

Biohacking Your Spirituality - Interventions with Dave - Mandy Pennington - #1021

Dave Asprey:

You're listening to The Human Upgrade with Dave Asprey. Today is a new, Smarter Not Harder intervention. I've done intervention calls for a while where I'll meet with a member of my mentorship group called The Upgrade Collective, and we talk about hacking a specific problem. Sometimes it's energy levels, sometimes it's weight loss, sometimes it's making your brain work better. Strangely, those five big categories mirror the things that I teach you in the new book called Smarter Not Harder. What I'm doing now is I'm applying techniques from the newest book on biohacking to helping a member of my community improve something in their life, and you get to listen in and learn how to do that and what to do.

If you'd like to check out The Upgrade Collective, full details are at ourupgradecollective.com. Today, Mandy Pennington joins us. She's a longtime biohacker member of the community and she's really upgraded herself already. Her body and mind are working better than they have before, but now she wants to get into the stuff around quantum energy, spirituality, purpose-driven life, things that are harder to do. In fact, they're almost impossible to do when you feel like crap all the time and you have no energy the way I used to. So Mandy, welcome to the show.

Mandy Pennington:

Thank you so much, Dave.

Dave:

How long have you been a biohacker? I actually don't know that.

Mandy:

I think I've been one for a long time, but I didn't have a word for it.

Dave:

How long have you been a biohacker?

Mandy:

I think I've been one for a long time, but I didn't have a word for it. One of the people I worked with would say, "You're such a consumer, you buy everything. You try things out." It wasn't until I went to the virtual conference in 2020 that I realized I've been a biohacker, like, I am one.

Dave:

It's funny, there wasn't a name for people like us, but there were plenty of us out there who were working on ourselves with every tool available, and no one had organized the tools. There were all these things over here and things over there, but if you wanted to just have a coherent view or hang out with other people who did it, you could go to yoga and hang out with spiritual people, but then they wouldn't know anything about making their brains work better. Talk to me about your current spiritual practices in our prep

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work. You have quite a few, so walk me through what a week in Mandy's life is like with spiritual practice.

Mandy:

Last April when you had a meet the expert with Emily Fletcher from Ziva-

Dave:

Love Emily.

Mandy:

Yeah, she's great, and so I decided that I wanted to check her out more. It felt really good to learn her process because it really made sense, and I really connected with it. I have been doing the Ziva meditation practices twice a day, every day, about 15 to 20 minutes. And I also, around the same time, started doing, maybe a couple months before Energy For Success, the Dragon Program, and I was so into it. I was doing all these practices and over time, it just seemed like it started to become a lot. A few months down the road, I did some hypnosis and I was so shocked that it actually worked. It really resonated with me. And then I did some energy healing, which really, really surprised me because it actually helped with pain, it helped with connecting to my body.

The teacher actually did a session with us at the very end, and I couldn't believe the sensations I was feeling and all that. It was on a Zoom call. It wasn't even in person, and it was crazy how much better I felt the next day. It just got me thinking that all these upgrades that I am doing, they're great, but it's a lot. I can't do this stuff all day long, every day. It prevents me from working on other things I want to do and I don't want to resent it. I did church growing up where I went so much that I didn't have time for myself or for my own interests. It's like I'm really into it, but I don't know which route to go next.

Dave:

When you get into the deep spiritual work, your body's operating system, the stuff I write about in the last two chapters of Smarter Not Harder, when you get your copy, it's not rational. It's your body, it's animal, it's spiritual, it's feeling, it's plugged into all sorts of stuff that's by definition, invisible to our conscious minds, frankly because if we had a life-sized map of reality, we couldn't process it all, just like you can't look at a life-sized map of LA to get anywhere because it's as big as Ia. Everything we see and think and feel is a tiny little grain of sand compared to what it really is, otherwise, how would we see it? Everything in you is like an icon on your computer screen. All of your email isn't behind the icon. It just feels that way. We do the same thing, and there's some intriguing work, a book called The Case Against Reality, about that.

In Smarter Not Harder, I'm talking about a lag time, a gap between when something happens in the world around you and when your brain picks it up, and the lag time for the average person is about a third of a second. If you're 18 years old, you have a very fast brain, it might be a quarter second. So there's someone and something else in charge for a third of a second, and you can't even see that the time is missing. When I

do this, snap my fingers, you see it right away and I see it right away. And I'll be damned if after I snap my fingers, there isn't a third of a second between when my brain gets the sound and processes it. And that is like, oh my God, there's a ghost in the machine that's hiding things from you, and all of the practices you're doing are tapping into this irrational, floppy, very feeling-oriented collective intelligence that's woven throughout your body, throughout your cells, that's also interconnected with all life on the planet via a variety of signaling mechanisms, some of which we actually now understand. That's kind of mind-blowing.

When you do these things that let you connect to the world of sensation and the world of feeling and the world of intuition, those are not crazy. Those are just very subtle signals that are hard to pick out of all of the icons and all the noise of reality. And the people who do a better job of picking those out are called meditators. They're called people with a personal development practice. Probably the author who's written the best about this recently is Joe Dispenza, has a book where he just goes through hundreds of studies showing, look, if you take a group of people who meditate, they can do this. People who don't meditate, it appears that there is no effect.

So yeah, there's weird stuff going on in the world, and one of the reasons that I started biohacking as a movement was that I had already learned... The idea for Bulletproof coffee came to me on the side of a mountain, the holiest mountain in the world, in remote Western Tibet. That might tell you something about having a spiritual practice at the start of biohacking, but biohacking gives us the data to show that it works. And what you're asking is a big part of Smarter Not Harder, which is, I could spend all day biohacking. What gets me there in the least possible time, right?

Mandy:

Right.

Dave:

Okay. You're going to love the last few chapters because I talk about it, but you're dealing with a more subtle thing. Part of this is a conscious decision to find community online or locally, and you might take a little while to look, and since you're already practicing manifesting, you can manifest. You'd manifest a community. If that sounds totally weird and you're like, "Dave, what do you mean manifesting?" Guys, I am a member of Transformational Leadership Council, which Jack Canfield put together. These are the guys who made the secret.

And manifesting does happen. It's hard to control, but we know the brainwaves of people who are powerful manifesters, so there is some science that you might not like. And you could say that can't be, therefore it isn't, at which point, it's okay to find another podcast. I'm just going to tell you like it is. You can say I'm a bad person if you want, and that's also okay. So, let's go through how you're going to think about prioritizing your spiritual development practices. It's kind of like your supplements, if you have a hundred bucks to spend on supplements, how do you do that? How do you decide which ones to take and which ones not to take?

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Mandy:

You take the most important ones. They're the ones that you feel the best taking. That's how I do it.

Dave:

Wow, I like your thinking here. Have you ever done the same thing with your spiritual practice?

Mandy:

Yes, and sometimes I wonder, is it me being lazy because I need a break or is it just me saying what my authentic needs are? That's where I am still learning that.

Dave:

You just made me so happy, you have no idea, because you hit on one of the main themes of Smarter Not Harder, and you haven't read it yet because we're recording this right before I release the book. One of the most important things you'll ever find in Smarter Not Harder is that not only do you have a meat operating system, this thing that runs your body without your knowledge, that it has goals. And one of its main goals is to be lazy. You've heard me talk because you're in The Upgrade Collective and longtime listeners have heard this, but I'm going to repeat it for everyone, that your body's operating system, number one, don't get eaten right now. It's the first of four F words that run your life. Fear is run away from, kill, or hide from something. That might be a tiger, anything scary. Number two is food, which is eat everything, because who knows, you might run out of food? And what's the third one? This is a quiz.

Mandy:

Fertility.

Dave:

Oh, you know that. See? It's the other F word for some people but you know did go to church, so it's fertility. In other words, yeah, your body will insist as an adult that you have intimate relationships because it's necessary for the species to survive, as necessary as eating actually. And then the fourth F word?

Mandy:

Friendship?

Dave:

Friends, right. Your first homework assignment was to nourish yourself with the right friendships that will support your spiritual practice, so we're going to get you more of the fourth F word. The third F word is the one that's always the funniest, and there's actually a lot of spiritual growth in that for people, whether or not it's in a relationship. But unless you want to talk about that stuff, we don't have to go there because the laziness thing is what you said that made me happy. The thing about food, the reason your body wants

to eat everything is that your body's afraid you'll run out of food. For the same reason, it also makes laziness attractive. So your body's like, look, if you go run a marathon, it's going to burn a lot of calories. You might not have enough food after that. If you just lay on the couch, you won't burn the calories, then you won't starve to death, so let's just lay on the couch. Doesn't that couch look really warm and fuzzy? Imagine how good you'll feel.

And then the couch feels way better than it is. It's your body lying to you to make you save energy. Now you said, I don't want to be lazy, as if lazy was a bad thing. Your body is lazy as fuck, okay? It just is. There is no way around it. You take a breath every minute. You are powered by [inaudible 00:12:57] bacteria, they are lazy. There is no shame, there's no guilt, there's nothing wrong with that. In fact, all human progress is driven by laziness. Your laziness drives you to improve your life so you can do less work. It makes not doing work so attractive that you'll move mountains to avoid doing even more work. That's how important laziness is. And the reason you're calling me right now is because you're lazy. Hey, couldn't I do more spiritual work in less time? Doesn't that sound lazy to you?

Mandy:

Yeah.

Dave:

So high five yourself for being lazy because it's making you a good person. That's how important it is. Yet our teachers, our parents, our churches, everybody, they shame you for what is a natural urge. And it is no more shameful to want to have love in your life than it is to want to lay on the couch instead of going to the gym. These are natural, healthy urges that keep us alive. We're taught to shame two of the things that nourish us, and one of them is rest, and laziness gives you rest. It's really interesting how our society has programmed us to be negative towards two things that nourish us.

What I'm teaching you in Smarter Not Harder is, let's harness laziness, and here's how you're going to do it from a spiritual perspective. You're going to choose the most effective and the most time effective ways of doing the work you want to do, and you're going to figure out how much time it saves you. And instead of saying today, yay, I spent an hour meditating, because we know, because our teachers told us, if you work hard and spend lots of time, you're good, but what we actually know to be true in our guts and our hearts is that the time that I save is more important than the time that I spend. And if you don't believe me, you ever go to the store and buy a \$200 pair of shoes that was on sale for a hundred dollars off? Let's talk about saving a hundred bucks or spending a hundred bucks. You're talking about how much you saved, right?

Mandy:

Right.

Dave:

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Well, that's because the savings feels bigger than the actual reality of how much you spent. Okay, let's leverage that. What you're going to do is you're going to say, today, I'm going to save two hours of meditation by doing my breathwork. And your body, because it's lazy, it's like, dude, two hours of savings? Hooray. And now you've got your operating system all excited that you're doing it instead of repulsed by it. This is a hack to just make things that save you time look as juicy and sexy to your body as they do to your mind. It's a neat little judo move on your internal urges. What you're going to do is go through your list of things that work for you, and when you get the book, there's a list of other things like neurofeedback and there's BrainTap. What I teach you to do throughout the whole book is to pick a goal. So spiritual practice, what is the why? What's your goal for spiritual practice?

Mandy:

My goal is to be the best version of myself. It's something I've neglected so that I can be the best version for the people I love in my life.

Dave:

To be the best version of yourself. That's kind of like saying you want to be healthy. Did you want to be more muscular? Did you want better metabolic function? Did you want to lose weight? Tell me more about the best version of you. How is it different than the current version of you?

Mandy:

I think the best version of me is more confident in how she walks, how she interacts with people, because she's healthy, because she has a solid relationship with herself and she's doing the work she loves, and she's not apologetic about anything else in her life.

Dave:

Nice. I hear some goals in there, but being the best version of yourself is kind of like you tossed all your goals in a blender and you made a smoothie. It's hard to manipulate one goal versus another. And it's funny but the whole structure of Smarter Not Harder is based on this kind of thinking. What I heard in there, I actually took notes on it, is you wanted more confidence, you wanted to change the way you move in the world, you wanted improvements in your relationships, and you wanted to not feel apologetic all the time. Is that a pretty good list?

Mandy:

Yes, that's exactly it.

Dave:

All I did was listen carefully for keywords and write them down, but they're all in there, right?

Mandy:

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Yeah.

Dave:

Okay, let's start with a shorter word for not apologetic all the time. How would you describe someone who's apologetic all the time? Give me one word for that.

Mandy:

Shame.

Dave:

Is that it?

Mandy:

Yeah.

Dave:

Thanks for being able to talk about that. A lot of people have a hard time even mentioning that it's shame. I would've said I had no shame because it didn't make any sense to have shame, if you'd asked me when I was 30. We don't have to go into where the shame comes from. Shame oftentimes doesn't even come from words or any particular thing. It could just be a feeling that came in from your community, from your spiritual thing, or just the most trivial things that happened when you were two years old that no one had any bad intent, just parenting errors. Or a teacher scolded you that one time and it left a mark, and all of a sudden you have a feeling of shame. Of those four things, more confidence, you're going to move better in the world, in yourself, relationships and shame, which one matters most?

Mandy:

Relationships.

Dave:

Awesome. The process I'm taking you through is the same process that is the structure of the book around biohacking your physical body as well as your emotional body, but what we're doing is we're saying, okay, if relationships becomes your top goal, then what can you do that improves relationships, that also feeds your other three goals, so that you can save time and energy? Because what if you did relationship work that also gave you more confidence, helped you move better in your body and resolved your shame? You'd be like, "I'm doing that," right?

Mandy:

Right.

Dave:

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But now you can say, of your list of things that you're working on, if relationships is your top goal and you look at your list, you've got Ziva, you've got Energy For Success, Freedom Frequency, group intimacy sessions, dream journal writing, moon manifestation, Leela Quantum capsule, and probably some other stuff. Top two that feed your relationships, if there are any?

Mandy:

I'm going to go with the hypnosis because that's the one I've seen the biggest shift of me moving through the world more calm and confidently. The other two are hard to pick.

Dave:

Well, just for relationships, what besides hypnosis is supportive there? I want two things that support relationships, or maybe three.

Mandy:

The Energy For Success is-

Dave:

I was guessing you'd say that. That's Dr. Barry's work.

Mandy:

And the meditation I think as well, because I notice I do more-

Dave:

Which meditation? Ziva?

Mandy:

The Ziva, yeah.

Dave:

Okay. Those are all super supportive of relationships, and I don't know the specific hypnosis you have, but hypnosis can be powerful. We've had the godfather of hypnosis on this show, Daniel Brown from Harvard, just one of the most profound episodes ever of the show if you haven't heard it. We know hypnosis can work. And Energy For Success, if it's good enough for the Emperor of China for 5,000 years, it's good enough for you and me, right? And Dr. B's a friend. And then Emily Fletcher is a really successful energy meditation teacher, and we've been friends for years. So these are three practices that are really profound. How many of those are about relationships though? Are you doing specific modules around finding good relationships?

Mandy:

In Energy For Success, you build energy bridges for one of your relationship goals. That one and the expanding finances are the two I found the most success with. And then

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with Emily, we just recently did one where we cut an energetic cord to a past relationship that was no longer working for us-

Dave:
Smart.

Mandy:

That was really profound. Those are adjuncts to the meditation every day when we do the monthly calls. They all kind of flow together and overlap a little bit with the themes and the way you approach it.

Dave:

What you'll find is that if you said, okay, these three things are the ones that support my top goal the most, knowing those programs reasonably well... I know Dr. B's work really well, I know Emily's reasonably well, I don't know your flavor of hypnosis but I've done lots of hypnotic stops, so I'm going to assume it's in that realm of the map somewhere. Knowing that, they're all going to have some effect on confidence, but frankly not enough. If you had a confidence-based practice instead of a relationship-based practice, you would focus your lens differently. And you might still do one or two or all three of these, but they would be of different weightings. And then movement, I don't see any of these that are really affecting movement. I mean, Dr. Barry's work has some specific movements that are almost like Tai chi, but they're not. They're his energy movements, but that could help to a certain extent. None of these is a specific shame-healing practice that I'm aware of, right?

Mandy:

Well, the intimacy coaching that I didn't mention, but I think I had put it earlier in the briefing, that one, we do a lot of, where do I feel this emotion in my body? And when I speak, speak with my hips. It's like you always-

Dave:
Oh, good.

Mandy:

Yeah, your posture changes.

Dave:

That was what was missing from the stack, was you needed something that was going to show you that shame is in the body. And if it's in the body, it's in your meat operating system. It's not you. It's a feeling, and it's a feeling that you think is coming from you but it's a feeling that comes from the Petri dish that you're walking around in every day, that has its own operating system making you walk around. You literally think, move over there, and the body goes, okay, and it moves over there at your bidding, but you don't

actually make every little motion happen. You can influence them, but it does a whole bunch of crap without your knowledge. For instance, you'd mention your hips. In women, shame and trauma sits in the hips most often, and any body worker will tell you this, you put an elbow in a hip and for no reason, a woman whose CEO of a \$500 million company will just start crying.

She'll be like, "I don't know why I'm crying." Because there was something in your hip and it wasn't your brain, it wasn't your big beautiful brain, it was something else. And it was invisible by definition to your brain until you really got into it, whether it was through massage or whether it was through deep trauma healing work. If you look at your list of practices through the lens of what supports relationships, which is my top goal, and which of those feeds my other things, I would actually put the intimacy coaching at the top of it because relationships are intimate, and because the work you're doing around that also affects your confidence, it affects your movement, it affects your shame. You get the most return on investment by focusing on that, like where does shame sit in the body? How do I hold my body?

People who have trauma and people who have shame, they'll hold themselves differently. They're protecting themselves, they're doing these things. I know all of this because I've had all of this, Mandy, in case you feel like I'm just lecturing from a mountaintop. No, I dealt with lots of shame and anxiety and all that kind of crap, and I do most of my work now on that stuff with neurofeedback, with the 40 Years of Zen technology. But the basic thing is, you're going to go back with probably your intimacy coach, possibly with your hypnosis coach, and you're going to say, what's the first time I ever felt a sense of shame?

And some weird image like when you're three years old and you dropped strawberry ice cream on the floor, I don't know, I felt it then. I forgot about that, why'd that image come into my mind? It doesn't have to make sense. And then you go, oh, that's right. Somebody yelled at me when I did that and it made me scared, and that was where it came from. And it's so stupid when you get to it. You're like, seriously, for 35 years I've carried around this sense because someone yelled at me over ice cream? Yeah, that's why we're that meat-based. Then you go in and there's a variety of ways of releasing trauma. EMDR might be very powerful for you. That's eye movement dissociative response. It's not on your list, but it's very high-powered compared to the time and money that you spend on it.

Mandy:

You're the second person to mention that to me. I saw a doctor at Amen Clinics who also suggested that.

Dave:

Daniel Amen doesn't mess around. I'm on his board of directors. He is a beautiful human being who's done a lot of his own work and helped hundreds of thousands of people. His team is right. I have done that kind of work. I've done similar work with neurofeedback, and it's just the highest ROI for dealing with trauma, which is usually behind shame. If you do that in combination with intimacy coaching, you're going to get

more progress and less time. But the learning for everyone listening is that, look, just in this little short call, we structured what's most important to you, and then what are the techniques that get that goal first. Otherwise, what we do is, all of our goals inside, be a better person or be healthy, they're all the same thing and they're all weighted, and then we're directionless and overwhelmed. But when you use that really simple process to think of what matters most, what you will find as soon as you do more relationship work is that what's holding relationships back is shame.

It's actually not about confidence. If you find the right guy, even if you're not feeling very confident, it's okay. He'll still see you, right? And if you're feeling full of shame, he might not see you. So then you work on the shame and the confidence gets better, and then you can do confidence and assertiveness training. In fact, I'm going to have a couple guests on about assertiveness, especially for women on the show this year. You're going to love them. One of them I'm hoping to get at the conference. That's the cool thing, but do not feel like you have to do everything at once. No. Pick a target and put all of your wood behind that arrow. And right now it's relationships, so you do the work on you so that you can manifest the relationship you want.

You can do that, and so many people have done it, and I've seen lives completely changed in one year of focus. But five years of hard work that's unfocused, you'll move and you'll expand and you'll grow, but you won't do it nearly as efficiently. So I want you to be relentless, does this meditation practice give me more power for relationships? If the answer is no, then you put it on your 'I want to do this sometime' list. And if the answer is yes, then you do it now. If the answer is, it doesn't do anything but it's so easy, like wearing your Leela Q capsule, that thing helps with energetic protection and you just wear a necklace. There was no work involved. Keep doing that. That's my lens for every biohack, for every spiritual thing. I have a long list of crap I want to try.

I haven't spent two weeks in darkness in a cave eating worms and meditating about the existence of nature, but I'll do that. Actually, the worms part isn't on there because I'm not going to let anyone make me eat bugs. You know what I'm saying? There's some stuff that just takes a lot of time, and some of the upgrades I do are hundred thousand dollar stem cell procedures. I have to actually save for some of those. People think I'm a quadrillionaire or something. No, I have a budget, I just got divorced. All these things, I have a list. What you are feeling is, I have to do it all. No. Don't say no to yourself because your operating system hates that. Say, not no, but not now. And by keeping a list, you'll still feel safe that you're not missing out, so your FOMO goes away and it switches over into JOMO. You know about JOMO?

Mandy:

The joy of not missing out?

Dave:

No, it's the joy of missing out. I missed out on that so I could do this other thing because I'm so lazy. Like, yay, you're lazy. It's awesome, you get the JOMO. I didn't have to go to that party so I could stay home and meditate because that's what I wanted to do. I

missed the party, yes, instead of, oh no, I missed the party. It's just a mindset shift but man, it's powerful.

Mandy:

That's something I've been feeling, that I am not doing all the things I used to do, but I kind of don't want to do them because I really enjoy the work I'm doing on me, and I don't want to lose that.

Dave:

That is JOMO and that is actually a sign that you're starting to work on your shame, because before you would've said, oh, I'm ashamed to miss this, I don't want to do that, because you have a message somewhere that says you should do it. And not only should you do it, you should want to do it. And that's the most toxic belief ever. There is no 'should wanting' anything. I should want to go to the gym. No, you shouldn't. Your body either wants to do it or doesn't want to do it. It doesn't matter what it should do, it matters what you make it do.

But expecting your body to want to do something that goes against nature, and by the way, I mean exercise, don't expect your body to do that. It doesn't want to. It never will want to. You need to expect that you want to do it, and you are not your body. You just ride around in there and you can have a great relationship with your body, and it'll serve you and it'll give you information about the world, or you can abuse it, but it will not want the same things as you because it's meat. Is this helpful?

Mandy:

It is very helpful and it's so simple, but for some reason I struggled with making that call. You just really helped me align what is most important and where to start, and then incorporate everything back in and check with myself to make sure it feels right.

Dave:

Well, there you go. I look forward to hearing what changes you make on our next Upgrade Collective call. And for listeners, if you thought this was interesting and maybe this might apply to you, join The Upgrade Collective. Go to daveasprey.com, there's a link at the top. And very importantly, if you would do me the honor of telling your friends about Smarter Not Harder, I just summarized a bunch of the last two chapters of the book for you. The rest of the book is a similar way of thinking, just to tell you how, if cardio is your most important thing, how could you get it done in five minutes instead of an hour so that you can do your next biggest goal? And whatever that is, I tell you to do it in much less time because I believe, Mandy, that you have things to do in the world just like you do.

You don't want to spend eight hours a day improving yourself so there's no time left to do anything. I don't want to do that either. Everyone listening has important work to do in the world, and it's not sitting in a class sweating on a bike, unless it's what you love. So Smarter Not Harder, please tell your friends, and if you haven't ordered the book, I read it for you. You like the show, you like my voice clearly, so pick it up now because when

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you buy the book now, that helps other people find the book and it helps the book hit all the lists, and that makes me want to write even more books. Thank you in advance for your help. And Mandy, thank you for being on the show.

Mandy:

Thank you so much, Dave.