

## Great Relationships Start with You & Hard Truths – Gary John Bishop – #932

Dave Asprey:

You're listening to The Human Upgrade with Dave Asprey. I'm filming today's episode from a different room than I normally do because I'm doing some construction at the main labs, or call it studio, whatever you want to call it where I record the show usually.

Today's episode, as I promised I'm going to tell you guys why you should listen before you listen so that you know it's worth your time. One of the biggest upgrades you can make in your life is upgrading your relationships. And this is one of those things you say, "What do you mean upgrading your relationships?" There's a lot to it, and I wrote about some of this in Game Changers. You'll get the world's most successful people, they've usually figured out a way to have a community or a partner or partners that support them.

So I thought, why not find an expert out here for us who is really, really strong and understands that, and our guest today is one of those guys. He doesn't believe that happy relationships come from the things that you might think they come from, he thinks that it isn't from 50/50 effort, it's not from compromise, it's not from molding yourself into whatever your partner wants. It's about some hard truths, and I really, really like that perspective. So with no further ado, let's have a conversation with Gary John Bishop, the New York Times bestselling author of the Unfu\*ked book series and his urban philosophy. Welcome, Gary.

Gary John Bishop:

Awesome. Thanks for having me Dave.

Dave:

Why do you go by Gary John Bishop instead of just Gary Bishop?

Gary:

When you Google Gary Bishop, you get a mass murderer.

Dave:

Oh, that's probably really bad for [crosstalk 00:01:54].

Gary:

I know.

Dave:

When you Google for Asprey you actually get extremely expensive jewelry in London, which is much better than a mass murderer.

Gary:

Right.

Dave:

So that's probably for the best.

Gary:

Right. Yeah. So I've included one of my middle names in there now just to make sure I'm separate and distinct.

Dave:

All right. And you are from Scotland, but you're a Floridian now. Why'd you move in Florida?

Gary:

I used to be a musician, so I made a few albums and toured a bit and had some fun doing that back in the heady days of the early 90s. And I just ended up meeting someone and getting married, and here I am.

Dave:

There's a question I've been dying to ask you, and some of the Upgrade Collective members in our live audience want to ask you as well.

Gary:

Yeah.

Dave:

Is it possible that the entire Unfu\*ked series is bullshit and it's just your accent that was the secret to relationships?

Gary:

Well, maybe, maybe. I'm not against the idea. There's nothing quite like getting told to get shit your shit together by Shrek, so I don't have a problem with it. But there is some good wisdom in there and some good philosophy, and so if you can include both I think it tends to penetrate a little better.

Dave:

I think you hit that one right in the head and you're not a psychologist or a psychiatrist, but you look at ontology. Can you even talk about what ontology is?

Gary:

Yeah. Ontology is the study of the nature of being.

Yeah. Ontology is the study of the nature of being. So you are a human being, and you're a very different human being to the one that was born, and you're very distinctly you now as a human being. And that persona if you like, was produced as a result out of certain things in your life. So what your left with is basically default ways that you are, or in other words, default ways of being. And I'm fascinated by those, I'm captivated by them and when you start to distinguish a human being through the lens of being a lot of it makes sense, it just makes sense. There's a logic to a human being that when you understand the ways of being, it's not challenging at all to understand.

Dave:

So if that's ontology, which is a nature being, you also look at phenomenology which is phenomena different from the nature of being.

Gary:  
Right.

Dave:

Where's all this coming from it? This seems extremely cerebral, but your books are very readable so how'd you get into this weird esoteric stuff?

Gary:

Well, I mean, I started to work on myself 12, 15 years ago. And in some of the work, I did some workshops, I did reading, but it was around ontology, it was around that phenomenon and it just got me into it. It got me fascinated by specifically those windows of philosophy. They're fascinating and the more that I read and the more that I understood it really was an eye opener for me. I started to make sense to myself and I could really connect with that for myself and other people, and so now it's my passion. I love giving people something that might be philosophically deep, but in a language that they can embrace fully and I feel as if that's a big part of what I do.

Dave:

It's a good description. One of the big things you talk about is getting outside your head, which funny enough is one of the laws in my book, Game Changers, where I looked at 450 high performing people, statistically analyzed what they all do, or at least most of them do as best practices. And one of those happened to be get outside your head. What do you mean about how to get outside your head?

Gary:

Yeah. So there are a couple of things. So you got to start the notion that you basically spend your entire life and the confines of your internal dialogue, right? So some monologues like observational, some things it's back and forth with yourself, but I don't think many people really, really notice the nuances of that. And that you're constantly shaping not only your own experience, but without being Tim Woodward but your own reality, right? I mean, your inner situation yeah it's different for all of us than what's shaping my experience. And so I want people to start noticing some of those loops, some of those default waves that continually come up.

That are sometimes hard to track because we're so entranced by the notion that we are circumstantial, that there's circumstances and this is why I am, not I'm on autopilot and it's getting applied to every situation or circumstance that I walk into. So that growing awareness to me is the beginnings of really starting to get out of your head and get into some kind of life that you are more attracted to a drawn to.

Dave:

So some of those tuned into the show right now, and they're thinking, oh man, I might be inside my head, but I don't know what ontology or phenomenology is. What do I do right now to get outside my head?

Gary:

Yeah. I think you have to first look at the areas of your life that you feel as if they don't work as well as they can, and see the window on those because there's something at play that goes beyond the circumstance. We all use the term a self-limiting belief, but you actually don't know what your self-limiting beliefs are. You live them, you are them. So if you look at an area of your life that's not working, you'll see there's a certain way that you are there. It's given by some fundamental view of what you're engaging with, and so all your answers are coming from that view, that perspective, if you like.

So that's when I start people on that pathway of you got to question your own wisdom, you got to question what you've come to believe to be true. Not necessarily so that you don't believe it anymore, but actually to start a question that there could be in fact, other views, other aspects, other ways for you to engage with this area of your life. A lot of your stoutness in life comes from a very distinct place.

Dave:

There's a lot of biohackers out there who are doing breath work, holotropic breath work helped me a lot in the early days and literally get outside of my head because you're floating around in the room. Or they're doing mushrooms or LSD microdosing, or a bunch of different drumming and all those sorts of things. How much does your definition of get outside your head to improve your relationship revolve around those kinds of practices?

Gary:

None of those practices, but I think if you engaged with some of the stuff that I say that you'd actually get a pathway for yourself whether you're doing those things or not.

Dave:

Okay. So they're not necessary?

Gary:

No, no. It's a growing sense and awareness of not only who you've become, but why you're becoming the impact of all of that. How is that playing out your life? And it's not just your junk, it includes what you've come to believe, like I said come to believe to be true, or what's possible. You'll see that you're constantly bumping up against what you've come to believe.

Dave:

So we all have, at least in my view of reality, a lens that we see the world through.

Gary:

Yeah.

Dave:

And the lens is colored by your time in the womb, and by early childhood experiences, and all this stuff we saw our parents do. And then whatever happened the first time we asked someone on a date and all sorts of bullies and just weird crap.

Gary:

Right.

Dave:

When people are finally done getting outside their head and looking past that lens, what's usually left?

Gary:

I think that's a brilliant question. I think if you can see your persona and what it does, you'll be in the presence of nothing.

Dave:

What was the single biggest I'm going to say flaw in your lens that you've discovered in your own life? What was one thing in your relationship that you thought was absolutely true that turned out to be total BS?

Gary:

That who I am is defined by how hard I work. I can't really relate to myself as this guy and I realized I'm not necessarily that guy. I could be that guy and I in many ways and by default, but what I really started to get fascinated by was okay, and what else? How can I play with this? How can I experiment with this? How can I explore my own human beingness from this place? And that's been a lot of what I talk about.

Dave:

So if you're not defined by working really hard, what are you defined by?

Gary:

Well, most people are defined by how they feel in any given moment. So I don't define myself by that, I feel lots of different ways. Some of them are empowering, some of them aren't empowering. Some of them I prefer, some of them I don't, and there's a lot of ways that I feel that I have literally no say in it, I find myself irritated. I'm not somebody who's like, "Let me get some irritation on today," right? I go into the world and get pissed off at people or something, but that happens. So what it comes down to is that I fully embrace all that's here, and then everything else is just a function of my willingness to intervene with that and express something new about this that I've never quite expressed yet.

Dave:

Okay. You have a gift for words because you're an author like me, and you have only one sentence to define yourself. What would it be?

Gary:

Compassion and honesty whether you like it or not.

Dave:

There you go. I like that a lot. So after you worked through a lot of your garbage and you stopped doing shit that, which is a title of your other book, that's what you were left with which is really cool. All right. Let's get into the relationships, I want to know a little bit about you because when people are going to take relationship advice from you, they know the guy you are.

Gary:

Yeah.

Dave:

And just say you're pretty solid, and there's three parties in a relationship and I'm not talking about those thrupples or anything like that. What are the three parties in the relationship the way you talk about them?

Gary:

So there's you, there's the other person, and then there's this third item called the relationship which is not you nor them. And that part after a while tends to get pushed aside, it becomes like this game of observation between you and the other person. How they're doing, how you're doing. They can be doing better, I could be doing better, but there's no one really tending, well, what is it that keeps this thing going? What is it? And again, we tend to rely on maybe how someone looks or maybe some behavioral characteristic or perhaps again, how you feel, right? Which is not always consistent in a relationship, right?

If you have been married to someone for two years or 20 years, there's usually a difference in how you feel between those two poles, right? You're usually not wallowing in the same stuff 10 years, 15 years, 20, it's different stuff. So yeah, I'm somebody who like [inaudible 00:14:43] when you take it apart, I notice that my relationship works when I work on my relationship. Which sometimes isn't always doing exactly what my partner wants me to do or how my partner wants me to be, but I really see it as like that's my responsibility to tend and make sure that this union is a strong one.

Dave:

In my last book on fasting, I made the analogy of the human body is not really a real thing. In that during the course of this interview, you shed some cells, you made some ones, so you're really more like an Eddie going through a matter. It's just a slow moving Eddie that you can't really see because you identify as the Eddie, right? All the carbon in you won't be there next year. So a relationship is pretty much the same thing, because there's all sorts of inputs to the relationship and it changes constantly over time. So you can look at that as a separate thing from either person. How many people actually do that? Or do most people identify as their relationship?

Gary:

Well, there's a reason why you persist.

Dave:

How many people actually do that? Or do most people identify as their relationship?

Gary:

Well, there's a reason why you persist. What is it that persists about this phenomenon called you? What causes it to move from one moment to the next? How come you wake up tomorrow as you? Why can't you wake up tomorrow as somebody else, right? But you always wake up as you. And it's a chain of language, you persist in language moment to moment, to moment, to moment, to moment, and so does your relationship. So very often you'll find people want to work on what's broken, but doesn't work. Let's work on what doesn't work. Now that can be fine, but that can end up becoming base camp. So

now the only thing we talk about is what doesn't work, which goes from moment to moment, to moment, to moment, to moment. Therefore, there's no life get breathed into this thing.

There's no context for empowerment in it, and it's critical to keep your eye on that stuff. You must have your eye on what's going on between you and I, and as I like to say one of things that's important to me as a human being is love. It's important to me. I started to really realize that that's my job, and I'd spent a lot of time waiting for somebody else to deliver it. A lot of time in my life waiting for somebody to provide and show me the love, right? You even say that. And I got that no way, I got to express it, I got to actually bring it to the table because it's important to me. And so that was part of the shift when I started to really get my ability to shift and move and influence not only the quality of my life, but the quality of my relationships.

Dave:

What's the best way to blame your partner?

Gary:

Just be right about anything.

Dave:

Just be what?

Gary:

Just be right. Just be right. I'm right-

Dave:

Just be right?

Gary:

Yeah. I'm right.

Dave:

You double down on that one, didn't you? So what's the role of blame in relationships?

Gary:

I think part of the deal is with relationships you can't help but manifest your past in your relationship. You can't, it's coming up. The more you can identify it and all of its little guises, the more power you'll have with it. But somebody said to me a while ago when they were talking about something they got hooked by, or triggered by, or annoyed by. And I say, "Well, I know, but it is yours." It's the same with all your crappy relationships in your life, you were in all of them. You changed the personnel and it still turned out the same way.

Dave:

You sound a little bit like my friend Jack Canfield, I believe it was his relationship like that, or his interview on relationships a couple 100 episodes ago. Something similar like the easy thing just say

you're right, it doesn't really matter just say you're right to your partner all the time and it gets a lot easier. So [crosstalk 00:19:26].

Gary:

It's amazing how we got hung up on those things, right? We're like they say something or they do something, but then you don't realize that it's and that moment of that you're not cashing something in for something else. That space of being right is ontologically speaking a disconnect, right? I can't be right and with you. I have to be right here and you're there, and that's the as lived experience of being right, that's the phenomenological aspect of being right. Here it is in this moment. And you can flick out of it, you can let go of being right and reconnect with that person. But all of those little interludes, all of those little vignettes of life, if you like, they add up, they become something over time.

Dave:

What's the role of sex in relationships?

Gary:

I mean, it's great when you have it, and it's fine if you don't.

Dave:

That was the shortest and least satisfying answer I could have possibly expected. I think a lot of people it's probably not okay if they don't.

Gary:

Yeah, and that's what you have to understand though, right? That go in any relationship that's something that matters to you, and it really matters to you. And then you might get to a point in your relationship where maybe there's either no sex or not as much sex as you wanted, you are faced with this thing that matters to you. And so your relationship might have been one way and now it's changed. You have to come to terms with that, and you have to say to yourself is this something I'm going to continue with? Or am I going to talk to my partner about it and maybe there's some underlying thing that we can both resolve, and sometimes there's not.

And you have a choice to make, and it's a hard choice to make, very, very challenging choice to make. But you have to realize and when you're in a relationship with someone it does move and it does shift, and there might be a point where you are unwilling to travel in the direction that it's going. And there's a lot of people though will keep drifting along with that thing and just complaining that it doesn't work rather than finally intervening with themselves and face the reality of what they're actually dealing with.

Dave:

I hear this question a lot, because I deal with a lot of personal development stuff when I'm talking with people, especially around neurofeedback and all. And what if you're just dealing with I wanted to get some every week or a couple times a week and I haven't for the past five years?

Gary:

Right.



Dave:

Is that a relationship issue or is that something's wrong with me for wanting to get some?

Gary:

Well, I mean, I think that's part of the reason why I wrote this book. I think you have to get really clear about what's walking into your relationship, right? One of the things that I talk about in this book is I say your relationship is an agreement between you and another person. Okay? For instance, if you're married and in the Western world that includes some kind of spoken agreement, I'm going to be this person, I promise to be this kind of person, that's your vows, right? If you're married. But there are unspoken agreements in a relationship, there are things that are not said, but expected.

Now, a lot of what we walk, like I said, we walk a relationship into with is a lot of our own stuff that has never quite been settled for ourselves. A lot of relationships are based on this attempt to fix oneself, so when you get any relationship, whatever you haven't handled about you it's going to be there. But when I say there's an agreement between you and another person, the one agreement that no one ever takes on is the agreement that you have with yourself before you go in. Can you manage you in a relationship? And that's a process that I talk people through. And I say you have to get to, what is it you are having to manage about you? What is it that you've been left with from the life you've had to this point?

Can you manage it in a way? Are you powerful with that now? And if you're not, what is it going to take such that when you walk in here you're clear about who you are, you're clear about what you're about, you're clear about what matters to you, and you're getting into a relationship with someone that you feel as if you want to express that with.

Dave:

Okay. You talk about telling yourself the truth. And you're really pretty straightforward in the book as you'd imagine from the title, but you talk about acknowledging to yourself that your current relationship doesn't work. So someone's listening to the show and their current relationship isn't working, how is it that they don't know their relationship isn't working?

Gary:

Yeah, because they've lived with the illusion that it's... They'll say stuff like, well we're working on this thing, we're working on that thing. But in reality, if you look at the last three, four, five years of their life they've been in a cloud, they've been in this constant state. And I think we're always trying to do things in our relationship, well, many people are trying to do things in their relationship that are going to improve or make it better. But included in that is some pretense that this will somehow turn out. And I think the greatest truth you can tell yourself in a relationship is, all right, look, let's just stop all this nonsense. This isn't working.

Why is it not working? What am I hanging onto? Maybe there's something they're hanging onto, but ultimately what does this come down to? And I think one of the greatest strengths we have as a human being is our strength to overcome. But I think it also intertwines with one of our greatest weaknesses, which is our ability to tolerate. So we'll put up with and pretend and, oh, well, that was a good day or a good week, but fundamentally there's something not working.

Dave:

You talk about what happens, people do a little bit of personal development and you read a book and you start realizing now that I know this, I can change the people around me so that I'll get what I want. What happens when people do that?

Gary:

Well, that's never good. So I'm just reminded of some of the times I've been tempted to say something to my wife and have thought better, right? Like this would be a good moment to talk about one of your triggers, no it's not. There's never a good moment. I think one of the things about personal growth is you can't help, but maybe read a book or do a course and be reminded of someone in your life. You can't help it, and I think that ties in with that at some level for us as human beings we want to make a difference, right? We do and I really believe there's an authenticity there, there's a real genuine want or need for people to make a difference with the people in their lives.

However, if you're in a relationship and it's maybe contentious or a little parched, sometimes your attempts at making a difference are landing like you're trying to control somebody. So I always pull people back to them, I always say look, do this for you, do the work on yourself to expand yourself and grow yourself and really deepen your experience of being alive. And if somebody wants that they'll ask, and if they don't, they won't. But my wife's, for instance, whatever growth work she does that's her thing. It's not mine.

Dave:

So you don't go to seminars together, you don't both read the same personal development books at the same time? That's not at all a part of your relationship?

Gary:

No, no. It was once upon a time we would maybe read a book or maybe we've done workshops together, but I think that's another thing that was really... You talked a little earlier what changed in my relationship over the years. But that was definitely another one where the expectation that she should somehow be different in certain times, that disappeared for me. There's no way she needs to be, she can just be whatever way she is and that's okay. I mean, who the hell am I anyway? But what I found there is the more room that I give to that, the more space that I create for that, whatever it may be, it just doesn't do any real damage for either of us.

Dave:

What would've happened if you had said, "All right, I'm going to do all this work on myself and on my relationship," and your partner had said, "I'm not going to do any work on myself?"

Gary:

I mean, if I'm not the same person in this thing, then it can't be the same thing. But if I'm going to be the same person about them, then this is going to be the same thing. I mean, I had a very similar thing with my mom many years ago when I just took on for myself that I'm going to love this woman unreservedly and that she can just do what she does. And my relationship with her was never the same after that, and she didn't do a thing. She never did. It was all because you spoke earlier a little about our lens, if I engage with you through the lens of love and I keep bringing that to the table because that's important to me and I like being that guy, there's really not a lot you can do to mess with it because I'm choosing to love you the way you are.

You don't need to be somebody else for me. Now, that doesn't mean to say I'm floating around here, like Gandhi just on a little bed of existential goo, but it does mean that I have leverage in my experience of life in a way that I've never had before.

Dave:

What do you say to people who are saying yeah, well, my partner's not really what I need, but they pay the bills really well, they're nice to the kids. They don't cherish me, but they don't lock me out of the house and get drunk every night or whatever. What's your message in that situation?

Gary:

Well, I think you have to look at those things, right? Looks after me and they don't do this and they're a good person and I feel looked after blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And you got to look at all of that, and here's what you'll find. You're leaning on all of that stuff to handle what's underneath it. And what's underneath it is the truth. That's the truth. The truth is whatever it might be, right? Like I don't love you, that's the truth. And then all this other stuff, this is part of the pretense now, this is what I'm going in now. This is how I'm going to convince myself that that's okay. And so you can do that, I'm not saying you can't do that. I'm saying you can do that, but it would really behoove you to get straight with yourself that that is what you're doing.

Dave:

One of the biggest knowledge bombs in your book was that people lose it when their partner behaves in a way that doesn't match what they say. They say I'm loving, but then they don't act in a loving way, or they say they'll do the dishes and then they don't do the dishes, whatever. What makes people act differently than what they say?

Gary:

We have to remember in your experience of being alive as a human being, you are much more likely to honor what you said to somebody than what you say to yourself. So you're much more likely to keep that whatever you said you were going to do, you're much more likely to keep that because you are at a very profound level eager to make sure that you're seen to be a certain person. So you're likely to extend yourself and do things you don't really want to do, or do things that you're hesitant to do, or because you want to manage that dynamic between you and another. When you're in a relationship, a lot of that gets cast to the side and what starts to come out is believe it or not, your fundamental relationship to yourself.

Which is one of you'll say, you're going to do it in then you don't in the areas of your life that don't work. In the areas of life that work, you'll say you're going to do it and you'll find you're doing it, you'll find you're actually functioning a way that's consistent with what you said. So in a relationship over time, because we can now bend the rules with ourselves, well, I was going to do it, but I'm not going to do it then it becomes easier and easier in a relationship to say you're going to do it and then you don't do it. A promise you're going to do it and then not do it. And so that muscle for knowing in yourself is something a little greater than your current emotional state becomes atrophy.

You don't have a real ability to intervene in your own experience. So that's something really, I had to interrupt in this book having people get what you say matters, it matters. When you say you're going to do something for yourself, that matters. That is another agreement by the way, when you say, "Well, I'm getting up at 7:00 AM or 6:00 AM or 4:00 AM." When that alarm goes off, if you are up at 4:05 and you said 4:00, you never honored the word that you gave when you put your head on the pillow

that night. That seems like nothing, but that stuff is cumulative, it becomes five minutes here, 20 minutes there. Well, maybe next time you're really eating away your own sense of self and your own sense of power.

Dave:

I like that perspective. It's tough because so much of what we're talking about is mushy. There aren't even necessarily words to describe half of this or when you and I say something that it'll get heard or felt in a different way by people, which is why I asked the question in the first place, right? Because people, they're acting at how they feel, not what they say, and I think that happens in the world outside of just a relationship with a partner. It happens with friends, it happens with coworkers and just all over the place.

Gary:

Right. And look, here's the image I like to create for people. I like to say to people, if you had a friend that said they were going to do all the things that you said you were going to do to yourself, if you had a friend who was saying that to you and didn't do it, what would your view of them be? What would you start thinking about them? And it starts to come out. People would say well, they just sound like they're full of it or that I can't rely on them. What relationship do you think you're going to end up with yourself then? Do you think it's going to be different, or are you actually diminishing your sense of power?

And that, to me, that's where every person I've ever spoken to who is successful in whatever thing they were doing had a profound relationship between what they said and what they were doing, profound. It was extraordinary. They would go beyond and they would overcome to fulfill on what they'd said. And even though it might have been causing them great discomfort or even pain, they drove through, they continued to produce and produce and produce in a way that's consistent and lining up with what they were saying.

Dave:

Talk to me about deal breakers in relationships. What are they and how do you deal with them?

Gary:

Yeah. I think we talk a lot about this in our everyday language. We talk about if this ever happens, and one of the examples that I give is people will talk about if infidelity, if there was ever infidelity in my relationship, I'm out. And it ultimately ends up though, not always being the case. All too often there's infidelity and then people keep going. I think you have to get clear about, so let's say I get in a relationship with someone and I move in with them, it's obvious that I must have some sense of, and I should be speaking about what this means to me, who I am in this, what you can rely on me for. It includes all of that stuff, but it should also include I want you to know if there was ever this stuff came up between us, I might not hang around for that, I'm reserving my right to be hurt.

Not like a threat, it's almost like the agreement would conclude at that point. And I have to determine whether I'm willing to begin a new one with you, given how the last one went. I think there's some things, a real problem for people when there's been infidelity in a relationship, how do you get over it? Because the way it was before continues, just keeps going. And one of the things I say to people is no, you're at the point of a deal breaker. You get to say whether you're now going to call that deal done and if there's something for you. And I to create newly here, then we're going to have to start from zero because that is concluded. So it really, as of again, people we see in many ways that your life is in fact, a series of agreements that are coming to completion and then be recreated or built as new.

Dave:

What happens when partners have different values? So one partner says something's important and it is just not important to the other person, and that creates a lot of emotional pain. Unpack that one, what's going on in there?

Gary:

Yeah. Yeah. Most people would talk about their values. If you ask somebody what their values are, they'll generally give you a handful of words that they feel. I value honesty and I value family, and I value... But if you go back and look at some of the... I think there was a German philosopher guy by the name of Max Scheler, who talked about values, and he was of the view... There's this view that your values are your values that are set thing that you ended up with. Scheler was a little different, Scheler was like, "Well, you could create values for yourself. You could literally make up values and be guided by those values." The first thing that you have to really get clear about is that you're not clear about what is it value and why? And why does this matter to me so much?

And where I flip it in the book is I say okay, so you value partnership. All right, good. That's your job. And you value adventure. Okay, good. That's your job. And that flips it in a relationship because usually what you're doing in life is looking for what lines up for your values rather than bringing them to the table. So you'll see there's a lot of space in there. You don't have to have the same values and you can create and recreate values, and you can start and see in fact, all the positive ways in which you are being influenced and impacted by your partner's values even though they might not be yours. I think it's one of those things we get a little too wrapped up in.

Dave:

All right, I could see that. You talk about breaking up to get together in your book.

Gary:

Yeah.

Dave:

What does that mean?

Gary:

No one starts a relationship with thinking about how it would break up, but I encourage people to do it. I've done this with people in business too, like this partnership sounds good. How would you get out of it? How would this thing come apart, and what would you do, and what's the agreement if you're going to get out of it? And so I encourage people to really look at yeah, how would I break up with you? How would I do it? What would it take to happen for me to get myself to that point? And what I notice, and I've coached a lot of people in this over the years, when people are going through that time of breakup, they inevitably resort to some default survival mode.

And then you look back on that time and people are left with regret, or resentment, or frustration and anger still, and anxiety. I say if you thought of that at the beginning, this is how the breaking up is part of being together and that it might happen, but I'm reliable for being this person should that ever happen, I think it settles something for a lot of people, like yeah, we'll make it. We're human beings. This might not work and it's okay.

Dave:

When you talk about planning for the breakup, are you a fan of prenuptial agreements? Are you a fan of married people maybe just saying all right, if we were going to fail, what would it look like?

Gary:

Right. I mean, it takes away a lot of that mystery, right? I mean, I don't have a prenuptial agreement with my wife, which I don't think she would've wanted one. She was worth more money when I met her than I had, but anyway. But there's an integrity to it, there's an agreement in place. There's a ground there that you both know is there, so I do believe that knowing and being straight about who you are and what you can be relied upon for even in the event of this, what could be a disaster for you, splitting up with your partner that will come back to that point. Will you manage yourself even in the split up, or are you going to go hot and caught up in the drama, the subltalar fusion? Or is there some line there where you can retain some sense of who you are?

Dave:

So is that a yes or a no?

Gary:

Well, I'm a fan of agreements. I'm a fan of agreements, I think they're... And we're surrounded by agreements, but I'm a fan of agreements because I think they bring clarity and certainty and that's a good thing in a relationship.

Dave:

I'm actually a fan of prenuptial agreements. If you just have that conversation, it says you know what? If something doesn't work, you are safe because you know, versus oh my God, what is he or she going to do if it doesn't work? And so that it makes all kinds of fear, but most people aren't mature enough when they get in their first big relationship to do that. I know I wasn't when I was married the first time so that wasn't a conversation. I said I wanted a prenup, but it was more out of fear and then we never did it. And besides I didn't have any money anyway, so the prenup would've been like two pages of I get the couch, I don't even know.

Gary:

Yeah. I agree with you in terms of I love the clarity. I love the sense of, and you'll notice from experience if you've had a prenup, the grounding that it gets you. Things can settle down and you can just be in this relationship. It's amazing what impacts a human being. It's amazing what's in the unsaid and what's not clear and how that conspires to undermine a relationship. And that's why I talk about it in this book not only the agreement, as I said, that you have with a person, but the agreement that you have with yourself. You must have your feet both in which a lot of people think they do, but when you do have both feet in a relationship, that's only what works.

Dave:

What would you say to people like my friend, Esther Perel or maybe Chris Ryan, they've both been on the show. Chris Ryan wrote *Sex at Dawn*, a convincing biological argument that we're not supposed to be monogamous. Esther Perel says relationships are changing into self-actualization relationships instead of "I'll take care of the farm with you" kind of things. Where are you on that spectrum?

Gary:

Human beings are addicted to certainty, so you can't escape that. They don't care what you do, and I'm not saying those things might not work, but you are addicted to certainty. Human beings have a fundamental fear of the future, of what's coming. That's why we're always trying to predict what's coming. We're fascinated by people that can foretell what's to come. And that's hardwired in all of us, that's why we watch the TV shows that we watch, it's why we educate ourselves in the way that we do. We are preparing for the life that's yet to come, and uncertainty rattles us.

Dave:

It's really interesting. I think you must be right. That blew my mind a little bit because I'm not afraid of the future, I'm excited by it and I'm doing my best to make it happen the right way. So I guess being afraid of that's never occurred to me until you just said that, but that sounds very accurate. So I'm going to go with your perspective on it. So let's say someone's afraid of the future, but if you're in a relationship, you haven't had a conversation about exits. You're already afraid of the future if something isn't working perfectly, and you already said relationships don't work perfectly, right? So you are damned if you do, damned if you don't. So that brings us back to the since you're damned if do, you damned if you don't, then maybe Esther Perel's right and you should have 16 girlfriends or that's actually not what she says, but she says you should have freedom to explore, to become more self-actualized and help your partner do that. You don't buy into that at all, because it's uncertain?

Gary:

No, I think it sounds a little too... You could do that, but at some point for you or whoever you're in a relationship with, that unnerving need for certainty will creep in. And let's say I have three different partners, at some level at the beginning of that I might be excited by that and pumped by that and completely gotten by that. But at some level that'll become the normal, that'll become the certain, that'll become the routine, that'll become what I'm relying on. Human beings both crave change and resist it. They're always at the crossroads of how can I do something new, but it's got to be familiar? It's got to be something based on something that I already know or think or believe to be true. I mean, I really do agree with that notion that no one's having original thought, not truly original thought, it's all based on... It may be a new combination of thoughts, but not truly [crosstalk 00:49:36]-

Dave:

[inaudible 00:49:37]. Right, right.

Gary:

Right. So that's an analogy, but at the same time, there's just some humanity up in each of us that you just cannot ignore. You cannot ignore that human beings really are fascinated by the notion of things being the same while simultaneously being annoyed by it.

Dave:

It seems like a big myth to me because you can say I'm scared of uncertainty so I have a monogamous relationship, but then your spouse gets sick. Oh, I didn't expect that. So then you do all the suffering and all that stuff. So then what we do is we have the strategy of having one spouse with uncertainty because they might not be there someday for whatever reason or what in technology we would call a raid strategy, a redundant array of inexpensive spouses. So that way, if one of them gets sick, you have two more. And that sounds really bad except if you look at how that was done in multiple cultures

throughout history, I'm thinking about my next door neighbors when I was 19, they were from Ethiopia like yeah, my grandfather had nine wives and he actually did. And I said, "Are you going to have nine wives?" God, no. Like one would be plenty for me. I don't want the management burden of that.

So we basically, if you're going to be non-monogamous, you have to deal with all of the emotional aspects that you have in your book, but with each of the people, and then it gets multiplied between all of the other people. And that's why most of the under 35 friends I have who've said logically non-monogamy makes sense to me, so they ignore the feelings to doing the thinking. And then they get out and go, "Oh my God, this is really hard. In fact, it's [crosstalk 00:51:35] and more complex."

Gary:

Very complex. So again, if you come back to this notion of agreements and integrity, how are you going to manage all of those agreements? And how are you going to manage yourself in all of those agreements? Because you can't just slip in and out. Well, you can, but you'll end up run by your emotions like everybody else. There's nothing grounding you, right? You're just flipping from one emotional state to the next.

Dave:

You really have to have your shit together to do that. And I do know some people usually who've done a lot of personal development work who are joyously non-monogamous or have multiple partners and they actually really like their life, but it's because they've done a lot of work. And so I'm not judging either direction. I have friends who are happily non-monogamous, I have lots of friends who are happily monogamous, and more friends who are unhappily monogamous. Which is why I'm happy you're on the show because this appears to be an epidemic. What percentage of people would meet your definition of doing pretty well in relationships?

Gary:

It's going to be low, so I'm going to call it something like... So I'll talk from the perspective of marriage, so half of marriages end in divorce.

Dave:

Yeah.

Gary:

So that means you're left of 50%. How many of them are actually working and happy?

Dave:

Probably not that many. My number was 30% and I heard you say 30% and then second guessed it.

Gary:

Yeah, I'm down there somewhere. I'm down 20 to 30%, right? Which is horrible. That's horrible. That is not a good number, but what I did want people to get with this book is you could have a relationship that actually work, but there's some, again, cold truths that you have to face and then really have to start to take on. I mean, a lot of what I'm talking about here is that trait of existential philosophy, of being responsible. You have to take it on, but in a way that it's not always going to go your way. You're not always going to get this thing flowing the way you would want it to go, but your job is to keep



bringing yourself to this phenomenon in a way that's consistent with you, who you are, what you're about. And powerfully managing all that you might do to undermine it.

Dave:

Very, very interesting. So I think you're firmly in that camp that says it's not worth the management and emotional overhead of being a non-monogamous, but those 50% of people who don't end up getting divorced, they can use what you've got in Love Unfu\*ked in your book. They can go in and do the work you're talking about. And let's say that everyone in a marriage got a copy of Love Unfu\*ked, and you gave them five years, what percentage, if 30% percent of people are happy now, according to our both of our estimations, what would the percentage move to?

Gary:

I think if you had a person or persons grounded and connected to what matters to them and as a human being and a sufficiently managed level of personal integrity to ensure that you are someone who's reliable for that, I'm going to say we no longer have 50/50, I think it's more like 60 something to 30 something people getting... So like 30 something percent of people get divorced. And for those that are saying they want to be together, this book, no kidding, this book... If you were to actually realize to yourself how much of your relationship is not about what matters to you, it's mind blowing how much of it is actually not what connects you to life as a human being. It's more about things like we talked about or joked about starting this conversation, which was things like being right, or another version of that, proving your point, or disconnecting yourself, or these.

People do this stuff all the time, but sending signals or never saying quite what they want to say, but showing it. Stop making love and connection a mystery, start making it a reality. Start identifying what does it look like for me to love another? What does it look like for me to forgive another? What does it look like for me to manage myself powerfully? What does it look like for me to bring all of myself to this thing that I say matters to me? Which is something, it's the weird thing you say to people bring your A game and they say stuff like well, why should I? I'm like, "Bro, because you're in it." You're in the thing, bring your A game, bring yourself to it, but not to change them, but to impact your experience of being a wife. I think we're woefully at a touch of our innate ability to shift their own experience.

Dave:

So you think that we could double the percentage of happy relationships if people read and put the knowledge in your book to work? And it's about what? Three or four hours for the audiobook version, seems like it's probably worth doing to read it. How much work is it actually do, what's in Love Unfu\*ked? I mean, is this an hour a day? Is this both partners together? Walk me through what it would be like if I read it, my wife read it. What would we do?

Gary:

I would say the real value in all of my books isn't so much in the words, but rather than the gaps between them. What do you start to see, realize, acknowledge? The spaces between every paragraph is where you should be set and pondering and inquiring and uncovering for yourself. So that's the real value of any I believe, any personal growth book that you read. It's not so much what it tells you to do, but rather what it's now beginning to reveal for you. If you do this work and it reveals some stuff about you that perhaps you've known, or even maybe not known, and you can see how you've gone on a certain pathway. And again, I'll use my own relationship as an example, I'm not a case study for this and

what I've written in here about living from who you say you are and being cleared about what you value, I am that. That's who I am.

I don't dwell in making people wrong, I will let that go in a heartbeat and I'll let it go in a heartbeat because I don't want to be that guy. So it's not a practice per se for me, it's more like I took on living my life from a different perspective, and it will take that from people. You can't beat your perspective to death and expect this is going to be different. You must start and realize that a human being's greatest strength is their ability to shift context. You can shift context at the drop of a hat. That's your ability to create life right in front of your face. Can you catch yourself in a context? Then can you shift yourself in a context? And you can either do that or not, but if you're ready to be powerful in this life, that might be a practice you want to take on, this is the way I'm choosing to live.

Dave:

What percentage of women buy your books, versus men?

Gary:

It's always more, so it's always like 60 something percent. My followers online are the same, it's always 60, 70% women. That's something surprises people.

Dave:

[crosstalk 01:00:14]

Gary:

Yeah. I mean, maybe. I'm thinking it's my ragged good looks, but maybe not. No, I really believe there's this idea that women like their personal growth were all touchy, feely. And I found that not to be the case at all, right? I actually have found that the people who are drawn to my work are sitting there going, "Tell me. Just tell me the truth. Give it to me, I can take it." And it's surprising the amount of women who are just like... I think women are way more ready to acknowledge that they're full of it than a lot of men.

Dave:

Interesting. It's true in nutrition as well, you tend to see more women buy those books. I'm really like 55/45 where slightly more women buy it and I like to think it's my accent, but it could just be something else. It's interesting though, if you look at partners in your experience, which of the two sexes is most likely to be the one to initiate working on the relationship versus themselves?

Gary:

Women. Women. And again, these are stereotypical. I understand it doesn't cover every aspect, right? There's a lot of exceptions to what I'm saying here, a lot, but at the same time most women tend to, when they're working on their life or working on their relationship, it seems to them to be a logical thing to do to uncover and discover. But as I found for many guys, it's more like, well, let me just improve it. Let me just keep whacking this thing, let's keep polishing this thing. Let's do something new, let's rather than... Okay maybe there's something here that's [inaudible 01:02:28] a whack, we need to do some work on either us or myself. I always find that women are more and likely to open that door first.

Dave:

Wow. I'm wondering then. So if more women buy the book than men, is it because more women are dissatisfied in their relationships than men? Or is it because they're more willing to do work on their relationship? Or is it because they blame the men more? What's going on with that?

Gary:

I mean, maybe this is a man, woman thing, but the reality is most men that buy my books are looking for a man or a male based perspective. And so they're often surprised that what I'm talking about isn't really centered around whether you're a male or female. But if I was to look at, for instance, questions that come into the podcast, vast majority are from women. This is what I'm dealing with. This is what I'm struggling with. This is what I'm up against. This is what about myself. I get regular communications from men, don't get me wrong, regular ones, but I think in general terms, the growth industry, the personal growth industry is very much driven by women.

Dave:

It's interesting. The reason I'm asking is if any guy's going to buy a book about relationships Love Unfu\*ked is the perfect title for that, so it's more accessible. And Gary, I look back at like the history of personal development books. One of the best books you could read about codependency is called Healing the Shame that Binds You. No guy who grew up and went to high school, I went to high school, would ever pick up that book because you'd probably just get beaten up just for reading it, right? And so the title just doesn't appeal, right? But now I think you've made it a little bit more accessible, which is super cool. And you have a class for it, Unfuck Your Relationships is on your website, garyjohnbishop.com. Guys, don't go to garybishop.com, that's the serial killer fan site. garyjohnbishop.com, you really want to do that.

Gary:

That's right. You want to make sure you're locked into the right guy, not the mass murderer guy.

Dave:

Yeah. Would you be really pissed if he wrote a book about relationships?

Gary:

I'm not too sure whether many people are buying that book, right? I don't think [crosstalk 01:05:03]. Maybe it's called The People I Murdered or something, I don't know. But I don't know if that'd be a good relationship book.

Dave:

It would describe some relationships of people I know. So there you go.

Gary:

Oh my gosh. Yeah.

Dave:

Now, I do think that you've written a very accessible, very short book and just in terms of information density. I cringe when I see an 800 page book because it's probably not information dense, unless it's one of the master level books like a Robert Greene book or something. 48 Laws of Power needed that

kind of space, but it's really easy to have big margins and just lots of verbiage. I thought you got straight to the point, like your title, Unfuck Your Relationships, it sets your course, but Love Unfu\*ked. It's just really hard getting to the point, so I like the brevity, the density and the accessibility for it. So I think you've done a really good job on it. And I want to say thanks for being on the show.

Gary:

Yes. Awesome. Thanks for having me. It's been a great conversation.