Announcer:	Bulletproof Radio, a state of high performance.
Dave Asprey:	You're listening to Bulletproof Radio with Dave Asprey. Today's cool fact of the day is that, about a third of American adults sleep less than six hours a night. According to a brand new, very broad survey of about 400,000 respondents, about 32.9% reported that short sleep in 2017 up from 28% in 2004. What they're finding is that, people are sleeping significantly less from 2013 onward. And the trend is increased most among black and Hispanic people, most are there than among white people, which I'm not sure why. And there's a 15% increase representing more than 9 million people about the population in New York City. And it's possible people are sleeping less than what they reported, because people overestimate the number of hours they sleep. If you sleep tracking like I do, you might say, "Oh, I was in bed for six and a half or seven hours." But you might have only gotten six hours of sleep, because you woke up or because it took a while to go to sleep and things like that.
Dave Asprey:	The researchers who did this study believe that it's probably stress or overuse of technology. And I got to say, those bright white screens, the rise of the iPhone in 2009, may have been related to this. Not just the iPhone, but all of the things with big screens like that. And according to the American Academy of Sleep Medicine and sleep research, seven or more hours per night is the recommended sleep time. According to the Bulletproof, Dave Asprey perspective, people who sleep more than eight hours a night die more than people who sleep six and a half hours a night. So, if you need more than eight hours of sleep, get it and deal with your health, because healthy People need the lesser sleep.
Dave Asprey:	You guys know that I'm a master of foreshadowing, but today I failed miserably. Because, I'm also embracing my ability to fail, because today we are not going to be talking about sleep at all, we instead are going to be talking with an organizational psychologist named Adam Grant, who's one of the world's 10 most influential management thinkers. He's on the fortune 40 under 40 list, and a top-rated professor at Wharton, a New York Times columnist, a TED Talk favorite and just an amazing guy who's very well known for looking at how humans interact. And we're going to learn more about that side of biohacking today from Adam, where we really just dig in and understand, what's going on at work? How do human dynamics happen? Adam, welcome to the show.
Adam Grant:	Thank you. It's good to be here, Dave.
Dave Asprey:	All right. You became a tenured professor at Wharton while still in your 20s, were you mistreated as a child or something? Why are you an overachiever?
Adam Grant:	I remember, I'm sure there are many dark explanations, but the thing that stands out from my childhood was, I remember when I was a kid, my mom would always say, "No matter what grade you get, as long as you tried your hardest, I'll be proud of you." And then, she would add, "But if you didn't get an A, oh no, you didn't try your hardest." So, there it is, here we are.

Dave Asprey:	All right, well, it worked, right?
Adam Grant:	Mission accomplished.
Dave Asprey:	Well, speaking of mission, I actually don't really believe you're there. Your first book, *Give and Take*, why helping others drive our success is really about why that act of service to others is something that's motivating and as a teacher, I mean, I taught for five years at university California. And as a teacher, if you're invested in the success of your students, it's exceptionally rewarding. Is that really what's driving all of the different things that you're doing to share the knowledge you have it? Is it that mission to help others? Or is it something else going on?
Adam Grant:	I think we're always driven by multiple motives. But I definitely, I was one of those college students who hated the question, "What are you going to do for your career?" And actually, I hated it as a kid, too. There's almost no worst question you could ask me than, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" Because, I felt like, I didn't want to be one thing, I wanted to do many things. And I think, part of my uncertainty when I was in college was not knowing where I could find a job that was both interesting to me and meaningful in impact that would have on others. And so, I think, as long as I can remember, I've been fueled by both of those motivations, to do work that I think is interesting and achieve my goals, but do that in a way that's helpful to others.
Adam Grant:	And so, there are times when those align beautifully, that's one of the things I love about writing and podcasting and speaking, is when you hit on an idea that you're fascinated by, that other people find interesting or useful, it feels like, it's sort of a win-win. But there are also moments when those motives diverge like, when I'm staring at email number 300 and thinking, "There is no way that answering this email is going to do me any good whatsoever, and I'm really bored by it. But maybe it'll help others and now I have a choice to make."
Dave Asprey:	Got it. That's a very balanced way of motivating yourself. But don't you still get burned out? Okay, now there's 307 emails and this one could help others, do you get caregiver fatigue? Is this a common problem for you or for the executives that you studied in your work?
Adam Grant:	I think we all go through it. I've definitely had moments of definitely the emotional exhaustion, that gets described in burnout a lot. And one of the reasons that I started studying this dynamic was, I was struck by the fact that there were some really generous people who were highly energized, and others who were exhausted. And I had been on both sides of that and really wanted to understand the difference. And the research I wanted to do has been really useful in my own life. I found that one of the easiest ways to burn yourself out and go through that kind of caregiver fatigue is to sacrifice yourself for others, and say, "Look, I'm going to put other people first, and I'm going to neglect my own priorities and well-being, which is a recipe for disaster."

Adam Grant:	And what I saw with really successful givers was, they had ambitions for how they wanted to help others, but they also realized they needed to exercise self-care. And so, I've tried to become more thoughtful about the helping I do and make choices around, who I help? And when I help? And how I help? That hopefully will allow me to be supportive of others, but not do it at a major personal cost.
Dave Asprey:	You're on the board of the Lean In Foundation. A very big, almost like a movement around just leaning in and not putting yourself first, isn't it? How do you reconcile what you just said with telling people to lean in, which is almost seems like self-sacrifice?
Adam Grant:	I think, a lot of it depends on how people define lean in and there are definitely as many definitions of it as there are people who use the term. When Sheryl Sandberg coined the term, what she was trying to encourage women to do in particular was to not lean back, and say, "Look, you may feel like there are societal expectations or stereotypes that say women are supposed to be caring and communal, but it's actually okay for women to be ambitious. And so, if there are leadership roles that you want to pursue, if there are ways that you would like to step up, don't self-limit." And I think that it's a particularly interesting and important message from a gender perspective because, the evidence is pretty clear that women are more prone to burn out at work than men are.
Adam Grant:	I'm sure you've seen it too, but women are more likely to get stuck with the office housework, where they basically get "voluntold" told to take notes in meetings, to organize events, and they do all this extra work that's invisible, unnoticed and not rewarded. And not only that, they get penalized more if they say no, because they're expected to do it. And they get taken for granted then if they say yes, and so, it's a big double bind. And I think we all have a personal responsibility, and also, an organizational responsibility to distribute that workload much more fairly.
Dave Asprey:	I think a contributing factor to that is that, at home, still, women do a lot more of the household work, I've seen a bunch of surveys about that. So, you've got a heavier load at home, and then, you're getting some of the stuff at work. So I would totally support you there and if what Sheryl means with her lean in philosophy is more of that, stand up and don't give in, that makes a lot of sense and that is in alignment with what you're talking about, is serving others but not doing it to the extent that you get rid of self-care.
Adam Grant:	Yeah, I think that's so important. When I was working on Give Take, I guess, I was searching the world to find examples of people who had ways of helping others that didn't require total self-sacrifice. And one of my favorites came from an entrepreneur named Adam Rifkin who said, "What I've learned over time is, I just need to do more five-minute favors." And Adam has been a super successful entrepreneur, he started three companies that he sold and was able to retire in his 30s, and yet, was known as this extremely generous guy along the

way. And he said, "Look, I think the mistake that a lot of people make is they feel pressure to be Mother Teresa or Gandhi, when in fact, you can often make these micro loans of your time or your skills or your connection to others."

Adam Grant: And so, I think one thing that a lot of us can do is say, "All right, I could probably do a few more five-minute favors each week, and, sometimes, that's as simple as making an introduction between two people who could benefit from knowing each other." It might be sharing a bit of knowledge, "Hey, here's an article that I think might have some insight on the question you posed." It could be going out of your way to recognize somebody whose work has gone unnoticed. I love one thing I learned from my mom on the giving side is, when somebody provides really great customer service, she would always write a letter to their boss, going out of her way to recognize them, and I think that's an amazing example of a five-minute favor.

Dave Asprey: I love that, that's such a powerful thing. And it does feel hard, I'm at a point now where I get masses of people who want the five-minute favor, enough that it would be multiple lifetimes probably every month if I listened to everything. But I also have a sincere desire to help, so I've had to become much more conscious of how I do that. I've asked my assistants to help me filter those, so that, when I do have five minutes to help, I'm doing the most I can. Is that idea of outsourcing the filtering to decide which five-minute favors to do? Is that something that works? Is that something that you've seen among successful people?

Adam Grant: I guess it depends who you outsource it to. But yeah, I think that in general it's helpful because, there's a bunch of research suggesting that, we actually give better advice to others than we take for ourselves. And every time I mentioned that when I'm teaching, my students laugh uncomfortably and I realize, "Oh, maybe I'm doing it right now." But I think that, one of the mistakes we make is, when we try to make our own decisions, we get stuck in the weeds. And we think about, "Okay, what would be an appropriate response right now? How do I make sure that I really bend over backwards to help this person?" Whereas, when we make decisions for other people, we're much more likely to take a step back and consider the big picture and say, "Okay, wait a minute, every yes that Dave says is going to be a no to somebody else. And so, if we can say no to the following five requests, we're actually freeing up his time to engage with people, where he can contribute in the most meaningful and unique ways."

Adam Grant: And so, I think, having somebody to take that 30,000-foot view, who knows your priorities, and is able to help you sort through them, is immensely helpful.

Dave Asprey: How do the people that you've seen in your research and in your teaching and in your books, your TEDtalks and everything, I mean, you've studied this more than anyone else I know. How do the people who say no avoid the backlash from people? Because, I've found that as I become just higher level and busier with Bulletproof and writing books and podcasts, and doing what I do to move the needle, there's a bunch of people who feel, like, "I didn't get my five

minutes, I feel abandoned." It triggers childhood stuff for them, and they get a little bit bitter, it's for lack of a better word. How do you see leaders and the people who are going on designing meaningful lives and meaningful jobs and those things, how are they solving that problem? Because I haven't solved it yet.

Adam Grant: Neither have I. It's an ongoing struggle but I'll tell you what I found most useful as I've studied this and as I've observed a lot of different people trying to deal with it. I think the first thing is, it is way easier to say no if you're offering something else still in return. I'll frequently, when somebody reaches out and I don't have enough room in my calendar to add another meeting. What I will right back is, I'll say, "If I could be helpful by email, I'm happy to." Often, I get asked a lot as an organizational psychologist for career advice, and I don't even feel comfortable giving career advice to students I've had for a whole semester in class, let alone to a complete stranger.

Adam Grant: And so, what I'll often do, is write back and say, "Look, I can't give tailored advice to people I haven't gotten to know really well, but here are the few books that I've read on the topic that I think are especially helpful. And then also, if I can weigh in on any questions about studies and worker psychology that might be relevant or if I can suggest people in a particular industry that you're thinking about who have gone on record thinking about this in an interesting way, let me know." And then, it doesn't feel like a no, it feels like a, "Hey wait, here's a different way that I could try to be helpful." And I think, that sometimes makes a difference, have you done any of that?

Dave Asprey: Sometimes, and it's really a question of judgment and time. I get a lot of requests from CEOs, those people I know pretty well. They're not close friends but people I really like and respect and have spent several hours with. Saying, "Hey, could you just sit down for an hour and help me crack my health problems." A, it's probably going to take more than an hour, and B, I have all my available free hours allocated for my family right now because I'm traveling and insane amount for Bulletproof. And I've got to get the kid time and the husband time. And so, you can tell them that and some people respect it, but what I ended up doing, was I put together that, this is the CEO only kind of insider's guide to what I actually do as an executive, that's different than what I do as a normal human being with normal requirements. Because, a pro athlete, is going to have one set of things and there's just a different cognitive and attention load that I find for executives is different.

Dave Asprey: So I'm like, "Here's my notes on that." And then, I'll do things like that. But it's a constant challenge, just like you're saying, and it's born out of my desire to be of service to as many people as I can, and not burn out along the way.

Adam Grant: Yeah, I think that makes a lot of sense. And I think the biggest mistake that I've made personally is, I've wanted to say yes as often as possible. And I found, I've always liked to be the person who under promising and over delivers, from time to time, I found myself in situations where I'm doing the opposite. And so, I hate this feeling of saying yes, and then, coming back and saying, "Just kidding, sorry,

I can't do it." And so, what I've tried to remember is, it's much better to just let people down gently upfront, than it is to disappoint them after agreeing. And so, I guess, the only advice I'd give to anybody who's busy and having trouble saying no, it's just to say, look, it's much kinder actually to give a swift no, than it is to say yes, and then, drop the ball later.

Dave Asprey: Oh yeah, it is much higher integrity to do that. And the one nuance there that earlier in my career I would say, "I'm sorry, I can't do that." Which is always a lie and that's in my new book, Game Changer is about weasel words. And here's the deal, if you say, "I'm not going to do that." Surprisingly, the person who hears that, usually feels more honored because you're truthful with them. Versus, if you said, "I can't do that." When they're like, "Actually, you could. You don't want to." And then, they make up a story about why you didn't want to, and you like, "I'm not going to do that, I'm working on some other stuff." And I just found that I got a more positive response, and probably, more respect from just being really truthful. "Would love to, won't." What do you think about that?

Adam Grant: I've definitely found that as well. It may just be a word and thing, but I get what you can relate to. But I think that, every once in a while, there's somebody who just will not take no for an answer. And you start out with a very polite no, and then, they ask again, and a second time, and a third and a fourth. I had this happen in a couple years ago where somebody was asking to meet, and the request was completely outside of my expertise. I mean, I could not be more irrelevant or unqualified to weigh in. And so, I just finally wrote back and said, "I've been trying really hard to get better at saying no, thanks for the practice." And he went away, I was shocked.

Dave Asprey: That is way more nuanced. On my Wharton senior trip, when we were graduating, we went to China. And, I'm a six foot four, white guy. And so, as I'm walking through the streets of one city or another, the people want to sell yourself on the street, they see me from box away because I stick out above everyone else. And they come running, and sometimes there's five or 10 people trying to sell me stuff. And I learned how to say in Chinese, how to say no, thank you. No, no, and how to say the impolite no. And, I had this one guy who just followed me for 10 blocks trying to sell me some statue I was never going to buy, and he couldn't take no for an answer. So finally, I looked at my friend and I said, "Tell me how to say, I will kick your ass in Chinese." And so, of course, my friend starts laughing, and she's like, Dave, okay, and she teaches me.

Dave Asprey: So, I turned out to the guy, and I said it, I wish I remember how to say it. And he looks me suddenly like this, look of like, "Really?" And then, said something and went away. And I asked her, "What does he say?" And after she got off the ground laughing, she said he said, "You don't have to be a barbarian about it." And, what I realized was, my ability to communicate no in Chinese was pretty crappy. So sometimes, it was about the nuance of how you say it. But sometimes, like you said, there's someone who's, they don't want to hear it. I don't know, you just brought up that story from me, looks like we're talking about Wharton.

Adam Grant:	That's so funny. Well, it sounds like you got what you deserved there.
Dave Asprey:	I did, it was funny. And I did not buy the statue, for the record. Now, you talk about something that I think listeners would love to know more about. You talk about job design and meaningful work. I think, when you're starting out in your career, I mean, you have the advantage, you're a Wharton professor. I got to go to an Ivy League school, and I had a good start in my career, which makes it easier now for me to say, "I'm going to design my job, I'm a CEO." But, how do you, when you're getting going? Okay, I'm a barista, I'm just building up my career. How do people make it meaningful as they accumulate the power and the skills and the experience, in order to go out and say, "I want to design my job?" Or, do we just have to suffer for a while?
Adam Grant:	No, I think you've already highlighted the first point, which is, oftentimes, you get much more latitude to tinker with your own job once you've proven your contribution. I have a lot of students who take on entry level jobs and they want to know right away, "Okay, how can I turn this job into my passion?" And the answer is, you need to be just awesome at your job first. You need to excel at the assigned tasks that are given before you can suddenly say, "Well, I want to reinvent what my role is here." And there's a whole bunch of research showing, this dates back over half a century that, when you stand out in your job and especially when you exceed expectations, you earn what would get called idiosyncrasy credits. Which is, basically, the latitude to deviate from expectations and do things a little bit differently. And so, I think that's the first step.
Adam Grant:	I think the second step, this comes from research that my colleagues, Amy Wrzesniewski and Jane Dutton did on a job crafting, is to say, look, there are very few jobs that were actually designed personally for you. When somebody writes a job description, it's made to be a kind of one size fits all, and so, you do want to customize to your job or become a bit of an architect of it. And one way you can do that is, you can go and approach a couple people who might be more senior than you in the organization and ask them if they have any problems that they need solved. Or, if they have any advice on how you can take a set of skills or strengths you think you have and make them useful to the organization. And if you ask enough people that question, you start to get invitations to work on a side project, to get involved in a team that you weren't currently part of. And if your input is valuable there, then you get to do more of that kind of work over time.
Dave Asprey:	There's one of my favorite books that no one's read about brains, is called, *On Intelligence.* And this is from the guy who was a creator of the PalmPilot. The first, early, early, early ancestor of what's today an iPhone, or at least a smartphone. And, he talks about pattern matching and filtering in the book, and what are-
Adam Grant:	Oh, this is the Jeff Hawkins book.

Dave Asprey: Yes, the Jeff Hawkins, you've read it?

Adam Grant: You know what? It's been a while, but go on.

Dave Asprey: Okay, it is the Jeff Hawkins book. I actually used to work at Three Com when we acquired PalmPilot. So, I briefly met him and Donna Dubinsky and all. And, what I learned from that book is that, our brains are pattern matching machines and we predict the future microseconds in advance. And we only notice things that don't match our prediction.

Adam Grant: I knew you were going to say that.

Dave Asprey: There you go, you predicted it, I love it. You're psychic, then. But you noticed, so maybe no. But what's happening as an employer and someone who's working with a boss or with partners, or even employees, if you do what they expect, you're going to actually not necessarily be noticed. And if you screw it up, they're going to notice and it's not going to be a good thing. But if you stand out because you did it very well, and I mean, the lowest level jobs. I mean, if you're in the back of the kitchen doing dishes, and you shop on time, you're reliable and you show a duty of care. You stack things right and you have this attitude, it stands out because it's not necessarily what your boss would have expected. And it's that little desire for excellence that I think triggers your growth in your career and gives you that opportunity to work into designing your job. Do you like that theory? I mean, does that match your experience of teaching this and experiencing it?

Adam Grant: It does in a really interesting way. The research I mentioned earlier on job crafting, one of the points it makes, is that, we're all active job crafters. And there're small changes that we make every day, adding a task here, maybe delegating something that we're not that interested in or where somebody more junior than us might benefit from trying it out. Maybe interacting with a certain person that we really enjoy more than the job required, or try to avoid an interaction with a really unpleasant person. And those are all tiny moments of job crafting. And, what I've gotten really interested in is, is how do you do that at scale? And so, one of the things I did last year when I started my WorkLife podcast with TED was, I said, "All right, I'm going to go into some workplaces that take some of these ideas to the extreme, and try to figure out what the rest of us can learn from them.

Adam Grant: And one of those workplaces was a tomato paste plant called Morning Star, where they've operated successfully for three decades. They bring in hundreds of millions of dollars a year in revenue, and they've never had a single boss. Which is crazy and way, way before holacracy. So, I was just interested in, there're probably some practices they have that I would not apply to my work life. But, all the things they do that might be relevant. And my favorite takeaway from Morning Star, which accounts for a huge amount of the tomato paste in the U.S. One of the things they do is, they say, "Look, it's hard to give everybody the freedom to invent their own job, which could quickly devolve into chaos if

nobody has a boss." And so, what they do is, at the beginning of each year, they ask people to write a letter describing the job that they want to do this year. And it's amazing to have that freedom, but they want to make sure it aligns with the organizational mission.

Adam Grant: And so, you have to make a case in your letter, for how the job that you want to do is going to advance the organization's goals. And then, you have to take that letter to the five or 10 people who you work with most closely and get their bind. And then, they all do the same thing and I came away thinking, I'm going to do this in every team I'm part of because, one, I want people to know what I think my contribution is. Two, I want to know what they want to do. And then, three, if we get aligned on that, it's a lot easier then to make sure that all of the key roles are covered, and everybody is adding value.

Dave Asprey: It's almost related to what Ray Dalio just wrote about in his operating system for companies book, where he talks about believability. And where, if you know these are the areas where you really truly add value, and these are the areas where you're average, and these are areas where you have nothing to say. If you know that and you communicate it with other people and they agree with it, then all of a sudden, they can better use you and you can just show up at the right time in the right meetings in the right way, and not sit in the meeting and say, "I know nothing about this topic, but I'm supposed to be here," therefore in there.

Adam Grant: Yeah. I spent a bunch of time inside Bridgewater and I think the biggest thing that I've learned from Ray, I'm not afraid at least, is, I really never thought about waiting people's input by believability before. I thought, okay, the way to be an empowering leader is to hear everybody's voices. And I remember Ray just say, "Well, that's a bunch of baloney because not all voices are equally valid." And you don't want to run a democracy in the company, you want to try to become a meritocracy, and yet, most companies don't get there. Because, they're too busy paying attention to the most powerful person in the room or the person with the most seniority or tenure, as opposed to the person who has the best idea.

Adam Grant: And so, if we can find out who has credibility in each domain that we're making decisions in, we can give those people's opinions more weight in those domains. What I've tried to do on that is, now when I work with teams, instead of saying, "Look, who's in charge of this team?" I want to know who has the best expertise on each issue and let them drive the conversation on that issue, or better yet, let them frame the conversation, and then, hear from everybody else.

Dave Asprey: It's a powerful way to look at things, and I didn't know I was doing this but as I became, what's now a professional biohacker. When I was looking at, how do I lose my hundred pounds? How do I recover my health? And then, how do I do more with my biology than you're supposed to? I realized that there's a huge number in the medical industry, a huge number of people with differing opinions. And I eventually developed a filter of believability for someone who's

in a medical profession and healing profession. So, you look at it not as a skeptic, but just says, "Okay, what have you actually done? And are you following the same script as everyone else? In which case, a basic Google replace you, or do you have some special believable skill where you can demonstrate it?" And I even apply that to do our interview someone on Bulletproof Radio. It's all about believability, and if you're going to take input, I learned a lot from that.

Dave Asprey: And it sounds like you're saying, as a piece of advice for people listening is, become believable in an area and make sure people know what that area is, and that can help you stand out.

Adam Grant: What's interesting about that is, I think that, sometimes, when people become successful in a domain, they overestimate how believable they are in other domains.

Dave Asprey: Yeah, ego.

Adam Grant: Yeah, it's like, hey, I think my favorite example of this was Steve Jobs investing in the Segway and predicting it was going to be to the car, what the car was to the horse and buggy, more or less. And great that Jobs knew a lot about computers and a lot about movies, and ultimately, a lot about whole bunch of technology. But most of his expertise was more in the software world than the hardware world. He certainly had not had any experience in the transportation world at all, and I think what happens often is, people, they achieve some success, and then, they learn to trust their gut. And they say, "All right, look, I'm going to make decisions based on my intuition." And I think that's incredibly dangerous. I think, you don't want to follow your intuition, you want to test your intuition. And if you break down where intuition actually comes from, intuition is just subconscious pattern recognition, right?

Adam Grant: And so, what you want to ask them is, okay, all the experience I've had that leads me to recognize patterns, those patterns diagnostic for the situation that I'm in right now. And it may well be, that, the patterns of the past or the patterns of one world that you've been a part of, are terrible predictors of the current one or of the future.

Dave Asprey: I'm a computer hacker tech, horizontal scalability cloud computing expert, and I run a coffee company, right? And human performance and we're more than coffee but, I had to really to get comfortable the fact that I know how to make a really good cup of coffee and dissect this, but I don't know this industry at all. And Bulletproof has been really successful, I think, in part because, at least, I'm telling myself that I've done a reasonably good job of saying, "I don't know anything about most of this, so I better hire really smart people."

Adam Grant: I would like to see more leaders recognize where they don't know anything, and they need to surround themselves with people who do. I think that there's

always a ... Well, not I shouldn't say always, I'll say that differently. I think there's frequently a tradeoff between expertise and creativity here, there's some research on what's called cognitive entrenchment, which shows that, the deeper your expertise goes in a field, the more you start to take for granted assumptions that ought to be questioned. And I think that's one of the reasons we see so much disruption from the outside as opposed to the inside, because, you've seen this in the tech world over and over again, the incumbents. The incumbents are basically operating on assumptions that don't apply to the world as it exists.

Adam Grant: They were built in a different world, and so, it's way easier to see that if you're a novice from the outside and say, "Wait a minute, why do we believe that a video has to be rented physically? Why can't we just watch it on a computer? Why do we believe that you can only make money selling film? What if we had a digital camera?" I think those insights, the funny thing is, like, you see those insights bubble up at places like Blockbuster and Kodak, and then, they fail to act on them and it's outsiders who are much more likely to run with them.

Dave Asprey: Now, you actually wrote a book called *Originals: How Non-conformists Move the World*. And you just talked about Steve Jobs and people like that. But, if everyone is a non-conformist, everyone is working to stand out and make their job designed for their own skills and believability and things like that, how do we sort that out? I mean, there's billions and billions of people on the planet, is there really a hope for that? Or should you just raise your hand and say, "I'm not a non-conformist, I going to find something that I love and just go with it." How does that work if everyone is trying to follow the same algorithm?

Adam Grant: That's a really good question. I have to say, I don't worry about that a ton, because, if you were to draw a curve, and on one side of the curve you have too much originality, and on the other side of the curve you have too little, I think most workplaces are in the too little realm. I think, there's evidence for example that, if you ask people about their best idea, their boldest suggestion they've ever had at work, their most promising creative direction. You see that over 80% of people never did anything about it. Most of them didn't even speak up, and some of that is because of fear. More often, though, it's because of futility. Even if nothing bad is going to happen to me if I speak up, I just don't believe that anybody is going to take my idea seriously, or, want to run with it, and so, why bother to try. And I think because of that, we lose out on so many valuable ideas and I experienced this personally.

Adam Grant: I had the great fortune of co-founding what our student newspaper called, Harvard's first online social network in 1999. At the time America Online was big, and a couple of classmates and I started searching profiles to see if we could find other people who are going to be in our class when we were high school seniors, and it eventually, turned into a big email list. And by the time we arrived on campus, we had connected over an eighth of the entering class. And then we got there, and we said, "Well, now we know each other face to face and we're all in Cambridge, why do we need the online social network?" And we

shut it down. And five years later, Mark starts Facebook in what turned out to be the house next door to mine. So, I think many of us have been in that position of having an idea that had real potential and either being afraid to pursue it or not thinking it would go anywhere and not seeing the potential. And yeah, I think that's a missed opportunity for a lot of people and I'm not saying we should always be non-conformist.

Adam Grant: What I am saying, though, is that, I think most organizations are conformity machines, they're designed to stamp out original thinking. And I think that's one of the reasons that, it's so common for organizations to go out of business. And so, I want to figure out, if you're an individual with creative ideas, how do you champion them effectively? And then, if you're a leader, how do you build a culture that welcomes original ideas, and then, makes them a reality?

Dave Asprey: I really like that. I really like that perspective. You said something on social media recently, you said, "Productivity isn't a virtue, it's a means to an end. It's only virtuous if the end is worthy. Don't worship at the altar of hustle. Don't boast about grit. Strive to be productive in generosity, creativity and integrity." Now, here's the question, does Gary Vee have a price on your head?

Adam Grant: I got a really funny texts from Gary a few months ago, and I'll answer your question in a second. But this, I think this context will help to make sense of my response. I got a text, out of the blue from him, which said, basically, he said that, "Hey, how can I be helpful to you?" And I was like, "Oh, hey, Gary, why do you ask out of the blue?" And he said, "Well, I support winners, and you're a winner, not just in business, but as a man." And I wrote back and I said, "Thank you. No one has ever called me a man before."

Dave Asprey: I like Gary. He's funny.

Adam Grant: I find him hilarious, and I think that Gary often captures attention by pushing ideas to their extreme and painting characters traits, right? And so, I think one perversion of Gary's philosophy is, there are people out there who belong to a cult of hustle, and think that it's good thing inherently, it's virtuous to be a hard worker. And I think it's important to take a step back and say, well, doesn't it depend on what you're working toward? I don't see any virtue, for example, in becoming like, I guess, like the king or queen of Marie Kondo, right? If you've mastered the process of decluttering your house, and no one else lives in your house, I don't consider that a virtue, right? What's the benefit to others? How does this matter for anyone beyond you? And so, my point was just to say, look, before we get obsessed with hustling or being greedy, we should think about whether the goals we're pursuing really matter. And then, try to take that work ethic that is so valuable in any lot of work, and apply it to something that really counts.

Adam Grant: And, I've not heard from Gary on that particular tweet, but I think, I'm going to send it to him and see if it makes him angry. I think he might agree with it, Actually.

Dave Asprey: I think he might. I mean, he really talks about long term view and some of this, one of his quotes is, "you eat crap for 18 months to eat caviar for years." Sometimes, you have to have enough grit to push that new non-conformist idea past the naysayers and things and there's some resilience in there. But I honestly believe that hard work is not a virtue at all. I'm a computer scientist, and I can tell you that, if I can get the job done with 5% load on my CPU, it's elegant. And if I can get the job done with 100% load on my CPU, then I'm a bad programmer. So, if I'm a programmer of my life and of my efforts, working hard is only of merit, when you're working hard with the highest possible efficiency. And I just find that, I spend a lot of my life wasting so much effort that, for me, the highest virtue is laziness.

Dave Asprey: Where laziness, it's defined as, I spent the minimum necessary time and energy achieving the goal, which freed up energy that I could use to become a better human being, to help other people, to be a better dad. But just working hard for the sake working hard, it seems like environmentally wasteful, if the environment is the time you have here on Earth.

Adam Grant: Oh, it's such an interesting metaphor for capturing it. I think that, in some ways, this whole hustle culture is why people are overworked. You have lots of leaders who have built work hard play hard cultures and said, "Look, you can only be successful, if you work 70, 80, 90, hours a week." And I look at that, and I say, okay, look, there are some tasks, where the learning curve is really steep, and if you work more hours, you probably, if you're learning techniques are good, you'll probably climb up that curve faster. There are definitely some periods of urgency in any project where you have to drop everything and work. But, if I'm hiring, I want to hire the person who can get the job done just as well in fewer hours and finds a better way to do it. And I never would have called that laziness, but I think the underlying philosophy resonates because, I think that it's interesting.

Adam Grant: Darwin, I think, he changed the world, working four hours a day. Most of the great writers I know, have a standard routine where they write two to three hours a day, and that's their total writing workload for the day. And I think that, again, not every job, not every project, but I think we put too much emphasis on inputs, when what really matter are the outputs.

Dave Asprey: I remember right after I graduated from business school, I went to New York and visited a friend who is working at a big investment bank, and she's like, "Okay, I think I have time to have dinner with you, we can get 45 minutes at 7:30 at night on a Thursday." Like, really, "Why is this so busy?" And she said, "I got to be back in the office." And at dinner, she said, "Some of my colleagues, like the managing directors, they actually put out a newspaper and reading glasses and leave the light on in their office when they leave." And it was this whole point where being seen working hard was a virtue and that was how you got ahead, and I was just thinking to myself, I couldn't handle this because, I want someone who has the highest possible returns in the entire time they're

sailing yacht around the world. That's my guy, because, they automated everything, so they didn't have to work.

Dave Asprey: Maybe this is just the rise of AI and machine intelligence, but, if you go back through history, one of the biggest commercial trade wars ever, was around baking powder. Because it freed up so many women from the drudgery of waiting for bread to rise to feed their family. And so, when that came out, it was such a massive way of enhancing laziness, or, the flip side is freeing up time. And I just want more time to be with my kids, I want more time to have meaningful conversations with someone who, really, they're stuck, and they can't lose that hundred pounds or whatever it is, that matters more than working hard. And I just wish that we could get that out there into the world a little bit more. Do you have a person who best embodies that value, that you've interviewed or interacted with? Who's the leader in being strategically lazy?

Adam Grant: Well, I'm not sure if they will consider it a compliment put that way, but, I think about this at the individual level, and then, at the organizational level too. Individually, I think, it's hard to argue with Cal Newport as a really good example. I'm sure you're familiar with his book, *Deep Work*, and he's very disciplined about saying, "Look, here are the goals I want to achieve, here are the most effective and efficient ways to work toward them, and, yeah, I'm just not going to waste my time on things that are irrelevant just because I live in a culture that glorifies busyness." I think organizationally, Leslie Perlow wrote a great book called *Sleeping with Your Smartphone*, where she worked with a bunch of companies and ran experiments to figure out how to get people to use their time more efficiently. And one of my favorite practices that she tested at a consulting firm, and then also, at a software company was, she said quiet time policies.

Adam Grant: One version of this, was software engineers was, no interruptions Tuesday, Thursday, Friday before noon. And they ended up launching their product on time for, I think it was the second time in division history, 66% of engineers showed above average productivity. And what was going on is, before, when there were interruptions, people, they had a really hard time getting into deep work, they couldn't get into a state of flow. They were constantly being distracted and having to go back to the beginning of a project as opposed to continuing from where they left off. And also, they were repeating the same conversations over and over again, when nine people had the same request. So, you set this quiet time policy, everybody feels more productive after that three-, four- hour morning. And then, in the afternoon, they have time for collaborative work, they can answer all those people one time.

Adam Grant: Some of those people have figured out a better solution to their own problem. I think, the problem is, we have a hard time sticking to those boundaries. So, after she finished the experiment, people started to slip. And they said, "Well, I know we're not supposed to interrupt each other Thursday mornings, but, this question will just, it really only will take me 12 minutes." And then, an hour and a half later you're still talking. The other thing I really like on this is, there's a

healthcare company here in Philly called Vynamic. And the founder, Dan Calista, just said, "You know what? There's no reason that we need work to intrude on people's lives." And so, they set a policy that, you're not allowed to send emails on nights and weekends. And you're also, not allowed to check your email on nights and weekends. And yeah, I think, you've probably seen others like Basecamp work with similar policies. But, I think that's a step in the right direction, we've got to set boundaries organizationally, because it's often too hard for people to do it individually.

Dave Asprey: I do not reliably check my email in the evenings at all. I mean, I might, if I just feel like it, but, I've set expectations with in my leadership team, you can text me if it's really urgent, but, evenings and weekends, don't expect me to check my email if I go to bed. It's not going to happen.

Adam Grant: That's the kind of example we need more leaders to set, right? Because I think too often, leaders are always on, and they're responding. They're trying to model that they're available or that they're committed, but that just sets a tone that everybody else has to be constantly reachable.

Dave Asprey: The first three or four years of Bulletproof, I'm a night owl. I was working every night until two in the morning, because I had a day job. I was a VP at a big company, and so, that did set that tone where people are feeling like they have to keep up and most people need more sleep than I do, with where I am now. I just realized; I don't want to train my people to do that. We all care, so we work hard.

Adam Grant: Well, the day job thing is interesting too, I've heard so many venture capitalists say, "I would never invest in an entrepreneur. I just wouldn't back an entrepreneur who's only doing this as a side gig, you need to be all in." And you will be pleased to know, but not at all surprised from your experience that, there's a nationally representative study of American entrepreneurs, which showed that the ones who kept their day job and started their companies as a hobby, were 33% less likely to fail as they went all in.

Dave Asprey: Mine definitely was a hobby, it was a blog to help people, like if someone had told me this and I was 20, I would have changed my life so I'm going to tell some people. But the honest truth is, I didn't have enough money to start the company. I had just moved to a new country; I didn't have a lot of savings. I had worked at for half salary for a while, I was the sole breadwinner. Like you know what? It's not an option. And so, whether that means all in or you're running in terror from bankruptcy and not feeding your kids or something, like no way. I have a job at a big company stock options and a VP salary, I think I'm going to just roll with that and do a great job in that job, and do my little side hustle until it's not on the side anymore. I think that's admirable.

Dave Asprey: As long as your side hustle isn't the same thing as your day hustle, there's a lot of abstinence among young people earlier in their careers where they, like, you can't start a competitor to your day job while working your day job, it's

unethical and it's probably illegal, and it's going to stick to your reputation for years if you do that.

Adam Grant: Yeah, it's like conflict of interest.

Dave Asprey: Yeah, yeah. Well, I want to talk about power with you, because you have this interesting audible audio book called *Power Moves*. And you went to the World Economic Forum, by the way, shout out to Arianna Huffington, who is speaking at the Bulletproof conference in April, she served Bulletproof coffee at the World Economic Forum for like three years in a row, which just blew me away. She's awesome. And you interviewed the CEO of Microsoft and Sheryl Sandberg and Eric Schmidt and David Solomon, the CEO of Goldman Sachs, and you asked them about power. And here's my question for you. I interviewed 500 game changers, people who've been on the show, about most important things for performing better. And none of them looked at money, fame or power as an important goal.

Adam Grant: Well, did they and not want to admit it? Or did they and were they not aware of it?

Dave Asprey: Hey, that is a very fair point. And my question was, what are your three most important piece of advice for people who want to perform better at everything they do as a human being? It could just be that power doesn't matter for performance, and there's no question that power and fame and money are pleasant. And some people are more attracted than others, but they don't lead to happiness. They don't necessarily do to perform better, so it could just be with the framing of the question, but what made you decide that you were going to go after these powerful people and interview them? What did you want to learn?

Adam Grant: Well, it was interesting. I had been invited to Davos, I don't know, five, six years ago for the first time and went as an academic. And, yeah, I was just, "What am I doing here?" There're these titans of industry and heads of state, and here I am. And after I had gone for a few years, I started to be a little more comfortable, I had a couple of other roles that involved me more centrally in the program and in various activities. And I found myself at dinners with a lot of these people. I got really interested in, how did they acquire power? How is it changing them? As an organizational psychologist, this is a kind of a fundamental question in our field, right? Is power corrupt? And especially, how can we all get better at using power for good? And so, it seemed like, since it's the ultimate epicenter of power, it seemed like the perfect place to explore those questions.

Dave Asprey: What did you learn?

Adam Grant: Well, I think that my biggest aha, which is something I've been reading about a little bit, but I didn't realize it was going to be so central to people's experiences

was, I came away convinced that power does not corrupt. I think it's tempting to believe that, and we've certainly seen some really disturbing examples of look like corruption in power. I think, whether, we're going to talk about the MeToo movement or the Catholic Church, abuses of power are rampant. But, I don't actually think power corrupts, I think, what I came away believing is that, power reveals on the outside what was already on the inside.

Dave Asprey: Yes, it amplifies corruption, it doesn't cause corruption.

Adam Grant: Exactly. I was told this over and over again, right? So, various people like Stewart Butterfield, the Slack founder. He said, whether we're talking about money or power, it doesn't change you. It just makes you more of who you were before. And to a point about being an amplifier, makes that stuff come out louder, because now you feel like you're free to express whatever your goals and values are. Whereas, before you had a lot of power, you might have been more constrained. And there's a lot of psychology research that's pointed in that direction which shows that if you were already a selfish taker, if you're given power, then you start becoming a faker. And you're like, "All right, I'm going to use power for my own gain." Whereas, the more generous givers, when they gain power, they try to use that to benefit others and serve some socially responsible goal.

Adam Grant: And I ended up armed with this perspective, going back through examples of presidential corruption and, lo and behold, it turned out that there was a presidential candidate who was accused of unethical behavior and a judge threatened to disbar him in his very first trial as a lawyer, and that was Richard Nixon in 1931. I think you can see, if you take this perspective, you can see examples all around you have of saying, "All right, if you really want to understand how power is going to affect someone, find out what their motives were before they got power."

Dave Asprey: Interesting.

Adam Grant: I guess, one of the places that took me also, is to say, okay, as you gain power, how does that affect the way that you look at other people? I've always assumed that, the more senior you get in your career, the better you are judging character. You have CEOs who say all the time, "One of the things that makes me great is, I'm good at spotting talent." And I think the reality is the exact opposite, because, if you think about it, when somebody gains power, people are really motivated to impress them, right?

Dave Asprey: Oh, yeah. Everyone shows ... So, I'm a CEO in my day job, everyone shows me the face that they want the CEO to see, so the camouflage levels of people around me are much higher than they are for normal people. Which even if I was the world's best at ascertaining people's motives and things like that, I would still have to wade through the extra positioning for people. So, I fully agree with that, it's actually one of the most frustrating parts of being a leader, is that whole thing where, could you just tell me the truth? But you're worried

that I'm a powerful person, so you're not going to tell me what you really think. And, man, it frustrates the hell out of me, but I don't know how to get around that. Is there a hack for that?

Adam Grant: Well, I'd like to have one. I think, yeah, obviously, I think awareness is the first step, right? I think that, you're already crossed that bridge to say, "All right, look, I know that as much as I'd like to believe my judgment is getting better, the information I'm getting is less believable. And so, I've got to recognize that I'm probably worse at judging character now than I was before." I think, in terms of hacks, I think the best thing is to deprioritize your own judgment, and not rely so much on your own impressions of people. When I studied givers and takers, the takers are really good fakers upward, but then, they realize, "Gosh, it's a lot of work to pretend to care about everybody." So, they let their guard down with their peers and subordinates, who get to see more of their true colors. And that means, if somebody has a great reputation upward, but it's more mixed lateral and downward, that can be a red flag.

Adam Grant: It means, you probably want to do your reference checks from people who worked side by side or below the people you're thinking about hiring, and, yeah, I think, I hear often, well, but I can't get an honest reference. They're all glowing and positive and, I think we can if we ask better questions. One of my favorite questions or ways of asking a question is just to say, Hey, when you think about this candidate, what's more likely? Little bit too, little bit too self-sacrificing? Or occasionally a little bit selfish? Too independent, too collaborative? You can do for any first choice, and if you set them up right, references do not know what the right answer is because they both sound like undesirable traits. And so, they tend to give you the real answer so to speak.

Dave Asprey: So you run a full conjoined analysis, that's actually brilliant.

Adam Grant: I never thought about as a contrary, but I think that's exactly what it is.

Dave Asprey: That is a serious hack, for people listening to the show, holy crap. I wish someone had told me that before, I'm going to start doing that.

Adam Grant: So Dave, are you more likely? Now [crosstalk 00:57:28].

Dave Asprey: Nice, turn the tables because, you have your WorkLife Podcast with TED, which is, you do get to turn the tables and interview people a lot. What's the most unusual professional you've ever interviewed for your show?

Adam Grant: Oh, it was definitely Bridgewater. I did an episode last season on how to love criticism, where I talked with Ray Dalio, a bunch, having done some research there. But, one of the things I asked was, of everybody who works at Bridgewater and who's ever been here, who's the best at really dealing with the harshest possible negative feedback that you can imagine? And I was introduced to a manager there named Kiran Rao, who arrived at a meeting one day, there

were a couple hundred managers there. And a slide went up and it showed the ratings of managers, but they were displayed as a ranking. So, you could see who the best managers were all the way down to the worst. And Kiran was the number one worst manager at all of Bridgewater. Can you imagine walking into that room with all of your peers, and a slide goes up and they're like, Dave, you are the worst boss at our company. And I look at that and I'd want to run away screaming or quit immediately.

Adam Grant: Kiran told me, it was one of the best days of his career and he learned a ton from it. And I grilled him really hard on it and ended up convinced that he actually enjoyed it. And I think, if he can learn to love criticism like that, we can all become a little bit more open. And one of the simple things that I learned from him that I have applied over and over again, is the language I put it in is, we all have two selves, right? There's the proving self and the improving self. And what I tried to ask myself, and whenever somebody criticizes me now is, okay, what would Karen say here? He would say, what's my goal? Am I trying to prove myself to this person? Or, do I want to improve myself? And the reality is, if somebody is criticizing you, you can't prove yourself. They've already decided that whatever you did, sucked.

Adam Grant: And so, the best thing you can do then is say, "All right, how do I take this as an opportunity to improve?" And there's a great description of this that Doug Stone and Sheila Heen have given in their book, *Thanks for the Feedback*. They say, to think about it as giving yourself a second score, which I now do all the time. Let's say that Kiran got, he got a D-minus for his performance as a manager, he can't change that score, right? That score has already been established. The best thing he can do, is say, "All right, I want to get an A-plus for how I take that D-minus." And gosh, I think that's a skill everyone could use.

Dave Asprey: Yeah, it comes down to, do you want to be right? Or do you want to be better? And being right in the face of a critic. But there's a CEO power thing that comes into this as well, I actually have four different companies but, I'm only CEO of one, Bulletproof. And an employee at one of the other companies came in as they were leaving and basically said, "Here's all my complaints." And I'm like, "Thank you so much for the feedback." And they looked at me and said, "I can't tell if you're being truthful or not." I said, "What do you mean?" The whole point was, they didn't expect thank you, I think, they expected defensiveness. And so then, it was this weird sort of distrustful thing, where like, the person is leaving, I just wanted to know what was up. So as leaders, and just as people in general, when we're hearing negative feedback, or criticism, or something like that, what's the best way to signal to the person delivering it that it was heard, and then, it was safe for them to do that?

Adam Grant: Well, I think you already started the ideal response, which is to say, thank you. I think we all feel the temptation to get defensive. There's a psychologist, years ago, who wrote about the idea that, we all have a totalitarian ego. Imagine there's a kind of a miniature North Korean dictator living inside your brain and trying to filter all the information that comes through and make sure it's only

positive. Like, a dictator who'll control the press. And I think that, that impulse is there, right? You want to say, "Well, that's not what I meant," or, "I think you're judging me unfairly." To just say, thank you, I think it completely changes the tone of the conversation. And then, what I like to see people do after that is just say, "I'd love to check in with you in a few weeks and update you on how I have applied this to my work, or get your additional feedback on whether I made the changes you suggested." And that shows a real action orientation, and then, allows you to actually work on the other thing you've been criticized on, before you try.

Adam Grant: I mean, look, the best way to defend yourself is actually to make yourself better.

Dave Asprey: There you go. That is a fantastic call out that you can put on your Instagram feed.

Adam Grant: Bring it on.

Dave Asprey: Adam, it has been a great pleasure to be able to pick your brain on Bulletproof Radio today, and people can find out more about your work at adamgrant.net. And you've just got this fascinating perspective where you've gone deep in your three books. And so, for people listening, you want to learn how to be a non-conformist, how to have the job that you want, how to design it that way. I think Adam has just gone really deep and done real research at all sorts of different levels and orgs. I've certainly learned from the things that he's written and produced, and I hope that you learn from today's episode. And if you did, you know what to do. You can leave a review for the episode, that says, it was worth your time. And that means a lot because, well, I see it when you leave a review, but also, it'll help other people find shows that were just worth your time.

Dave Asprey: There's an ROI talking about being strategically lazy for everything that you do, including an ROI for the time you spend listening to a podcast. And if you got more out of this hour, then, the hour of your time was worthwhile you're commuting or working and doing whatever else, then, by all means, leave a five-star review and tell people that it's worth your time so that they can make better choices as well. And if you really love the show, pick up a copy of *Game Changers a*nd get 500 episodes boiled down with a statistician into actionable advice. Have an awesome day.