanisms that I developed first with drugs, I'm happy to talk about any of this stuff and then sex and addiction and workaholism and obsessiveness and just all of these maladaptive ways of trying to connect with something. I look back at all of the stuff that happened in my childhood and I realized when people are going off the rails and being dysfunctional, you can usually trace it back to the things that happened to them in childhood.

I certainly had those sort of experiences. Now, there's a lot of great things too. I built a multimillion dollar business. I was a millionaire by the time I was 30 and all that sort of stuff. But it was a weird roundabout way. But I grew up lonely and disconnected and introverted and I used to get picked on all the time and I was a skinny little kid. By the time I was 16, years old, I just didn't really know how to relate to people all that well did the best I could. But I started smoking pot, and I started drinking alcohol. I started taking LSD. I started taking speed. What happened is, it opened up this whole world, all of a sudden I went from being this shy introverted person to being very outgoing and I started feeling better.

Initially the drugs worked. It's biochemical in a lot of ways. So, the dopamine levels, however my body was responding to doing drugs, it actually worked. But, as they say, like a coke addict as an example, the shortest line is too much and the longest line is never enough. So basically, there was no moderation. What ended up happening is, I just got deeply involved in doing drugs. For about two years between the ages of 16, 18 years old, it just escalated and got worse and worse and worse and in my worst possible state, there was one week where I had not eaten for several days and on average, I weighed 120 pounds when I was 18, years old. I was doing so many amphetamines, I was snorting crystal meth, I was snorting coke. There was a period right after high school when I was 18, that I weighed 105 pounds in my worst day from just doing freebase and cocaine for three and a half months straight. So, that's the story.

Dave: So, I'd like to look at human resilience and ways we can make people more resilient. With your story, by all rights, you should either be dead or in prison.

Joe: Totally.

Dave: Instead, you're a multimillionaire and you hope a lot of people do a lot of good. I want to know and learn from your experience, what's different about you or what you did that kept you off that path and turned into the admirable and fantastic human being you've become? What did that?

Joe: It's a good question and I wish I could point to one thing or one episode or one spiritual awakening or something, because people have asked, "What was the one thing that did it?" It was a whole series of things. The human spirit is resilient. The human body is quite resilient. With all of the work you do in the health field and all of the things that you've learned, and I've learned a tremendous amount from you. We've done 40 years of Zen with you, we've done a lot of great stuff. We've gone on an amazing trip in Alaska, which we're going to do again, there's all kinds of cool stuff we've done.

But to go back to when I was in my worst physical shape, I'll tell you. I'm not saying these stories just for morbid curiosity, it was just to give a context. One day I remember, in a single day, I was smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol, smoking pot, snorting crystal, snorting cocaine, and free basing and I was on LLSA.

Dave: In one day?

Joe: In a single day. How much abuse could you give a body, right? I would blow my nose and pieces of flesh would come out, blood. One time I rode my bike around the block, and I was 18 years old, and I could not even breathe after riding my bike. My lungs were so damaged. Looking back, I was like, yeah, I should be dead. I cannot believe that much abuse, what ended up happening was it got so bad, when I looked in the mirror and I looked like a skeleton. I had one episode where a person that we had as a roommate was flipping out, nearly burned the house down, and I just said, I got to get the hell out of this environment or I'm going to die.

So, I packed up a pickup truck, drove to Las Cruces, New Mexico and ended up living in a trailer for a couple years with my father and got sober. I removed myself from the friends, from the environment, from the drugs, and I just simply had to change the environment. That gave me enough space to not have access to drugs, but the mental withdrawals, the physical withdrawals were pretty severe. I didn't go to a treatment center back then. I didn't even go to 12 step groups back then. But what happened was I was taking aspirin or Tylenol almost daily just try to deal with the headaches and stuff. Eventually, I kind of got through it and then I got a job at a health club selling gym memberships. For the first time in my life, I started exercising, I started working out, and started feeling what it felt like to actually get in physical shape.

I worked there and I was very successful. I learned about selling and that you can persuade people by the words you use and by talking with them and leading them into something that I was getting benefit from myself. Which gave me my first experience with selling. While I was there, I met a guy that ran a mental hospital, and he offered me a job as a mental health tech. So, I started working in this mental hospital, and I would drive the patients that had addiction challenges to AA meetings, Alcoholics Anonymous and NA meetings, which is Narcotics Anonymous. I would sit in those meetings because I was the driver, but never realizing that later in life that community, and those stories, and hearing people that we're sharing their pain with others that that would become so valuable in my life.

When I ended up moving back to Arizona, which is where I live today and I've lived most of my adult life, I never got a degree in anything. I have to tell this story too. I went to Chandler Gilbert Community College, and I got a C minus in Principles of Marketing, and I failed owning and operating a small business. I even show my report card when I speak because people are like, What are education? I'm like, "I'm like Abe Lincoln, I'm self-taught." I never got a degree in anything but I've read over 1000 books and I've gone to a lot of seminars.

One of the things was I was always super curious about just how do I get out of this trap? How do I become more successful? I was a big reader, I don't remember anyone in my childhood that was a mentor or a teacher or anyone that had any significant impact. Not saying they weren't there, I just don't recall it. I just literally found my mentors and I found my inspiration in books. I would read and eventually I just started following different people and some of the same stuff you've done. Tony Robbins who's now a dear friend of mine, I was listening to Tony Robbins tapes when I was getting out of that mess. And Wayne Dyer and reading, Thinking Grow Rich. All of that sort of stuff.

But when I came back to Arizona. I ended up starting a small carpet cleaning business because I had a friend who I went to high school with who talked me into taking all the money that I had saved from all these different jobs. I spent \$1500 dollars, which was all the money I had and I bought a portable steam cleaning unit. I got some business cards that said professional carpet cleaner, and overnight, I was a business owner that didn't know what the hell I was doing. My friend who started the business with me, he said, "What we'll do is I'll start making phone calls." because he was working for a company in Arizona, that the guy was an alcoholic that owned the company, but he had grossed \$600000 the previous year, and had a phone room where they would call people.

Looking back, I didn't know anything about how do you run a small service business, but they were low price, getting people's houses and they would hopefully sell them stuff. It wasn't full blown bait and switch because there are a lot of people that advertise 595 rooms 695 room and anyone has probably seen those sort of coupons. Those people are basically scam artists. They just use low prices and then they do high pressure selling. I never did anything like that. I just had this friend who's like, "Yeah, I'm going to make the phone calls. We'll get some jobs and then once we get established, we can hire a few girls to make the phone calls and then we'll clean the carpets and build up cruise." But after about two months of being in business with this guy, every night he was basically getting drunk. I was of course, had gotten sober. I took his name off the business account, and I was stuck with these chemicals and equipment and this carpet cleaning business, and I didn't really have any options. So, I just started knocking on doors and go into apartment complexes.

This is a funny story. In Arizona, you know how hot it can get here in the summer, right? It's like Hades, it's pretty damn hot. I'm allergic to cats and back then I would clean these dirty apartment units because they are least the ones that were give me consistent business. They would pay me \$20, \$25 \$30 per unit to clean these units. I would be there 10 hours, 12 hours, 14 hour days in the middle of summer. Some of these units didn't have any air conditioning because the electricity was off. And so, I would run an extension cord to some of these third story apartments, I'd have to lug this steam cleaning thing and buckets of hot water up the stairs, clean the carpets, and in a cat infested apartment where there's cat urine and all this stuff, I would be literally doing hard manual labor and I would be wheezing. It was like doing-

Dave: Your life was basically shit.

Joe: Oh, it sucked. It totally sucked that I had this entrepreneurial fantasy that damn it, I don't want to work for anyone. I want to make this thing work. On top of that, I so badly wanted to just figure out how to make a business work, that I was paying money to do that work. There's many ways to go broke, but doing hard manual labor, cleaning carpets and going and doing that on credit cards, is one of the stupidest ways to go broke, but that's what I was doing. I wasn't intelligent enough to say I could probably just sit at home and watch TV and go broke. I didn't have to do hard manual labor. But I amassed about \$30000 in debt over a couple year period. And I was just frustrated.

I can keep telling you my story, but I want to take a break, just to make sure you-

Dave: It sounds like twice in your life, once when you're about 18 you sort of hit rock bottom from just a health and an addiction perspective. And you climbed out of rock bottom. And then from a business perspective, you hit rock bottom and you climbed out of it. This is a common pattern though, you see this over and over, where people lose money in businesses or they have addictions and it sticks with them. But I've known you for five years now and you live an unusual life and that you're always meeting amazing people and helping them. You just walk around and everyone's like, "Do you know what Joe did for me?"

You got from hard physical failure and hard business failure and something happened. You read these 1000 books and all that stuff. But what was the spark that made you go, I'm going to not just become a little bit successful but just abundance opened up for me?

Joe: I've always been interested in massive significance and I don't like things that are mundane and mediocre. There's a lot of pain and suffering in the world, and I certainly have had those plenty of experiences. I am driven to ... And I say driven hopefully in a good way, because people could be very driven in a very destructive way. A lot of my upbringing, my driven is actually led into driving into walls, driving off cliffs and being very self-destructive to myself. But I have this deep internal thing to where I want to reduce human suffering.

At first, I had to start with me. I want to connect people, but at first, I had to start with me. One of the big distinctions, which where I was at in my carpet cleaning business. When I was in the worst possible state, I was frustrated. I had a guy call me from high school, and he said, would you like to go jet skiing when you're totally broke. You don't have any discretionary income, you don't have any money to do stuff. And he said, "Would you like to go jet skiing?" I'm like, "No, I got a lot of work to do." I didn't want to admit that I can barely even pay for anything to eat. He said that the guy that owns the jet skis is a multimillion dollar real estate investor. That of course piqued my interest. I'm like, oh, maybe I could go and meet this guy and talk with him and he could give me some advice on what sort of business I could go into in order to get out of the damn carpet cleaning business that clearly wasn't working.

We went to Saguaro lake, which is a lake out here in Arizona, and there were two jet skis. There's my friend Pat and then this guy, the wealthy real estate investor had to jet

skis and one of his friends was with him. And so, my friend Pat and this guy's other friend we're on the jet skis, and I finally had a chance to sit down with this wealthy guy in the tailgate of a pickup truck, and I said to him, "I hear you do really well in business and I this small carpet cleaning business and it's not doing that well. I was wondering if you have any recommendations of another business that I could go into so I could maybe do better?"

Dave: You asked for help.

Joe: Yeah. What he said, he goes, "Well, is there anyone in your business that's making money?" I go, "Well, yeah there's several companies in the Phoenix area that do over a million a year. That's a lot of money to me, but they've been around a long time, they're established. I've only been doing this for a couple years. I'm good at cleaning carpets, but for some reason they're established." He said, "Well, if there's other people in your business that are making money and you're not there's nothing wrong with the business you're in, there's something wrong with you." And I said, "Well, no, no. These people, they have a lot of staff, a lot of them do bait and switch advertising. I don't do any of that sort of stuff. I'm trained, I'm certified. It's just that ..." I was making excuses. Because when you're a hard worker and you actually care and you're still not successful, it really messes with your head. Because there's a lot of really good people that put forth the effort and they don't get results and they're like, what the hell is going on?

Dave: You ever see the monkey video with the grape versus the cucumber?

Joe: I wish I could see I have but I have not.

Dave: This is what was happening to you. You can Google this thing, well Google after this program has run out. But it's some psychologists and they have two monkeys in cages, they can see each other. They're trained to reach out and grab a rock and put in a bowl. You put a rock in a bowl, you get a treat. So, the first monkey gets a cucumber as a treat and is perfectly happy. The monkey next to him does the same task and gets a grape, which is sweet and good. The first monkey's like, you could see this look of like, "He got more, we both worked hard." Then they go back to the first monkey and he puts the thing on the rock again and reaches out his hands they give him a cucumber. He looks at cucumber and throws it at the researchers. It just goes nuts and tries to break out of the cage. It goes into this rage because he didn't get a grape because he worked just as hard as the guy next to him.

Which is our primal things and that's what was going on with you.

Joe: The lesson here, This was, I didn't know this yet, but this was going to become the most important mentor at that time in my life as it related to a direction that I was going to take. Here I was, dead broke carpet cleaner, talking with his guy, trying to get some advice and he says, "Young man, you're like most people, you think the grass is always greener on the other side. And what's going to happen, if you try to go into another business another industry, you're going to spend another six months, another year, another two years learning the technical skills of another business so you can go out

repeat the same bad business habits that have caused you to be a failure in this business.

Dave: Wow, that was some powerful advice.

Joe: Totally. At first I was like, "Well, shit. That's not the motivational message that I want." But what he helped me identify was, there's other people that are successful. They're doing well, I'm not. There's something they're doing that I'm not doing. So, what the hell is that? When I left that trip, I was super sunburned, and I was driving home and I was thinking to myself, I live in America, I think it's a great country, I'm not the smartest guy in the world, I have tons of personal problems, I have my own issues and stuff. However, I've got my limbs, I've got my vision, I've got my hearing, I'm a hard worker. Someone knows what the hell to do.

That started me on my venture saying, "I'm going to figure this out." Here's what I did though, I made a commitment that I don't like the business, I'm not doing well, but other people are having success in it and I'm not, I'm going to figure out how to make it work. All of a sudden I reframed the business and the failures like, this needs to be a canvas. I need to use this as a lab rat. This needs to now become an experiment. I'm going to figure out how to make this thing work, and I made a commitment to myself that I'm not getting out of this business until I figure out how to turn this business around. Because what he said to me, he goes, "If you learn fundamental business skills, you can then go into any business and you can apply that."

I was like, I got to use this carpet cleaning business as a place to test things out. And now what's funny is, I happened to get into a business selling something nobody wants to buy. There's not anyone that's listening or watching this, that has any excitement about calling in carpet cleaner. It's like going to the ... If you live in America, Department of Motor Vehicles and get a license renewal. It's just sucks. People don't love cleaning carpets like going to a comedy club or going to movie your buying clothes. But here I was with this accidental industry that I was in.

What happened was, I just started reading. I started studying, and I had a friend that gave me a newsletter, written by this crazy marketer named Gary Halbert and it was called the Gary Halbert Letter. I ended up reading this newsletter and there was something that was said in the very first issue that I read, which was the February 1992 issue of the Gary Halbert Letter. It said that smart people would rather pay \$1000 for 10 pages of really valuable information, than \$10 for 300 pages of fluff. So, you don't measure the value of the information by quantity, but by the quality of the information. It made a distinction of what marketing is, that you need to can and clone yourself. That whole term, can and clone yourself, I learned what marketing actually is versus selling, because selling is what you do when you're on the phone or face to face with somebody, and marketing is what you do to get yourself on the phone or face to face with somebody properly positioned, so by the time they talk to you, they're pre interested, pre motivated, pre-qualified and predisposed to do business with you.

All of the advertising or marketing that I was doing, because I didn't even know what marketing was. If someone would have said that term, does that mean a logo, does that mean a brand? What the hell does it mean advertisements, what does it actually mean? Again, this was before the internet even existed. We're talking the way people got business back then were yellow page ads, Val pack type coupons, magazine advertisements, sometimes TV, sometimes radio, newspaper ads. We're talking about a small service business. I didn't even know how to create an offer. What most people were doing was, they were advertising price. What most industries do, is everyone copies what everyone else is doing, and they're all doing the same dumb things. Back then I didn't quite know what to do, but when I read that term, can and clone yourself, I started studying and reading all of the books that Gary would recommend, like Scientific Advertising by Claude Hopkins, the Robert Collier Letter book, How To Write A Good Advertisement by Vic Swab. Ogilvy On Advertising, by Dave Ogilvy.

I started reading all of these books about making offers. I hired a copywriter with money that I had to borrow on a credit card. I paid the copywriter \$1800 to write my very first sales letter for my carpet cleaning business, which was, A Consumer Guide To Carpet Cleaning. Everyone was running name, rank, serial number ads; who they are, what they do and their phone number. Today it's what they do and their website or their social media or whatever. Same stuff that most businesses still don't know how to create advertising. So, I created this education based marketing guide and I started running ads that said, warning, don't call any carpet cleaner to read this consumer guide. I would have people call and request the consumer guide. Or if people called me up on the phone and say, "How much you charge?" That question., when someone asks how much you charge, they don't have any other criteria on how to make a buying decision. So, if you don't have a system for selling what it is you're selling, you're always at the mercy of the consumer system for buying, which is always price unless you give them another criteria.

I created all this rattle through this real quick, and then I'll then share how that led to what I do today. Basically, I created Consumer's Guide To Carpet Cleaning, read this guide and discover seven questions to ask a carpet cleaner before you invite him into your home, eight mistakes to avoid when choosing a carpet cleaner, crawling critters and crowded guide to the slime grime and livestock, the seeping, creeping and galloping through your carpet, how to avoid four carpet cleaning rip-offs, the difference between value and price, how to get your carpet cleaner to 100% guarantee they'll work all these stuff? Then they would open up this little guide , and unlike every other form of advertisement which looks like we're trying to sell you something, a fancy brochure, this was inexpensive. It was paper and ink, but the thing is, paper's expensive, ink's cheap. So, the message that you put on it like a dollar bill, what's the difference between a \$1 bill and \$100 bill? The message on the paper. Same paper, same ink, why is one worth 100 times more than the other? It's because of the words, it's because of how you positioned it.

I started learning that you could influence the effectiveness of something just by the copy, just by the words, just by the offer. They would open up the guide and it says, "Dear homeowner choosing a carpet cleaner isn't easy, why? Because you're

bombarded with confusing claims, simply bad information, near worthless methods, unqualified technicians, how do you ever find a qualified company carpet cleaner? You start by reading this guide." Then it said, "Now with this information, you can make an informed, intelligent decision." That's key because people don't want to make an idiotic, uninformed decision. They want to make an informed intelligent decision. Then I answered the number one question in all consumers' minds, which is, who can I trust? I just gave them all of the information.

Money earned ethically is a byproduct of value creation. You actually can create value before anyone even does business with you by teaching them how to make a buying decision. What I learned when you're selling something that nobody wants to buy, what you do is you help them learn and know all the things that they don't know that they don't know. Once somebody read my consumer awareness guide. They didn't call me up and say, "How much do you charge?" They would call up and say, "When can you do the job?" But people would call up and say, Well, I need my carpet cleaned tomorrow."

What I then did, is I paid the copywriter another \$250, and I had him turn my consumer awareness guide into a 24 hour free recorded message script. Then I did a 10 minute recorded message. I would run the ads that say, warning, don't call any carpet cleaner until you listen to this free recorded message. Call anytime, 24 hours a day." They would call and listen to a robot that would sift, sort and screen price shoppers. It was totally robotic. It was automated, it always delivered a perfect pitch and never bitched about a headache would always show up to work on time. It was automated. I call that today, elf marketing. So you can have an elf business which is easy, lucrative and fun, or you can have what I used to have before I learned all this stuff, a half business which is hard, annoying, lame and frustrating or hard, annoying, lucrative and frustrating, which is a subject of my new book that's going to be coming out soon, which is called The Average Joe's Marketing Book, very clever.

But anyway, I literally created this system. Then I went from \$2100 a month on average losing money, gross. I was grossing \$2100 month, it would cost me more money to be in business to over \$12300, a month within a six month period. I didn't learn any much more about how to clean carpets, although I was certified and I was trained and I did a good job. I learned. There's no relationship between being good and getting paid. Now, let me explain that in the right context because a lot of people are like, "Well, that doesn't make sense." Some people are really good and they get paid because they're in a certain type of supply and demand situation, but there's a great relationship between being a good marketer and getting paid.

What I mean by marketing is you got to get your message out. You have to tell your story. You have to be compelling. You cannot bore people into buying. I created this way of using education based marketing, and I turned my small carpet cleaning business around, and then I decided, wow, how many other people like me that are struggling that don't know how to do this? If I could just teach them what I've learned here, they would apply it in their business. So, I started running ads in carpet cleaning trade magazines. I ran my first ad in a magazine called Cleanfax magazine at the end of 1994. I ended up running this ad and in the ad it said, "How to get a flood of new customers.

My name is Joe Polish, I've learned this method of how to generate business. The big money is not in carpet cleaning, it's in the marketing of carpet cleaning services and that discovery changed my life. Call this free recorded message to request a free report."

People would call and they would request a free report, but the free report would tell my story. It was like a 12 page to 26 page sales letter because I had different versions of this very long copy. I would send it and I ended up generating leads off \$138 regional ad in this trade magazine. I ended up generating leads, sending these people a free report and the free report, the first time I did, it generated \$7000 in sales, because I offered a \$497 course and a \$597 course, and I was pretty much off to the races.

Dave: So, it took you would another year or two to become a millionaire.

Joe: Well, the first year I sold \$250000 worth of these marketing courses when I was 26 years old. The beauty was, is the materials worked.

Dave: You added real value.

Joe: Oh yeah, I transform people's businesses. They were applying it and I was changing people's lives. I literally ended up over 1200 carpet cleaning companies purchased my materials within the first couple years. The second year I sold half a million dollars' worth of courses, the third year I was doing over a million a year. And so, yeah, I became a millionaire by the time I was 30.

Dave: How did you avoid taking all that money and going back to hookers and blow?

Joe: Here's the deal. During this period of time, I had never dealt with a lot of childhood trauma. When you are sexually abused, you have an arousal template. So, what someone is into sexually, is usually based on how they were first introduced to sexuality. Sexual addiction by the way, is an intimacy disorder. When people hear it, they can conjure up all kinds of perceptions of what does that mean? Because all forms of addiction include suffering. All forms of addiction are disconnection. All forms of addiction include binging and purging it's not about moderation. It's either deprivation or its excess. So, one of the forms of sexual addiction was being sexually anorexic. Not having the ability to be intimate with someone or be intimate with someone that matters.

Because if you look at men or women that were abused as children, they will usually develop relationships with abusive partners, and it's a trauma bond. Luckily for me, I don't ever recall ever being abusive to anyone physically or mentally. I'm sure I was an asshole in a lot of ways, and unaware in a lot of situations, but here in my life, every girlfriend, every partner I've had for the last 18 years, other than one of them, I'm still friends with all of them. A lot of them are friends with each other. You've even witness it.

Dave: I've met a couple of them. Yeah, they say enough good things about you.

Joe: I've really done my best to try to be just the kind human. But what happened is I ended up getting in a very toxic relationship during this time with a woman that we should have separated after the first year, but we stayed together for about six years. This is a long story but I'm going to give you the real quick Reader's Digest. If there's younger people, they probably don't even know what Reader's Digest means. But anyway, so basically we ended up having a child together at a time when I was actually going to separate from her. I ended up staying with her because of this. What ended up happening was we did not get along at all. We ended up having this child together and every moment with her it was miserable. But I love this child. In the process of raising this child, it was intolerable to be together but I love this baby 20 times more than any woman I'd ever been with. We ended up separating and I got her a new apartment leased her a car and I was taking care of her, and the child trying to figure out how do I navigate this.

So, that's just part of my life where I'm helping business owners, I'm having success, but my personal life is just kind of in shambles. It's just real difficult. What I found about a lot of successful entrepreneurs is they could have a lot of the secret lives where no one really knows all the shit storms that are going on. What ended up happening was, she wanted to move out of state and not realizing that I'm supporting you and I'm the father here. What ended up happening was I joined a father's rights group because I wanted to see what I need to do in order to prevent her from moving out of state. They recommended that I read a lot of materials to prepare myself if we have to go into a legal custody issue. They're like, "What do you want to do." I say, I just want both of us, I feel she raised this child."

In the process of going down this road. They said, "Read all these materials, take a DNA test, because it'll help you if you ever go to court." I'm like, "No, I don't need to do that." "But they're like, "No, it will actually help you." I ended up taking the DNA test and again still hesitant to not tell more because it fills in the blanks, but I ended up finding out five days before this child's first birthday through a DNA test that I didn't even ... That I only took because I thought it would help with custody. I never questioned that I was not the father, I found out I was not the biological father.

Dave: Wow.

Joe: It was the most pain mentally that I'd ever felt. Both my parents passed away and I've had lots of friends dying stuff, nothing compares to how that loss. I feel like I lost ... I did, I actually lost a child that I cared for. I offered to adopt this job because at that point I was bonded with this child but-

Dave: You had no rights.

Joe: Yeah, I even offered her 100 grand if she would sign away rights and let me raise the child. She wanted the money, but she didn't want to be without the child and there's nothing I can do. What happened is the only thing that made the pain go away was to sleep with a lot of women. I started paying for sex, for hiring escorts. It was pretty painful. I didn't go back into the drugs but I certainly went into the core addiction, which

actually stemmed from the trauma as a child, and that's what people's addictions and crazy making behaviors usually goes to where the biggest source of pain was.

Dave: One of the reasons that I wanted to ask you about these things is that you're a multi, multi-millionaire and you have incredible influence and the ability to pick up your phone and call God knows how many billionaires and captains of industry and all. And you're willing to stand up in front of guys and talk about really uncomfortable Shitty situations you live through and just own it and be like, "This is the person I am today." One of the things that that taught me ... Come to know, some small percentage of the number of these people is that most people have a lot of crap in their background that they don't want to talk about and things that they're ashamed of, and it causes them pain even though they're extremely successful or successful in one domain not another domain.

I think that by just being one say, I'm a really successful guy and I lived through all this stuff and I'm still dealing with it in this way today, that you've actually made it safe for a lot of other successful people to get help, or to talk about, "Maybe I really do have an addiction to my business or an addiction to something that maybe they didn't see was an addiction." Now you've made this your moonshot based on the Dan Sullivan Peter Diamandis kind of thinking. Both of them have been guests on the show and both them you introduced me to. You're now focus very heavily on addiction and what you can do to rid the world of addiction. Talk with me about how that became your mission and what you're doing about it.

Joe: Thank you, by the way. Yes, my moonshot is to change the global conversation about how people view and treat addicts with compassion instead of judgment and to the find the best forms of treatment that have efficacy and share those with the world. Also, let me say this, I'm not a dummy. I know how to do sales pitches. I could use this platform and say, "Hey, I'm this great guy, I know all of this marketing stuff. You should opt into my list. You can buy things, I can teach you how to make a lot of money and I can do all that. I know all that." But I know you and I know that you care a lot about this because we've had private conversations about this and I've heard the things on Bulletproof, your show, and about how you've brought up addiction, and how you've brought up challenges, and how you've talked about stuff, and you've always been super acknowledging of me and the people that have introduced here.

My whole thing is, I'm thinking of like, whoever's out there fighting the silent battle, whoever's in pain, whoever is real ... Because you have a lot of very successful people that listen to you and that follow you. A lot of these people have these secrets that they don't share. So your secret is your secret. I wanted to take this time actually not talk about how cool someone may think I am, and all the famous people that I know and I have plenty of that sort of stuff, and I do run the highest level marketing group in the world and all that. It's great. But the bottom line is, I had to go through a hit storm stuff-

Dave: You suffered a lot.

Joe: Yeah. I want to ... The opposite of addiction is connection. I ended up building the biggest connection group because I was so disconnected as a kid. I think once I learned

marketing, I looked at this issue, which I think addiction is a modern form of human slavery, and how do I use my marketing skills, my storytelling skills, my connection skills? And how do I become a curator and bring some of the greatest minds, some of the greatest thinking and try to solve this issue which right now we're treating addiction punitively. The criminal justice system in America is treating addicts when it needs to be a more compassionate industry.

Dave: it's evil what they're doing.

Joe: Yeah. We're going to probably look back at this and say, "Wow, we used to throw people in cages because they were traumatized. Because like in America, there's 2.3 million people that are in prison. 0.91% of the US population. There's another 4.5 million to 4750000 thousand people that are on parole or probation. Depending on different towns, different cities, you can walk around and statistically three to five people are freaking criminals, and 80% to 90% of people that are arrested or thrown in jail, alcohol or drugs were involved. That's not including behavioral issues like the internet or porn or gambling or gaming or food or workaholism which is the respectable addiction. A lot of these people they're obsessive there's compulsivity. A lot of these people are really functional. I was very functional when I was an addict.

The key is, man if you can actually build businesses and do cool stuff while you're going through all these struggles. Imagine how much more effective, you would be if you could deal with this sort of pain?

Dave: You've really led that just an incredible life. When you decided to stand on stage in front of a room full of people who write larger checks to you. A lot of these people are also big donors and people running companies with tens or hundreds of millions of dollars revenue. And you stand there like, by the way, I didn't really tell you guys about these dark chapters of my life. What thought process did you go through before you first like, "I'm going to just ..." Come out of the closet might be the wrong word, but I'm going to just basically expose this part of my background to all these people. Were you worried?

Joe: I was incredibly worried because there's a lot of shame attached to it. A lot of these things opened me up to be picked apart and ridiculed and certainly the more I do this, I'm sure that can happen, and will happen and people are going to misinterpret stuff. I'm willing to use my platform and hundreds of thousands, millions of people downloaded my podcasts and stuff. I'm Richard Branson's largest fundraiser, I've a lot of access to people and most people in these positions they don't talk about this sort of stuff.

That's the exact reason I wanted to start talking about it, because that which is most private or at least feels most private is actually most public. I have some unique perspectives on stuff because in the early 2000s when my life was a train wreck after that situation where I raised that child. I then turned my company over to a woman to run it, who was a Jehovah Witness, and she looked me in the eye and said she loved me. She was a client that had turned her business around and she actually said, "Oh, I can

help you with your company. I've got a team of people that can help you. You've been so helpful to me." I turned my company over to this person.

About nine months into her running my company, I'm looking at financials and they don't make any sense. And I found out that she's embezzling money for me by writing checks to fake vendors she had set up. So, I had to take my company back, nearly destroyed my company that was barely holding on by a thread anyway, because I was barely holding on. Then I got into another just really toxic relationship. Then finally I was like, what the hell is going on in my life. I'm out of control." And so I joined a high profile group with people that were so famous they could not easily go to 12 step meetings and not get out it. I was in rooms with famous NFL players, NBA players, Academy Award winning actors and actresses, famous musicians, famous politicians. I got to see in my 30s people that were world famous, some of them literally running billion dollar companies, everyone in the world would know some of these people. When I say have won the World, maybe not in like third world countries and stuff, but some of these people had global fame.

I saw how broken they were and I realized that wow, the world can admire someone and not have any clue just how hard and how difficult ... I started just doing a lot of work. I started going to a lot of meetings. Now, I still kept running my business, I joined Strategic Coach with Dan Sullivan who's now one of my best friends. But I just kept at it. So, when people were like, "How did you do it?" I just never gave up." You see a crack in the asphalt outside and you'll see a little weed or little flower trying to grow through. The human spirit wants to grow. It doesn't want to give up. There's not a single addict out there, people, are like, "Well, they're destroying their life they want to do that." No. First off, no one wants to destroy their life. No one wants self-sabotaging behavior. No one wants to be lonely. No one wants to be riddled with depression and anxieties. These are all part of the human condition, and I'm incredibly sensitive to that, and I know what it's like to really want to do the right thing, do your best to do it and fail and fall in holes. Fortunately, I just happened to learn some skill sets that allowed me to actually have some financial success.

I love money. People that say money can't buy happiness haven't given enough of it away to people that actually appreciate it and that you really you know care with ... I buy happiness all the time with money. So, the making of money is a really valuable thing. If you like eating nice dinners, if you like going to movies, if you like going on vacations, money gives you that access. But money could also be a success trap. Because you give money to a person who hasn't basically discovered who they are, you can you can afford vices that some people cannot. I've seen people that literally have not dealt with underlying traumas, because I believe that addiction is a response to trauma and if you don't address that sort of thing.

How does that all do with Genius Network and all the stuff I do today? Well, I believe that any problem in the world can be solved with the right Genius Network. So, I started a really high profile group of business entrepreneurs. That's the group that you're in, Genius Network, and some very successful people. What I realized is that, you know, if I just connect other tribal leaders with each other, if I create a tribe of tribal leaders,

people that have unique abilities and capabilities, and create these discussions about business of where they can all get better and they could all make more money, but my trick is, I sell people what they want. I give them what they need. They all want to have more clients, they all want a better business. But what I want to do is help any entrepreneur that's fucked up to unfuck themselves. Not because I'm the guru. I don't want to be a sage on the stage. I want to be a guide on the side. I just want to be a curator, I just want to bring incredible people together and I want to really reinforce, be a giver. Because life gives to the giver and takes from the taker.

As you know, in my groups, I just try to be very open, very vulnerable because I want people to feel safe. I said this earlier, one of my favorite definitions of intimacy is intimacy, which was taught to me by a guy that I'd never met. But he spends his life, he's in his 70s just helping people to have sexual addictions, men and women. He said, intimacy is a mutual exploration of a shared safe place. Abuse is anything that takes away the safe place, and addictions are what we do to make ourselves feel good when we don't have a safe place.

So, I never felt safe in the world for the longest time. The issues are in the tissues, and once I started meditating, and once I started doing flow pots and once I started learning how to breathe and doing yoga and really getting into my body. Doing somatic experiences even doing experiences out of the country with Ayahuasca and Ibogaine. I'm the first person in the world to have before and after brain scans of doing Ibogaine in five [inaudible 00:49:14], which people can look that stuff up if they don't know about it-

Dave: We've talked about that on the show with Rick Doblin Maps and with Tim Ferris and all.

Joe: Rick Doblin's doing great work with Maps and everything. I've done a lot of trauma work but what I realized is like, wow, I used to be really scared all the time. I never felt safe in the world.

Dave: Did you know you're scared when you're scared? Or was it just like your condition?

Joe: I learned to ignore it to a degree or ... What I did for the longest time is I always felt like there was a dark cloud following me around. I was always in a hurry to get somewhere and as soon as I was there was in a hurry to be somewhere else. I couldn't sit still in my own skin. So, the devil makes work for idle hands as the cliché goes, and I just always kept busy because I was trying to outrun the dark cloud that was about to come over me and just start raining shit on my life again. I spent a lot of time doing that. So, I would go to 12 step meetings, I would go to therapy, I would ... I've spent over \$2 million on my own business and personal education. I've done a lot of therapy and just doing enough of it finally paid off.

But here's what I'll tell you, people are out there, "Well, don't I have money. I'm struggling." Most of the best stuff I've ever had cost nothing. Walking into a 12 step meeting. If you don't have any money, you can go to those meetings. It's people that they're there to share experience, strength and hope. There's all kinds of resources,

doing a yoga class, exercising, sometimes just a gym membership can be more valuable than therapists. So, getting in your body, doing the things. Look, you're on the cutting edge of discovery. 40 years of Zen that you do, there's a lot of things that with food. Food is an example, it's biochemical, your dopamine, serotonin, your hormones, just learning how to ... That totally changes your life.

There's four areas to really address to treat addiction. One is community. Nobody recovers an isolation. You need some sort of community, 12 steps, and if you're an anti-12 step person, there's plenty of communities. I actually have a site called [geniusrecovery.com](http://geniusrecovery.com), which lists every type of community, 12 steps and others and videos and podcast links. Currently, we're not even selling anything on the site. It's just purely-

Dave: Information.

Joe: Yeah. The first is community, the second is it's biochemical, it's food, its nutrition, it's exercise which they can learn all of that from you, reading your books, listening to different podcasts and stuff. The third is trauma work. The issues are in the tissue. So that's where EMDR and meditation and breathing. You take tobacco, the number one killer of people in the United States, the gateway drug is sugar. More people die of things related sugar, second would be tobacco, third would be alcohol and then fourth would be opiates currently.

Smokers is an example. When someone says you should quit smoking, well, to a smoker who that's sometimes the only breathing that they really ... The deep breathing they do is meditative. It actually is survival to them. Just learning how to breathe, most addicts they're very shallow breathers. So, doing somatic work, plant medicines can come and play. And then the fourth is the environment, the Rat Park studies which I'm sure you've talked about on your show.

Dave: An enriched environment that makes you not an addict because you have something interesting.

Joe: Exactly. So, those four areas. So, I just started doing that in my life. I started applying that and all of a sudden, I started feeling better. I told this story about when I hired a yoga instructor, she said to me ... I was going through grief from a breakup and this was a few years ago. She said, "If you do yoga three times a week, it'll change your body. If you do it every day it'll change your life." I thought to myself, I wonder what would happen if I did yoga every single day? I've done yoga, but I don't do it every day and I'm a busy guy, I travel like crazy. But I made a commitment, I'm going to do yoga, not a 10 minute YouTube video yoga, I'm going to do a real class with an instructor privately or go to a place

For 31 days I did yoga every single day. And then I took a break for like a day or two, and then I kept doing it. And over a 90 day period, I went I did 82 or 83 sessions of yoga and it completely changed the way I felt in my body, but in my mind. I actually just increased a little bit the space between reacting to life and responding to life. Most people,

especially if they're in an addictive state or self-destructive state, they're not responding to life, they're reacting to life. As you know, if they're not getting good nutrition, if they're constantly in snap mode that they're just stressed. So, what are the things ... When I talk about it in a business analogy, I say you're the million dollar racehorse. Everyone listening to this, wherever you're at in your life, think of yourself as a million dollar racehorse. If the million dollar racehorse was designed to win races, because when you win the race you win a million bucks, how would you treat that horse? You wouldn't shovel fast food down its throat, you wouldn't have the horse smoke cigarettes, you wouldn't have the horse get lack of sleep. You would give it the best training, the best food, the best nutrition, you would take care of that horse. Because if that horse is taken care of, that horse is going to win races.

You know what, I just started taking better care of myself. I learned how to meditate. I learned how to do some things that I wasn't doing, and more importantly I unlearned a bunch of shit because unlearning is more important than learning and, I now share all this stuff with all these entrepreneurs and all these successful people, and I've built this incredible business around it, because people they want authenticity. People want safety. They want to feel like they're connected. So, now, I just wanted to try to connect people, and that's what I do.

Dave: Joe, if someone came to you tomorrow, whether or not they have trauma or an addiction, but just a person said, "Joe, I want perform better at everything I do as a human being." What are the three most important piece of advice you'd have for them?

Joe: Well, I would ask, and this would apply differently to different people. I would say, "What needs solved? What is your biggest problem, and how do you solve one problem that solves 100 other problems?" For instance, if someone's problem is they can't sleep well, I would say, "You need to solve the sleeping issue." When it comes to reading books, when it comes to anything, ask yourself the question, what the solved? Depending on that, for one, if they're not doing any sort of fitness or exercise ... Food allows you to cope, sleep allows you to cope. There's this proverb that he who has their health has 1000 dreams, he or she who does not have their health has only one. The reason anyone has ambitions or goals or desires to get better, is they're not laid up in a hospital bed. They're not chronically broken.

If you are in a state where you actually can dream and have ambitions and you're not in chronic pain, you're not in a hospital, then you actually have to sit and think, "Okay, well, what am I doing to facilitate my health?" I would certainly have them focus on exercise and health first, and I would make sure they're not fatigued. So, that's the first thing.

Secondly, I deal with a lot of entrepreneurs. I want to be a hero to entrepreneurs and people that have addictions. So, as our friend Dan Sullivan says, entrepreneurs that are too tightly scheduled cannot transform. I would find whatever you need to do in your life that will give you space. I tell this to ... Because most of my world is successful people that are very busy. Those are at least the ones who pay me money. I've said this

a lot of times, do yoga every day for a month. Go and get a massage every day. I know it sounds crazy, but have you ever like-

Dave: Yeah, it matters.

Joe: Most people that are successful, you can spend \$60 to \$100 on a massage, you can spend more if you want. You do that every single day, and they're like, "Well, that could be a lot of money. I can spend \$ 3000 to \$6000 if you're going to go to expensive hotels and get massages, but you know what you're going to do with that time while you're taking your body down? I would do enormous amount of self-care and I would cut all ties with dishonest, negative and lazy people. Only align yourself with people that are aligned with you. Your environment matters. Your phone is an example. People say, "Get off your phone." But they don't realize that when you tell like a young person or person to get off their phone, we have become so integrated it's no longer a phone. We have outsourced our brain. It's where we drive. Most people can't drive anywhere that they never been to before without looking at an electronic GPS that's going to take them there, or finding restaurants by looking at Yelp or someplace to find ... We communicate and so much of our life is integrated into our technology.

So, people really need to have space. I would encourage people to read a book like Deep Work by Cal Newport, and literally, do what you need to do electronically, but don't tie your life into it. Because marketing today is algorithms, and marketing today is all of these technology companies that employ attention engineers and they're trying to suck up every bit of attention they can. So, I would give yourself space. All this is basic stuff, go in nature, exercise, eat well, get yourself sunshine, get yourself proper sleep and probably apply all the bio hacking stuff.

Here's what I would say, because I know we have to wrap up here. We have a whole group of people wait for us for dinner downstairs, as we're doing this. There's a lot of different people that are offering biohacking and they're offering sort of things, but if you resonate with a person, don't read. I've read a shit ton of books. Don't just read a book, master book. If you like what Dave Asprey is actually teaching, don't read a million books, don't join a bunch of different groups, don't listen to 50 different podcasts, it's obsessive. Go really deep and actually apply the stuff that you're learning. You're better off mastering one book that works, and actually trying the stuff. Don't read this for entertainment.

When people say 12 step groups don't work, it's like I went to meetings, it didn't work. Well, I say to people, it's not an attendance group, it's a step group. You don't join a gym and sit on the bench and not lift the weights and say gyms don't work. So, if someone's following in your advice, they should actually apply your advice, and they should not get distracted by things are going to give you conflicting ... They can give it a shot and if Dave's stuff doesn't work then jump into something else, but give it a real shot. And the thing is, is people just jump around. They go very shallow with everything. My advice is go deep, go deep with people that matter, go deep with advice that matters, it's your life, it's important go deep with it.

Dave: Joe, thanks for your work and just thanks for being willing to be exceptionally vulnerable and just talk about all the stuff that you've been through and to just demonstrate you can be successful and happy no matter what you've been through. And that people who are successful oftentimes have the same things. I think there's something that very few successful people talk about. We might talk about it over dinner when we know no one's listening and all that, but you're just out there in public and still just full of compassion and love and giving. It's very unusual and takes a special kind of courage. So, thank you for doing that act of service for people and thanks for Genius Network. It's absolutely changed how I think about my business and what I do to serve people.

A lot of times you talk about how that one guy changed things for you when you're out jet skiing. And you sitting down at the first Genius Network [inaudible 01:00:45] man I thought I was thinking big but really there's another level and you help me see it. So, thank you.

Joe: Absolutely, thank you.

Dave: Where can people find out geniusnetwork.com and where-

Joe: You know, Joe Polish my name, you can Google me, but you know joepolish.com links to a bunch of stuff and things related to addiction, go to Genius Recovery. We're really building that out and that's my whole goal and my mission right now is to really build that out. I hope people out themselves. In the past, people had to be anonymous because there was a lot of judgment and a lot of persecution, but you cannot punish pain out of people, and you're not going to punish pain out of yourself. If you're fighting the silent battle, remember that you're sick as your secrets and there are people out there that will help you and seek it out.

I hope that more people will come out and say, "Hey, yeah I've been successful or my life's a train wreck, but I'm challenging you to do these things because the world needs to have a more compassionate approach." I really appreciate you giving me a platform to actually share this message and for also being who you are.

Dave: Thanks.

Joe: I wish that everyone that's listening to us the very best, and I hope whatever we talked about is valuable to them and they go do good work.

Dave: If you liked today's episode, you know, to do. Go to geniusrecovery.com, if it could be helpful for you, or you go listen to Joe's podcast, which is I Love Marketing?

Joe: Yeah, ilovemarketing.com. 10xtalk.com with Dan Sullivan and geniusnetwork.com. They can find out all about that stuff.

Dave: Nice. If you don't do that, just do something nice for yourself, do something nice for someone else. It actually matters. It makes you perform better as human being too.

Joe: I have a new book out to that's coming out by the time you listen this.

Dave: Okay, let's talk about your book just real quick. Miracle Morning with Hal Elrod, who's also been on the show, but this is Miracle Morning For Addiction Recovery.

Joe: Yeah, with Hal, and Anna David and myself. That's our first addiction recovery book and that'll just give you a whole process in the morning of how you can apply it if you're struggling with addiction or if you have a family member, friend is.

Dave: Awesome. Thanks Joe.

Joe: Thank you so much Dave.