

Dave Asprey:

I've reached into the thousand legacy episodes of the podcast to bring you this incredible conversation because it's changed so many lives. You're going to get a lot of value from the ideas in this episode. And if you're hearing it for the second time, you're going to get more than you did the first time. And frankly, a lot of people don't hear every episode. This is one of the greats. If you like the show, I'd like your advice. Go to daveasprey.com/podcast and let me know what's working. And I'm sending a quick note of gratitude to you for being a Human Upgrade listener. Thanks for spending your time and your energy here with me, expanding your knowledge, exploring your performance and figuring out what you're actually capable of. I think we're all nicer when we do that. Stay connected with the podcast and with me on Instagram or Facebook. The handle is @thehumanupgradepodcast. Thank you.

Today's guest is none other than Frank Zane. Frank is a American former professional bodybuilder, author of more than 15 books on fitness, nutrition and bodybuilding, but calling him a bodybuilder doesn't really do him justice because he's a three-time Mr. Olympia and his physique is considered to be one of the greatest in the history of bodybuilding due to his incredible focus on symmetry and proportion. And he was called the King of Aesthetics in the bodybuilding world. Today, he's 75, about to turn 76, and he offers a variety of personal coaching and training programs and training seminars and posing clinics. And I wanted to have him on the show because he's one of the biggest names in the field and some of the first biohackers out there or people who said, "I want control of my physiology. I want control of how I look at a level beyond what anyone's ever done before."

So he started doing this back when I weighed 300 pounds and was hacking computers and even probably before that and has just achieved incredible results over his lifetime and is still going strong. So it's a real honor to have you on the show, Frank. Thanks for being here.

Frank Zane:

Thank you, Dave. It's my pleasure. I'm looking forward to this.

Dave:

There's so much I want to talk about, but one of the most obvious things is that you are a bodybuilder, and so many people listening to the show today, some of them, in fact, most of them want to look good. They'd like to have some degree of physique, but maybe not the level of mass and all that you had. So in your mind, having been to the extreme of bodybuilding, what does fitness look like for everyone including those of us who aren't bodybuilders?

Frank Zane:

Well, I think there are a lot of myths out there about what you might look like if you work out with weights and most of them aren't true. It's very hard to get a lot of muscle. It was for me and I think, most people, they don't really have to do too much to look better. As long as what you do in your workout and how you eat is better than what you've been doing and you do it on a regular basis, you're going to make progress. And so there's really nothing to be concerned about as far as ... Well, there is one thing, is don't get injured when you're doing this. Don't do stupid stuff. Be careful. Learn good form. Stretch during your workout. We stretch between sets and that keeps the muscles warmed up and the joints flexible. So if you do everything with common sense, you'll be okay.

Dave:

Now, I'm sitting here today with a recently retired professional bodybuilder, former Mr. Canada and a guy who's educating people around the globe on a holistic approach to muscle building and his name is Ben Pakulski. Ben, welcome to the show.

Ben Pakulski:

Dave, it's truly an honor to be here. As I said, I'm a big fan.

Dave:

Ben just interviewed me for Muscle Intelligence and-

Ben Pakulski:

It's the best interview Dave has ever done.

Dave:

It was a fun interview, but we talked about why someone would go into bodybuilding and it was fascinating and I said the pejorative statement, and as someone who when I was younger, I spent a lot of time in the gym. I was never professional grade, but I do think that sometimes people are attracted to MMA and to bodybuilding partly because they were bullied or they were traumatized, so they just didn't feel safe, "If I'm a wall of muscle, maybe I'll be safer or maybe I'll be more accepted." You're saying there's some truth to that.

Ben Pakulski:

Yeah, absolutely. I completely agree for myself for sure and I see that it's pretty common amongst bodybuilders and I can't speak for people who do MMA, but absolutely, for me, it was this armor that I built that I thought, "If I do this, I'll have this protection," as you say, against whatever was causing my fear in the past. And a lot of it was physical. I wasn't necessarily physically bullied, but I was always physically afraid. I remember that, as a kid, there's a lot of anxiety around authorities. So anyone who I encountered, if it was a teacher or if it was a coach or if it was a parent, I would freeze and I would get nervous and I would literally stutter. I was so nervous.

Dave:

Wow.

Ben Pakulski:

And that was a huge amount of fear and I know where it came from, but I didn't know at the time where it came from and I didn't know I had it. I just thought there was something wrong with me.

Dave:

Where did it come from?

Ben Pakulski:

A very, very explosive temper with my father. Yeah, explosive temper. And he never hit me, but to the point where you'd come home and it looked like the Tasmanian Devil was in the house and everything was turned upside down and I saw him do that many times. And I would just stand there and freeze and I wouldn't cry and I wouldn't let it out. I just stood there and freeze and that became my default. And so anytime I walked into a room with a teacher, with an adult, I would feel the same way because I had that feeling coming from my parents, my father.

Dave:

So fight, flight or freeze, freeze became your dominant pattern.

Ben Pakulski:

Yeah, and literally, with teachers, I would get up in front of a class where I'd speak with a teacher and I'd stutter and trying to speak and trying to get it out. I just figured that was me. I didn't know any different. And that's become my mission now, similar to you, is I want to empower people to realize that the story they tell themselves as to why they are the way they are now is not necessarily a reality. It's just the way you've adapted to your environment and your scenarios and you can change. I think that's the big messaging behind what I do is I want to empower people to change their body and change their mind and realize that no matter what it is in this world, you can do it, you just haven't figured out the steps yet.

Frank Zane:

It's not like I've been in shape for 61 years. That's how long I've been doing this. It's more like I've gotten in shape 61 times.

Dave:

Interesting.

Frank Zane:

And so I never really go far off what I'm doing. In other words, I don't get fat in the offseason. I don't bulk up, although I tried that. I stay lean most of the time and that works for me. And I don't eat much. And my diet is nutritionally dense. I take a lot of supplements, freeform amino acids, especially other supplements like CoQ10, ATP. And these things, I really believe they work very well because all my blood levels are good. I don't seem to need as much sleep. I'm lighter than I was before, but I'm back training hard again to get better peak for this time of the year. And I think one of the things that I've done over the years is I have a cyclic method of training where I reach a peak every year. Now, it used to be my best condition ever when I was competing, but since then, it's my best condition for the whole year relative to the rest of the year. And it's basically when I used to peak for competition, which is around October.

And so for me, that's my peak training season. I plan everything to train gradually harder and harder and harder, peak in October, and then from October maybe to January, February, I'm in what's called maintenance phase, but I don't train quite as much, but my training is directed to weak points, areas on my body I want to improve more in relation to everything else, so that when I improve them and I come back to regular full-fledged training in the springtime, I have a different look. And that's always about what I've been doing. The other thing is I based my entire training program on photographs. I never bother with any of that stuff. I don't bother with numbers. People that come to see me, we don't measure them or weigh them, do body fat percentages. We photograph them and we keep photographic records.

The other thing is I morph photos of people that come here for programs. I show them what they could look like. Just by doing special effects on their photos, changing the outline and their proportions, they get an idea what could be possible for them and they use that as a visualization exercise. So I've been doing all this. This is what I've come to after all this time at what works and I continue to do it.

Ben Pakulski:

Most of the fitness community is exercise-centric, right? We're focused on things outside of ourselves. So people are focused on the exercise, they're focused on lifting more weight, they're focused on doing more reps. And those things are all external stimuli that are useful only in as much as they create an internal stimulus or an internal response. So my focus is really shifting people's attention from the external, which is like, "I want to do a squat or a bench press or a deadlift and I want to lift more weight," to realizing that the only thing that matters is if that's external stimulus actually creates the internal environment that I want. So I'm having people shift their focus from the external to the internal. And now if we start looking internally, "Well, what's the internal response I'm looking for" "Well, I want to challenge a muscle." My objective then is not to lift a weight. My objective is to challenge a muscle.

So how do I become more consciously aware at every inch, or since we're in Canada, every millimeter of every rep that I do? So rather than just objectively finishing a set, my objective is not to finish a rep or finish a set. My objective is challenging a muscle. So if I shift my focus to, "Am I actually challenging this muscle at every single millimeter of every single rep?" You can get so much more done in so much less time, thereby

causing less sympathetic arousal and less sympathetic stress, generating greater stimulus in way less time. That's what it comes down to. Now, that's a skill, right? Like anything in life, learning how to dribble a basketball or anything, there's a skill component.

So there has to be this phase of, "I'm going to learn this skill," and that's really what I teach, is many people are focused on periodization and they're focused on load and they're focused on these things that are great and useful and I call those the X's and O's, the things that come afterwards, but the foundation of everything we do is optimization of the skill, optimization of the execution. And if you ask anyone in the world, "How's your execution?" "Oh, it's good. It's okay." Bullshit, it's completely wrong, right? Most people are terrible, abysmal usually. And even though you think you're doing it correctly, if you think you're training your biceps or your chest, most people are not because the way they're taught is incorrect. Not that they're not capable, it's what you're taught in high school in gym class, on YouTube, is not correct for your body., right? So you're built very differently than me.

So how can we do the same exercises and think we're going to get the same result? It's not possible. So how do you then learn to do things that fit Dave's body and optimize stress to the muscle for Dave's body? Because if Dave does the exercises that Ben does, Dave's going to get sore back, sore knee, sore shoulders, all these things that, "Well, hey man, maybe I'm just not built for it, right?" "Well, yeah, you are built for it. You absolutely can do it if you want to. You just haven't learned how correctly yet."

Dave:

That doesn't sound like a short answer. You're saying work with a coach, someone's going to customize exercises for you?

Ben Pakulski:

No, no, because it's actually so much more simple than it sounds. It's just most people are just looking at it the wrong way, right? We're looking at it like the Earth is flat. In reality, it's round. So rather than just looking at it from an exercise perspective, the simplicity of it is, Dave, you look at every muscle in the body, let's say your physique muscles and there's not that many of them look at them and go, "Okay, well, this muscle has two ends. Every muscle in the body has two ends." Let's say we're looking at your pectorals, it's on your arm and it's on your sternum and all this muscle does is pull one end closer to the other. So how do I then forget about the exercise? And obviously, the exercise matters at the end of the day, but I'm more focused on, "Is this muscle going through its full excursion, so a full lengthening and shortening cycle under load, under resistance the entire time? So it's really that simple.

Dave:

Aside from CoQ10, what are the other things you do to make your mitochondria perform better?

Frank Zane:

Well, I think it's probably everything I take. It's hard for me to say, "This is what's doing it," because I really don't know. It's just that it's so synergistic, everything works together and so I take as many things that I think I need. For one thing that I've discovered that works really well, people ask me about steroids and what's the story. That's a shortcut, especially for competitive bodybuilders to level the playing field. And also men as they get older, there's this hormone replacement thing where guys are given testosterone and maybe human growth hormone and all that and I think that that stuff does have side effects that aren't desirable. Your testosterone levels go too high, you get aggressive and that's not a good feeling. It's not good for business.

And basically, it doesn't really enhance your youth. All that, taking testosterone, you're looking older sooner. Your body, you can train harder and recover faster. It doesn't really enhance how long you're going to live. I've been using a combination. I just got back doing this of fenugreek seed and 7-keto DHEA. And by doing this, most guys in their 70s have total testosterone level of 200. I had mine tested about six months ago and it's 567.

Dave:

That is great.

Frank Zane:

This is totally natural without doing anything. And so when I started on this stuff, it's been shown that fennel grape seed does boost testosterone, growth hormone and thyroid levels, optimize thyroid levels and then DHEA is the mother hormone and 7-keto DH is one that doesn't bring about the secondary male characteristics like lower voice, thinning hair, all that stuff. So if women are to take that, they usually take 7-keto. But that's what I'm doing. It's all natural substances. I don't eat much and I train on a regular basis. Plus I meditate a lot.

Dave:

We'll get into meditation. Do you actually fast? Do you do intermittent fasting or do you occasionally just not eat for a day or do you eat every day?

Frank Zane:

I don't fast. And also you mentioned intermittent fasting, I think that's one of our programs that we recommend with people who want to start losing weight to get the ball rolling, eating every other day, not even fasting on those, just eating less on those days using amino acids and it works very well. The next step would be that three-on-one off diet we talked about. And then the final stage of dieting is just basically to adjust your carbs and your protein and fats to a level where you feel comfortable, which is usually about as much carbs as protein. To me, it's maybe a little less carbs, but it's all right around that balance.

Dave:

And what happens if people eat too few carbs?

Frank Zane:

Well, a lot of things, you can get dehydrated for one thing because carbs hold water in your body. You can get constipated because you have no fiber going through. You can get lethargic because you just don't have any fuel to run on. And what can happen is your body can start tapping into lean muscle mass, which basically your hips and your thighs where most of the muscle is and pull out gluconeogenic amino acids like glutamine or alanine, send them to your liver and strip the nitrogen off, use that for energy. And then what happens is it robs your muscles for energy. And this happens with a lot of people when they get older. They don't need enough protein or exercise with weightbearing movements to help maintain the muscle mass. You just need a lot of empty carbs and they shrink.

Ben Pakulski:

What I'm really focused on is then this holistic approach to muscle building, is I'm not someone who just teaches, "Hey, go in the gym and work hard and lift heavy." It's just the opposite of what I teach.

What I'm really focused on is then this holistic approach to muscle building, is I'm not someone who just teaches, "Hey, go in the gym and work hard and lift heavy." It's just kind of the opposite of what I teach. If I teach anything, it's an intelligent approach to building your greatest body. And there's a number of things that go into that that people should always be considering that I weigh evenly. So I don't say, "Training is more important than nutrition," or "Nutrition is most important." I think it depends on who you are and what your rate-limiting factor is. So it could be your sleep, it could be your stress, it could be your environment, it could be your mindset, it could be your training and your nutrition, so it could be any of those. Those are what I call my six pillars.

And if you're placing more weight on one, oftentimes there's one or two you're neglecting and those would be the ones that would be the most important for you to address in transforming your body.

Dave:

You say something, in fact, you say directly, "There's no such thing as genetically weak body parts."

Ben Pakulski:

Yeah, so I made this statement a lot, is if you can build one muscle, you can build them all because it's all the same internal environment. There's one asterisk that I always add there that sometimes gets overlooked, is the only reason you wouldn't be able to build a body part is if you have really, really long tendons and short muscle bellies. But typically, if people have short muscle bellies, somewhere they have them in most places, so that would mean your ability to build muscle everywhere would be the same. So if you can

build muscle in your quads or your shoulders or your packs or whatever, it's the same muscle fiber composition. It's the same internal hormonal environment. It's the same protein synthesis that's happening. It's just you haven't learned to direct the stimulus yet through that muscle.

So if I pick up a weight and you pick a weight, let's say we're doing a squat, you may get lower back pain or maybe big glutes and I may get big quads. What's the difference? It doesn't mean you can't build your quads, it just means the way your body does this exercise mechanically right now. It means I just haven't challenged that muscle appropriately. So I just have to learn to adjust it.

Dave:

I see your point. You're saying if you can get a signal into a muscle, the muscle's going to grow. Okay, I like that perspective a lot. You say meditation builds muscle. How does meditation build muscle? What's the meditation that I use to build muscle?

Ben Pakulski:

We're going to focus on building muscle, Dave. It's all about the secret. I'm teasing the secret.

Dave:

I manifested muscle through wanting.

Ben Pakulski:

Yes, that's actually all I did. I never went in the gym. No. Well, really, so what is most people's limitation in building muscle, right? One, the skill. They don't have the ability to perform the skill correctly. The second thing is most people go in the gym and they can't focus. So their mind quits well before their body. And another thing is, where's their autonomic nervous system, right? So where most people, especially in current day and age, are way over stimulated, way too much sympathetic tone. So that little bit of meditation can bring that parasympathetic tone up a little bit and allow them to live in this recovery state a little more often.

So again, I don't want to get into the mechanics of the autonomic nervous system, but if we can allow our resting default autonomic state to be slightly more parasympathetic than it is sympathetic, now we're giving our body this opportunity to be able to recover and be more anabolic rather than catabolic. So the sympathetic nervous system is, as we speak about a lot, the nervous system of catabolic, it's breakdown, whereas the parasympathetic is anabolic, it's build up, it's recovery and repair. So most people live in this high sympathetic arousal that just literally prevents muscle from building. So by meditating or breathing or doing anything that's mindful to just increase that parasympathetic tone, even as simple as going outside and getting, again, a panoramic view is very, very parasympathetic and can contribute massively to muscle building for people who tend to be very sympathetically oriented.

Dave:

Okay, so give me a specific visualization that I should do right now, "Bigger biceps."

Ben Pakulski:

There's not visualizing. There you go.

Dave:

Dammit.

Ben Pakulski:

We'll do it. If we both do it together, it's going to work.

Dave:

I really wanted you to give everyone listening the bicep meditation.

Ben Pakulski:

Yes. Now, it doesn't exist, right? But there's certainly value I think in believing and that you can. Because when you say you can't, you certainly won't. But this meditation of maybe picturing yourself, visualizing yourself, I did a lot of visualization throughout my career, it's very, very powerful. And I think Arnold spoke about it way back in the day. It's like, "You got to see it and you got to believe it." And if you see and believe it, you don't realize how much it changes your mechanics, it changes your posture, it changes your belief. All these things shift and all of a sudden your body will develop more. And again, I don't want to get into that esoteric aspect of it, but it's certainly pretty definable that what you're thinking about and how you're thinking about it absolutely matters.

Frank Zane:

I've meditated during my free period.

Dave:

Oh, you did?

Frank Zane:

I did all different forms of meditation, insight meditation, gazing, mantra. I did all of that and I still do it, but it really saved me. You know what I mean? It helped me maintain my cool. I remember one time I was doing insight meditation, Vipassana, where you label your sensations and your thoughts as they come up. And I had already been doing that for a whole day and I was sitting in the teacher's meeting just wasting time listening to this stuff. I had to go to graduate school anyway, so I left. And the teacher called me out and it just didn't faze me at all or the principal called me, it didn't faze me at all and I continued doing what I was doing. And it just was a remarkable way to maintain my calm in spite of my adversity, but I enjoyed teaching in the poorer schools. I found that

the kids were more appreciative and they respected me because here I was, Mr. Universe teaching them. They were in awe. So that worked in my favor.

Dave:

What's your meditation practice look like today?

Frank Zane:

I say a mantra. I found this mantra in 1976 and I started saying it because it felt good. And I made a vow to say it a million times a year and I did in those three years, '77, '78, '79, the years I won because my mind was just so focused and nothing could faze me, especially 1979. I had a house in Palm Springs that was really a gym, and just for the whole month, I trained and got sun and ran at night and said my mantra all day. And I was just in samadhi the whole time of the competition. And I knew I was the winner.

Dave:

Wow.

Frank Zane:

And I was able to convince myself that I was the winner and I think that's the secret of winning, is to win it ahead of time and to think and talk like the winner, not to boast, but just to be sure, to be sure of yourself. And then I developed this concept of faith. There's really different degrees of faith. The ordinary faith is believe in things that are unseen that haven't happened. For some reason, you believe them and you practice this more and more and you're around people who do and you develop a strong faith. But the other level of faith, I believe, is much higher level of certainty, being certain that things will happen. Not guessing, is you sure.

And that's what I was able to do. I was able to become certain and I was able to become certain because they got proof of what I looked like by all the photos I took. I realized that everybody that was going in a competition except me does not know what they look like when they get on stage. They find out at the contest and they either place high or not, usually not. But I knew what I looked like, because not only did I see what I looked like from all angles, but I also rehearsed the pre-judging. I would go out and stand, for example, round one was where you stood relaxed and then judges look at how you look standing relaxed and then they'd call you up for comparisons. But what I would do is that, in Palm Springs at 6:00 at night, the sun was getting lower on horizon. So I would go down and stand like I was in the lineup for 15 minutes from the front, back and both sides for a total of an hour, getting a tan, believing that I was on stage doing this. And it was things like that, yeah, I knew nobody else was doing that, so it made me all the more confident.

Dave:

How important was the role of community, working out with your buddies and that whole thing? How important was that for your motivation, for who you became?

Frank Zane:

Dave, I loved it. It was everything. When I came to California in 1969, the older generation of bodybuilders like Joe Gold, Zabo Kazuski, Artie Zeller, our photographer, Joe Weider, they're all there and helped us. I didn't make any money doing that. That's why I was teaching, but I did it because I loved it. The older guys, they're such great people. It was like we were able to stand on the shoulders of giants from these guys. And I don't see a lot of that anymore. That community doesn't seem to be there, but it was really great, the early '70s especially. We didn't compete against each other in the gym. We helped each other and gave each other feedback, but then toward the end of the '70s, we were competing against each other because that we got to be the best to compete against

But it was wonderful. I still think about those days all the time. I still write about them. I still write about them. I finished this new book I have called Zane Body Building Manual. It's all about that. It's actually everything. It's about eight of my works condensed into one volume and it is basically a reference book. And so it's all traced, this whole story is traced in here about what I've been through and what's coming up now.

Dave:

What did you do at the peak of your bodybuilding nutritionally and how did you change it to now?

Ben Pakulski:

Well, throughout my career, early in my career, I did what everyone else does, is you focus on what the magazines say or what you see your favorite expert doing and you do that. And that's just eating as much as possible and training as hard as possible. It's what I call just a mindless approach. We're just going to go and do. And then as I evolved in my career, it really focused on learning my body and feeling what things felt like. So if I was really, really sore, that told me my body needed something. And if I was really, really tired, I needed something else. And if I was inflamed, I would look and I would feel and I would shift that. So learning to pay attention is the foundation of everything. So during my career, it was very much focused around writing down absolutely everything and then measuring, "Okay, today I did this amount of volume in my workout and I had this much sleep and I feel this way."

So if I'm feeling okay with those variables, now I can then progress it up. So if my training volume goes up a little bit, then I can obviously progress my calories up. So it had to be very, very calculated. Yeah, so whereas now, as you speak about, it's about feeling great, performing really well, but longevity more than anything. So I'm not attached to really anything. I'm not dogmatic about, "You need to eat this much protein. You need to eat this many vegetables," or, "I'm a keto," or, "I'm carnivore," or, "I'm vegan." I just really am focused around for my DNA and I examine my DNA, "What does my body need? Am I lacking any vitamins? Am I lacking any micronutrients? And do I feel great all the time?" So I want my body in the ketogenic state sometimes. I want my body consuming carbohydrates sometimes.

"Am I training hard? If I'm training hard, well guess what? I'm going to eat some carbohydrates," because I know not only are carbohydrate's fueling performance, but they're also mitigating cortisol. So one of your body's if not best mechanism to modulate cortisol, so it needs to bring down that cortisol response. So if I'm very stressed or if I'm not sleeping very, well, carbohydrates can be a really great tool. So now training or nutrition, because I have a bit of a knowledge base and that's literally all I teach, I don't teach any dogma around nutrition, I just try to teach tools in the tool belt, right?

Dave:

Eat to feel good really matters like cheesecake.

Ben Pakulski:

Yeah, that makes me feel really good for about five minutes.

Dave:

Exactly.

Ben Pakulski:

And then it's done. But you acknowledge that, right? And most people and I teach my kids that, I'm like, "Well, that's good for your mouth. Your mouth really enjoys that and that's good. You want your mouth to feel good, but what are the nutrients you're eating for the other parts of your body, right?" This thing your brain really likes this, so let's eat some of that. And this thing your muscles really like, so let's eat some of that. And this thing may be good for, whatever, your blood or your skin and kids are really attached to that. And maybe parents or adults should attach to that too, is like, "What am I feeding with this?"

Dave:

Yeah. All bodybuilders know, "This is going to make me look good," but you were never eating to feel good, right? Most of the people I've talked to, they felt like absolute garbage when they were doing that.

Ben Pakulski:

Yeah, that was one of the big deterrents too, is the bigger I got, the worse I felt. Even the leaner I got, the worse I felt. Walking on stage at 4% body fat, you feel terrible and people don't really realize that you're walking on stage and it's really hard to do that and so you create a negative association after a while. But yeah, I love bodybuilding and I think bodybuilding has so much value for so many people done for the right reasons and the right context. And I don't think, obviously, the level that I took it to is necessary, but I think empowering yourself with the knowledge and the ability to do anything can build confidence daily, right? Bodybuilding took discipline. It took focus. It built character. It built confidence. And I think anything that does that for people is extremely valuable, because when our life is so easy, it's so curated, right?

As human beings right now, what else do you allow your body, or again, any athletic endeavor I guess is anywhere where you can intentionally subject yourself to challenge and discipline is extremely important, especially, well, I would say especially young people, but really anybody. And that's what bodybuilding did for me and I think it can do for so many people, which is why I continue to be an advocate in just a different way, is set a goal, set a plan and prove to yourself because nobody else matters, but prove to yourself that you can do it because you can. And that's really the message of what I deliver in my business.

Dave:

If you could go back and talk to yourself when you were 20 or early 20s anyway and tell yourself something that you know now, what would you tell yourself?

Frank Zane:

Don't get injured and follow your own path and don't listen to other people so much. I think they don't know what you should be doing. Don't use as heavy weights. Save your money. Don't spend it foolishly. One of the things about getting popular and you get all this money flowing all of a sudden is you think it's going to go on forever and so you buy all kind of stuff and it doesn't. I wish I was a little bit more conservative. I was okay with that, but not as good as I could have been. But it was all learning experience. What you don't really profit from directly in form of gains in your life or wealth or whatever, you can always write off as learning experience. And so I can say it's all been a learning experience and there have been things that I haven't profited from, but there have been a heck of a lot of things I have.

I work with people to get them to a point where they can help them with and do it on their own because they have the skills and ability to do that and to develop the confidence to do that. And then if they want to check back with me anytime, they can and I'll give them my personal feedback. And that's the L part of our bodybuilding equation, learn, which is learning what you look like, your feedback, which is due to photographs and also expert critique. And then what you develop, what you get to look like is equal to the product of your exercise, your attitude, your recuperation and your nutrition. And the better you do in those super variable categories, the better you're going to look.

Ben Pakulski:

Bodybuilding, there's no time off like, "You have to sleep tonight. I can't miss a day. I have to train tomorrow. I have to eat this way," or I guess I should say, "I get to," but if I really want to succeed, it's very all in. It's all or nothing. And that in itself is character building and I hope everyone realizes who's out there aspiring to build a great body, that it's such a great opportunity to develop character. Even walking into a room, when you see someone who trains and looks great, they automatically get your respect and I guess your admiration and I think that's powerful.

And I think everyone should realize that, every opportunity in life, whether it be training, whether it be what you're eating, is an opportunity to become the greatest version of

yourself and it's always a decision, right? "Am I going to choose something that my tomorrow self, myself of tomorrow is going to thank me for or am I going to choose something that maybe is in some way negative to my body? And if I can choose things that my tomorrow version of myself is going to love, then I'm doing myself a justice," and I think that's the big mess message.

Dave:

You've talked about your shift from, "How I look to, how I feel and even to how long I'm going to live." And on Muscle Intelligence or podcasts, you talk about longevity a lot these days. How long do you think you're going to live?

Ben Pakulski:

Well, it seems like everyone in my family lives to be at least a 100 to 102, so I've got the genes ...

Dave:

All right.

Ben Pakulski:

... backing me up, Dave. So what do you think I can do?

Dave:

Well, that's your floor then, right?

Ben Pakulski:

Yes. I figure 102, 104 is minimum. I just want to make sure that I can still ride my bike and have great sex at 102, so that's why I'm reading your books.

Dave:

Well, let's think about it. We got 62 more years until you're 100, right?

Ben Pakulski:

Right. Rather than focusing on how long, I'm just focusing on how well and I can't control if I get hit by lightning tomorrow or whatever, drop a dumbbell in my head, right? But I can certainly control this moment and I can control being present with my family, with myself and with my loved ones and with anyone I meet. And that's really my focus, is rather than ... Again, I want to optimize every minute of my life, both physically and mentally, so that I can live to be 180 and you and I could be neighbors and share our biodynamic vegetables and organic gardens and animals and stuff.

Dave:

I'll trade you some broccoli for some cauliflower.

Ben Pakulski:

Done, I'm more of a broccoli guy anyways.

Dave:

Nice. You've been listening to a podcast with Ben Pakulski, benapakulski.com. It's been a pleasure. Thanks for coming up to my house on Vancouver Island. I appreciate you.

Ben Pakulski:

Dave, likewise, beautiful place. You've done an amazing job. And Dave is truthfully a man of his word, living an authentic life, so it's truly an honor. And as I said when we started, I'm a fan.

Dave:

Frank, if someone came to you tomorrow and said, "I want to perform better at everything I do as a human being," just based on your entire life's experience, what top three pieces of advice would you have for someone?

Ben Pakulski:

Well, I'd say start working out, do a regular exercise program because physical activity and something like working out with weights is actually a meditation and action. It's moving meditation. You learn to focus on something, develop your focus, your concentration. Be able to narrow down your attention to something very specific and burn a hole in it. That's why I'm good at bodybuilding. I have tremendous focus, but I'm not really good at multitasking. I'm not good at doing more than one thing at a time. And so that has had negative consequences, but it's also very positive as well, because whatever I focus on, I tend to do. I also don't do a lot of things. I tend to specialize now on the things that I'm already involved in and good at, relatively good at rather than learning a lot of new things.

But I have learned new things over the years recently like playing guitar, making flutes. I never knew how to do that. I just became interested and started doing it and now I'm getting better at it. So I'd say that develop focus, concentration, workout, become aware of yourself. Start getting photograph. Try to develop the ability to see yourself the way other people see you. And be nicer, be nicer. I have a poem about that. It's about people who try to influence you to their way of thinking, their religion, for example. And so to them, I say, "Christ or Buddha, what's it to you? It's the message, not the medium. Don't let it fool you. I learned that all the great teachings lead to the same end. Be nice. Practice empathy and kindness. You have nothing to lose putting yourself in another's shoes."

Dave:

Wow, what a fantastic-

Frank Zane:

It's all about that. It's all about that.

Dave:

What a fantastic summary.

Frank Zane:

It's all about being nice. If you can't do that, you're not going to get anywhere.

Dave:

Very well said. I fundamentally believe that that's our core state, is to be nice to each other and that, when we're not nice to each other, it's because our mind isn't in the right place because we ate crap, because we were lethargic. And there's all sorts of things that take you off your game, but what a fantastic way of just putting it into four simple lines. Thank you for sharing your poetry on Bulletproof Radio.

Frank Zane:

Oh, my pleasure. Thanks for listening.

Dave:

In 500 episodes, no one has ever recited one of their own poems on the air, so you're the first there. Frank, thank you for being on Bulletproof Radio. It's been an honor and a privilege to be able to interview you and learn from your life's work. And thanks for all that you've done and all that you're still doing. I'm genuinely grateful for it.

Frank Zane:

Well, thanks for the interview. It's been great talking to you and learning your ideas that I'm glad you're so involved with the neuropsychology and the mind-body experience. It's great. And being up there in Northern California where all that good work is going on, it must be really nice.

Dave:

It's a beautiful part of the world. That's for sure. Frank, your main body of work is at frankzane.com. So people listening, you can tell this is a very unusual human being I just interviewed here with that unusual combination of a mental and spiritual and physical and a teacher as well. And I would encourage you to check out his work. Just go to his webpage. It's all there and-

Frank Zane:

The thing is I would like to get more people coming as many as possible that can benefit from my program, The Zane Experience. I've been doing this ever since the 1980 and I take people for one, two or three-day programs where I work with them privately to develop good form in their exercise and work on the other areas like nutrition and

energy conservation and what we call high-tech meditation. We use light sound machines. We've been doing that for quite a while ...

Dave:

I love it.

Frank Zane:

... and all that. And basically giving the whole picture of bodybuilding, what it's all about. It's not just lifting weights. I think it's the most tremendous method there is for personal growth because it covers everything. Even yoga. Yoga's great. What doesn't have ... Well, you don't see people that ... With this, we have the ability to change our appearance, to change the way we look. That really can't do that in any other areas. It might happen as a result of it, but not directly. We focus on that, we make it happen. So we'll be able to create what we want by doing it correctly. So come and let me show you how to do that, everybody.

Dave:

And that's in Southern California, what city is the-

Frank Zane:

That's in San Diego.

Dave:

San Diego. Well, next time I'm in San Diego, which happens pretty often, I might swing by for a day. I think that'd be fantastic ...

Frank Zane:

Please do.

Dave:

... time.

Frank Zane:

Please do.

Dave:

Beautiful. Frank, thanks again.

Frank Zane:

Thank you, Dave.

Dave:

Human Upgrade with Dave Asprey - Ben Pakulski and Frank Zane

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