

## The Gift of Criticism: Why “Yes” is Holding You Back – Steven Herz with Dave Asprey – #745

Announcer:

Bulletproof Radio, a State of High Performance.

Dave Asprey:

You're listening to Bulletproof Radio with Dave Asprey. Today, we're going to talk about something that's top of mind, I've been seeing this on my Instagram channels, on Facebook and where I communicate with people, fans, followers, part of the biohacking community. And it's that, a lot of people don't have jobs right now. And everyone who does have a job is wondering, "Okay, am I going to have a job? What can I do to make sure that I do?"

So I wanted to do something to help all of us and you want to pay attention to that. So career development right now, you can say, "Career, what career? I'm just happy to have a job." This is a short term phenomenon in the overall course of your life. You're going to live to at least a hundred, probably, 180 cause you listen to the show. So this feels really big right now and it is big right now.

And five or 10 years from now, it will not be as big in your mind as it is right now, and your career will still be there. So I brought in an expert on today, who's a career adviser. He's led large sports entertainment talent marketing firm. He's helped CEOs, lawyers, entrepreneurs, and especially young professionals grow their careers faster than otherwise would have. So you could kind of put your head down and run and hide, or you could say, "This is the opportunity of a lifetime," and this is a chance to really lean in and push forward and say, "Okay, when there's chaos, there's opportunity," as you would hear from [Lou Sioux 00:01:30].

So, that is what I would recommend to you. And I wanted to bring someone in who could teach you about something called connectability. And he's going to teach you some tips on how to develop something called A-W-E, and we'll define that for you. When you're done with this show, whether you're late in your career or you're just getting started, you're going to have more tools to go out and kick ass now and for the rest of your career, however long that is. I'm talking about Steven Herz, he's president of Montag Group in New York city and he represents 250 big journalists broadcast executives, and basically he knows what he's doing. So Steven, welcome to the show.

Steven Herz:

Thank you. That's quite an introduction. I hope I'm right, I hope you're right, I should say.

Dave Asprey:

Well, you got my attention because you have a book called Don't Take Yes for an Answer: Using Authority, Warmth, and Energy to Get Exceptional Results. And it's a really cool perspective on things. So no one's ever said don't take yes for an answer before. Why is that even a title? It doesn't make sense on its face.

Steven Herz:

Well, the reason why is because, I believe that a lot of people unwillingly over the last 20, 30, 40 years have been put or put themselves into an echo chamber of yes, there is three factors for that reason. One, we've had great inflation, B is now an A, C is now a B, et cetera. Many universities don't even give out C's, they're not allowed.

So then the second thing is... Well, it's true. The second thing is that, we had this introduction in the 80s of the participation trophy and that was great. But now the participation trophy is kind of morphed into what I would call an MVP Trophy. So everybody who steps out on any perspective field is mistakenly thinking that, because they got a trophy for showing up, they actually are the MVP. It's kind of similar to what the movie, *The Incredibles* tried to say. So, that's the other factor.

And then the third and most important factor, I think for your listeners today is, HR departments by and large. In many major companies in North America have stopped firing people. They've also stopped giving people feedback for the people that are not necessarily the best performers. They might spend some time trying to get the A minus and the A's to an A plus, but everybody else kind of goes by the wayside. And one major HR executive told me, "We don't even let people know they're being let go. We call them downsizing's and reorgs and RIFs. We use all of these euphemisms to get rid of the people we don't want. They never even know what hit them."

And that's why I say don't take yes for an answer because so often in life, you think you're hearing, yes. And then six months later, you're on the wrong end of a downsizing or a reorg and you're out of a job or someone else gets a promotion. Well, if you were so great and everything was so, "Yes." Why aren't you where you want to be in life? And that's why I called the book, *Don't Take Yes for an Answer*.

Dave Asprey:

It makes so much sense, and it's true. The normal process that I grew up with in the tech world as an entrepreneur, if you didn't produce, they'd put you on a performance improvement plan, which is like getting a C and then say, "You're not cutting it. So do these things and you'll be fine." But in today's world, quite often you put someone on a performance improvement plan, they're so incensed, "How dare you say that I'm not performing well?" "Well, look at the numbers, look at the data, or look at the feedback from all of your colleagues that say that, you leave bodies after meeting and you're mean to everyone."

All of those are not performing well. I'm saying this as a CEO, but there are people that are so incensed, they just fly off the handle. So yeah, a lot of HR departments are, I think, worried about that. They don't want a bunch of people flying off the handle and doing a bunch of legal things that are ultimately futile, but take up a lot of people's time. So there's a corporate behavior from that, that's actually largely driven by legal issues.

Steven Herz:

Correct.

Dave Asprey:

And you're right. It does rob employees from that positive or negative feedback that could be really valuable for them. I never thought of it that way.

Steven Herz:

I prefer to call it a constructive feedback rather than negative but yeah, I'm trying to keep a positive spin on it.

Dave Asprey:

There you go. I suppose, you suck at this would be negative feedback so that'd be bad and you have a bad manager if you hear that at work. But I will actually admit, I have said that to employees where I've built trust with, I'll say, "You know what? You're killing it on these three areas and this one, you've never done this before and you are completely failing." And we can laugh about it because there's an element of trust and improvement.

But you can only do that with certain employees who are just interested in self-improvement and improving their performance. Whereas if you say that other people, they cry for a week and so you would never do that. And how do you get over that as an employee though? How do you go in and say, "Okay, you told me I'm doing fine. I don't really care. Am I the best person in the company?" Tell me more, is there secret words do you tell a manager to know how you're doing?

Steven Herz:

Well, first of all, just to go back to what you said earlier about the person that you could laugh about when you say the negative feedback, you've achieved with that individual connectability, you've connected with them. There's a high level of trust. And so you're able to do that, and also kind of furthering the point you're talking about, I think the employee... Look, this book is written for the employee. If it works on the corporate cultural level, great. And I think it can, but I'm hoping that the reader is an individual. I mean, because two people can't read the same book at the exact same time, unless you're staring over someone's shoulder.

Dave Asprey:

Too bad.

Steven Herz:

Each person is going to have an individual experience with this book. And I want them to say, "Hey, how can I improve my lot in life?" And the answer I think is to change your mindset and to start looking at the to use your term "negative review" as a gift, that's a gift. If I get a negative review even if you tell me I'm doing seven things well, and one or two things not as well, if I can improve those two things and still continue to do the seven things well. And I come back to you a year from now and I'm maybe nine and O, or eight and one, I'm more valuable to you a year later, but if I'm still at seven and two, because you didn't tell me what those two things were, my value hasn't increased to you.

And if I realized that as the employee, that I'm increasing my value to you or to the world in terms of more customers, better getting along with colleagues, better leadership, fellowship, whatever it might be, I'm helping myself. So you should be thinking about that criticism as a gift and also take it selfishly. Boy, I'm so selfish that I'm asking for this constructive criticism. I mean, it works on, I believe on multiple levels.

Dave Asprey:

It's funny because Brian Tracy real famous personal development guy wrote a book, Eat That Frog! And in that book, he says to employees anytime in their career, look, there's really only three things you do that are really important. And if you do those three things right, your boss will love you and you'll move up in the organization. Yet you have a list of 25 things and you don't know what the three of them are. And so he describes that thing, maybe if you figured out and they say, "Hey, are these the right three?" And that'll work.

Is that sort of tied into this? That conversation where you say, "Look, I did some soul searching on what I do that adds the most fire to the org. I think it's these things." Is that right? Is that building

that connectability you're talking about? Or is it more going out for beers and hanging out and playing basketball or whatever to build that connection? Is it more, let me show you value or is it more, trust me I'm a person kind of a thing?

Steven Herz:

I think they're very connected. So again, the ideal reader of my book, you can't choose your own reader. Can you imagine I'm sitting there in Barnes & Noble, "No. You Dave, don't buy this book. It's not right for you. Only for you Bill." Right?

Dave Asprey:

Great.

Steven Herz:

That'd be really great for sales, right? But the ideal reader of this book is someone who has the core competency in the job. He can do the three things. I talk about dentistry for example, if you needed a dentist tomorrow because you had a cavity, you could probably find 50 dentists in your community, we all could, who are good enough at filling the tooth, right-

Dave Asprey:

Right.

Steven Herz:

... the cavity. The problem is that the end user often doesn't know the difference between the great dentist, the good dentist, the average dentist. So we're really evaluating people on how they make us feel based on their expression, their communication of their qualities. It's not their substantive qualities that we're evaluating them on because we don't know.

So again, it's to answer your question, it's very related. It's not so much about going off for beers, although that helps on the margins. It's about that person, let's say you're in a computer software business, which I know that's your background is, and you need to develop a new program whatever it might be. You Dave might be the greatest programmer in the world, but in this hypothetical, no one person can build the perfect program. And you've got to work in a team of 10.

And if you can't listen to the guy next to you who may just know that one little thing, that's going to make that program better. Even though you're contributing 90% of the value of this idea, but it's not going to work without that tail wagging the dog, so to speak. Then you're not that valuable to the team. And that's the idea is, can you listen to other people? Can you make room in the relationship? Because you might be the greatest coder, but if you can't do those other things, you're not of great value.

Dave Asprey:

So then how do people avoid that feedback avoidance, where you're not getting the feedback you want? What's the trick? So it's connected to beers, it's connected for saying, how do I add more value? I mean, is it a conversation? Is it a thing you do?

Steven Herz:

Yes.

Dave Asprey:

It seems very hard to get to create a trusting environment where your manager's going to say, "I'm going to take the risk of telling you something you might not want to hear." That sounds like a [crosstalk 00:11:53]-

Steven Herz:

Let me tell you a quick story, okay? Maybe this will summarize it for you. It's a small story, it's actually in the book, but I think it illustrates a lot about hopefully the culture in my business and the culture I think others should try to create. We had a guy, he's still with us, Reid Pakula is his name. And he starts with us as an intern, about a year out of school. He'd worked for another sports marketing firm. And he started as an intern and he was going to be paid intern. He's going to become a junior agent, that was the aspiration.

And after about two months, he comes to me and he says, "How am I doing?" And I said, "Reid, you're doing great, everybody likes you. You do everything that's being asked of you. You're really a pleasure to have around the office. You've got a great attitude. You have a can do spirit. All I've heard is positive about you. And I think you're well on your way in the next..." it was a three month thing, "A month from now being promoted." And you know what he said to me... At 23 years old by the way, he said, "I'm not taking that from you. I don't want to hear that."

He said, "Don't tell me how good I am. I listened to the way you talk to people around here. I know the entire premise of your book, I know the culture you have. I see the way everyone talks to each other." He didn't say exactly this but, "How dare you tell me I'm doing well?" I couldn't believe this kid had the presence of mind to say this to me at 23. And I thought, okay, I've really achieved corporate culture Nirvana here. Right? This was the moment.

And I said, "All right, fine you asked, you're right. Very wise of you." And I said, "Well, you actually have a problem with your authority." Because my book is about this AWE, A-W-E, authority, warmth, energy. Those are the components of what you should be looking to improve once you don't take yes for an answer. So I said, "You speak with a lot of filler words. You say like all the time, it really detracts from your intelligence. You're a bright kid, I could see that, but you don't come across that way. You don't maximize your intelligence in terms of the competency you create around you." And he said, "Wow, okay." He was taken aback.

Dave Asprey:

He actually said, "Like okay, like." Didn't he?

Steven Herz:

Yeah, exactly. So he says this to me... And of course like, even though I'm writing this book, I felt bad saying it to him. I don't know him that well, he's a young guy and he was doing just fine enough to get the promotion. And two weeks go by and he comes back to me and he said, "Alright, I've really worked on it. How am I doing now?" And now we had a better opening for this and I said, "Well, to be honest, you stink, you really haven't improved at all." And again, like you had with your colleague, we laughed about it.

And I gave him this trick that I've now employed. It's sort of a life hack, if you will. It was Martin Luther King weekend, 2017. I said, "You go home for the weekend. And you say like, for your heart is content. Don't even think about it. All the likes you want, enjoy yourself, go like crazy." And I said, "But one thing you have to do is, you are going to pay absolute hypertension to your parents, your siblings,

your friends, everybody using the word like, I want you to be hyper focused on that. And we're going to see where this takes us." I had an idea where it would go.

So Tuesday comes, he comes in and he says, "All right, I have good news and bad news. The good news is, you are never going to hear the word like out of my mouth ever again, the bad news is I can't stand any of my friends anymore. I can't be around them." And so to this day, three years later, I have not heard him say the word, like one time.

Dave Asprey:

It's incredible. I had a problem, I spent too much time at The Bulletproof Coffee shop in Santa Monica as was traveling a lot. And I picked up like in my lexicon and maybe I got from my kids, I don't know. But I started saying, "All right, kids, I need you to remind me of this," and I'd remind them. And then having your kids pester you about it works really well.

But you're also reminding me of one of the exact side working for me, who is pretty good on some levels and not great on others, but she had this habit when she would stop to think. She would say, "Uh..." just like that. Like Er talking, this is the worst sound you'd ever make. And I really wanted to sit down and say, look, you need to work on this because you're really smart, but I would never put you in front of the media. And you're at a point in your career where you probably could do that sort of stuff. And you're unaware you're doing it, but you can just stop and think without making that sound.

But I didn't do it. And I didn't do it because especially for CEO's or for very senior, quite often men, they're the father figure in a company, you're the oldest strongest authority figure for all young children, that pretty much translates to dads. So there's weird, really complex psychology that's all subliminal and none of its conscious, but it affects behavior pattern.

So if you feel like someone's been criticized a lot by their parents, particularly their dad and you're a CEO and a guy, your even small criticism can really be triggering for people. And in this case, I'm like, "I really don't want to," I just want to step into that because even though I think it would be of service to know that, I think me saying it would probably create exactly that problem that you talked about at the beginning of the show. So I never did, but you definitely built that relationship. And in this case we didn't have it. So it's really interesting you said that, I wish everyone would do it what you said.

Steven Herz:

Well, there's a solution to your problem, if I may.

Dave Asprey:

Yeah. Please offer it.

Steven Herz:

So I say this, there's one very important word in the title of the book, it's called Don't Take Yes for an Answer. The most important word, believe it or not in that title is, Take. Because there's something called the give and the take, right? Give and take obviously. You're talking about giving feedback, right? And I'm talking about taking feedback and I believe that the best feedback is the kind that Reid Pakula got because he initiated it.

He was the one who said, "No, I don't want to hear how I'm doing well. I want to hear what I could be doing better." And he had the presence of mind at 23 to say that, and now he's thriving in our company three years later because of that mindset. And that's why I wrote this book, honestly. And to your point, you're right, I'm not doing it for the money. I wish I had known when I started.

Dave Asprey:

It's a labor of love. It's great, it's focusing and it's educating. But man, it's hard. So thank you for writing it though.

Steven Herz:

Yeah. You're most welcome. But the point of really why I wrote the book is that, it forces somebody to take the affirmative step in their life and find out to ask that question, do I have that, uh... the Er thing you're talking about, do I have that like, do I have this bad habit of not making eye contact with people? Am I a bad listener? There's a hundred things you might be doing wrong that could be sabotaging your career and your life. And you don't even know it. And you know that song by Nick Lowe, you've gotta be cruel to be kind, right?

Dave Asprey:

Yes, sure.

Steven Herz:

Well, I think it's a slight variation of that. I think it is cruel to be kind by you not telling that person about the Er sound. I mean, sorry if I'm criticizing you right now-

Dave Asprey:

No, that's fine.

Steven Herz:

... But I do think in a weird way, if you realize it's cruel to be kind in that moment. And my hope is that, first of all, I hope a lot of people buy my book and I hope other people write. No, but I'm serious, I hope other people write books like this. I hope that this mentality is something that gets really inculcated in American and Canadian businesses.

Dave Asprey:

Right. But what I was planning to do in that situation was... All right, just hold on, 'em see. What I was planning to do in that situation was to hire an executive coach to help with career development for this kind of mid-level executive, and then tell the coach, "Hey, can you work on this?" So then it's in a constructive feedback and I don't have to be the one to deliver the bad news. I have no problem delivering bad news. In fact, there was a time, not so much after that, where I delivered the bad news that you didn't hit your numbers, your job isn't here anymore.

So I didn't apply with the career coach because they failed at their core tasks. But as I think through the whole process there, it's that how do you create an opening as an employee for a manager to just say, "All right, you really want to hear the truth?" And for me as a leader, it's actually relaxing to know that someone really wants to know because usually senior executives know because we've worked for 20 years with people and we pick it up. So your book is a really important point or your book contains a really important point.

No one told me this in my career when I was 25 or 35. And I think the problem is worse now than it used to be, which you're also saying here. What does this do though for someone who has already lost their job? I mean, should they call up their old boss and ask what they could have done better? Or what would you do?

Steven Herz:

Yeah, that's a good place to start. And also talk to friends, talk to family. Look, my book is really largely centered on this idea that it's your communication skills that are sabotaging you. Now, if it's something else, then I really can't help you. That's not the purview of my book. If you just don't know how to code or you can't actually fill the tooth, that's a problem. Or if you don't show up on time or you're a jerk, those are issues I'm not really dealing with in my book, I'm dealing with those people that are just missing out on the margins a little bit and not getting the promotions. And they're on the wrong side of the downsizing's, et cetera.

And so I think you can get that feedback from your bosses. You can also get feedback from your colleagues. You can get it from your wife, your husband, your partner, your brothers, your sisters, your friends. And if you create that open space in your life to really seek it out, and frankly, over the last four years, I have made myself into the Guinea pig, even though I'm writing a book on communication and I'm supposed to be the "expert" you know the expression like, "He couldn't do it so he taught," right?

Dave Asprey:

Oh, yeah.

Steven Herz:

I mean, I still have a lot of communication flaws and my wife and many others have taken the opportunity thankfully to just punch me when needed along the way. And I think, I've hopefully made a lot of big improvements in these last four years.

Dave Asprey:

Asking for feedback will cause that. And the other thing that I would offer as we're talking through this, I'm thinking about my management interactions, both as an employee and as the big cheese, it's usually the words thank you, are really important. So if a manager goes out of their way and offers you a little bit of constructive feedback and instead of going, "Oh, that's really bad news." Instead you say, "Thank you so much for telling me," you'll probably hear more.

And so I feel like managers are going to be testing the waters a little bit to see how open to feedback you really are. And if you send that signal that says, "Yeah, I do want to know how I'm actually doing," instead of getting the gold star, your overall kind of overarching theme in that book is so critical.

Steven Herz:

Except we're leaving out one important point.

Dave Asprey:

What is it?

Steven Herz:

You are referring to managers as if feedback can only go down the food chain so to speak. I have a culture where I work with a lot of 20 something year olds. And just yesterday, one of my young 20 somethings, he blasted me. I sent an email out and he just blasted me to smithereens on a text. What are you doing basically? I just can't believe you just did that on that email. And he's 28 and I'm 53 and I loved it. I thought it was great. And-

Dave Asprey:

So good. You've built a really powerful, good culture with that safe. Ray Dalio does a lot of that, and I got a chance to meet him briefly at the Milken Conference in the Middle East, impressive just as an individual person. But you look at how he's written a whole book about that, where that kind of upward feedback is normal. And so I crave more of that and I find I have a hard time getting it. I don't know if it's something I'm doing, but you're totally right.

You really want to be one of those people that tells the boss what's going on, but okay, it's a pandemic, people are happy to have a job. Is there some way that an employee can feel out whether their manager's really ready for some feedback? Cause it can also be a little risky. You'd tell the boss that he's acting like a jerk-

Steven Herz:

No. I agree with you. Look, like I said, I'm 53, I'll be 54 in a few weeks. And the thing is that my company has been around since 1996, so this is almost 25 years. And many of the people that work for me with me have been there 20 plus years, 15 years, 10 years. And so there's a lot of foundational stuff down there and I think you have to start building it. And you're going back to your original point about giving the boss feedback or what have you, I think the boss has to also say, "I'm not taking yes for an answer either."

And I think Ray Dalio is great, I've read his book. And I think he focuses a lot on decision making. Are we making the best decision here? And I think that's great. I would also add to it that a lot of businesses don't succeed in the room, not because they're not offering the best product or what have you, but the boss himself is often not the greatest closer, so to speak in terms of the salesmanship or not creating the best communication. And that's where I think in addition to what Ray's saying, we should also be creating a lot of dialogue best practices around communication.

Dave Asprey:

Okay. That's hard enough even in an office, but now we're all stuck at home on video. So what changes if we're doing this over zoom and Skype and all the other stuff like that?

Steven Herz:

I mean, this is kind of like one of these TV commercials. I don't recommend you try this at home. I say not yet, if you don't have the foundational underpinnings in your organization or in your relationships, I do not recommend starting this program during the pandemic, I do not. I think we should wait. But again, just talking about our company because we do have that foundation and you seem like you have it also in some or all of your organization-

Dave Asprey:

Some of my companies I'm working on them all differently.

Steven Herz:

Right? So the ones that you have. I mean, I can tell you the truth, that in the very primary relationships with the 10 people that I deal with the most in my life professionally, we haven't missed a beat. I mean, there hasn't been any change. Like I mentioned yesterday with the feedback, whether it's via zoom or email or text or phone, there's a constant interplay with each other, and it's like a family.

I mean, I love my job and my wife makes fun of me because I'm a much better communicator in my business life than I am in my personal life. And I think it's because, I don't have like any of those underlying sibling issues that I had when I was a kid or mommy or daddy issues. And everybody kind of leaves their baggage at home, I think with work. And we can just say whatever we want to each other.

Dave Asprey:

The thing is, you're 53, right? We have these Erikson's stages of adult development. And it's pretty common when you're working with someone who's under 25, their prefrontal cortex isn't all the way really laid in yet, it really solidifies around 25. So you're naturally going to be more interested in different things when you're 22 or 23 than you are when you're 28 or than when you're 35 and it's not true for everyone. But in terms of the law of averages, there's behavior patterns, for instance, in your 20s you're oftentimes about building your community, your set of friends, your tribe.

And you get into 30s and all of a sudden you're like, what about my career? What about my core relationships? And maybe a family. And so we shift our behaviors over that time. But when you're working with someone as an employer, then communicating on a level with people where, okay, by the time you're 50, you've hopefully dealt with most of your crap or you at least know what it is, but when you're 22, unless you're raised by saints in a monastery or something, you probably have a bunch of crap you haven't dealt with.

And then someone comes along and says, "I don't like how you communicate, you're rude at work and you chew like a cow," right? It's going to land different. Or do you change the feedback tone based on where people are in their stages of life?

Steven Herz:

I don't really think I've ever thought through that before, it's an interesting point. And I'm going to give you an honest answer, I don't know that I have. One of the touchstones, I think of really good feedback, I've said this it's tough love, right? And I think there has to be love there. Even if it's a work relationship and I use the word love, maybe slightly metaphorical, but if somebody knows that you care about them and you really have their best interests at heart first and foremost, it gives you, I believe a lot of latitude to say certain things if that love is very present. And it's kind of hovering in the background or in the foreground of the conversation.

And I've experienced this, like I said, with Reid, who's 23 and people who are 30 and 40 and 50 and 60. And I think it's incumbent upon the person giving the feedback to really communicate, "Look, I'm saying this to you Igor," the one you talked about earlier, because I care about you. It's not just for the betterment of our business, it's also for the betterment of you.

You may take this feedback and go run another business someday and be the CEO and reach all your potential. And I hope you achieve all of it here with our business. And I'm telling you this because I think it's better for you to know it. And I care about you and hopefully I've manifested that elsewhere in our relationship. Then I think the person has a real opening to hear it.

Dave Asprey:

I like that. How about this idea of warmth and energy? These are such mushy concepts. But you put them on the cover of your book, authority, warmth, energy, how do employees or managers, since it's most of the people are working. How do they go about projecting that warmth and energy as a way to get ahead?

Steven Herz:

Well, what I try to do is take those mushy concepts as you aptly call them, very rightfully so and try to break them down into their smallest parts. So almost like thinking about warmth on the molecular level, if you will. And saying, "Well, what are the 10 components of warmth and how can it manifest itself in your life?" And one of the ways is smiling at someone, just smile. And the other is, to be emotionally committed to your words when you're talking to someone so that they know that you actually care.

Another, is to make eye contact when someone's talking to you. Another is to ask a question. If someone's saying something to you, ask a question that shows that you're actually paying attention, be interested in another person, be interested in what they're saying, fair it out what's important to them, show that emotional consideration when appropriate, I know we're in a different era now, but if it's the right moment and you have the equity with the person, touch their arm a little bit, just give him a hug if it's necessary.

Dave Asprey:

Yeah. That's such a tough and I had a hugging culture for a while in Bulletproof, like I took all my execs like equally. And when they first come to the company like, "Hey, this is what we do, you okay?" And at that point forward, it was all right. But at a certain point, it's like, here's too much weird legal energy floating around. We just kind of stopped doing it and something's missing from that. But all right so it-

Steven Herz:

So we're luck again, like so many of these relationships have been around. One of my top people is a woman, Carol Perry who's been with me for over 20 years. We've been hugging each other for 20 years and we're not going to stop now. Her husband is a great friend of mine and he's six foot three and played college football. He can-

Dave Asprey:

When people sexualize a hug or a caring hand on a shoulder, there's something wrong because those are kind of how humans connect. But I don't know that I'm going to be the one to go out and fight that fight.

Steven Herz:

But putting aside, hugging for the moment, there are certainly other ways you could manifest your warm to another person. And I think if you read hopefully about this and you get it down to its granular level, you'll see there are certain things that you can be applying in your daily life that are very low hanging fruit type things. And also you may learn that there's one or two or three things that you're not doing that's really again, to use this word sabotaging you and harming your growth.

And the same thing is for energy. Think about it, energy can manifest itself in two ways, if we're just going to simplify it, high energy and low energy. And sometimes high energy can deflate the other person and sometimes low energy can energize the other person. So it's important to think about energy from the perspective of inside out and thinking about how are you energizing the other person? And do you have the presence of mine in the moment to know whether or not to be a little more high energy, lower energy, let them talk, be very attentive to them, by listening to them which might energize the other person and use some of these other tips that we talk about.

Dave Asprey:

Is it possible to fake warmth?

Steven Herz:

It's a great question. I would say, I hope not. Because the last thing I want people to do is read this book and become... What is that famous expression? Life is all about sincerity if you can fake that, you've got it made. So I do hope that people take these things and they change a little bit on the outside and that changes them on the inside.

Dave Asprey:

Well said. My research says that, the only people who can really fake it are sociopaths and psychopaths, about 4% of people. The rest of us, our physiology changes when we try to fake it. And other people pick that up, like changes in electrical fields and things like that and we know at some level it's not authentic. So unless you're one of those really 4% probably broken people, then you're not going to be able to fake it. And we're going to know, and that creates a feeling of not safety.

Steven Herz:

Right? I agree with you. And I'm very happy to hear you, I didn't know the data that you decided, the real that you did, because it's a little scary thankfully, that this is true because people could use this for very nefarious purposes.

Dave Asprey:

And people have been faking that stuff for a long time. And certainly I've had sociopaths and psychopaths infiltrate into different ones of my companies. And eventually you find them and you get rid of them, but they usually leave a swath of damage in their wake. And the company has to heal when they're gone. So part of my job is, to be better at detecting those people and not letting them in the door.

And some of them know what they're doing, some of them don't, but it doesn't really matter if they're causing harm. And those are the kinds of people where as a manager, if you give them feedback, it's impossible for it to be their fault. And they will reflect, deflect, and you have a bubble of invisibility. And if you hire someone who just won't take any feedback at all, because it's always someone else's fault. Do you have any advice in a situation like that or maybe for people who are working for a manager like that? Cause I mean, that's a terrible situation when you're working for a sociopath or psychopath where it's always your fault, even if it's not, what would you do then?

Steven Herz:

Wow. I would say if possible, try to find a new job.

Dave Asprey:

Yeah. Run. That's the right thing.

Steven Herz:

I would, I mean, if someone's a sociopath and they just really have no ability to self-reflect, that's not the right organization for you. And I hope that people could find a way out of that. Some problems, I think are maybe insolvable.

Dave Asprey:

And in that case simply, it's not you. Right? And of course the act of gaining wisdom over time is figuring out when it's you and when it's the other person in any relationship, whether it's a relationship with a friend, with a loved one or even at work where you're both part of it. But if you realize, wait a minute, the common element here is this other person. You just got to get out of there. Okay, I like you thinking there.

Now, you also wrote Energy in the book you call it, A dynamic quality that gives you power. And I define energy as electronics in the body, and it comes from eating food and metabolizing air, but you have a softer definition of energy. How do people show energy in the workplace in order to establish all?

Steven Herz:

Well, I think both of those statements can be true that you just said about your definition of energy and mine also. I think, first of all, if you're talking and your volume is very flat people will sense. If you're not inflecting with your words and there's no body language moving, you're just sitting there and you're completely disconnected. That to me is the definition of having no energy.

But if your volume is rising at times, it's lowering at times, this is unpredictability to your cadence, there's a lyrical quality to your communication. And you're so committed to what you're saying. Then I think people will feed off that. And that is my definition of energy. And it's that ability to know not only how you're reading the room, but how the room is reading you at the exact same time. It's that dynamic that's happening.

Dave Asprey:

I like it. I'm actually taking voice lessons right now from Roger Love. And Roger's the guy who taught Bradley Cooper how to sing so he'd be in that movie, I think A Star is Born with Lady Gaga, and this is a very famous voice coach who I just met through happenstance. And I've been doing that because I wanted to be better at projecting the energy that I feel. But it's really interesting to me where you're saying, okay, how do you protect it? It is in how you show up.

And now that we're living in a world of microphones and a world of microphones and video, the skills seem like they've changed so your voice maybe becomes more important. And now it's time for some tough love for you. Your video conferencing skills also have to change so you can project energy and all these things like that. So you've got not such a good camera, you've got a bad camera angle, bad lighting and a bad microphone, tough love.

Steven Herz:

Yeah. I agree with you. I mean, we're out here sharing a house cause of the pandemic and it's-

Dave Asprey:

True.

Steven Herz:

... I'm just hoping people don't start screaming, but I completely agree with you and I need to get that changed. But I want to say this to you not to change the conversation, but I actually think that the most impressive thing, maybe I've heard about you after reading your bio and knowing everything you've achieved is actually that you're taking voice lessons. It's incredible-

Dave Asprey:

Thank you.

Steven Herz:

... because I spend a lot of time on this and the book and I talk about how your voice is your second face. And then this was a line that a guy named Dr. Morton Cooper said in his book which is called Change your voice, change your life and he might be the precursor to someone like Roger Love. And I think it's fascinating how important our voice is to people, and yet we spend so much time on our face and the impression we're making, but almost none on our voice. I applaud you for working on it.

Dave Asprey:

Thank you. And I didn't mean to come across as super critical on your stuff there. It was more of a comment for, hey, if you're doing interviews to get a new job right now, and you have it within you to change the lighting in your room, if you show up better in the interview and you have a microphone that costs you 50 bucks. This is a \$700 mic I'm using cause I run a professional show, but a \$50 mic is going to make you shine. Right? And if you do a couple of deep breaths before, and then you calm down, I think people can do exactly what you say in your book. And they can do it with a little bit more strength and power.

And heck if you have voice lessons, you know how to sing and breathe and all this stuff that I'm working on learning that's even better, but it feels like if it's a competitive job market and you want someone to trust you and you want to project energy and authority and warmth, the way you're describing the tools of projection used to be standing in a conference room and doing it and not sweating through your suit. But what it is now is, how do you look and how do you sound? And the rest of it has been taken away. So I feel like doubling down on those might be worth doing in a pandemic but there's no data to that, just guessing.

Steven Herz:

I just want to say that I give you a lot of credit here because you took my entire book and you summarized it and you gave the best possible feedback that anyone's going to get in this podcast it's not going to be for me, it's what you just said for the last 60 seconds. So I caution your listeners, if you can't listen to any of this podcast, except for that one minute, you've got enough.

Dave Asprey:

Thank you.

Steven Herz:

I think it was brilliant what you said. I'm serious, that was perfectly stated.

Dave Asprey:

It's one of those things where I hated as a young fat computer hacker, I weighed 300 pounds. My dress code was Powell-Peralta pants or shorts, the skater one size 46 inch waist and a double extra-large black tee shirt with some sort of hacker slogan on it and mirrored shades, which is kind of how you looked in the 90s as a hacker. Yes, that was me. And a leather jacket when I could afford one. So, I go from there and then you show up for an interview. You had to learn how to dress and I had to learn that how your

look matters, right? And you go through this and some people, it's just naturally parents taught you. And that's not what I learned, I learned that, how you hack matters and what you do.

But now how you present an idea, it matters cause otherwise your idea will never be born. And I had to learn the art of marketing not because I wanted to but because I wanted coffee without mold in it and stuff like that so package yourself. And I think the reason I wanted to have you on the show after going through the book, it's that the concept of authority, warmth and energy it's really important. And those are things that no one teaches you in business school, I went to Wharton, no one teaches you that in high school, your career counselor isn't going to do that. And your boss, isn't going to do that even if they are giving you good feedback.

So for you to say, all right, 53 years, run an agency for a long time. You guys need to know this, I think that's a really big gift. And man, if I had to read this when I was 25, it probably would have given me an extra five years of growth in my career. It's that big of a deal what you're teaching here. So that's why I wanted to have this on, to hopefully help some of the 49 million people were looking for jobs right now.

Steven Herz:

Well, I really appreciate you saying that. And I want to just add that, you actually do get taught this at one point in your life-

Dave Asprey:

When you get fired?

Steven Herz:

No. I'm being serious for a second. It's going to sound funny, but it's very true. This a metric of AWE, A-W-E like you could say it, doesn't show up at Wharton, it doesn't show up in college, it doesn't show up in law school, nowhere shows up at one time. It shows up in kindergarten.

Dave Asprey:

Interesting.

Steven Herz:

It shows up on your report card in kindergarten. In the sense that they'll say, "Dave is a pleasure to have in class, Dave is a warm person, he shares his blocks well." All these things are on your report card in kindergarten, go back and look, and you'll see that these AWE qualities are on many report cards, also nursery school. And then it disappears in first grade and it never shows up again.

Dave Asprey:

Wow.

Steven Herz:

And the thing is Dave, is that this is exactly why I wrote this book because I'm a bit of a missionary zealot here for this idea that the data shows that 85% of your success is based on not how you are the technical part of your job, because that gets commoditized and everybody gets to be good enough on the bell curve or get the job at the computer company or the dental office or the law firm. And so everybody's kind of good enough at it and that's not separating you, and the 85% does.

And yet we dedicate in our country to this day, zero resources to teaching people the 85%. We don't have any language around it, we don't have any metrics around it, we don't have anything actionable around it. And that's what I hope people will get from this book is to say, "Well Jesus! 85%." And I'm not looking at it at all in my life. Well, maybe just spend few minutes and start to learn about it.

Dave Asprey:

Very well said. And thanks for writing about it. Thanks for taking the time and just for sharing, it's just the right time. And I know it's stressful time to launch a book right in the middle of June and a pandemic. I think it's the best time ever because that's when your book can do the most good. Your website Steven Herz, S-T-E-V-E-N H-E-R-Z, and they've got a couple of words you can misspell there. So the proper spelling of Steven, no offense to my PH friends out there and Herz, H-E-R-Z, not the rental car spelling. And your book is called... I'm just going back up to the exact title, there you go. And your book is called Don't Take Yes for an Answer.

So if you're looking for a job or you're struggling in your job, or you don't want to be struggling in your job and you want to be the person who keeps your job, if you're at a company that's in a tough place right now, this is what you need to know and what you need to do, and that is why this episode exists. I hope it was of service to you. If you like the book, do what all good people do.

I used to say, tip your barista. But you don't have to tip your barista because you're probably not going into coffee shops cause you're probably brewing at home, which is a good thing to do anyway. So what else could you do? Leave a review for your author. It's like leaving a tip, but it doesn't cost you anything. So if you like the book, leave a review. And if I've ever said this on any podcast, if you don't like the book, leave a negative review and Steven will thank you for it.