

The Human Upgrade: Episode 1124

[00:00:00] **Dave:** You are listening to The Human Upgrade with Dave Asprey. Today's guest needs no introduction if I say those magic words, Gary V. You've probably heard of him. If not, you probably should try social media or something like that.

[00:00:15] Gary's, I think changed the world for the better. He's not a scientist. He's not a guru, not an inventor, but he is a hell of a business person and actually has inspired a ton of people and is just a heck of an entrepreneur. This is his second time on the show. He's a chairman of Vayner X, VaynerMedia, Vayner Sports.

[00:00:35] He's built really small businesses. He goes to garage sales. He buys baseball cards and shoes and all sorts of weird crap that I don't really understand. We go back in time because he established one of the first e-commerce wine sites way back in the day. Now, Gary, the Virtual Vineyards, was that--

[00:00:55] **Gary:** Oh my God. No, I was winelibrary.com, but I remember Virtual Vineyards.

[00:01:00] **Dave:** Yeah. So Virtual Vineyards and me were the first two companies to sell anything online as far as I could tell. I beat them a couple of days with my caffeine T-shirts way back in the day. So it's funny. We go back that time. We're going to talk about marketing and what's changed in 2024 in growing a business, and a little bit about gratitude, which is one of the things I love about what you do, is you talk about that so much.

[00:01:25] So you and I were old-school entrepreneurs, and if you were, say in your mid-20s today, or maybe you're looking at a career transition, there's a lot of us who are going to be doing career transitions in the next couple years here, how would you look at things?

[00:01:43] **Gary:** First of all, thank you for having me on. And honestly, I love your audience, so the answer to this question's going to be pretty fun. It's funny you said not a scientist. I think of myself that way. I'm not kidding. I was just about to say, I've been in the lab.

[00:01:59] And what that means is I've been in my head. People see me, especially people that don't know me as well here may see me super loud, super New Jersey, maybe a couple of curse words. And I'm very empathetic to the first glance being like, is this guy for real? Is he a blowhard? Other people love it, and it clicks. Just how the world works.

The Human Upgrade: Episode 1124

[00:02:16] But what's ironic is when people see me on social media or on stages, I'm talking the whole time. Even in this format, I'm going to speak a lot. I even get excited at times and interrupt you. So I apologize in advance, everyone listening. But the reality is I spend most of my time actually thinking. My favorite thing in the world is the shower, is the walk to work, is the long flight.

[00:02:40] And so I've been in the lab a lot in my own head for the last year, especially on the concept of redefining success. I think about root cause. When I think about health and wellness, I think about like, hmm, the food system is very entrepreneur. America's a capitalism. I'm an entrepreneur. I love capitalism, but when capitalism, like anything in life, goes too far, it does things like what's going on with our food situation, things like that. I think about these things.

[00:03:10] **Dave:** It's funny. I wouldn't have pegged you as someone who would call that out on the show. You're such a broad spectrum entrepreneur, but more media. So you're worried about the food supply too, huh?

[00:03:21] **Gary:** I think about clean eating a lot. I think about laws. I think about the fact that grass-fed can be worked around, but grass-finished can't.

[00:03:31] **Dave:** So when did this come online for you? Because I don't know that 10 years ago this was in your conscious field. What changed for you?

[00:03:38] **Gary:** My fiancé, Mona, is very passionate about clean eating. That's a huge driver. But in general, I would argue that most of the good that's happened in my life is curiosity. And I'm also a kid that was born in the Soviet Union. So for example, my great-grandma, Anya, when we moved to New Jersey out of Queens, the first day she visited, in the morning when I woke up, she made me go walk outside barefoot on the grass.

[00:04:06] **Dave:** No kidding. So grandmothers are always biohackers if they were trained by their grandmothers, right?

[00:04:12] **Gary:** Right. Especially from the old country. Right. My grandma spent her first 75 years in the Soviet Union, which is 50 years behind America. Or fasting. Because I grew up in my dad's liquor store, I didn't eat breakfast or lunch my entire life. I still don't predominantly. So

The Human Upgrade: Episode 1124

anyway, obviously, I'm very aware of your audience, and it's funny because the reason I'm bringing these things up is it's how I see entrepreneurship.

[00:04:37] So I love entrepreneurship because I think it is one of the arenas in the world that allow people to maximize their joy. I love building businesses the way I see my friends who are poets, how I see my friends-- I see entrepreneurship today, unlike when you and I played with it in the mid-90s, even that short ago.

[00:05:07] Now it's cool. Kids are forcing themselves to be entrepreneurs, and that scares me. I want people to be entrepreneurs if they are entrepreneurs. But I'm petrified if somebody does it because they think it's the cool thing to do.

[00:05:23] **Dave:** Thanks for saying that.

[00:05:24] **Gary:** Well, because you know this, Dave. It's really lonely and hard, and it hurts your self-esteem because, unlike school, you can't hide when you fail in entrepreneurship.

[00:05:36] **Dave:** Yeah. Did you hear that interview with the founder of Nvidia?

[00:05:39] **Gary:** I did not.

[00:05:40] **Dave:** Well, they asked him, what would you tell yourself back when you and a friend were in your college dorm starting Nvidia. What advice would you have? And his advice was, don't do it. It was, you no idea how much suffering this is going to cause you. From one of the most successful entrepreneurs on the planet, right?

[00:05:57] **Gary:** It's funny. I don't know him, and I've heard many people say that through years. And I don't think they actually mean it. I think it's a soundbite.

[00:06:06] **Dave:** Yeah, I'm sure it's.

[00:06:07] **Gary:** For example, I think when you're a pure bred entrepreneur-- this is going to be a left field one-- I actually think the adversity is the most delicious side dish.

[00:06:18] **Dave:** Yeah, because if you're used fighting-- it changes though. I've heard your stuff has changed as well. So for me, at the beginning, it was even before Bulletproof, just in tech entrepreneurship, it was like, I'm going to prove something to the world or to myself and probably more to the world. I'm going to fight. I'm going to push.

The Human Upgrade: Episode 1124

[00:06:39] **Gary:** This is very common. I think there's two fuels. There's chip on shoulder.

[00:06:44] **Dave:** Right. I certainly had that.

[00:06:46] **Gary:** And I think a lot of people have that belief. I'm very fortunate. I don't love using the word luck, but this is as black and white luck to me as possible. Between my DNA, the mother who was a suffocating force of positivity and optimism--

[00:07:04] **Dave:** Suffocating optimism.

[00:07:06] **Gary:** Suffocating optimism, but practicality, not modern parenting where you also add delusion, which eliminates merit. Incredibly optimistic and positive and sunshine, but held me accountable, a word that has completely disappeared from modern parenting and circumstance. I believe if I was born in America as a third generation, DNA of my family entrepreneur, my life would've looked very different.

[00:07:34] But I was born in the Soviet Union and came here and grew up with the struggles that gave me outrageous perspective to gratitude. I believe, Dave, that the greatest gift is when you are born. If in the first 10 years of your life you are not an incredible means, you're lower middle class and below, this is the greatest way to be bored.

[00:07:55] That money is not a thing in your family yet or maybe ever, but you have unlimited happiness. You've been taught. You've been built. You've been affected by money is not the variable of happiness.

[00:08:08] **Dave:** That is true in the science, but a lot of the studies, I found, and this was before they inflated the crap out of the currency in the last three years--

[00:08:17] **Gary:** Right, all the money we've printed.

[00:08:19] **Dave:** Yeah. It said about \$74,000 of household income [Inaudible]. So I think if you're struggling all the time and only have ramen twice a week--

[00:08:27] **Gary:** Oh. By the way, I know people who have 200,000 but are always in debt, making 200, 000 a year and-- it's so funny because I talk to many of my employees. I can't say all because they don't all take me up on my open-door policy, and I don't get to everyone. But it's

The Human Upgrade: Episode 1124

crazy because I'm so well-known as an entrepreneur, but I'm the CEO of this company, and I speak to kids all the time that work for me.

[00:08:50] They will often bring up that their parents were entrepreneurs if they were, or anti entrepreneur, one of the two. Like a union man, whatever it might be. And it's really interesting. This is so cliché. I'm sure this will land for everyone. It's interesting to watch them then react to that.

[00:09:06] They either go all in on it or they go all out on it. And the ones that go all out on it tend to be the ones that lived in families, regardless of how well they were doing, always stressing about money because there's also the other part in society that we've lost, which is there's making money, but there's also saving money.

[00:09:24] **Dave:** Yeah.

[00:09:24] **Gary:** And Dave, you and I grew up when people talked about saving money. There are people that I know, and especially in this new world with inflated dollars, like you just talked about, who make a million dollars a year and don't have a dollar to their name because they're buying dumb shit.

[00:09:37] **Dave:** It's a real problem. I cringe when I see guys 25, with a Ferrari and all that. Even if you have the money when you're 25, you probably don't need to buy the Ferrari.

[00:09:48] **Gary:** I cringe less about the savings money. I always ask myself, does he need that to patch up an insecurity? Are we using things to make ourselves happier? Which gets me all the way back. I'm sorry audience, but I'm coming all the way back to answer your question, what would I say to 25- or 45-year-old depending on start or transition? Please pick something you actually like.

[00:10:12] **Dave:** So it hasn't changed that much because of AI or anything like that.

[00:10:17] **Gary:** No, because--

[00:10:18] **Dave:** It's true.

[00:10:18] **Gary:** I think it's incredibly hard. And if you're going to build something for yourself-- you don't know if you're destined to have a \$10 million business or a \$300,000 business, but if

The Human Upgrade: Episode 1124

you love it, if you love Star Trek more than anything in the world and you want to build a business around that passion, you start a podcast, you make content for social media that then leads to creative commons, product like T-shirts, or you create anything. Literally, that's what's so amazing about the world now. You create anything.

[00:10:50] **Dave:** So easy.

[00:10:51] **Gary:** Anything from a beanie to a protein powder that maybe is a slang term that Spock said in Episode 4 of Season 3. I don't know Star Trek very well, but I'll use Star Wars. Greedo was my favorite Star Wars character, tier 7 character in the Star Wars ecosystem.

[00:11:10] But when you know something deeply or you love something deeply, we live in an unprecedented time in the world where the internet, the blockchain, AI, the mobile device. You and I, when we started our stuff back in the day, we didn't live in this lucky time where we could have just done organic content and got free distribution. Dave, social media is free distribution. You know how insane that is?

[00:11:36] **Dave:** It's so crazy. You know that caffeine t-shirt I talked about a long time ago? I sold it to 16 countries in alt.drugs.caffeine on Usenet, which is basically Reddit from 1990. And it was the first time someone had done that, and it wasn't that much money, but I was just trying to pay my rent and tuition. So I was happy about it, and it was very scrappy, and it's one of those things, though. All I had to do was talk about it to my people because I finally found my people. But now you can find new people anywhere.

[00:12:05] **Gary:** Even better.

[00:12:05] **Dave:** So this is amazing.

[00:12:07] **Gary:** In the same way that I was on Prodigy and then the internet--

[00:12:10] **Dave:** Yeah, Prodigy.

[00:12:12] **Gary:** From the eRobertparker Mark Squires Bulletin Board talking about wine by my community, and then make them aware of Wine Library. You and I had to spend hours, countless hours building community to have a community. Today Wine Library TV started on February 21st, 2006. YouTube itself was created, launched on December 15th, 2005. Within two

The Human Upgrade: Episode 1124

months, or roughly a little more than two months after YouTube existed, I started a long form wine show about wine on YouTube.

[00:12:48] I'd made a 20-minute video. I posted it. 19 people watched it, maybe. Today, 2006 Gary with his, which I was born with my charisma and capability to communicate and my wine knowledge at that point was more than half my life because I started learning about it at 14. That first video, Dave, might be watched by 800,000 people, the first one.

[00:13:11] **Dave:** Wow.

[00:13:12] **Gary:** It could also have gotten 80, but anybody who's listening right now, let me just give you the universal truth. If you do not take social media seriously in 2024, it doesn't mean you're going to go out of business. It doesn't mean that you are bad, but you are absolutely missing out on opportunity to create your thing. That is incredible. And the speed and time, if you produce content on the internet, of building awareness and opportunity, because the algorithm now is letting the creative find its audience. When I started doing social back in the mid-2000s and you and everybody else, all of us, when we started doing 2005, '6, '7, '8, '9, MySpace, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, it was more like email marketing.

[00:13:55] You have to do content and slowly but surely build up following, AKA list. And then you post. And 30 or to 40%, just like email newsletters of your audience, would see it. Today what we have is the interest graph, not the social graph. The social graph was, build a following, post. The interest graph is make something, and let the algorithm, the AI, find the audience of the billions of people it has on the platform.

[00:14:23] **Dave:** Wow.

[00:14:24] **Gary:** That is remarkable.

[00:14:27] **Dave:** It's crazy remarkable because you don't have to do all the sleuthing. Are you worried, though? And this is something that I'm really thinking about when podcasts first started. You had an early podcast. I had an early podcast. You could have these conversations. And now there's one guy, every single guest I've had on my show for 10 years, he'll call them the next day and try and schedule the same interview.

The Human Upgrade: Episode 1124

[00:14:54] And there's a lot of people who will go to a website. In fact, you probably even have some people in your group. Here's how to ethically steal this business model. No, it's not ethical stealing, but they're going in there just mirroring a competitor's website. It feels like the amount of new information and signal to noise is going down, and we're just getting an echo chamber of a bunch of people saying the same thing, but moving their hands differently. And now with AI avatars, is it going to be impossible to find the good stuff versus all the copies of good stuff that are lower quality copies?

[00:15:27] **Gary:** I've never had the audacity to judge what people decide is good.

[00:15:33] **Dave:** Hmm. Oh no, hold on. That's bullshit. You sell wine.

[00:15:38] **Gary:** Yes, but--

[00:15:39] **Dave:** There's ratings for wine.

[00:15:41] **Gary:** There is. And if you go watch the thousand episodes of Wine Library TV, I would always say trust your palette. I would say the reason I'm doing this show is I'm tired of people only buying what Wine Spectator and Parker buy and give good ratings. And then I would say, vehemently, almost every episode, hey, by the way, I just rated this wine 94 points, but I love Big League Chew. I love beef jerky. I love oysters. I love sweet breads. I love jolly ranchers and lemonheads. Unless you like every single thing I like, and this was the thing I said 40,000 times, you have to trust your own palate.

[00:16:19] So I value craft. I think the story you just told me, my brain went to, yeah, but he or she may not be as good at interviewing as you are, so they can have the same exact guests, but you might ask different questions. And even if they decided to ask the same questions, I believe in energy. I believe that the intent-- I believe in the moment. I believe in all these other variables. So to me-- listen, I've had a career where people have done slight variations and tweaks, very slight, and have built things.

[00:16:54] But I always say, but what about me? I was affected by Randy, the "Macho Man" Savage Wrestling Interviews. And I loved Chris Rock and Eddie Murphy. And when I watch my keynotes-- I don't watch them-- when I'm on stage and I do keynotes, somewhere about a year or

The Human Upgrade: Episode 1124

two in, I'm like, wait a minute, this feels a lot like Macho Man and Eddie Murphy mixed up with a little bit of-- I think that's how the world has always worked.

[00:17:17] To your point, the size and scale we're playing at now. The size and scale we're playing at now. And there's a lot, and AI's coming, but I don't know. It's funny. Maybe this goes back to being suffocated by practical optimism. I'm optimistic. I believe that the cream does rise to the top. I believe that you don't get to choose how much competition you have.

[00:17:40] **Dave:** No, you don't.

[00:17:41] **Gary:** You really don't. And I like to figure out the merit of it. And I also have enjoyed, and this is also fun being with you because we've been through this journey and have seen each other from a far up, close at times. We have moments, right, Dave? You and I both have had moments in our career. Yeah.

[00:17:57] Sometimes we're hotter and winning more than we are. You think about all the personalities that have come up in the internet age that you and I can think of now, early podcasters, early Twitter personalities, some come and go. They have a good year. Other people have been consistently around. Some people have family events or their own personal-- this is why I want people to choose things they love. Many of the personalities that have fallen off have fallen out because of burnout.

[00:18:23] **Dave:** It's so common. You haven't burned out, and you run, man. I feel it. I've seen your energy. It's consistently high. It's because you like what you do and because of your optimism. But there's probably something else in there too.

[00:18:35] **Gary:** Gratitude.

[00:18:36] **Dave:** It's gratitude and--

[00:18:38] **Gary:** When I tell you, man, God, this is so fucking even emotional. I just don't know how to value anything other than the health of the people around me. I don't know how to do it. Of course, I am proud of my career. Of course, I'd like to do well. I'd like everything I do to do well. Of course, I'm grateful for the accolades.

The Human Upgrade: Episode 1124

[00:19:00] I'm empathetic to the people that want to tear down my building because they don't know me, and I don't mind when they leave a negative comment. I'm empathetic. The reason I will never run out of energy is I don't value this stuff enough.

[00:19:14] I will tell you something. I know we don't know each other that well, but it's one of those things we have a good sense of each other, even though we haven't had the luxury of that kind of time yet. And I say, yeah, because I hope we get those dinners and times

[00:19:26] **Dave:** Me too.

[00:19:26] **Gary:** I don't value myself based on my professional career, even though it's my passion. I don't get self-validation from Gary V, or the successes, or the followers, or the money, or the headlines. I just don't. I get validation from the people that actually know me, how they speak about me behind my back.

[00:19:45] **Dave:** See, that is something that if I could have internalized that when I was in my early 20s, that would've been life changing for me. And I write all my stuff, and I feel like you do too. It's like this is what you need to know. And if you learn it early on, it profoundly changes what you do.

[00:20:03] The amount of time you're trying to prove stuff to other people or you're responding to trolls and all that kind of stuff, it sucks the life out of you. And if you just say, it doesn't matter--

[00:20:14] **Gary:** And then if you say the level above, which is, don't feel bad for you. Feel bad for them. For everybody who's listening, really, if I could accomplish anything in this podcast, it would be to encourage you to go try the thing you've been debating. And I know for all of you, literally the fundamental reason that you haven't yet started posting on social media to do the thing, because that's what you would do-- we live in 2023, '24-- is because you're genuinely concerned about the judgment.

[00:20:45] **Dave:** That's totally true.

[00:20:46] **Gary:** And the judgment can come from your mother. The judgment can come from your spouse. The judgment can come from your children. These are important people. They can come from your coworkers, your boss, your best friend, and then unfortunately, it can come from

The Human Upgrade: Episode 1124

Johnny Pants 47 because you once posted something and he said you were ugly, or stupid, or you're wrong.

[00:21:11] And so for me, the level even above, it doesn't matter, which is absolutely true, is, what about having empathy for your mom who's always been negative and has always put you down because, I promise you, her mom or dad, or both, did the same to her.

[00:21:28] The reason I've been able to continue to go, Dave, because, again, this is a fun interview because we don't get to catch up often but we're both watching always, is, I'm able to go because I have empathy and compassion for the people that are trying to tear me down, not anger.

[00:21:44] **Dave:** So you're always welcome if you find you need a job at any point, to be a facilitator at 40 Years of Zen. This is my neuroscience company where I teach entrepreneurs, with neuroscience, how to do gratitude and empathy and forgiveness so they can get that state. I spent six months rewiring my brain to do exactly that. How did you pick this up? Is this from your mom?

[00:22:06] **Gary:** 100%. And the DNA. Look, I'm such a poor student. I'm not a reader. I'm like this very interesting consumer. I'm consuming everything, thus almost rendering me consuming nothing. Deeply curious, always gravitated towards humans. Here's a good one. My mom, she's very behind the scenes.

[00:22:27] My dad would do a podcast. He likes the limelight. My mom's very behind the scenes. My mom would tell you that the weirdest thing, the most interesting, intriguing thing about my childhood was, starting at about three to six, predominantly in Queens, in the early '80s, late '70s, we would go outside to get some fresh air, or whatever we were doing, and I would pull her arm. I would gravitate to go sit on a bench with a stranger who's over 80.

[00:22:57] **Dave:** Holy crap. Okay, tell me more.

[00:22:59] **Gary:** And my great-grandfather who passed away, unfortunately, pretty quickly after we got here, was my best friend in my youth.

[00:23:04] **Dave:** Hmm.

The Human Upgrade: Episode 1124

[00:23:05] **Gary:** I don't remember three to five, but I remember six to 10 when grandparents would visit my friends. And again, I'm an '80s baby, so we were outside at all the time. And when a grandparent would come for the holidays or a birthday and they'd come to the park where we were playing basketball, or baseball, or whiffle ball, or football, I would always go out of my way to go talk to them.

[00:23:29] Don't forget, I was 34 years old before I started any level of a public life. I know myself because I lived it. I spent my 20s and my early 30s building a business for my father. I owned none of Wine Library. I never got paid much. I wanted to give back to my parents. I was very unique. I'm a first generation immigrant. I was born in the old country. I was in a cocoon. I wasn't a good student. I didn't go to a university that expanded my world. I was family, business, immigrant life cocoon. Didn't go out. I was closed in this beautiful closed environment that made it unique, which is why now in my 40s I'm like, ah, I loved wisdom. I'll give you one. Right now, we champion youth.

[00:24:18] **Dave:** Yeah.

[00:24:18] **Gary:** We want to look younger. We love the kids. Have more say. Gen Z, even young millennials had more say with their parents and in the workplace than our generations. We clap for the youth. 70 years ago, we clapped for the elderly.

[00:24:34] **Dave:** Wow.

[00:24:35] **Gary:** And I believe we're in the pre-dawn of going back. I believe in the next 20 to 30 years, after this chapter of our over obsession of youth, we will counter it because that's what we do over 50 and a 100-year windows. And I believe that you will start to see signals. Right now, no, because we're in generational warfare.

[00:24:55] I've never seen the level of judgment of boomers versus Gen Z and Gen Z versus millennials. It's really unfortunate. Humans have found another thing to tribalize to be bad at each other, and it breaks my heart. And back to social media and branding, I believe you'll see more breakout stars who are in their 70s, 80s, and 90s--

[00:25:15] **Dave:** Oh yeah, 100%.

The Human Upgrade: Episode 1124

[00:25:15] **Gary:** If you're listening right now and you're 70 and older, please start a podcast called The Wisdom Week or What I've Learned. And don't be insecure. Everybody who's 80 has something massive to put deposit to the world.

[00:25:31] Tell us about your life. Tell us about what you learned, because that's what I've always been drawn to. So I think to answer your question, where did this come from? I think I came out a 90-year-old man.

[00:25:42] **Dave:** Wow. This is also just an enormous drop of knowledge. The reason I started the biohacking movement is because when I was 26 and my health was failing and I had brain fog and arthritis and just all the bad stuff, I hung out with a room, 60 to a 100 people in their 70s, 80s, and 90s who taught me longevity before it was supposed to be done.

[00:26:09] And that led to me becoming an expert in the field. I didn't know how to do it, so I asked the old people. And old people know a lot. And the crazy thing is they want to share it because they have a lifetime of wisdom and they got nothing else to do with it, but just share it.

[00:26:23] **Gary:** Especially now because families, unfortunately, are not respecting their elderly, especially in America more than ever. And they're just sitting around with so much to give, which is why I'm telling all of them that are listening, don't wait for your grandchildren to ask. Start a podcast. Go make TikToks. Tell us. I'll tell you the exact month. In August of 1982, my babushka, Anya, when I woke up, instead of making me breakfast, took me outside in my bare feet and made me walk on the grass for 15 minutes. And now it's cool to do grounding. So they know.

[00:27:01] **Dave:** They totally know.

[00:27:02] **Gary:** When we used to drive on the highway, my grandma, Esther and my babushka, Anya, they would go crazy when they would see something in the grass on the side of the highway. And we would pull over and pick it, and we would bring it home, and they would dry it and make it tea. Now, I've learned all these years later, that it's a St. John's wort or wart.

[00:27:23] **Dave:** St. John's wort. Yeah.

[00:27:24] **Gary:** It's called zveroboy in Russia. We would literally be driving to the beach or to the store, and out of nowhere-- we'd be listening to like Michael Jackson or Cyndi Lauper and

The Human Upgrade: Episode 1124

the radio, out of no where, my grandma or uncle or my great-grandma would be zveroboy, zveroboy, which would mean my mom would have to pull over on the highway.

[00:27:44] We had plastic bags in our trunk, and we would go outside. I'd have to go out there as a 7-year-old and pull this zveroboy, and we would fill the bags. And then 30, 40 years later, I hear people on social, or podcasts, or wherever I see it, or over dinner, talk about, hey, there's this thing. It's good for depression or things of that nature. And I'm like, wait a minute. I [Inaudible] and I'm like, motherfucker, that's zveroboy.

[00:28:14] And so-- especially people that are from outside the US because the US has always been a modern society, you get some real old-world shit from the immigrant grandparents, and you don't even have to do it with your own grandparents. I just mentioned two of my grandparents. I really only grew up with a grandma, a great grandma who had dementia pretty early, a great grandfather who I told you died very early. Other than that, my mom lost her mom at five. My dad lost his dad at 16. So when you ask me about me, I grew up fearing my parents dying.

[00:28:46] **Dave:** Oh, fear of death. Interesting.

[00:28:47] **Gary:** Of course. So much that once they didn't, by the time I got to 18, I went into, I won. And now I'm just going to live on pure gratitude. And yes, it's really wild. I would actually argue that in my essence, I'm the most opposite of what people think an entrepreneur is. I would say that it's weird that I became an entrepreneur. I'm so simplistic. I love the idea of living in an incredibly remote town and making my own food and going to sleep at set. I would've crushed 1643.

[00:29:28] But there was one other thing, one of my DNA traits is I'm an entrepreneur, and I did want to sell flowers when I was five, and I did want to sell lemonade. And when it snowed and everybody sled and played snowball fights, I did ring doorbells and shovel driveways. So I have this weird mix.

[00:29:44] But all this movement today, I think parallels into entrepreneurship, importantly, so I'm going to recall it all the way back. I believe, in the same way that the biohacking and food and mental health, if we can reframe entrepreneurship and tell people don't follow the next trend,

The Human Upgrade: Episode 1124

it's not about is cannabis hot or crypto is hot, or real estate is hot, or apparel is hot, or coffee-- no, no. What do you like, Susan?

[00:30:15] What do you like, Henrica? What do you like, Jonathan, Yohan, Samuel? What are you about? You're into music? Okay. From the high water, your business needs to be about music because here's why. I promise you to everyone who's listening, if you make \$318,000 a year doing music, you will be four billion times happier than making \$730,000 a year in real estate.

[00:30:42] **Dave:** 100,000%. The number of friends from business school went into management, consulting, and banking, where you make the most money, almost all of them are terribly miserable, a lot of substance abuse. They make millions of dollars a year, but it's not worth it because you're selling your life to do that.

[00:31:03] **Gary:** You're vulnerable. You're vulnerable. Even the ones, Dave, that don't fully crack, the ones that don't do substance abuse, the ones that don't have infidelity, the ones that don't do whatever humans do, food. Many people just eat their way out of their-- because they have the gene to not use drinking and drugs, but they're using food. Or something that people don't see. They use weekends and holidays and interest to deal.

[00:31:35] Here's one. My friends who are listening, again, respecting living shit out of this audience. Having a good sense of what Dave's built here from afar. I know how thoughtful the people are that are listening to this podcast and what journey they're on. I don't know where they are in their journey, but I have a sense that you're on this journey from more thoughtfulness and all this stuff.

[00:31:55] You have to hear what I'm about to say. My friends, if you're a human being that wakes up on Friday and you're ecstatic for the day to end and you wake up on Monday and you are crushed that the week is starting, you are not in a good place. I'm telling you, you're not. It doesn't mean you don't love your family and what you do on the weekend. That's remarkable.

[00:32:20] But if you are in a place where you are so not fulfilled at work, that you live for the weekend-- and we're filming this. I don't know when you're going to put out, but we're filming it on the Tuesday before Thanksgiving.

[00:32:31] **Dave:** Yeah.

The Human Upgrade: Episode 1124

[00:32:32] **Gary:** All of us are excited in America and other places. Obviously, it's fun to spend time with family. And I know that all the jokes that Aunt Sue-- and all that. But it's great. And vacation, and late August, and Christmas. I get it. But no, I'm talking to the people, and I'm hoping you're listening to this randomly on a Friday or Monday and this hits you in the core. My friend, if you are really unhappy-- I'm not naive. I love when people think and consume my content and they think I'm delusional. I'm aware.

[00:33:00] **Dave:** No, you're not.

[00:33:01] **Gary:** I know that you have debt. I know that you have bills to pay. I'm talking that happiness is worth fighting for. Happiness is worth selling your home to get out of debt and rent a house or an apartment, even though-- all of you are not doing this because of judgment.

[00:33:18] Happiness is worth fighting for. Your job is killing you. Don't come home and use Netflix, or food, or alcohol, or video games, or go into your favorite sports team's games as your escape from work. Use those evenings to crush on LinkedIn to get a job offer to get you out of it. You cannot. With the amount that the world works, even though we've got it better, we're better than we've been with work-life Balance in America.

[00:33:46] By the way, on work-life balance, some people are a pig in shit working 70 hours a week. Some people are devastated for working 25 hours a week when it's not right. You must fight to change it, even if you have to take a step back in front of all your family and friends with your luxuries.

[00:34:03] Go exchange the BMW to the dealership and drive a Toyota. Don't go to the Four Seasons when you go to Disney. Go to the Holiday Inn like I did when I was a kid. It's okay. I'm sorry on this one, Dave. Don't buy 7-dollar coffee. Make your own tea for a little while. Reform your dollars to give you the breathing room to reset your life.

[00:34:27] Because if you do not like what you do, it suffocates everything. That's entrepreneurship. That's work. That's my relationship with it. And just like with food and mentality, we've made huge advancements in the last 20 years. I don't believe that we've gotten to the 301, 401 conversation.

The Human Upgrade: Episode 1124

[00:34:48] I believe what I'm talking about today, which is not the common talk of entrepreneurship, will become the normalized talk in 25 years, that we'll understand that the joy of the process, not the riches we get from it, is the game of entrepreneurship and work, and that is what we have to fight for.

[00:35:07] **Dave:** It is, except do we have to fight for it? I feel like the fighting part was really the first 35 years of life. I'm fighting. And some of that came from being bullied, to be perfectly honest. And at a certain point, I did enough of the gratitude, forgiveness, the neurofeedback, the meditation around the world, all that kind of stuff. And I just realized I'm moving towards something that matters. So I feel like I was fighting for the first half. In the second half, I was moving towards something greater, and there was a quantitative shift in it.

[00:35:40] **Gary:** You and I are saying the exact same thing.

[00:35:42] **Dave:** Okay. It wasn't a fighting energy at the second half. It was like, I'm going to do this because it's what's important. It's what matters for the world. It's what matters for me.

[00:35:49] **Gary:** The first part was your fighting.

[00:35:50] **Dave:** Yeah, yeah. So how do people make the shift from fighting against towards moving into?

[00:35:57] **Gary:** Honestly, I view that as semantics.

[00:35:59] **Dave:** Okay.

[00:36:00] **Gary:** I swear I do. What I'm saying is if you're 49 and you're sitting and listening to this, which many 49-year-old will just given our audiences, I can't let you, out of goodness of my heart-- and I'm a hoper. I love to hope. I will hope. I can't let you just throw up your hands and say, well, it's not in the cards for me to enjoy my professional career.

[00:36:26] Gary, you don't get it. I'm pretty good. My teenagers are 15 and 14. Just a couple of more years, and I think that's worth fighting for. Challenge yourself. Look, we've known each other long enough where maybe you noticed somewhere about eight or nine years ago my physical health got better. I got better.

The Human Upgrade: Episode 1124

[00:36:48] And I tell you nothing on earth comes less natural to me than eating well and working out. And I mean nothing. And I lived my whole life being a poor student, but being successful, being liked, and being successful.

[00:37:00] And so I thought I was one of these people who was crushing what came easy to them and punted because I wasn't even willing to get C's. I got D's and F's. So I thought, in my 20s, oh, I know who I am. And I saw that in my mother. If it comes natural, quadruple down superhero.

[00:37:21] **Dave:** Smart.

[00:37:21] **Gary:** And I agree. And I still believe in that, but what I thought was, does it come natural? Punt. I'll give you one in business and in life that I struggled with. Gary V, on a podcast like this, canderous at a hall of fame level. Gary Vaynerchuk, the human being at work, if he liked you, which usually happened within the first two days of you working for him, could not be canderous because he didn't like delivering bad news, which led to all the sloppiness in my career.

[00:37:47] **Dave:** Same here. You could almost say that twice. Yes, you got to be kind, not nice.

[00:37:55] **Gary:** That's right. My last book, Twelve And A Half, I call it kind candor, my half. I talk about 13 traits that I think are really needed to win the game. One man's humble subjective point of view of business and being a leader. And I called it Twelve And A Half because I want to be vulnerable and say, this one's a big one. It's called kind candor. I'm only at a five out 10 right now. And by the way, that might be nice, me creating my own homework. Today I'm probably a four out of 10. Fuck. Three, four years ago I was a one out of 10, and when I look back at my 25 years, the only people that know me, that don't feel remarkable about me were people that I wasn't able to be canderous to and I had to fire.

[00:38:30] And I surprised them because I didn't warn them. And more importantly, now that I look at it, the reason I used to think it was good that I wasn't deploying kind candor was I didn't want people to be scared. I hate fear. What I spend a lot of time thinking about is how people weaponize fear on everything and how much it breaks my heart. Well, I thought I was doing this great thing as a boss because people weren't scared.

The Human Upgrade: Episode 1124

[00:38:55] The lowest point of my professional career was when I realized, oh my God, people now really know me in my company. And because they know they might get surprised fired because they've seen it happen to others, they're actually scared. My lack of candor is creating fear, and it's changed everything for me personally, professionally. And so anyway, I know I'm bouncing around because I'm excited to be on this show and I'm hoping somebody gets value out of this talk.

[00:39:23] **Dave:** There's great value. You're teaching people the stuff they don't teach you in business school about how to think.

[00:39:29] **Gary:** I think so. I think these things really fucking matter. IQ getting commoditized. Fuck with AI. The IQ is getting commoditized. It's the EQ.

[00:39:44] **Dave:** It is the EQ. And it's funny. I asked Eric Schmidt, the CEO and chairman of Google for a while, you scaled a bunch of tech. That's a solvable problem. How did you scale that number of people without narcissists destroying your organization, to what you just said about kind versus nice?

[00:40:02] And he thought about it. He goes, oh, interesting. He said, we identified the people who are working for their own interests instead of others. And we told him that we saw them, and then we fired them publicly and dramatically. So everyone could see, not surprise firings, but so people could see the firings of people who weren't pulling in the same direction for the organization.

[00:40:24] And he said a few of those and then all the other ones who were doing that realized they were going to get spots so that the people who were not the right people left to go build their little empires somewhere else. And then the people who are all on the team and knew where they stood could be there.

[00:40:38] That was a lesson for me because I've lost at least a \$100 million from allowing people to be in leadership positions where, much more quickly, I should have been a lot more direct about things that I didn't like.

[00:40:54] **Gary:** For every one listening who wildly agrees with that has no question. The reason I've been able to build companies has been based on being thoughtful about who you fire

The Human Upgrade: Episode 1124

and why. And I'm so aligned with everything he said to you. Even when someone's completely dicking me and their fellow workers, I don't really want to hang them out to dry in town square, but I definitely make it known to why one is no longer here. But I will say this, and I want everyone to hear this. I am predicting that a \$100 million number is low.

[00:41:30] **Dave:** Oh, probably.

[00:41:31] **Gary:** The hidden loss of compromising your values because someone is effective at their job is the great economic loss of every company.

[00:41:43] **Dave:** Yeah.

[00:41:44] **Gary:** When you have a sales organization and you can see that Johnny is the number one salesman, and he's bigger than number 2, 3, 4, and 5 combined, but he is the biggest dick face on earth, when nobody realizes that number two to 40 on your 40-person sales team, the second he's gone, all elevate up 20 to 50% because they're spending 50% of their energy on the anxiety of having Johnny around.

[00:42:12] **Dave:** It's so true. I had a salesperson recently. Gave away a million dollars of my ad spaces without telling anyone so she could get her little bonuses approved, her own deals, all the dirty stuff that salespeople are prone to do, and we caught her. And of course, in a situation like that, it's, oh no, it's the company's fault.

[00:42:34] It's not their fault. And as soon as we cleared that person out, the other people in the company, they blossomed and flourished, and we're serving customers better and making clean deals, but you don't know. And if you just look at the top line-- so yeah, if people are in a cultural fit, you have to let them go, and quickly. And I think that's true for friends as well. Sometimes we get these friendships.

[00:42:55] **Gary:** A big believer in that. I think the reason people struggle with the friend part, and I'll go back to the salesperson, the friend part is a challenge for people because the world is too absolute. Dave, the reason so many people just heard that and said, ah, I know, Johnny is toxic in my relationship. He's an asker. Yes, we were best friends from first to third grade, but fuck, for the last 25 years of adulthood, he's played on that, and all he does is ask and really

The Human Upgrade: Episode 1124

doesn't provide anything genuinely, whether it's monetarily or emotionally. Takes, gives zero. But I'm loyal. I da, da, da, da, da.

[00:43:36] I need you to hear this. You don't have to cut people completely out. And a lot of times, this is what's going on with people's parents, siblings. We have not learned because the world is absolute, they hear this and be like, well, I can't fully cancel and never talk to a friend or a family member ever again.

[00:43:55] That sounds not productive. And you're right. But what about limiting? Whoever is the most negative force in-- you are what your surroundings are. If you talk to your mom four times a day and all she does is shit on your sibling, shit on your dad, shit on her boss, if she is a negative Nelly-- and by the way, I grew up in a family of extremes.

[00:44:19] My mom was the most positive. My dad, and more specifically his mom and my great-grandma, who I've referenced, were uncomfortably negative. And I'm talking extremes on both sides. So I got this upbringing where I really saw the world through two very different sets of eyes. And I'm a very big believer that the world is how you see it. If you went into my Instagram feed right now, Dave, you would think the world is filled with sunshine, rainbows, and unicorns.

[00:44:51] **Dave:** And that's how you see it.

[00:44:52] **Gary:** It's also what I engage with. If you engage with content of someone helping a kid cross the road, if you consume that-- do you know how fast you can make social media more positive? Go to Instagram or whatever platform you like, TikTok, YouTube shorts, Twitter, search, happiness, joy, positivity, optimist, advancement, upgrade. Search these things,

[00:45:16] **Dave:** Well played.

[00:45:17] **Gary:** consume it, and then like and follow things that are actually positive. And then watch how the next morning you wake up. People love to not be accountable, just like your salesperson. It's the algorithm's fault. No, it's not. The algorithm is just smart at knowing you. Social media isn't changing you. Social media is exposing you.

[00:45:40] **Dave:** Ooh, so good.

The Human Upgrade: Episode 1124

[00:45:42] **Gary:** It's real, brother. It's real, and we've got to fight. And I like fight, but I'm the same way as you. I can change that. I use the word hustle because I believe that work ethic is one of the variables to have 1% life. The world canceled hustle. That's bad. I'm like, okay, no problem. I now use work ethic, just like you jumped on early, and I like it. Maybe you don't want to call it fight. You want to lean into, upgrade towards.

[00:46:07] **Dave:** It's about willingness and ability to work hard when it's called for instead of doing it reflexively and stupidly.

[00:46:14] **Gary:** Yes, and where I'm going on this little mini rant, you are worth it.

[00:46:20] **Dave:** There you go.

[00:46:21] **Gary:** It's worth it. It's worth it. What people don't realize is that most people are in some version of an abusive relationship with themselves.

[00:46:34] **Dave:** Yes.

[00:46:32] **Dave:** insecurity for what? As if not every other person on earth sucks at a lot of things too. We all suck at tons of shit. Stop putting others on a pedestal to only undermine yourself, when in essence a parent likely put that insecurity, negativity into you. You don't hate yourself as much as you think. You don't think you stink as much as you think. You are borrowing the words of something that happened along the way, and you are capable right now to start the process to not do that anymore.

[00:47:04] **Dave:** Wow. All right. Seven, eight years ago we met at Jason Gay Nerd's amazing mastermind event. And you were on stage, and I think you were going through something. Then you said, I would give anything to someone who could just teach me how to meditate, how to be happy. There has to be a way. I don't know if you remember that talk. You and I both give a lot of talks.

[00:47:29] **Gary:** I'm being really serious with you. This is very important. It's funny that your brain recalls that and the video's online. It's not how I position.

[00:47:38] **Dave:** What did you say?

[00:47:40] **Gary:** What I was saying was, it was cool to me that meditating was exploding

The Human Upgrade: Episode 1124

[00:47:44] **Dave:** Yeah.

[00:47:45] **Gary:** And that I was scared to meditate.

[00:47:48] **Dave:** Okay. There you go.

[00:47:49] **Gary:** Because I'm in such a good place that I'm actually scared that if I start to meditate--

[00:47:56] **Dave:** Ah, okay. I get it. Yeah, yeah. That's a much better translation of what my brain recorded.

[00:48:02] **Gary:** Yeah, I was saying that in a lot of talks, about 5, 7, 8 years ago, because obviously meditation was starting to get its momentum. And by the way, I'm still in that place. And as I've watched the space, and as I've watched people get the value of it because I'm a big believer, I'm in this new state where I'm like, motherfucker, I'm meditating at all times.

[00:48:24] **Dave:** That's what I'm picking up. I've spent many, many years. So there's reading people, whatever. Maybe you're born with it, but I want to know. So when you lean into the camera and you do this and you say something that really matters to you, your eyes change, and you're actually transmitting energetically.

[00:48:39] And I can pick that up. And so can everyone else, whether they know they are or they don't know they are picking that up. That's one of the reasons you're powerful media. Is that a skill you learned, or have you always done that?

[00:48:51] **Gary:** I've always done that.

[00:48:51] **Dave:** Okay. That's just part of who you are. That's just--

[00:48:54] **Gary:** Yeah, I realized that most of the reason I was able to get through school, even though that I should have stayed back every grade since fourth grade, if we're going on merit, if you don't do homework ever and you get an F on every test and you don't pay attention in class unless it's history, because you're genuinely interested in it, you shouldn't pass.

[00:49:14] But they passed me, a, probably for self-interest because the school's going for a blue ribbon and need everyone passing, or all those things. I've come to learn that. Or what I've now

The Human Upgrade: Episode 1124

come to believe is my charisma. My teachers loved me. I was an atrocious student, but in the history of school, because of the way I was parented, I never disrespected a teacher.

[00:49:38] I might have been disrespecting the craft by my behavior, by talking to my friend and trying to sell him baseball card or talk about wrestling or about the Jets game while a teacher was giving a lesson. I can respect that that is a form of disrespect with words too. I never did it once.

[00:49:59] I was the president of my fifth grade. Clearly, when I look back at-- I don't even know why I did it. But I did it like, yeah. But there's also another thing that comes along with this, which is I really like people. I actually have a very weird relationship with dogs.

[00:50:17] This is very tongue in cheek, so don't get all upset with me everyone. Anytime I'm in the world and I see people huddle around a dog and they love the dog, I always say to myself, man, I wish we did that for each other. This unconditional love that we are able to, as a society, deploy towards dogs.

[00:50:36] And I know what people are going to say. Well, that's because they unconditionally love you. Yes, but where is our capacity to be the bigger person? Why do you need someone else to do something for you? Why not take it on yourself to do it for them? Because, oh, by the way, you're doing it for yourself in that framework.

[00:50:53] **Dave:** Yeah, you got to do that to yourself. The self-love and maybe not self-loathing.

[00:50:58] **Gary:** It was back to an early point you said. 90% of people that I see become successful went down your track with the chip on shoulder. And if you are part of this and you're listening, please call your parents and kiss their faces. I'm in a small group of people where gratitude is my fuel, not insecurity.

[00:51:18] **Dave:** Gary, when are you going to write a book on parenting?

[00:51:21] **Gary:** I've been writing a book in my head called Perfectly Parented.

[00:51:24] **Dave:** Yeah. There you go. Please write that. It would be an act of service.

[00:51:27] **Gary:** I still have young children. I'm not in the point in my life, even though I'm writing the book from the perspective of-- and by the way, I think people will enjoy this. I'm

The Human Upgrade: Episode 1124

going to write the book from the perspective of being the one who was parented. I'm also like, I'll say it here because I think parents need to hear this.

[00:51:42] Even though I spend my life, 20% of my communication, putting my parents on a pedestal, I could spend an entire hour with Dave on a podcast telling you all the things my parents did that I don't think was great. It's the flight of a human. It's what we go with. It's just that I wish that everybody would stop spending 100% of their energy pointing to one to seven things their parents did wrong instead of the many things they did right.

[00:52:08] **Dave:** So you've got a balanced view. You've got good and bad. Most people go all good or all bad, and neither one is true. So you see reality for the way it is.

[00:52:17] **Gary:** You'll like this. I have a new book coming out next year called Day Trading Attention, which I think is going to be a smash because I think it helps everyone. Whether it's a nonprofit, or their personal brand, or the company they work for, or their startup, or their Instagram page, or running for mayor in town, everybody is starting to wake up to the fact that if you're unable to garner attention on social media, you're not going to be able to pull off the thing you want. Selfless, Selfish, And Everything In Between. The cover is purple, Dave, because of what you and I just talked about. America has a red and blue political system. I'm sure everyone knows that.

[00:52:54] **Dave:** Right, right.

[00:52:56] **Gary:** All of the answers to our unrest is in the purple.

[00:53:00] **Dave:** Mm. Amen.

[00:53:02] **Gary:** Life is about the purple. Happiness is in the purple.

[00:53:07] **Dave:** So well said.

[00:53:08] **Gary:** The reason everyone is so, ugh, and they will point to everything but the accountability of their journey to move to the purple. They're either red or blue. Back to fear. The weaponization of fear. Parents, think about how you talk to your children. If you do that, I'm going to do this.

The Human Upgrade: Episode 1124

[00:53:30] Bosses. If we don't hit our numbers, someone's not going to be here. Fear. Our politicians have done it at scale. Parenting is doing at scale, and then we're eliminating merit. One last thing while I'm on this, eighth place trophies is not a good idea.

[00:53:47] **Dave:** I was going to ask you more about that because, yeah, that is rotting the world, and we don't--

[00:53:53] **Gary:** Teaching indifference is devastating.

[00:53:59] **Dave:** Worst thing you could ever do.

[00:54:01] **Gary:** And that's what you're doing. It doesn't matter. Tell that to a kid who's born competitive. Tell them that their seventh grade championship basketball game-- hey, Johnny, it's okay. Don't cry. That's silly. This doesn't matter. Fuck you. It matters much more than my report card, which is completely subjective and ridiculous. This is real life.

[00:54:22] **Dave:** Mm-hmm.

[00:54:23] **Gary:** We have misplayed a couple of hands in parenting that if we tweak, we can have way more joy back. I'm just going to throw this one out, my friends, because I'm just trying to throw a couple deposits that maybe make someone think about it. If you have a 27-year-old child and you are paying for their lifestyle, it's bad.

[00:54:45] **Dave:** Yeah.

[00:54:46] **Gary:** I'm going to say this nice and slow. Someone gets 10,000 direct messages a day, when he goes on long flights, reads tons of them. I was taken aback 10 years ago when I realized the resentment a 26-year-old Nepo baby has to their parents.

[00:55:03] **Dave:** Oh, crazy.

[00:55:04] **Gary:** I would read these things, and I would make a piece of content that would trigger them, DM me. Gary, I'm that kid you talked about in that video. I have a BMW. I live in West Hollywood. My parents pay for my Equinox. I fucking have a bullshit job. It doesn't matter because my parents pay for everything, and I thank them, and they think they're doing the right thing. But deep down, you're right. I fucking hate them. And what that means, just to give

The Human Upgrade: Episode 1124

everyone the preview, when you pay for your kids and they're grownups, you are telling them that you don't believe in them.

[00:55:36] **Dave:** There you go.

[00:55:37] **Gary:** That they're not capable.

[00:55:39] **Dave:** They can't fly. You're never going to kick them out the nest.

[00:55:42] **Gary:** The second they smell that you're really doing it because you actually care what your friends, you, the parents', friends, think about the kid and they become an object to your self-esteem, then it's tipped.

[00:55:53] **Dave:** Yeah. And you've got so much wisdom, Gary. I greatly admire the way you communicate and the way you're living your life and the way you've maintained optimism, even with all the pain that comes with entrepreneurship. And I'm not discouraging anyone, but it is more painful than you think, and it's more rewarding than you think, especially if you care about what you're doing. So you've somehow stayed on top of it all. It's admirable, and I appreciate you.

[00:56:16] **Gary:** I love it. Thank you, brother. You got to like it. Anyway, listen, thank you for having me. Continued success, continued health to everybody. Please take this to heart. Make 2024 the year that you always talk about in your elderly ages as the year that you shifted and they got good, and you're happy for your relationships and your joy. Thank you, Dave.

[00:56:34] **Dave:** Ah, thanks guys. Follow Gary V if you're not a true guy of wisdom, not just entrepreneurship. Thanks, my friend.