The Human Upgrade: Episode 1114

Dave Asprey: [00:00:16] You're listening to The Human Upgrade with Dave Asprey. Today we are live from Austin, Texas. I love doing live episodes for you because it's just easier to make a connection that way. So you'll hear some amazing Zoom interviews, but nothing beats good old-fashioned meet space as opposed to virtual space. Sorry, Mark Zuckerberg. I don't want to do my podcasts in virtual reality. Don't know why.

Our guest is Dan Freed. Dan is a chef, a burned-out chef, who decided to become an expert in nootropics. And he's sitting here going, did Dave just call me a burned-out chef? That's probably not what you wanted me to say, but hear me out here. He's got some really interesting thoughts about nootropics because, like me, he has a brain that doesn't behave itself all the time.

I've talked openly about having Asperger's and ADHD and not having those anymore and how things change from that. I don't know. Maybe I do have some ADHD. Hey, is that a squirrel over there? You maintained eye contact. You don't even have ADHD. No, you have a really interesting story. I thought our audience would want to hear about this. And people send me buckets of nootropics all the time. And you can tell something that's formulated in a new and interesting way.

So you're working on some cool stuff, to be perfectly honest. So I thought it'd be fun to just bring in here, have you tell me why you're doing some of the things you're doing? I have a bone to pick with you about one of your products, and so I haven't told you about that ahead of time, so no need to be nervous now that you're nervous.

Dan Freed: [00:02:08] Thank you so much for having me. I am so excited to be here. You were somebody where when I was getting started in biohacking, there was nobody out there talking about it. And so I found your content, obviously, through Bulletproof, and then some of your books. I actually went to see one of your events in the very, very early days of starting Thesis back then. The company, when it started, it started in my apartment. It was never meant to be a company.

Dave Asprey: [00:02:45] And Thesis is your nootropics company, I should say.

Dan Freed: [00:02:48] Yeah. And I started just selling to friends and friends of friends. And then it grew organically like that. And the original name of the product was Placeboproof. It was a

play on Bulletproof. And it's the absolute worst name you can think of for a supplement company.

And the concept of it, this is crazy to actually think of, it was structured like a four-way crossover clinical trial. There were actual placebos in the box, and users would just go, and there would be a packet of pills that says day 1, day 2, day 3, day 4, and they wouldn't know what was in each packet.

And so they would take it, and they would record subjective measures of energy, mood, productivity, sleep. And then at the end of the month, we would unblind them. We would do basic statistical analysis, and we would tell them which ingredients worked and which ones didn't. But in those days, I remember you were one of the only voices for the biohacking community.

Dave Asprey: [00:03:53] That started the movement, but thanks for being an early adopter. I think the event in New York-- I used to do book signing tours when I would launch a book, and it turns out it's really hard to do this because you have to fly there and sell a bunch of tickets. Logistically, it's a nightmare, but it's always just fun. I love connecting with my community. And by the way, thank you for listening today and being part of the community. So I guess, you'd finished being a chef.

Dan Freed: [00:04:24] I'll take you all the way back to the beginning. I have always struggled in the structured environment of the American educational system.

Dave Asprey: [00:04:34] As most free humans do.

Dan Freed: [00:04:37] Most, but not all. So what's interesting, I was expelled from preschool.

Dave Asprey: [00:04:45] That's actually a pretty solid street cred right there.

Dan Freed: [00:04:49] At four years old, I don't know what it was for, but my parents won't let me forget about it. And I was formally diagnosed with ADHD when I was six. This was in the late '80s.

Dave Asprey: [00:05:00] And that's exercise deficiency in young boys. Is that ADHD? I'm sorry, there's no way a four- or five-year-old can really do ADHD. If you put them outside for six hours running around, they don't have ADHD. They can still have medical issues and things like that,

but I feel like trying to make a preschooler behave any certain way other than rambunctious seems mean. Could you have just had bad teachers? I'm not saying you don't have brain stuff. I do too.

Dan Freed: [00:05:26] So I'll explain my views on it. So for one thing, I have a sister. She is a triple-board certified physician. She's a medical school professor. We grew up together. After school, I would come home. I would try as hard as I could to study, and it felt like I wanted to put my head through the wall. The amount of energy to try to force myself to do that, I couldn't do it. I look over at her, and it's just natural. It's like it's nothing to her. She could just go through. And in that respect, I believe our brains are fundamentally different.

Dave Asprey: [00:06:05] Oh yeah, I believe it. Absolutely.

Dan Freed: [00:06:07] The way that I look at it is like when you go up to the meta level. My great grandparents never stepped foot inside a classroom. It just didn't exist. And so when you look at the time scale of human evolution, this environment sitting in front of a laptop, the types of work that we have to do is very different. And some people are able to adapt to it well, like my sister.

For me, it was impossible to conform to this without some type of pharmacological intervention, either medication, nootropics, something, and behavioral intervention. That's how I look at it. And so I ended up not being medicated. I dropped out of high school at 16. I went to work in fast food. I watched my friends graduate high school, go off to college. I was still working for minimum wage. It was demoralizing. It was a very difficult time period in my life, and I got a lucky break and ended up becoming a chef.

Dave Asprey: [00:07:12] That's actually a good thing if you have ADHD. Because as a chef, it's a constantly changing environment. It's stressful and not that healthy. I've had a few chefs on the show.

Dan Freed: [00:07:23] It was a superpower. So I went from being called stupid, lazy-- I knew that I was motivated, and I tried as hard as I could to be successful. I just couldn't do it in that environment. As a chef, it was like flipping a switch. For once, I was good at something. I didn't struggle with focus, and I could do 10 things at once, which is pretty incredible. And I spent my

20s traveling the world, cooking in some of the most incredible restaurants. I worked my way up to a Michelin three-star restaurant in France, where I became saucier.

Dave Asprey: [00:08:00] Oh, do you speak French?

Dan Freed: [00:08:01] I did fluently. I still understand it very well. I haven't spoken French daily for about 15 years now.

Dave Asprey: [00:08:10] When you say the word croissant, do you feel stupid if you say it in French?

Dan Freed: [00:08:16] A little bit. My accent is so bad.

Dave Asprey: [00:08:19] Can you say it?

Dan Freed: [00:08:19] Croissant. [Foreign]. When I was in France, actually, I was studying to be a citizen. I lived there for two years. That's a whole other story. But I burned out in a Michelin three-star restaurant. I thought I would never work as a chef again.

Dave Asprey: [00:08:41] What does burnout look like?

Dan Freed: [00:08:44] That time, I was so sick. I was surviving on caffeine, cigarettes. I was smoking a pack a day.

Dave Asprey: [00:08:54] Very French.

Dan Freed: [00:08:56] All I did was work all day, every day. I was the first one into the kitchen. The last one to leave. At the end of that, I was physically sick. I was mentally sick. I bought a one-way ticket to Thailand. I gave up my dream. I had worked, at that point, for five years as a chef. My dream was to be the saucier of a Michelin three-star restaurant, the most technically skilled position you could get into, and I worked day and night for five years to get there. And when I had it, I hated my life. I was miserable.

Dave Asprey: [00:09:34] How old were you?

Dan Freed: [00:09:36] I was 24 when I made it, and I think about 25 when I burned out the first time. Really bad.

Dave Asprey: [00:09:40] Wow. It's funny. I'm giving you a hard time about French because both of my kids speak French reasonably well because of the Canadian education system, and I still have a hard time saying croissant or however you're supposed to say it. I do my best. Sorry, French friends. That is not my superpower.

And that burnout thing is something-- I had this similar thing happen in my late 20s, where you just realized no matter how much you're doing, there's always more, and you just lose it. How did you come back from that? Because that's part of your story for why you started Thesis.

I always want to call it your Thesis, but I started Thesis and you really got into some precision cognitive enhancement stuff. Is this a brain problem that fixed your burnout? Was it an adrenal problem? Was it meditation? Was it getting a girlfriend? What fixes all that?

Dan Freed: [00:10:35] I haven't really talked about this too much publicly, but I bought a one-way ticket to Thailand. A Michelin three-star restaurant is a brutal environment. There were people who I was close with that committed suicide.

Dave Asprey: [00:10:48] I've heard it's just really high intensity.

Dan Freed: [00:10:50] I was so done with life. My plan was to become a monk. That's one of the reasons--

Dave Asprey: [00:10:58] I thought about it. I shaved my head once. I got it.

Dan Freed: [00:11:01] And so I ended up in Thailand, and I started dealing with severe depression because this was the dream that I worked for so long, and it was gone. And I didn't know what to do with my life. And that was the first time that I read PubMed and discovered clinicals, because I was in such a deep depression, and I was in Thailand. I didn't know what to do.

So I started looking up antidepressants, and I read a bunch of clinicals, chose one antidepressant. I forget what it was back then. In Thailand, you walk into a pharmacy. You buy it. Took it for a couple of months, and it got me out of bed. It got me dealing with people. I spent a year in Thailand. I tried to start a nonprofit. I didn't know what to do with my life.

And then I got to the point where I was healthy enough that I also ran out of money and failed at starting a nonprofit. And so I went to work on cruise ships. And that was my last role as a chef. I

did it for about two years. The burnout there was a different type. So I would sign on to a ship. I would work six months straight, no days off. Seven days a week. You talk about biohacking, and sunlight, and all of this. There was one rotation that I did in the production kitchens.

So all of these are below deck. I would see the sun once a week. I would work from when I woke up in the morning. Sometimes we would have to start work at like 4:00 or 5:00 AM if we had inspections, all the way till midnight. Sometimes I'd get a little break in there. And it was overseeing the butcher, the baker. I used to do ice sculptures on the ships. It was a very intensive environment.

And the other thing that happened there was I was cooking a lot less. So my role was more managing people, supply chain, budgets, scheduling, and that started hitting up against that ADHD barrier that I had. And so when I burned out from that, I somehow-- I know how. I had a boss on the ship who was a burned-out investment banker who became a chef, which is crazy.

And he taught me how to use Excel. He taught me how to do some of the basic business functions and mentored me. And he told me one day, if you've come this far without an education-- at that point, I was a high school dropout. Never took the SATs. Never went to college. He said, imagine what you could do with an education? So I got it into my head that I wanted to go back to school. And I want to get an MBA, which was pretty crazy, considering where I was.

Dave Asprey: [00:13:55] I did the same thing. I decided when I was 29 I wanted an MBA.

Dan Freed: [00:13:58] Yeah, I was 28 at the time. And so I got a GED study guide, and I started studying. It felt like I was back in high school. I would read the page five times. I couldn't internalize the information. I never had any high-level math. It was a completely foreign concept to me to study like this. And that's when I went back to PubMed and started looking for nootropics and different ways that I could improve my focus.

Dave Asprey: [00:14:29] Oh, so instead of being just helpless, you decided to control your own biology. Who would have thought? How dare you.

Dan Freed: [00:14:36] That was such a huge thing for me. I discovered Reddit, all the different nootropics forums back then. There was very little. So this was 2013.

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Dave Asprey: [00:14:47] I just started the blog at the end of 2011, and I was actively saying, guys, nootropics are real. But I'd been mentored by the guy who ran Smart Drug News, which was a print newsletter in the '80s named Steve Foulkes, who was an advisor to the anti-aging nonprofit that I ran. And so he'd sit down and tell me these things. And it was funny.

I ordered them from Europe and spent a huge amount of money and was like, oh my God, I got my brain back. And I feel like they saved my career, and I would have failed out of Wharton, absolutely, if I wasn't on nootropics, because that's not my brain does. And I like to think I'm smart. But if you want to feel really dumb, if you have a brain that's smart in one way, just do the standard education system. You'll feel like an idiot overnight. So I don't do standard education anymore, but I like to think I'm reasonably successful.

Dan Freed: [00:15:35] There's this standard path, and if you don't fit into-- my sister is the perfect example, and there's nothing against her. She is able to succeed in that environment and do incredibly well.

Dave Asprey: [00:15:47] Is she really happy? Does she love it, or did she just-- some people can make themselves do that better. I'm not sure that's healthy for anyone because there's just better ways of learning. It's more work to teach someone in a way that's customized, just like nootropics. You can't say everyone needs X amount of this vitamin, or everyone needs X amount of running, or X amount of sleep.

It's all customized, including learning. And when they try to cram everyone into, you will have six ounces of skim milk, and one scoop of military-grade peanut butter, and seven pounds of wheat, and two scoops of soy, and that will be your meal-- oh, and a cricket for dessert-- I'm like, how about you go fuck yourself?

Because it doesn't work for almost anyone except for that one person who's in the middle of average, and even they probably don't want to eat crickets. So you have to be like, well, what works for you with your brain, with your electrical signaling, with your neurochemical signaling, and your learning style? And you're probably familiar with Jim Kwik, right?

Dan Freed: [00:16:45] Yeah.

Dave Asprey: [00:16:45] Dear friend. Same thing. He had a brain injury.

Dan Freed: [00:16:47] He's great. Yeah.

Dave Asprey: [00:16:48] And he's been on the show a bunch of times and on my stage at the Biohacking Conference so often because, same thing. How is it that you can be successful, I can be successful, and everyone listening can be successful. It's because we changed our environment for learning and for the type of work we do so that it suits our strengths. And then we found teammates who could do the other stuff. So you've managed to do this for yourself, it sounds like.

Dan Freed: [00:17:15] Exactly. My story is almost exactly like yours in that I bought a bunch of stuff from Europe, from Mexico, from anywhere I could find nootropics, and I methodically tested different ingredients. Most of them did nothing. This was, again, back in 2013. I would go into a coffee shop to study. I would take out a milligram scale, and I would be weighing white powders. And everybody was looking at me, like, what the fuck is this guy doing? And then I'd put it under my tongue, or I'd take it.

And while most of the nootropics did nothing, I just kept going. I was desperate. More than anything, I needed to pass the GMAT, and when I went in to take the GMAT, I ended up scoring in the 99th percentile. Surprised the hell out of me. I wasn't even shooting that high. I knew that I was intelligent, but I didn't think that I could function at that level. And once I was able to focus, everything else became easy. And that score changed my life. I ended up doing an MBA at INSEAD, so I'm somebody--

Dave Asprey: [00:18:31] No way. I've been to lectures at INSEAD. They're a sister school to Wharton.

Dan Freed: [00:18:35] Yeah.

Dave Asprey: [00:18:35] We went out there to Paris and spent a day. I remember I fell asleep in the front row because of jet lag. Hadn't had jet lag back then. Sorry INSEAD, but okay. It's cool.

Dan Freed: [00:18:43] It's such an incredible school. So I went, and I'm a chef. The last time I was in a classroom, it was 10th grade, and now I'm surrounded by people from McKinsey, Goldman Sachs. We're doing some serious MBA stuff that you know. And I leveraged the benefits of nootropics and behavioral interventions. So back then, it was like exercise, cold

showers, some of these things to really help me increase my level of focus. And I started to do well.

Dave Asprey: [00:19:15] Did you feel guilty that you were maybe doping and cheating in business school?

Dan Freed: [00:19:18] No.

Dave Asprey: [00:19:19] I did. I was like, okay, guys, I don't know how to say this, but-- and I put my smart drugs on the desk in front of me. I'm like, I'm on these substances. Because if you tell people what you're doing, it's not cheating. I'm on modafinil. And I would list all the stuff. I have it right there. And of course, now the positive full disclosure side of me is like, that's great.

The other side of me is like, there is a psychology game. So of course, that means everyone else is like, oh my God, I might fail because someone else is on smart drugs. And if that lowered their scores, which had the net effect of raising my already shitty score on average, I'm not going to complain about that.

Dan Freed: [00:19:57] I hear a lot that people think Adderall, nootropics, smart drugs are cheating. That's a topic that I'll address in a second. So after INSEAD, I got offered a partial scholarship to do another master's degree at Yale. And that's when I did a deep dive into nootropics. Once I could focus, I ignited this intellectual curiosity that I loved school in a way that I never imagined possible.

And so when I was at Yale, they had a cooking competition with students, and I went, and I beat every single person, hands down. I had this little team. And people were complaining. They're like, this is a fucking professional chef. This is bullshit, and all this stuff.

Dave Asprey: [00:20:46] But you got a lot of dates after that, though.

Dan Freed: [00:20:49] That was one of the benefits. I went to the dean, and I had a conversation with him, and I was like, listen, people are really mad. Obviously, I won this competition. Maybe I shouldn't do it. Give away the award. There was-- I forget what the prize was. And he's like, listen, you're in classes every day with investment bankers, consultants. They've been doing this for a decade, and you're coming from a kitchen.

You've never been in a classroom. This isn't cheating. You're at the disadvantage 99% of the time. And I look at that as like, I think one of the greatest gifts that humans have at this stage of evolution is the ability to modulate our brain chemistry.

Dave Asprey: [00:21:34] Yeah.

Dan Freed: [00:21:34] And to not take that, it's not cheating to do it. I wouldn't be able to function in my job today if I didn't have nootropics. And it makes no sense to limit myself. I think that nootropics need to be in everyone's hands. Probably not my sister.

Dave Asprey: [00:21:55] Why not?

Dan Freed: [00:21:58] There are some people that don't need it.

Dave Asprey: [00:21:59] Would she turn into Lucy?

Dan Freed: [00:22:03] The way that I look at it is, for her-- we're so different. Just like it's hard for me to explain to somebody that doesn't struggle with focus what it's like to try to complete something and the amount of motivation it takes, where it's basically impossible for me to do it alone without some type of pharmacological help, I can't understand how easy it is for her.

Dave Asprey: [00:22:31] Have you ever asked her about this?

Dan Freed: [00:22:32] Yeah, we've had debates long into the night on nootropics and different types of smart drugs. She had something where she knew what she wanted to do. We're very different personalities. So I would not be happy with her life. It would make me miserable. No judgment against it. But just that structure and the way that she thinks about things is very different. She would absolutely hate my life. Just traveling, doing all these different things. It's a very different experience.

Dave Asprey: [00:23:10] And I suspect, and most of the real high-performing people that I know at that level have some degree of stress behind it all. It's a desire to perform, or to be good enough, or something. And what I find is that-- do know about the rule on the show? If your phone goes off on the show, you have to do an interpretive dance for the audience.

Dan Freed: [00:23:33] Interpretive dance? Oh, no.

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Dave Asprey: [00:23:34] It won't have to be nude this time, but that's only for the second one. Are you ready to just--

Dan Freed: [00:23:41] My leg is asleep, but--

Dave Asprey: [00:23:43] Oh, excuse. So this is an ADHD strategy, ladies. No, I'm kidding. There is no rule like that. I'm just messing with you. The idea here, though, is that if you have control over your biology, which is the core definition of biohacking, it includes your neurochemistry. And that means if you're a super high performing, and this is after 1,500 people have come through 40 Years of Zen, or thereabouts, 1500.

And we've looked at their brains and talked with them and all that stuff, and people are just killing it in the world of business. And they have families, and kids, and picket fences, and cats, and whatever, the standard things. There's a lot of miserable people who are really, really high-performing, and they're just barely hanging in. And some of them are triple-board certified, and some of them are in a situation where, like us, we had to come from behind or come from a different perspective on it.

Having that control means that if you're super high performance, you can be chill. And if you're too chill, you can be focused. And if you're too unfocused, you can be focused. It doesn't have to be pharmaceutical. It doesn't have to be nutraceutical, which is the area that you're playing in with Thesis. It can be electrical, it can be changing sleep, like you said, exercise and cold-- these are all just tools to let you select your state.

But to throw out this set of tools because people say it's cheating, I'm like, well, wait a minute. If you don't go get shitty drunk every night because it makes you feel bad, then you're cheating. Because avoiding things that cause harm so you perform better, that's okay. Doing things that make you perform better specifically, that's not okay?

That's probably because you've been programed by some weird puritanical zombie virus. I don't understand the mindset, but it's a common one. So no, nootropics isn't cheating any more than eating to lose weight is cheating. Selecting helplessness is stupid.

Dan Freed: [00:25:36] So I would love to hear your opinion on this. I told you my grandparents never stepped foot in a classroom. What I see is technology is outpacing human biology. So

when you look at food and the obesity epidemic, we got cheap, mass-produced food. They started looking at putting sugar into different things to sell it faster, to sell more of it.

And then we are faced with the obesity epidemic. And now we have things like Ozempic and GLP-1s that are starting to tip the scales. And it's essentially, at its core, human evolution isn't equipped to deal with the modern-day food supply. I look at it as similar, where it's technology for focus. So I went out to eat with my fiance's family, and she has a cousin who's one year old. Can't even talk. At dinner--

Dave Asprey: [00:26:38] They're not supposed to talk at one year old.

Dan Freed: [00:26:39] I know, exactly. That's what I'm saying. It's normal.

Dave Asprey: [00:26:42] Let listeners know. Okay.

Dan Freed: [00:26:43] Yeah. There's nothing wrong with him. He's perfectly healthy.

Dave Asprey: [00:26:46] What's wrong with that kid?

Dan Freed: [00:26:47] They gave him an iPhone. He can intuitively use it. He loves it. He's giggling. He's swiping. We have no idea what that's doing to that child's brain. Even from when I grew up, I just turned 40. We're constantly bombarded with notifications. You have smartphones that-- TikTok, work from home.

We're not equipped for this modern environment. And I think that one of the things that allows me to function here are, one, behavioral intervention. So I limit my use of technology in certain times, exercise, meditate, do things--

Dave Asprey: [00:27:29] How do you limit your use of technology?

Dan Freed: [00:27:31] So the best biohack, hands down, that I do now is I will leave my phone and my laptop at the office a couple of nights a week.

Dave Asprey: [00:27:41] Wow. How do you find your way home without a phone?

Dan Freed: [00:27:44] I walk.

Dave Asprey: [00:27:45] And you just know how to get there without Google Maps?

Dan Freed: [00:27:47] It is such a liberating feeling.

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Dave Asprey: [00:27:50] So weird.

Dan Freed: [00:27:50] I cannot even tell you--

Dave Asprey: [00:27:51] In New York City.

Dan Freed: [00:27:52] In New York City. To walk out of my office, no phone, no way anybody can get a hold of me. And I run a large business, big team. There could be a catastrophe. I trust them to handle it.

Dave Asprey: [00:28:04] How big is Thesis now?

Dan Freed: [00:28:06] We're about 50 people.

Dave Asprey: [00:28:08] 50. Wow. By the way, guys, takethesis.com. And yeah, I always ask for a discount for you. So use code ASPREY. Is it ASPREY, ASPREY10, whatever?

Dan Freed: [00:28:17] I can make it any code you want.

Dave Asprey: [00:28:18] It's ASPREY. Use code ASPREY at takethesis.com. Okay. So it's a sizable team. You know that things are cruising for you, and no one can get ahold of you. Does anyone die when they can't get ahold of you?

Dan Freed: [00:28:30] It was very difficult for me to do this at first. I would have this anxiety when I left the office, and I would constantly be checking my phone. First thing I do when I wake up is check my phone, and I don't do it every night, but when I do this, I can feel my blood pressure go down. That feeling of anxiety in my chest, it doesn't completely go away, but it gets much, much better.

And it allows me to connect more with people outside of the office. It's been really, really incredible. It's hard to do. It seems so simple. I've recommended this to so many of my friends who have very stressful work lives, like mine. Almost nobody ever does it.

Dave Asprey: [00:29:18] It's rough. Way back in the early days, before biohacking had a name, when I was struggling in Silicon Valley, just having the brain fog, and I didn't know I had chronic fatigue syndrome, and fibromyalgia, and all the mitochondrial dysfunction that oftentimes comes with ADHD and all that, I went and did neurofeedback, and I was sitting there.

This was like a dumb little Pac-Man game on a green screen. In fact, it was the only place you could do it in the Bay Area back then. It was a chiropractor's office. It was not the cutting-edge 40 Years of Zen experience. So I'm sitting there, and I'm playing this dumb little game with two electrodes, and then the phone rings, the old-fashioned ring.

And then I'm like, ah, and I can see my brainwaves, and I go, what just happened? And the doctor, Thomas, he goes, oh, yeah. He goes, see when the phone went off, you had a full fight-or-flight response. And I was like, oh my God. An alert signal caused a stress response, and I saw it in my brain. And then I correlated that with the experience.

And I realized, when I was a kid, the phone would ring, and it was like, coming. And if you didn't grow up at the right time, you wouldn't know this. But if the phone would ring, it was like an emergency because someone had to answer it, for no good reason. And then the kids would run for the phone, and the parents would pick it up. And it was this whole big stupid drama for no good reason because someone wants to talk to you.

And now we have that same neurological response every time an alert goes off. That's why I turn off all the alerts on my phone. And I've had someone break up with me because I didn't see a text message for a day. I had 200 text messages that day, and it didn't come to the top. And shit happens. And my people who know me well, they'll text me more than once. If I don't answer, they'll call me, because I'll probably see that before I'll see a text, because other people's priorities are not mine.

But to get to that point for me was 20 years of work to the point where an alert on my phone is not neurologically interesting anymore. That helped me a lot. And that means I can turn them off without feeling like I'm going to die. But that's ninja level for me anyway. Are you there, where you just don't care about an alert on your phone, or are you still driven by alerts?

Dan Freed: [00:31:32] A lot less. So work is really the only thing that gets me. I don't have TikTok, or Instagram, or any of those things on my phone. I don't get sucked into rabbit holes like I used to. That's one of the things with ADHD. I would get interested in something and just go on a deep dive that would take away my focus. One of the things, as I'm sure you know, running a company is hard, and my brain goes into problem-solving mode.

So if there's something that's not working, I'm just constantly thinking about it in the shower, when I wake up, when I'm having dinner with a friend. It'll be in the back of my head. And being able to disrupt that and put a little bit of space in there so that I'm not constantly in problem-solving mode for the company, it's been incredibly helpful. Again, nootropics have been really foundational in that. And behavioral interventions like leaving my phone at work, it's putting friction in it that I can't see my phone.

Dave Asprey: [00:32:36] So the nootropics are a big deal for you. And I want to get into what you're doing with Thesis because Thesis is a different approach. And so guys, you know, if you're a long time listener, I've been doing nootropics for 25 years now. And I've probably spent, I feel comfortable saying, at least $100,000 on nootropics over the course of my life. Probably more. I haven't tallied it up, but a lot. I mean a lot, a lot.

And I've probably tried-- there's probably some weird forms of racetam that-- I don't care about Fasoracetam versus call Coluracetam. I just don't care because my brain works so well, the net benefit. I have bottles of those. I just don't take them because I don't want to spend a day figuring out if I got a headache or not.

But I'm really into this. But it's like a labor of love. It's a passion. I've wrote a major science book about brains that included nootropics. I interviewed guys like you who are experts all the time. So coming from that mindset, I'm saying that what you're doing with Thesis is interesting because personalization matters.

I keep trying to tell people, look, if you're going to try this whole racetam class of nootropics that are actually legal, even though they're not approved, and that's a whole different thing we're not going to get into in this podcast, but to know which one works for you, there's only one way to do it, is to try them.

But if you try them all at once, you're probably going to scramble your brain because one works, one doesn't work, and you just don't know what feels what feels good and what doesn't feel good. So it's a personalization scheme. And most of us, unless we have a ton of money, and a ton of time, and a ton of curiosity, or a burning need to have a brain that can do what the world wants it to do, we're not going to actually go to that trouble.

You went to the trouble. I went to the trouble. But then you built a process around it, which is something ADHD people are good at. And you built a process to help people customize how they're using nootropics, which I find really helpful. I keep publishing content on it, but it's, hey, you should take artichoke for this, and you could do this, and you could do that, but it gets overwhelming. So what do you do at Thesis to test nootropics and to customize it for people?

Dan Freed: [00:34:55] A lot. So we have a formulation process where we're constantly iterating on the formulation. We're changing dosages ingredients, and we're doing internal beta testing. Anyone can go to our site and sign up to be one of these beta testers. They are blinded, and they're taking different iterations. Usually, they're placebo-controlled, but not always.

We have multiple armed. And then we do statistical analysis to see, can we beat one of the current existing formulas? Can we create something new that's better? So that's one thing that we do that you'll see our formulations and ingredients are very unique, because it comes from this data-driven process of formulation.

What we do from a customer standpoint is this is what I wish existed when I was looking for nootropics. I felt like I was blind, and it took me a long time to get to something that worked. Most people give up along the way, and that breaks my heart, seeing people where they're like, hey, I want to try nootropics. They'll try one. It doesn't work, and then they just immediately give up.

So what we do is, for most people who come to our website, they'll go through a quiz, and we'll recommend them multiple formulations to try in their first month. They'll try them, and they'll report back to us which ones they liked, which ones they didn't like. We have coaches on staff. They can pick up a phone, call us, and we hold their hand through the process, and we guide them to find the right nootropics for their goals and their unique brain chemistry. And that makes such a huge difference.

Dave Asprey: [00:36:31] Having a, we'll call it, nootropics coach is super cool. The only thing that comes close to that when people come into 40 Years of Zen, they have a week of neuroscience. We work with a bunch of different nootropics to try and get them tuned in on that and make recommendations afterwards. Other than that, I don't really know how to do that at

scale. And so you've actually got people trained. You've got algorithms and quizzes, and this is how it ought to be done.

So I very much approve of that perspective. And I want to go deep with you on some of the ingredients that you're using in your blends because I think our listeners are going to be interested. Some of these, a lot of people don't know about.

So I get so many things sent to me, and the vast majority of people are saying, oh, I want to come on the show. I'm like, look, if you're going to copy Alpha Brain, which itself was a copy from a company called SuperBeets, and that goes way back in the history of nootropics and, in itself, was a copy of the Life Extension Foundation formulas from the mid-'80s.They had a nootropics blend called Cognetics that looks an awful lot like those things.

So these are not exactly new. If you're going to do that, sorry, I don't want to interview you because you probably don't know what you're talking about. But then I talk to you where you're like, burning need, had to do it myself to go from ADHD, failing, in order to go to a top school and succeed. And by the way, I'm going to be really blunt. I did graduate from Wharton, but there's a special name for it. You know what they call the person with the lowest score in the MBA class?

Dan Freed: [00:38:12] No.

Dave Asprey: [00:38:14] MBA. So I'm just like, I'm not here to get good grades. I don't care about grades. I never have. So I'm here to not fail out. So I barely scraped through. And I did, for the first time in my life, actually get-- I've never shared this before. I actually got extended time on tests because I would sit down to do a test, and there was nothing in my brain at all. I couldn't do. My first thing, I'd get 80% on the question, the second one 50, third one 30, and after that, it was zero.

I couldn't even read my handwriting, like, what's going on? It was Dr. Daniel Amann's work, and I'm on the board of directors of Amen Clinics. He's going to come back on the show soon. I had a hardware problem. As soon as I tried to focus, all blood would leave the front of my brain. It would just shut down. And I'm sitting there feeling like an idiot.

So it was actually humiliating. I didn't want to tell people I had extra time, but I did have extra time because otherwise, I probably would have failed. And it was a medical-psychiatric need. And I got around it. That was when I started modafinil, and I took all these other nootropics, and I did graduate, and I felt like my brain worked better than it had before. And it was a lot to climb out of it.

So based on all that, I'm pretty impressed with these mixes because you've got some really cutting-edge ingredients that I don't see a lot of people use, and you're guiding people on how to use them. So that's why you earned a spot on the show.

Dan Freed: [00:39:37] Thank you. That really means a lot. One of the important things to know about our formulations, we're constantly testing and improving. So thesis is short for hypothesis. We think that this will outperform this mix of ingredients. I'm constantly going to all the different ingredient vendors, keeping on the cutting-edge of what's available. And then we just do tons of testing.

And I would encourage our audience to go to our website if you want to be a part of these tests. One of the core hypotheses of the company also was that we could conduct something that was similar to a clinical trial, but with fewer controls. So in a clinical, you would have doctors, blood tests, double-blinded, placebo-controlled, randomization, things that are very difficult to do outside of academia-- not difficult, but incredibly expensive.

And the core hypothesis was, could we have fewer controls but sample sizes that were orders of magnitude larger, thousands of people, and use data science techniques to filter through the noise and create a more effective product? And then once we do that, we were at the beginning phases of taking those effective products and putting them through clinicals so that we can actually publish data on the efficacy of the product.

Dave Asprey: [00:41:00] One of the things that holds supplement companies back, and at Bulletproof, I formulated a good number of different types of formulas for longevity, nootropics, and things. In fact, a couple of them are using ingredients that you're using that almost no one else uses. So you have cutting-edge stuff. If you want to change an ingredient, you can't make any claims from the previous version, mostly due to weird regulatory nonsense.

So if you're saying, well, we tested our formula with these four ingredients at these levels, and we added 10% more of an ingredient, you can't make the same claims. Or maybe you can, but it's a little bit of a fuzzy zone. So doing [Inaudible] iterations to go from alpha to beta to version 1, version 1.2, like we do with our iPhone updates. But to do that for nootropics can make explaining what they do a little bit difficult. How do you get around that?

Dan Freed: [00:41:51] So I think that that's holding the industry back significantly. Without going on a rant with FDA and everything--

Dave Asprey: [00:41:58] You shouldn't go on a rant against the FDA because they just they'll come after you for that. But I'll just say, in other countries, we don't deal with these problems.

Dan Freed: [00:42:04] I think it's innovation where-- you're making claims on different ingredients, but as soon as you add something or subtract something, all of the work that you did up to that point is invalid, and it holds back innovation. So one of the things, if you look at the way innovation works in pharma, looking at ADHD medications, you had methylphenidate. It was approved in the '60s, but it really became popular for ADHD in the '80s.

Then you had Adderall, which is a mix of amphetamine salts in the '90s. Then you had Concerta time-release mechanism, then Vyvanse lisdexamfetamine. Each one of these goes through clinicals. It's incredibly expensive to bring them to market. And then the pharmaceutical companies will patent that specific innovation. Almost all of the innovation is in pharmacokinetics, so how it's metabolized by the body. And then they 10X the price. They make their money back for going through clinicals, and then they move on to the next one.

What I believe is the future of pharmacology innovation is a multi-molecule approach, which is what we're doing with Thesis. And even more interesting, our second brand is Stasis. So Stasis is a supplement that is meant to be taken alongside stimulants to mitigate some of the downsides, like jitters, crash and trouble sleeping, where you're specifically targeting some of the mechanisms of action that cause the downsides.

So adaptogens to modulate levels of cortisol. Antioxidants to fight oxidative stress and free radicals that come with chronic stimulant usage. This is a groundbreaking new category of products that I think is going to have a huge impact on the world.

Dave Asprey: [00:43:57] Absolutely. Stuff that goes along with either pharmaceuticals or just lifestyle stuff is, I think, important. So if you're going to run a marathon, there's probably stuff you should do, but you don't do that on days you're not running a marathon. If you're running a marathon with your brain because you're studying for your GMAT or because you're giving the most important presentation of your life, you want to be dialed in with the same level of rigor, right?

Dan Freed: [00:44:18] Yeah. So with Thesis, the main value proposition is we find the right ingredients for everybody's unique brain chemistry, and we walk them through the process. With Stasis, we have one piece of information that a customer is taking stimulants. They very predictably alter their brain chemistry. So they have elevated their levels of dopamine and norepinephrine. That's the primary mechanisms of action of most of the common stimulants. They've also elevated levels of cortisol and oxidative stress.

With that one piece of information, we've created a precision-targeted formula that is able to disrupt some of the damage that comes along with that. And it's interesting. So we have a daytime formulation that's meant to be taken alongside stimulants. Stimulants can mean anything from caffeine even can cause elevated levels of cortisol.

Dave Asprey: [00:45:12] This one? Caffeine?

Dan Freed: [00:45:14] Yeah.

Dave Asprey: [00:45:16] Guys, I'm showing off my caffeine tattoo. The only tattoo I have that you can see. It's the only one I have.

Dan Freed: [00:45:23] Yeah, I think it's a groundbreaking product. I think that there are tens of millions of people that wake up every morning and take a stimulant, and there's no judgment on our part. We stay away from that decision on whether or not somebody chooses to take a stimulant. That's something that's between them and their physician. We strongly believe that supplementing, knowing what that's doing to your body is a really healthy way to think about it.

Dave Asprey: [00:45:53] I like that perspective. And for people who are using stimulants, taking care of your neurochemistry while you do it seems like a good idea.

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Dan Freed: [00:46:03] And we'll give you the same discount code. The website for that is takestasis.com and--

Dave Asprey: [00:46:09] Code's ASPREY.

Dan Freed: [00:46:09] Yeah.

Dave Asprey: [00:46:10] So takestasis.com. That's ASPREY. And takethesis.com, which is your nootropics. Use code ASPREY.

Dan Freed: [00:46:16] And it's really easy. If you're not taking a stimulant, you should take Thesis. And go to takethesis.com. we will get you set up with the right nootropics. If you are currently taking a stimulant and plan on continuing to take a stimulant, you should take Stasis to support your body's natural mechanism of homeostasis while you're taking a stimulant.

Dave Asprey: [00:46:38] Now, I told you that I had a bone to pick with you.

Dan Freed: [00:46:41] Yes. Let's go.

Dave Asprey: [00:46:44] Can we talk about vitamin B6?

Dan Freed: [00:46:47] Okay.

Dave Asprey: [00:46:48] So I did a post recently about this. People who are either on the spectrum or have ADHD have a much higher chance of having MTHFR mutations. Guys, if you're listening, MTHFR means you have a hard time handling some forms of B vitamins, and you can't detox some molecules. You have a genetic thing. I have that, by the way. You probably do too, right?

Dan Freed: [00:47:09] I've actually never gotten a genetic test.

Dave Asprey: [00:47:11] Oh, no kidding. All right. So I would lay odds that you do. So if you're one of those people, you need things like methyl B12 instead of cyano B12. But for vitamin B6, you need P5P instead of pyridoxine, which is what almost everyone uses. And pyridoxine, which is the form of B6 that's out there, 95% of it clogs up your receptors and doesn't get converted to the active methyl form.

So if you have a healthy methylation system, 5% of the B6 you take will be useful in the body, but your receptors are clogged up. And to unclog them from the synthetic form takes a 1,000

days. So if you replace B6 with P5P, which is methylated B6, then everyone can use all of it. But if you use the other form of B6, it can create some backups in your cells.

And the issue is that if multiple companies throw B6, and it's in energy drinks, so it's all over the place, one of the symptoms of this is peripheral neuropathy or numbness in your feet, and your legs, and things like that. So I feel like a lot of people are getting a B6 overdose in a form they can't use. And the way to unlock that is to switch to P5P, which is slightly more expensive, but it's not going to change your cost of goods almost at all. You open to doing that change?

Dan Freed: [00:48:40] I am. So we had something with B12 that was very similar. When we initially used our motivation formula, we use cyanocobalamin, and we saw that people were reporting side effects. And again, everything is going to have some level of side effects. And we monitor these very closely, and we're constantly iterating. And so we upgraded to methylcobalamin.

Dave Asprey: [00:49:04] Which solves the cyano which is cyanide.

Dan Freed: [00:49:05] Exactly. And we saw a much better response. I will commit that I will put that change through our beta testing process. What I can tell you is we very closely monitor how people respond to our formulas, and we're always trying to beat them. So I will put that on a backlog that we're going to test, and I will reach out to you and let you know what the results are.

Dave Asprey: [00:49:28] Please do. And don't know if you're going to see a change in cognitive function, except among people who have the genetics that need extra B6. By the way, I'm one of those, which is why I know so much about this. I think that's [Inaudible] that does that. But regardless, if someone's getting a bunch of B6 from all over the place, getting P5P in your formula is going to be beneficial.

And if people listening start reading labels and saying, manufacturers, let's switch to the form that's biologically compatible that is human identical versus a synthetic form, then we're going to cause the supplement industry to shift towards making a better decision.

Dan Freed: [00:50:04] Yeah. And we talked about the pharm industry and how it runs on IP and incentive structures. I don't think pharma is evil, but I think that some of the regulatory systems

are not functioning properly. And that's not to say that there aren't people in pharma that are doing some things that I would not approve of.

Dave Asprey: [00:50:26] There are actually some really cool pharmaceutical companies out there, especially some of the early innovative ones doing polypharma. I'm not against pharmaceutical interventions whatsoever. I just don't like it when any industry, whether it's oil, or chemical, or pharma, or seeds, or pesticides, uses regulatory capture as a way to have a monopoly. If you do that, frankly, you're an enemy of humankind, and we will find you, just to be really clear. There we go.

Dan Freed: [00:50:55] So my problem with the supplement industry is there isn't enough regulation in some parts. So I don't know if it's--

Dave Asprey: [00:51:08] Wow, that's a surprising thing.

Dan Freed: [00:51:11] All of our products are third-party lab-tested for not just identity but potency. And I can tell you that in the last year, we've rejected at least five different ingredients where it comes with the CoA from a manufacturer certifying that this is it. But when we send it to a third-party lab, they test it, and it's not hitting the active ingredients that it needs to.

And this is not required by anybody. And very few companies do this. And even fewer make it public. So for us, you can look at the CoAs, and you can see where the lab test was done, who did it, the sign off, the HPLC results. I think that anything I put in my body, I want to be sure that what's on the label is what's in the product. That's the bare minimum.

With pharma, I'm confident that when I go to a pharmacy, it's highly regulated. You know you're getting that medicine because there's a lot of regulatory processes in place to ensure that. When I go to CVS and buy something, there's several brands that I know take quality very seriously, but a lot don't.

So I told you about nootropics, where it breaks my heart, where people will give it one chance, and if it doesn't work, they just give up. So many people tell me nootropics is bullshit. I tried it. It didn't work. Part of it is because of brain chemistry and finding the right ingredients. Another huge part is they bought something that is a crappy product that doesn't have what's on the label in it.

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Dave Asprey: [00:52:50] Can we talk about lion's mane for a minute here, which is something that you have in your Clarity formula, which, by the way, is a really cool formula. We'll talk about that one in a minute. I was so excited when I read all the PubMed 12 years ago saying lion's mane increases BDNF. There's really only two things that are behind my book on cognitive function and the brain.

It's increased mitochondrial function, increased BDNF, which is your signaling molecule that creates synaptic plasticity. So you can form new neural connections more easily. So if you get those two things right, you have a younger brain that works better. Who would have thought? And that was a major, monthly science bestseller between Homo Dues and sapiens. It was cool. I'm like, yeah.

That's the big list, man. That was a good day. I think there's a poster around here with that on it. So I look at that perspective, and then I look at lion's mane, which raised BDNF, and I'm so excited. It doesn't do anything. But then I find out I'm getting lion's mane that's not heat-extracted. It's not alcohol-extracted, and you mix a little bit of lion's mane roots and sawdust essentially into coffee and say, look, I've got a lion's mane thing.

Actually, it just doesn't work. But if you get a proper extract of it, what I noticed was increases in REM sleep, very noticeable and predictable. I take that. I get more REM, I don't take it. I get less REM. Very, very reliable. So I'm a fan of lion's mane when it's extracted right, which is really important. So the quality of the substance matters more than most people would imagine. And you put some good stuff in there.

Dan Freed: [00:54:23] Let me tell you about lion's mane. Here's two problems that I see very often. One is it's underdosed. So everybody knows what lion's mane is. You can look, and all these companies are saying, hey, there's lion's mane in these gummies. It's here. It's there. So we don't have proprietary formulas. We tell you the exact milligrams of everything. You can look on our website. Some companies hide it through proprietary formulas. Some will put it there, and it's like 15mg. That's not going to do anything.

Dave Asprey: [00:54:53] It's called vanity dosing. Yeah.

Dan Freed: [00:54:54] And then the other side, is nothing about the extraction process-- so you'll see 10 to 1. You'll see mycelium, fruiting body, all of these things. It's not regulated. So

they can basically say anything they want. For us, I do have a lot of opinions on extraction process, where it is the DNA, all of that stuff that you can look at. But what we said was the molecules that increase BDNF, the active ingredients that increase BDNF, are hericerin and erinacine.

We standardize our lion's mane to that. So we have a bar that it has to hit. We have tested every lion's mane on the market, so different suppliers. We test regularly our competitors. We developed a test that we can see how much hericerin and erinacine is in there, and we publish those results. We've standardized it so that you read these clinicals, and it's like, wow, this is great. And then you buy a product, and you don't get the same results. It's because they're not doing the same standardization process that we are. We're very public about it.

Dave Asprey: [00:55:58] What percentage of lion's mane stuff on the market has reasonable levels of those two compounds?

Dan Freed: [00:56:05] There are companies that I think are doing well, and there are companies that don't have proprietary formulas, and they're just few and far between. I can't tell you how many times I'll go, pick up a product, and it's laughable. Supplement companies innovate primarily on brand. And I don't want to badmouth competitors.

There are some really reputable companies out there, but most of them, it's like a brand or an influencer, or something like that. And when you actually look at the label, they don't have effective dosages in there. They're not sourcing it well.

Dave Asprey: [00:56:49] And the influencers don't even know because they haven't studied it. It's like, oh, I white-labeled this thing from some website that does that, and they're genuinely trying to help their followers, but they don't have the science behind it. And those are the ones where I just say no when people want to come on the show. But when you're willing to go to the trouble of third-party lab testing, same kind of stuff I did when I was running Bulletproof before I started Danger Coffee and all that.

It's expensive, and it's unrewarding some of the time. Your board of directors is like, why are costs so high? Because I don't want to sell crap. That's why. And so I still maintain those things. But for people listening, you'd never know this happens. And it's more about who's running a company. Do they care? And is it about the money, or is it about making a change that's worth it?

So I got a good vibe just even looking at how you put stuff together, I want to-- what was that? Oh, the timer. We need it to not do that anymore. So I want to go through a few specific ingredients.

Dan Freed: [00:57:58] Sure.

Dave Asprey: [00:58:00] All right. So one of them we talked about was lion's mane. Another one you have in your Clarity formula that I really like is Dihydroxyflavone. I haven't seen anyone really talk about this, but I think it's a massively, massively important nootropic. Why did you choose it, and what does Dihydroxyflavone do?

Dan Freed: [00:58:17] So it also helps with BDNF and neuroplasticity. I'm hesitant to say what I take because everybody goes and buys that, and my brain chemistry is different from other people. Clarity is my go-to. Clarity is the one that I take most often out of all of our products.

7,8-Dihydroxyflavone, lion's mane, all of these things that are increasing BDNF, neuroplasticity, and they help me with focus. It's been transformational for me. And one of the best things about it is the longer you take it, the more potent it is, the more of the effects that I notice. And that's why I always go back to it.

Dave Asprey: [00:59:01] And there's probably some things I can say because there's this weird thing. It's called the First Amendment. Some people have heard of it still. It's like this old retro thing that says you can say stuff. So what Dihydroxyflavone does is it's a small compound, like a flavonoid, a colored thing you would see from flowers, or herbs, or something.

And it can cross the blood-brain barrier, and it can attach to the BDNF receptors and activate them. So I've been looking for 15 years for a compound that I could do intravenously, or inject into my muscles, or swallow that would raise BDNF. But BDNF doesn't work because it won't cross the blood-brain barrier. So you can't do it IV. You'd have to puncture your spine and inject it into your cerebral spinal fluid, I think, to get it into the brain. It's not viable.

But here's this little compound that, so far, yours is the only form that I've seen that uses it. It's something I've used for several years, but it activates BDNF directly. So that's for people who want to focus or have a young, neuroplastic brain. This is some serious stuff. So that's in your

clarity formula. By the way, guys, takethesis.com, code ASPREY. Save yourself a little bit of money.

And I'm just talking about the stuff that I actually do. So good quality lion's mane, yes. Dihydroxyflavone, yes. These are core BDNF activators, the two most effective we know of, along with a couple of other ingredients that I support. We don't have to go into the tea because I also want to talk about something in your Logic formula.

Now, I've struggled with-- how do I describe the states, like a state of logic? Isn't that the same as clarity? Because if you're clear-thinking, you have logic. So what's why would I take Logic versus Clarity, and should I just take them both?

Dan Freed: [01:00:59] So this was a problem that we had. When we were Placeboproof, when I launched, there were no names to anything. So it was formula 1, formula 2, all of that stuff. And it was blinded. And we would just tell people what ingredients worked, and we would make custom formulas. What we did back then, similar to a clinical trial, we would have a dropdown that's just like, do you feel motivated? Do you feel focused, energized, confident, all of these things?

And it was like a word cloud. And we saw very clearly, hey, formula 3, people are focusing better. Formula 2, a lot of people are tagging energy. And so, really, the customers and those early trial participants are the ones that named the formulations. It's good because people have expectations on how to use it, what to expect. It's bad because Logic might not work for you.

And it's not a good way of looking at. Logic isn't a great fit for me. I don't take Logic, and that doesn't mean it's a bad formula. It's a great formula for some people. It's grouped around different neurotransmitter systems and different mechanisms of action.

So confidence and creativity are primarily targeted towards serotonin and GABA. Logic and Clarity, BDNF, NGF, acetylcholine. Energy and motivation are dopamine and norepinephrine, the psychostimulant type. So there's groupings like that. But I would pay a lot less attention to the names. And this is what we're here for, to help you find the right ones.

Dave Asprey: [01:02:48] That's why you have coaches and consultants to figure it out. So this is a bit of a cheat code, to be honest, to say, how do I know which nootropics I should be taking?

You've got a pretty good one set up here where you have logical buckets that work on specific systems. You're using synergistic ingredients, and then you're guiding people to tell them what to take.

So if you're saying, I want the benefits of smart drugs. I don't want to spend a couple of years or maybe more like five or 10, for me, going through every single thing and dialing it in, this is a great way to do it. And the formulas are cool. In Logic, you have something called triacetyluridine.

Dan Freed: [01:03:24] So we switch that out to just regular uridine.

Dave Asprey: [01:03:28] Okay. I was going to ask you. I'm not sure that it makes a difference what the format is, but talk to me about uridine. We'll say it's a little-known cognitive enhancer. I wrote about it in Headstrong, my brain enhancement book. But just talk to me for a minute about it because I think most people don't have any idea it's a nootropic.

Dan Freed: [01:03:45] Yeah. So we had triacetyluridine, which I really liked. The Logic formula is primarily targeted to acetylcholine. Let me see. We have things like Bacopa for memory, ginkgo. We have DHA, phosphatidylserine, theobromine which is in chocolate, and then uridine. And again, we've--

Dave Asprey: [01:04:12] You call it uridine versus uridine.

Dan Freed: [01:04:14] Uridine.

Dave Asprey: [01:04:15] I don't know how to say it. I just always read. I haven't read about it for 10 years ago.

Dan Freed: [01:04:17] But one of the things about me is I do a lot of reading. And that's why the pronunciation, I just go with whatever it is, with what I'm reading.

Dave Asprey: [01:04:27] We have similar brains. It's all good.

Dan Freed: [01:04:29] And yeah, Logic is primarily targeted to working memory, analytical thinking. Surprisingly, it's very popular with the quant heavy type jobs in finance, and it's great for long term brain health.

Dave Asprey: [01:04:46] I like both of those. Then can we raise our IQ?

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Dan Freed: [01:04:55] So I think about this a lot, and this is my opinion. I am just as intelligent now as when I failed out of high school. The only difference is my ability to focus. What I see in most people is their limitations are not their intelligence. It's their ability to focus. And thank God. that's something that we can change.

Dave Asprey: [01:05:25] Focus is teachable and hackable.

Dan Freed: [01:05:26] Exactly. And I can't tell you how many times I see incredibly intelligent people not living up to their potential because their amygdala, they're not able to control themselves. They're impulsive. They can't stick to things. That's what causes most people not to live up to their potential. That's what almost destroyed my life and caused an incredible amount of pain.

That's a solvable problem, and that's what Thesis does, is we help people modulate the levels of neurotransmitters in their brain so that they can focus and achieve their potential. As far as IQ, I can just tell you, for me, I don't think my IQ has changed from when I was in high school. I do think that I'm able to function in a way that I never even dreamed possible. And it was just that horsepower was there. I just couldn't tap into it.

Dave Asprey: [01:06:22] I love that picture of it's there, and tapping into, or unleashing, and things like that. It's part of it. There are studies that show you can raise your IQ. Even Dr. Amen came on a while ago saying, yes, you can raise your IQ. And if you don't believe that, get shitty drunk, wake up the next morning, and take an IQ test, and it'll be 15 points lower than normal.

Take a different test that correlates so you don't have a learning effect from the test two days later, when you're not hungover, and your IQ will be 15 points higher. So if we can suppress our IQ, we can also raise our IQ. And then there are multiple studies showing things like some of the training I've talked about can do it.

And probably modafinil, which is a prescription nootropic, has some effects on it. And so there's evidence that we can improve our IQ, maybe by detoxing, maybe by increasing efficiency. I know it's doable, but it doesn't matter very much as long as you can increase your focus, and you just have a bunch of cool stuff to do.

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Dan Freed: [01:07:22] Yeah. And so I don't disagree with what you're saying. It's fundamentally, what is it that you're increasing? So the thought of me getting a 99th percentile score on the GMAT, I never had high level math. The combinatorics permutations, that was completely new to me. I never took the SATs. I never passed 10th grade.

I'll tell you a story. We just raised our series A. There was this investor, and I told him the whole pitch, like I did here, and they're like, we're really interested in everything. And then they came back, and they're like, one of the partners doesn't believe you.

Dave Asprey: [01:08:02] That's easy. Give them a bunch of your stuff, right?

Dan Freed: [01:08:04] I did. So I sent them pictures of my graduation from Yale, from INSEAD. I sent them my high school report card before I failed out that's like fail, fail, fail. All of this stuff, and they're like, they still don't believe you. And it was so unbelievable. But you think there's a lot of founders that lie about their backgrounds and all of this stuff.

I sent them a newspaper from France with me on it cooking in a Michelin three-star restaurant, and they paid somebody to do a background check because they just found it so unbelievable that somebody could do this. My fiance's mom, when she heard all of this stuff, same thing. She's like, let me see your diploma. This is so outside of the norm. It doesn't have to be.

Dave Asprey: [01:08:51] No, it doesn't. People say I'm a liar all the time. I'm like, is my fat picture from entrepreneur magazine when I'm 23 not evidence enough? But it's not because they're just haters. But these aren't haters. These are people who've been screwed by liars.

Dan Freed: [01:09:05] And I understand that. But when I go back to what's Thesis's mission, I think back to when I was 16, making sandwiches at Subway. I thought that I was stupid. I thought that I was lazy. I didn't know what was wrong with me, and I just needed a little bit of help and guidance to meet my potential. And once I got that-- and I got lucky. I got a lucky break to become a chef.

And then I was very determined and had some lucky breaks to find nootropics, and I didn't give up. How many people just give up? Yeah, that's what keeps me going, and seeing the reviews on our product and how transformative and life-changing it is for some people. And then, with

Stasis, thinking about how many people are damaging themselves with stimulants, and like, this is finally a way that they can still be productive and healthy.

Dave Asprey: [01:09:59] Thanks for coming to Austin, coming on the show live. I think you're doing some groundbreaking work in the world of nootropics. And guys, if you're listening to this and you're thinking, I wanted to try some nootropics-- maybe you have tried them-- there's some really interesting formulas. They're very nicely broken down into different buckets so you can just see what works for your brain.

And the reality is, don't do what Dan does. Don't do what I do, because you probably don't have our weird brains. I think we have some similarities here. But you have your own weird brain, and thank God it's weird because the worst you can have is just a completely average brain that's average at everything.

You want a brain that's completely crappy at some things because you can outsource those, and a brain that's just amazing at other things. Find the things where maybe you have some areas to fill in, and take the supplements that work for that. So you're below average, but those are handled. And then double down on the nootropics that enhance your superpowers.

And when you do that, like, I can't believe I can do this. And you're a prime example here where you've failed a couple of times, and then magically, you got your brain working through conscious action. So that was what I wanted our listeners to hear about. You did a great job. Guys, takethesis.com, code ASPREY. Or if you're on stimulants, takestasis.com, code ASPREY. Save a little bit of money. But more importantly, have a brain that works.

Dan Freed: [01:11:28] Thank you so much.