

[Announcer:](#) Bulletproof Radio, a state of high performance.

[Dave:](#) You're listening to Bulletproof Radio with Dave Asprey. Today's cool fact of the day is that genes might explain why dogs can't sniff out some people when they're stressed. This is one of those curiosities and that trained police dogs who can recognize a smell and they track you and things like that, can't recognize some people when they're stressed. They can with other people. This is because fear sets off a flood of stress hormones that makes some people freeze and some other people might want to fight or run away. That hormone can alter your scent.

[Dave:](#) Researchers at the University of Foggia in Italy wondered whether fear could change that scent. They thought this might be why police dogs can't really pick people out of a lineup and they explained it with genetics. There you go, how you smell is based on your genetics and how your fear response works is also in some extent based on genetics. If you're ever running away from police dogs, maybe you should not be afraid or be afraid.

[Dave:](#) If you like Bulletproof Radio, you might know about my new book *Game Changers*, which just came out. This episode is going to be an epic episode, because I have the most amazing guest lined up for you today. Even so what if you could get almost 500 hours of Bulletproof Radio boiled down by me and a statistician into 46 rules that you could follow, well that's what *Game Changers* is. It is my highest rated book in history and it's doing really, really well in Amazon. If you haven't had a chance to pick it up, if you get the audio book or the print version, however you like to read, you'll find that the return of investment for your time is as high in this book as anything that I've ever offered you. Check out *Game Changers*.

[Dave:](#) One of the guys who inspired me to write *Game Changers* is our guest today. In fact, on episode number 380 I said to the guest, "When your next book comes out, I hope to have you back on the show." I'm doing that today because the guest is Robert Greene. He's the author of five previous *New York Times* bestsellers including one that changed my entire career called *The 48 Laws of Power*. Still cited today in the high end rapper community which is hilarious and awesome. He wrote *The Art of Seduction*, *33 Strategies of War*, *The 50<sup>th</sup> Law* and *Mastery*. His new book, *The Laws of Human Nature*, might be the best he's done so far, which is really hard to do, because he's written some amazing books. Robert welcome to the show.

[Robert:](#) Thanks for having me Dave. By the way *Game Changers* is an amazing book. I'm not saying that just because I'm in it, but it's a great book.

[Dave:](#) Thank you. I was inspired. *Game Changers* is based on this 46 laws idea and 46 came out of the research. I wasn't trying to hit, get close to 48. In fact, I was hoping there wouldn't be 48 because then I would have felt really bad. I did talk to you before I did this, so I wasn't stealing an idea here. Just I was inspired by how do you provide value for people and boiling it down to understandable things. Then I read *The Laws of Human Nature*, I'm like, I'm only a third of the way to that level as a writer I would like to say.

[Robert:](#) I wouldn't be so modest, but okay.

[Dave:](#) Well thank you, but just when I read that book, it's just every word that you've chosen in there you can just tell, you've done something that is remarkable. In fact, it reminds me of a perennial seller, which is a book about how to write a world class thing written by Ryan Holiday who did the research for you on *48 Laws of Power*. It's a small world, but there's something you've got Robert that makes you an amazing writer and that's why I want to have you on the show again.

[Robert:](#) Well thanks so much Dave.

[Dave:](#) Now, what inspired you after having written the series of really just powerful books studying all of history, understanding why people are motivated to do what they do around seduction, around power? What inspired you to just go deep on human nature, all the things you have written?

[Robert:](#) Well you know I've been doing this for quite a few years, over 20 years. Over the course of that time I've had a lot of experiences with right people who read my books who would write to me for advice and consulting work. Just a lot of varied experiences with people. I've had this idea that people are in a lot of secret pain that they don't talk about it. It's like a dirty little secret in our society. To me the intuition I had was that pain really revolves around relationships with end.

[Robert:](#) Basically we're a social animal. It's deeply ingrained in our nature. Our brains are designed for interacting with people on a high level. When we're not interacting with people on a high level, when we're not being the social animal that we were born to be, we pay a terrible price. With most price can be depression, could be all kinds of physical or mental ailments. It's like chronic loneliness and it's also like the sense that we don't really have the kinds of, we're never really connecting to people on any deep level.

[Robert:](#) I really sensed this a lot in the people that I was dealing with. I just wanted to write something that would help people in the deep and lasting way. Not just write a superficial self-help book about just connecting better and all the kind of platitudes that you might say. I wanted to really get to the core of it and understand why we're not connecting with people. Why we're a social animal, but we're not maximizing these powers that we have. What is the source of this pain? In my research and in delving into the subject, I came to the conclusion that it's not what we think it is. It's that we in certain moments in life we are connected to people. We do feel it. We do have that kind of empathy and that sort of excited feeling where we're actually getting inside the minds of other people and getting inside of ourselves. We're chronically self-absorbed and I don't say that in judgmental way. It includes me, it includes all of us. That comes when we fall in love or in a situation where we're in a foreign environment and we don't have our usual familiar sign posts. We have to pay attention to people or we're going to suffer some terrible consequences. It could be in our childhood when we were extremely sensitive to people.

[Robert:](#) The difference is, that in these situations we have a tremendous desire and need to connect to people and to get outside of ourselves. The difference is, the source of the problem is, is that we don't feel that desire, that necessity in our daily life. We think that the people that would surround us, our wives, our spouses, our colleagues they're not

that very interesting. We've kind of categorized them and then put them into these various pigeon holes. We decide this person's good or that person's bad. I want to open you up to the idea that people are endlessly fascinating. That you really have no idea what's going on inside their brains. They have an inner life that is incredibly rich and interesting. They're like characters in a novel.

[Robert:](#)

I wanted to spark your interest in getting outside of yourself and developing those natural powers that you have. You talked about dogs, dogs can smell fear, which I know very well. I know in my own experience that animals can sense that. Like have you ever ridden a horse and the horse senses that you're afraid, it reacts in a completely different way? Well we humans are the same, we have all kinds of natural responses to people that are preverbal, they have to do with kind of nonverbal communication. I wanted to open you up to this whole sort of secret language that people use between themselves and how they communicate and understand what the nonverbal communication that people are emitting in front of you. I want you to understand the signs of what is really going on behind people's fake smiles or masks that they wear. Open you up to this whole hidden world that you haven't been paying attention to so that you can finally begin to realize those amazing untapped social powers that you have.

[Robert:](#)

I believe that following this path and getting re-interested in the people around you will help go a long way to curing some of this pain so that you have a distance. One of the major point in the book is to stop judging people as you do instantly, which we do, that's how our brains are designed. Stop judging them and start to understand them. Your first instinct is to get inside their world. What motivates them? What are their intentions? With that comes with a bit of distance and a kind of ease in your social relationships where not everything is taken personally. You don't have all this emotional trauma and turmoil that's consuming your brain, day in and day out.

[Robert:](#)

Have you ever spent a couple minutes looking at your own thought process, so many of them revolve around petty little resentments about what somebody said or things that you haven't don't or things that you haven't gotten from people. It weighs you down. It's consuming all of your creative energy. It's taking up too much of your mental space. By following this path, you will free up a lot of this mental energy for other things. You will rid yourself of this constant emotional insecurity that you have in social situations. I know that's very grandiose ambition of mine, but that's my long-winded response of what inspired this book.

[Dave:](#)

You spent six years writing it, which is a lot of time. My very first book on fertility was five years of writing before it came out. I know the differences between pulling your thoughts together and doing for me it's usually to your writing cycle on the books that I do now, because I like to think I'm better at it than I used to be. You really dug deep and you found stories throughout history. One of the things that stands out related to what you said in your book is you talk about a famous psychoanalyst. It's either Erickson or Jung and I'm forgetting which one, who was paralyzed with some childhood illness for a long time.

[Robert:](#)

Oh Milton Erickson.

[Dave:](#) It was Erickson?

[Robert:](#) Yeah.

[Dave:](#) That's right. He laid there going, "Well since I can't really communicate right now, I'll just watch how my sisters communicate. I'm so bored that I'm going to realize that, when one of them says yes and her head is slightly shaking no," that there's so much rich data in our body language that became some of the foundational work that he did as a psychiatrist or psychologist, whichever one he was. You just call it out in a really eloquent way. That he says, "Look, if you're talking to someone, you should be putting most of your energy into looking at that stuff instead of just what they're saying to see if they're in alignment."

[Dave:](#) A few other guests on the show have talked about NLP or the FBI agents who are trying to see if you're lying and things like that. You really dug into that and here's my question for you. Now that you've written this book, does that change the way you look at people just when you're talking to them? Do you practice this on a daily basis?

[Robert:](#) I've been practicing it my whole life since I was one of those kids that was a bit shy. I was always standing at a distance observing people. I've been very intuitive and keyed into people's nonverbal communication for my whole life. I think I've gotten a lot better at it. If people realize it, they get a little weary in my presence, it's almost like I'm reading their thoughts, and I'm not really able to read people's thoughts. I'm very keyed into all of the little signs. The eyes, the smile, how the face lights up. Any signs of disagreeableness, of unpleasantness a reaction like that. Maybe it was because as a child I felt like my survival depended on being able to read these signs from my own parents and maybe they didn't pay enough attention to me. For whatever reason I am extremely keyed in to all the little signs. It's not just things on the face, it's also the posture, but it's also in people's actions. How they respond to your phone call, to your texts. How long they take, the reading the subtexts of their words and their language, whether there's real excitement or fake excitement in what they read.

[Robert:](#) Some people say, "Well that's just because you're naturally good at that." I don't think so. I think we all have that ability. It's just that I've been practicing this for so many years that I've been able to hone this muscle that I have.

[Dave:](#) Well, in fact a law in *Game Changers*, law No. 2, never discover who you are is the one that was directly inspired by our last interview. In this I wrote, "To change the world tap into your strengths, but don't passively discover who you are. Actively decide and create who you are. If you abdicate this duty by allowing others to tell you who to be, you'll struggle greatly and you won't achieve greatness."

[Robert:](#) Right.

[Dave:](#) The differences of life of mediocrity and creeping misery compared to life of freedom and passion. I quote you in that law. What you've done there is you've already figured out that's who you are. You are that observer of humanity, so you wrote that law

because you've done this. How did you know this about Erickson? I asked in your double board certified psychiatrists, psychologists, none of them know that Erickson did this. Where do you get your stuff?

[Robert:](#) Well I've been researching for a long time and it's an art. I've been loving Milton Erickson for a long time. He's been on, I've wrote about him in the *48 Laws of Power* and all of my books I think I have some kind of reference to Milton Erickson. People who knew him who met him said that he was this weird empath, that he could read their thoughts. That he had this uncanny ability to understand people without a word of them, without saying a single word. He fascinated me.

[Robert:](#) He's also the founder, he inspired NLP. He's the founder of hypnotherapy and he had way of relating to psychology that was more sort of behavior oriented. It wasn't so much trying to get into your inner life. He believed like I believe that people are naturally manipulative. That children are highly manipulative and that we have a deep need for power, which obviously meshes very well with my book *The 48 Laws of Power*. I knew his story. The books, biographies of him are not easy to find, so the story about his paralysis is not widely known. There's a book that sort of has lessons of his life, I can't remember the story. It says the word stories in the title. In the preface they mentioned his paralysis and that got me very excited and I found the books about it. It was obviously the moment that changed his life and made him decide that he wanted to go into psychology.

[Robert:](#) Just imagine that he spent several years paralyzed to the point the only thing he could move were his eyeballs. He was that paralyzed. His intensity of focus on people, because as you say he was dying of boredom, he couldn't read a book. People could read to him, but he couldn't read or do anything, no stimulation. His focus on his sisters who were constantly in his room were so intense that he was picking up every little bit of information. How they touched their hair, the tone in their voice when they said no or yes or whatever. Their whole body language as they were interacting. He learned the language.

[Robert:](#) Then over the course of 30 or 40 more years as a practicing therapist, he honed this over and over and over again with people. So naturally he had this power to the nth degree, but I'm trying to maintain that it's a power that all of us possess as a potential. If you know about theories of mind and our unique ability to get inside the perspective of people, it's something that our ancestors depended on for our survival before the invention of language. We have this what I call visceral empathy that we can tap into. It's just how do we access it? It's easy for me to say that, so I wanted to make it as practical as possible and give you a roadmap for how you can develop just a tenth of the power that Milton Erickson had. It could be a life changer for you.

[Dave:](#) I think it is and I didn't know any of that stuff. In fact, early in my career, I would have likely tested for being on the Asperger's syndrome.

[Robert:](#) Oh really?

[Dave:](#) I didn't do like a formal diagnosis since I had done a lot of already brain-hacking things. Many members of my family have and I certainly met all the things you would expect for that as being a man. I found myself thrust from the deep engineering side of Silicon Valley into senior executives at a billion-dollar company. Like presenting to that level, attending board meetings where I wasn't allowed to speak. I had decided that everyone was insane, because nothing they did made any sense.

[Dave:](#) Then one Friday I got *48 Laws of Power* when it first came out and I read it. I came back in and it was like someone had taken a veil away and I said, "Oh now I understand. I was just following rules that were completely not apparent to me." It changed the whole way I saw a human interaction. When I'm reading your newest book now, it goes one level deeper than that about the laws of human nature. I'm getting value out of it even now and I think most people listening to the show today were cognitively aware of some of the stuff. The way you describe it in the book, it takes it a little bit deeper.

[Dave:](#) I want to ask you about a couple of the laws that are probably I don't know, maybe a little bit more controversial or less likely. Tell me about the law of gender rigidity. How did you come up with that? What is it?

[Robert:](#) You're practically the first person that's ever asked me about that chapter, so that's really interesting. It was one of my most fun chapters, I feel very close to it, but nobody ever wants to talk about it. The idea is that, I'm trying to get a who we are in the most natural sense of our biology. Clearly as it's been demonstrated we all have traits of the opposite sex. We have hormones of the opposite sex but even more importantly another physical factor is, but even more importantly our earliest years were deeply embedded with somebody of the opposite gender. Most prominent was powerfully for young boys with their mothers, but also for young girls with their fathers.

[Robert:](#) Those figures in our earliest childhood when we were so susceptible and so vulnerable to influence had a major impact. We carry the spirit as a man of that mother figure within us, and it can also be siblings or sisters et cetera. Women carry deep within that kind of archetype of father figure. People are not as male or female as they appear. They carry the traits of the opposite sex. This is something that deeply affects our choices of our romantic partners that we have.

[Robert:](#) If we are in denial of that feminine side of us as a man, we're going to search for women who compensate for that, who have those qualities that we are missing. That we secretly have, but are repressing and are afraid of. It will generate the kinds of people we're romantically attracted to. For instance I talk about Jacqueline Onassis. Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, her father was this incredible rake who couldn't stay loyal to anyone for very long. He was a charmer, good with words, seducing women left, right and center. She was totally devoted to her father. That was the main influence on her life. Lo and behold throughout her life, all she did was fall in love with exact duplicates of her father, much to her dismay men who could never be loyal to her. She was repeating a childhood trauma, childhood pattern throughout her life. I give instance after instance, example after example of how this affects men and women.

[Robert:](#) I want you to become the main influence here was Jung and his theory of the anima, animus, which I won't go into now. Basically, there's a power that you possess by letting go of this repression, this rigidity that you have and accepting this other side of yourself. It doesn't mean that a man suddenly starts wearing dresses and becomes feminine or a woman becomes butch. It's quite the opposite. It's more like you bring that side of your personality into your work, into your thinking process. You loosen yourself up. Feminine styles of thinking, feminine styles of leadership, feminine styles of interacting with people are immensely powerful. They're part of who you are as a man. Accessing that will actually make you more of a man, will make you a more rounded and authentic figure. The same thing for women.

[Robert:](#) There are moments in culture when the male and the female, the masculine and the feminine are getting closer to each other. These are rich artistic periods in history, I point to like the 1920s in the United States. Then there are periods when there's incredible polarization between the genders which I think we're going through right now. A kind of war where men and women can't possibly understand each other. That kind of war has very negative consequences, because you basically deny a very important part of something inside of yourself. I'm just trying to draw awareness so that you're less of this kind of repressed figure and you're becoming more authentic, becoming more whole.

[Dave:](#) I'm really happy you wrote about that, because if you look at historical shamanic practice, you look at traditional Chinese medicine, even the yin and yang figure we all know it's masculine and feminine.

[Robert:](#) Exactly.

[Dave:](#) Having that balance is part of the path to enlightenment and Lewis Howes who's a great friend and has been on this show. Have you been on his show or?

[Robert:](#) I sure have, he was one of my first. He's a great and [inaudible 00:24:47] books.

[Dave:](#) His book *The Master of Masculinity*, it's the same sort of thing.

[Robert:](#) Great book.

[Dave:](#) You can't be all invulnerable, hyper-masculine all the time even if you're a pro sports guy like he is, because it leads to unhappiness and stress. Certainly in my life being able to tap into whatever you want to call it, feminine side of thinking is some of the deep personal work I've done is around just being comfortable with any of that, has made a difference. So few people will talk about it because we all know that one woman who may not be butch, but is basically energetically a guy. We all know that one guy who's maybe completely masculine, but just has huge amounts of feminine energy. I'm not talking about being a straight or gay.

[Robert:](#) That is exactly right.

[Dave:](#) Right. Just to call that out, this is real and it happens and it's just a part of the human condition. I thought that was really courageous to write it and also just unusual, I haven't read that anywhere.

[Robert:](#) Well thank you. Yeah, it's interesting as you've mentioned the shamans. In ancient cultures the figure in a tribe or a group who's considered the wisest, the most in tapped into wisdom and sort of telepathic powers was the androgynous man who carried within him literally a woman inside of him who he tapped for his powers and the same thing for a woman. This is deep, deep roots in our psychology. I just want to bring us back to that elemental wisdom.

[Dave:](#) Yeah, rejecting any of that energy inside of you is not going to lead to happiness or high performance, right?

[Robert:](#) Yeah. Definitely.

[Dave:](#) Now, one of the other laws in here that I paid a lot attention to was the law of death denial. Now keep in mind, I'm going to live to at least 180 years, but the real thing behind that is, I'm going to die at a time and by a method of my choosing. I've thought about immortal, it's about the long slow painful decline isn't something that I'm interested in pursuing, so I'll take all the steps I can to avoid it.

[Robert:](#) Who is?

[Dave:](#) Exactly. Tell me about the law of death denial and how that affects people.

[Robert:](#) Well it's weird because we can argue left, right and center about what's real, about what's good or bad et cetera. The one thing we can't argue about, the one reality is that we're all going to die. It's like the ground of who we are. There's no arguing about this. It's my belief that we carry a sense of death within us. We have a visceral relationship. Now we know that we carry a relationship to life because we live it every day, and we're breathing, and we have a natural connection to living things. Death is a part of life. If we have a natural connection to life that we carry within us that's part of our consciousness, we also have a daily consciousness of death. They go together. We live in a culture that is deep, deep, deep denial of death as a presence as a reality. We pay terrible consequences for this.

[Robert:](#) In the past if you lived in the city in London or wherever you were constantly surrounded by the presence of death. There were plagues going, there were people dying in the street. Your mother or father died in the house, you were there, you saw it happening before your eyes. Animals for your food, they were killed right there. They were being slaughtered. You saw death and you had a real powerful connection. How could you deny the fact that someday this was going to happen to you when it was around you all of the time?

[Robert:](#) We now live in a world where it's all been managed, everything is so sanitized. People dying in hospitals completely isolated from anybody else. They're not in their home.

Sometimes they're with their family, but it's not always the case. We can walk around in our world in a day to day life and never ever smell or sense or see death in the slightest way. Then when you look at our culture and the media and how death is presented it's almost like a cartoon. It's never anything kind of psychological. We are seeing a character die on the screen and thinking, "Wow, someday that's going to be me." No, it's like a cartoon thing where some guy takes out an AK 47 and shooting 50 people, it's all like a comic book. We are in deep denial, we're deeply afraid of death. As afraid of it as our most primitive ancestors who created a world of immortality and heaven and hell. That's how they dealt with it. We deal with it through massive, massive repression. It comes with a price. I believe it creates latent anxiety.

[Robert:](#) The source, people are carrying around anxiety with the mind, I do as well, within every day and it's a very powerful motivating factor. You're never feeling in touch with yourself, you're never feeling in touch with life. You're always worried and anxious about what's happening. The confrontation with mortality, I say it's like turning around and facing it. Stop running away and actually face it and go towards it, is an immensely liberating feeling. It comes with obviously a touch of fear. It's very odd because I wrote that chapter in about May of last year, that's the last chapter. About two months later I had a near death experience myself. I had a stroke in which I was unconscious for a while and I came very close to dying because I was driving. My wife was in the car, she managed to pull me to the side. I came very close to it.

[Robert:](#) What I was writing about suddenly became very real to me several months later in a very ironic fashion. I can say that that confrontation is an immensely liberating feeling. It's something that you stop denying. It becomes part of your daily reality. It makes you, A, appreciate every moment that you're alive. It gives you a sense of urgency and desperation. Your energy isn't diffused in a thousand different directions. You know that you could die tomorrow. You're going to live to 180, but you might die tomorrow. You don't know, something could happen.

[Dave:](#) That's true. A piano can fall out of the sky, right?

[Robert:](#) Exactly. It makes you concentrate your energy. It makes you deeply aware of the mortality of other people around you. I once did this exercise where I was walking in New York city just after the book was finished. I was imagining all of these people and dying at some point, like in 80 years none of these people will be alive. That was really a powerful, it's like what Freud called the oceanic feeling, a feeling of deep connection to people. Instead of all the differences that we have and all the judgements that we have, it was sense of wow, we're all the same. We all carry that same sad fate within us. It's a way of connecting to people and it's a way of opening yourself to something awesome, mysterious and powerful what I call the sublime, which is going to be the subject of my next book now.

[Dave:](#) Wow.

[Robert:](#) The sense of the mystery of life, the awesomeness, the wonder, the fact that you being alive is by such an incredible accident of so many circumstances. The fact that you Dave Asprey and me Robert Greene are having this conversation, if we added up all the

minute little permutations that had to go into the happening, going back four billion years to the start of life, it's absolutely mind blowing. Death, the awareness of it and the awareness of our mortality is the spark of a great feeling of the sublime. It's the spark for creativity of connection to people of having energy and focus in life on and on and on.

[Dave:](#) I went through this path of losing 100 pounds and figuring why I was anxious and fearful and angry all the time, even though I didn't really know that those were going on for most of my life. Part of that was I went to Tibet to learn meditation from the masters, that was the trip where I discovered yak better tea, that was the genesis of Bulletproof Coffee. I ate pigs' ears at a Tibetan little restaurant because my knees were wrecked from too much trekking to get collagen and putting pigs' ears in my coffee wasn't a good idea, so that's why collagen is a thing now. It was this big trip for me.

[Dave:](#) One of the things they talked about at the monastery was, there's awareness of death and just to get really comfortable with the fact that you're going to die. That every fear you have is ultimately a fear of death. They also talk about reincarnation and past lives and I decided you know what, I cannot prove that there are or aren't past lives. In fact there's an evolutionary argument that maybe there are. I've actually talked to an author of a book on that who the Dalai Lama wrote the forward for his book.

[Dave:](#) I just decided I was going to tell my subconscious, my unconscious mind, that that's real, which took a lot of the reactive fear of death. Where you don't fear that much in a video game because you get to start the game over again. I'm just going to pretend like that's the case, that that's just my assumption, which in my own practice has made it a lot easier. Where if I do die, I'll probably come back. If I don't, I probably won't know that I didn't, so I can't lose. My grandfather who's a hardcore atheist and he wrote for the Encyclopedia Britannica under the general heading of chemistry and was a chemist his entire life, a physical chemist. On his death bed he said, "You know I've been an atheist my entire life and I know that at the end," basically he went through this story. Everyone in the family was like, "Oh my God he's going to convert right before he dies." Then he goes, "I'm more convinced than ever that it's all bullshit." It was such a good sense of humor, but then when he was even further on his death bed with hospice and everything, he said, "You know I've never done this before, so if I'm wrong I'll send you guys a signal if I can." Of course we know that's all his interpretation.

[Dave:](#) It's that, "If I'm wrong," thing that he came across at the very end of his life that really stood out as I was going through this law of mortality. How do you or the law of death denial, you've gone through this now. How do you deal with that question for yourself? Like do you think that you are going to be reincarnated? Do you think death is the end? How does that play into the average person who would read your book? Is that a part of the script?

[Robert:](#) Well, it's interesting because reading a lot of history and ancient cultures and about religions et cetera, the idea that you're going to be reincarnated, that the soul is immortal was extremely helpful to people. It helped them manage their fear of death. It served a very positive function. We might scoff at it in our sophistication, but a lot of what humans create is to sort of help us live and help us deal with problems. This was

something very real and very positive in a way, so I don't scoff at it. It's just that I can't make that thought real for me. I'm a very realistic person, a very visceral person. That idea of reincarnation it's an idea for me, it's not a reality. I'm not against it, I don't poo poo it in any way, but I have no way of physically or mentally accessing that is something that I can make part of my daily practice.

[Robert:](#)

My idea is more like seeing death as kind of a comforting thing. As kind of an end to all of the torment and all of the pain. It's accepting the fact that this is the reality that you are living. That every living thing must pass away in order that other living things can live. If we were all immortal, the earth would be too crowded, there would never be any space for any other form of life. We have to die, it serves the purpose. Now all of this is very intellectual, so I might be like the case where Napoleon said that no soldier on the battlefield is an atheist. That when you're facing the bullets, you're going to suddenly be revealed as a fraud.

[Robert:](#)

As I said, I faced it several months ago and something that I've been dreading for a long, long time. The thing is, the sensation that I had in my body the moment that I woke up from my coma, it was a very strange feeling. There's something in my bones and I can't even describe it because it's not something easy to verbalize. I carry that feeling with me every day and now I can't shake it. I turn and I face it. I just think that being a realist and being practical and facing this reality is sort of a liberating feeling. It opens up all kinds of visitors. You get rid of this sort of anxiety that haunts you day in and day out. It opens you up, like I have a quote in there, I know I've also had in other books from some Japanese writer who I very much like who wrote the essays of idleness. That is, if things didn't pass away, if things didn't die, if the cherry blossoms didn't disappear, life would never have any, there would be nothing beautiful about life. We wouldn't appreciate it. We would take everything for granted. We'd become monsters.

[Robert:](#)

The fact that the blossoms at spring only happen at a certain moment, that people could pass away tomorrow, because life has an incredible poignancy. This is a very Zen idea and Buddhist idea about the impermanence of life and the power of allowing yourself to kind of immerse your mind in that impermanence. Not getting fixated on wanting to live forever or thinking that everything that you have is going to last forever. That's sort of my personal way of dealing with it.

[Dave:](#)

Well thank you for sharing that. I'm with you there. I have no clue about reincarnation, I just start telling my nervous system that it was real. It works for me.

[Robert:](#)

If you can make that happen, I am all in favor. Maybe you can teach me how to do that, because it would be great. I mean I often have the sensation of was I around 400 years ago? Was I some kind of aristocrat who had all this power? Was I some sort of lowly peasant? You know I do wonder about these things.

[Dave:](#)

Yeah, it's one of those things we'll probably won't be able to prove, and I've talked to some of the Tibetan masters who, in fact I've met the Panchen Lama the guy whose job it is to select the next Dalai Lama where they have visions and find a child and they'll show two combs. The child will always grab the comb that was ... It's fascinating stuff and it's not proof, it just raises that, oh my God that's so interesting. I'm just like you, I

don't know, but whenever it happens I'm just going to be curious about it instead of fearful. That's what held for me.

[Dave:](#) I want to also understand your thoughts about the law of envy, you say where the fragile ego. Tell me about the law of envy, how that's built into human nature.

[Robert:](#) Well it's one of the most deepest parts of human nature, but the one's that least discussed. It's like, as I said a dirty little secret. Primates which we descended from feel envy. They've had studies that showed the test with monkeys. You give one monkey a cucumber and the other one a grape and you see that monkey that has the cucumber have a very human look of envy at the other monkey that was given the grape. It alters its behavior.

[Dave:](#) That's so good.

[Robert:](#) We see it in primates. Primates, chimpanzees are social animals like we are. They're also very hierarchical so they have an alpha male and they have a hierarchy leading up to the alpha male and the females have their own hierarchy. What goes along with the social animal with hierarchies is a sense of continually comparing ourselves to what other people have. First of all the human brain functions by continually comparing things, that's how our perceptual system works. We see something and we just don't see what it is, we compare it to other bits of information that we have and how it contrasts to that. Our brain functions by contrasting it and so we're always doing that with people. They have more than we do. Do they give me enough attention? I'm I worthy enough? I'm I given, I'm I vowed, do people respect me? It consumes 95% of your mental life and it was very much a part of primates and our earliest ancestors.

[Robert:](#) If you read about hunter gatherers societies, envy was a horrific problem. It was the source of murder. A lot of hunter gatherers cultures have very high murder rates. They devised a system understanding the dangers of envy, so that if somebody was given a gift, they had to immediately share it with other people. If you kept a gift, you were violated, a taboo in that culture and you were going to pay a price. If you were given something, you never kept it, you gave it to other people so no one could feel envy of you. Leaders, people who are always feeling envy of the leaders. In a lot of these cultures, there never really was a leader. It was constantly being shifted among different people, so nobody would feel envy. They understood the dangers of it. In ancient cultures the Greeks had a ritual of ostracism. The word ostracism comes from the word ostraca, which is a piece of clay sharp. Every year the Greeks would vote on who to banish from Athens, who was the person that was going to get the most envy? Who is the most successful, the richest that people were going to hate? We've got to get rid of that person because if we don't it's going to cause all kinds of political problems because of the deep powerful effects of envy. They would take those sharps and they would say, "It's Aristides, he must be banished from Athens."

[Robert:](#) Primitive ancient cultures very much understood the problem. Envy is the kind of thing that nobody overtly, nobody goes around saying, "Man I envy that man's success. I wish I had it. In fact, I feel kind of negative feelings towards him because he's got more than me." Nobody expresses it. Instead we go through this mental ballet in which the person

that we envy, we feel a pang of envy that person is superior, to what they have that we don't have, who we disguise it to ourselves immediately through this narrative. That person who has more is actually a bad person. They're not good, they don't deserve it. They didn't get it through any kind of proper means, it was all chance or an accident. That gives us license to either dislike that person or to even take action against him or her by sabotaging them or by saying something nasty in the media. We're never aware that envy might be the source of our thoughts and our actions because we cover it up almost instantly. The brain goes through this process of it's the other person that caused me to feel resentment because of their actions, not because of the inferiority that I feel.

[Robert:](#) Envy is throughout culture, it is completely in social media just rampant, envy [is] kind of motivating so much of what people say or do there. You're constantly being aware of what other people have, the great vacations they're going on, the beautiful women they're dating, of the great advances that they got on their latest book. Your little envy triggers constantly being pulled inside of you. You're feeling it all the time and it's the source for a lot of political movements. It's the source for a lot of resentments that some people have against all other groups of people. It's endemic to our culture that nobody ever talks about it because it's such an ugly emotion.

[Robert:](#) I want to make you aware that you Dave or me Robert you feel envy, you feel it every day. It's constantly going on. Being aware of the fact that you're prone to feeling envy, you can begin to overcome it, you can begin to deal with it. You can begin to transform it into other emotions, even into positive things. It's the denial of it that's the problem. I'm going to instruct you in the signs of envy, how you can re-decipher it in people before they take ugly action in you. The kinds of people who are prone to feeling envy. The kinds of things that happen in the world that would trigger envy in other people so you can become much more aware of this phenomenon.

[Dave:](#) I've definitely seen that in the course of the past six or so years as Bulletproof Radio has become really successful and all, you get sniping in the world of podcasts. It seems like there's a personality type where, it's like "how can I help?" You get guys like James Altucher and Lewis Howes and they're always ready to stand up and help. There are some other people who are really kind of guarded and I'm not. One guy was like, "I'm non-reciprocal in the way I deal with these things," and things like that. Is this because they're traumatized as children? I mean what makes people more envious or more prone to envy than other people?

[Robert:](#) Well this brings us back to the dog story that you started the whole thing with. There's this great therapist like [inaudible 00:47:42] who psychoanalyzed infants, children from one to two years old. She literally had them in her office and she observed them and talked to them. She did this for thousands of infants over many years. She really understood their weird psychology. She decided that some babies are simply born greedy, envious and aggressive. She said that because she would see like a three month baby, suckling on the mother's breast with so much energy and anger that it was never getting enough milk from the breast. It was like crying all the time. There was no reason to explain that. The mother was fine and normal and this was occurring several months after being born, that this baby could not be satisfied. It wanted more and it felt offended if it saw other people getting what it wasn't getting.

[Robert:](#) The only rational explanation she could come is that there is a genetic disposition towards the greedy, aggressive, envious type person. That some people are born that way. Then of course they'll be circumstances that will create it and you can see it early on in sibling relationships. We all felt that to some degree if we had brothers and sisters, like we were completely sensitive to the fact that they were maybe getting more of the things that we weren't getting. We carry those resentments with us around for years and years and years.

[Robert:](#) The sense of insecurity that other people are getting things that we don't have, if it happened early on in your life, if it was like three or four or five years old and you felt that in your family dynamic, that's going to turn you into the envying type for the rest of your life. You'll see that in a lot of envious people. On the other hand if you had a more kind of comforting, less competitive type sibling environment in the family, then you probably won't develop this trait. I mean I say everybody feels passive envy, we're constantly feeling it. I feel envy for Ryan Holiday's tremendous success even though he was my protégé. I don't do any action on it, I don't sabotage him. I don't [crosstalk 00:50:01].

[Dave:](#) You won't say he's a bad man behind his back.

[Robert:](#) No, never.

[Dave:](#) Of course.

[Robert:](#) Other people can take that feeling without acting on it and some of their action will be very passive aggressive. They'll do what you were signaling. They won't help you when you need help, but they'll disguise it as, "Oh Dave you're so successful, you don't need my help." Or they'll disguise it as, "I don't have the time, I'm sorry, I'm a very busy person." They'll never ever admit that envy is the source of why they don't want to help you with your business. Yeah.

[Dave:](#) Yeah, and then you also I think from the law of envy you get the people who will just work on saying, "You must be a bad person because you're successful."

[Robert:](#) Yeah.

[Dave:](#) Therefore the character assassinations and things like that. I've come across that and it's not how I operate and it really confused the heck out of me for a while until I saw the pattern just as I became more visible. Reading *The Laws of Human Nature* during the law of envy, it really crystallized and clarified some of that and yeah, it's really all childhood stuff. In fact almost every bad thing we do seems to be early childhood. You agree with that?

[Robert:](#) I think a lot of it is. It's an underestimated force. The thing also I think about envy that I'll say is, envy usually occurs among friends which is what makes it such a disheartening and weird emotion, something that we really can't access or understand. Why would someone befriend us and then turn envious and do some action against us in some

level? It creates all sorts of very confusing emotions. I try to point out that a lot of people who feel envy are actually motivated to become your friend first. They don't realize this consciously. They befriend you, they learn your weak points and then in some fashion or other by some nasty comment or some action, they're able to wound you.

[Robert:](#) Envy is complicated and it's slippery and it's hard to put your finger on it, because I'm trying to give you a little better sense of how you can detect it.

[Dave:](#) Well I think you achieved that with that law in your book. Robert we are coming up on the end of the show. I feel like I could probably chat with you for about like five days and we would have cool stuff to talk about. Just my sincere thanks for your life's work.

[Robert:](#) Oh thank you.

[Dave:](#) All of your books have been exceptionally worth reading. There's a bar I have for a book. When you set the book down, you say, "What was the return on investment I got for the time I spent with this book?" You can tell, it's easy to throw a book together in 30 days and throw it out in the Internet and all that. When you read the book, like okay I might have gotten 5 percent return on this. Yours are the books where you would read like this was a 5,000 percent return on the time on that. You've done that with every single book you've ever written that I've read. You have a unique skill and ability there and I'm really grateful for that, because you're one of the leading thinkers at least in my opinion. Thank you for being on the show and thank you for your work. Just keep doing it. I can't wait to read the next one.

[Robert:](#) Thank you so much Dave. I really appreciate it and your book is pretty amazing too. I really, really learned a lot from that.

[Dave:](#) Oh thank you, that's very high praise coming from you. If you've liked today's episode, I've just got to tell you, like *Game Changers* has a high ROI. There is a higher ROI for Robert's *The Laws of Human Nature*. You should read them both, but you owe it to yourself as a functioning human being who wants to be a game changer, who wants to just have more resilience in your life, there is precious human knowledge in this book. You've just got to read it, so that's your homework assignment for today. Go to Amazon, go to wherever books are sold, pick up a copy of *The Laws of Human Nature*. If you haven't done *Game Changers*, pick that one up too. I'm just telling you, if you think the show's worth your time, reading Robert's book is going to be a better return on investment than the last hour, which was well worth it.

[Dave:](#) Thanks for listening.