

The Human Upgrade: Episode 1110

[00:00:00] **Dave:** You're listening to The Human Upgrade with Dave Asprey. This is a live in-person show, which I absolutely prefer over Zoom or remote, but you know how podcasts are. The people that you want to hear from oftentimes aren't where I am, and vice versa, with good microphones and all. So thanks for showing up in the same city, same time as me, Shaahin.

[00:00:23] **Shaahin:** Yeah, great to see. I always find face-to-face is better.

[00:00:25] **Dave:** Yeah, it's just way more fun. So what are we going to talk about? What are you going to learn today? How about we talk with the Willy Wonka of Generation X? That's a name I think you've earned, building a billion-dollar ecstasy business and not going to jail for it. Creating herbal ecstasy, being investigated by seven attorney generals, and not going to jail for it because there's nothing wrong with selling herbal ecstasy. And this is back in the '90s. This is a while ago, and you weren't even 18 when you did that.

[00:00:59] **Shaahin:** No.

[00:01:00] **Dave:** Okay. So you guys interested yet? What does this drug kingpin from the '90s got for us, except he's also an Amazon expert. Since then, he's been selling nootropics and a bunch of other stuff on Amazon as a very, very successful entrepreneur. So he's also an author, a filmmaker, got a couple of his books here, like Billion: How I Became King of The Thrill Pill Cult. So basically, all around interesting guy, Shaahin Cheyenne.

[00:01:30] **Shaahin:** Perfect.

[00:01:31] **Dave:** When people are taking a lot of herbal ecstasy and they try to say your name three times fast, what happens?

[00:01:35] **Shaahin:** Unfortunately, you can't get herbal XC anymore because they banned the key ingredient in it. We're going to be doing a relaunch at some point.

[00:01:45] **Dave:** Are you serious? Are you just going to call it, like, fuck you, FDA?

[00:01:47] **Shaahin:** Fuck you, FDA.

[00:01:49] **Dave:** Dude, I'm serious. They're going to come after you so bad. You should be respectful of those guys.

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[00:01:53] **Shaahin:** In the United States, the key ingredient, which was ephedra at that time, is now no longer easily, readily, legal, and available, so--

[00:02:02] **Dave:** Ephedra.

[00:02:03] **Shaahin:** Ephedra, yeah. And for people who don't know-- I don't blame anybody for not knowing because you haven't been able to get that for close to 20 years here in the United States-- ephedra is one of the oldest plants known to man.

[00:02:16] When they find these cavemen mummy-type things and these little pouches on them, they almost always have a little bit of ephedra in there. And ephedra is a stimulant, a central nervous system stimulant, and one of the most powerful, I think, plants known to men. So it was very effective.

[00:02:36] **Dave:** More than coca?

[00:02:38] **Shaahin:** So coca, if you process it, will have the effect of cocaine. Ephedra, you can have it just the way it is, and it will have that stimulating effect. Coca, if you know, if you ever travel to South or Central America, actually has the opposite effect when you have it in tea, when you see people having tea.

[00:02:57] **Dave:** Yeah. I would chew mouthfuls of it at altitude to feel better the first time I went to, I guess, go mountaineering in Ecuador and in Peru, for sure, all the times I've been there.

[00:03:07] **Shaahin:** It's such a bummer you can't get it. It's such a bummer it's illegal in the USA. It's actually a really nice tea.

[00:03:12] **Dave:** And it's not strong. It takes, I don't know, 50 pounds to make a useful amount of cocaine or something. And guys, cocaine's a terrible drug. You shouldn't do it. It's dumb, just to be really clear. And if you really like to wake up, there's just better drugs for that, and there's probably natural ways. Porn and cocaine, do similar things to your dopamine receptors. So why would you do that?

[00:03:35] **Shaahin:** Yeah, especially don't do them at the same time.

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[00:03:38] **Dave:** Never thought of that. Yeah, I see why they call you the Willy Wonka. So you're already doing all these things. You're just an interesting guy. You've been homeless. You lived out of your car. You fled Iran when you were five years old carrying your family on your back. Do I have the story right?

[00:03:53] **Shaahin:** More or less. Yeah. So we left Iran 1979, the Iranian Revolution.

[00:03:59] **Dave:** So really serious time. With literally nothing.

[00:04:03] **Shaahin:** And we came here. My parents were basically working their fingers to the bone trying to make a living. And I was like, dude, there's a guy driving down the street in a Ferrari with a beautiful blonde in the seat next to her. How do I get that? And I quickly realized that there was no laid out path. They don't teach you that in school. They don't teach you entrepreneurship in school.

[00:04:22] **Dave:** Of course not.

[00:04:23] **Shaahin:** So I bailed.

[00:04:25] **Dave:** Bailed on high school.

[00:04:26] **Shaahin:** Yeah, before 9th grade.

[00:04:29] **Dave:** So you dropped out in 8th grade.

[00:04:31] **Shaahin:** Dropped out. Yeah.

[00:04:33] **Dave:** What did your parents have to say then?

[00:04:34] **Shaahin:** I cut all ties. Good or bad, I read that book, Think and Grow Rich. I don't know if you--

[00:04:41] **Dave:** I never heard of it. I read it when I was 16 and did all the stuff in it. This stuff doesn't work. I literally was like on my mirror, I'll have a million dollars by the time I'm 23, and I only had \$6 million by the time I was 26. The thing doesn't work out. No, it totally works. So we were both influenced at a young age by Napoleon.

[00:04:57] **Shaahin:** Yeah, yeah. And his stuff is now pretty controversial. We won't go into that. So I thought to myself--

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[00:05:03] **Dave:** You can't cancel Napoleon Hill. That's stupid. If you're trying to cancel Napoleon Hill, pick a guy who's alive to cancel, for God's sake. It's stupid.

[00:05:11] **Shaahin:** It inspired a lot of us. So I take it for what it's worth. It worked for me, is what I can say. And I was 15. I decided, hey man, you know what? I'm like sink or swim. Let's go. I don't know what I'm going to do, Dave. I'm going to go find my fame and fortune. I found a mentor.

[00:05:27] **Dave:** So how were you living? You're in 9th grade, you've cut ties with your parents. Did you have a car? How did you do this?

[00:05:32] **Shaahin:** I had a period of time, and then I lost it to a mob boss. Long story. And I got into the electronic music scene at the time.

[00:05:41] **Dave:** So you were a raver back when Crystal Method was coming out.

[00:05:45] **Shaahin:** That's right. And what I would do is I managed to make friends with everybody in the clubs because they knew me. I didn't do drugs. I would just go into the clubs late at night and observe what was going on? I would observe the commerce happening in the clubs because I was interested in making money. I wasn't interested in partying. I wanted to know, how do you make money? And I quickly realized that the DJs, broke ass-- can we curse on this? I don't know if we can curse. Broke ass motherfuckers. Always broke. The club promoters--

[00:06:16] **Dave:** Don't tell Steve Aoki. He's doing all right.

[00:06:18] **Shaahin:** That's changed a lot. That's changed a lot. This was early '90s. And the club promoters, also broke. But these clubs would happen all the time. I thought to myself, man, they must be subsidized. And by the way, you asked me how I lived. I would sleep behind the speakers, glorious place to sleep. You've got that droning beat, and you could get a solid three, four hours with that metronome behind you. Nice Delta waves. It's fantastic.

[00:06:43] So I started looking around, and I saw these guys. They were like subsidizing. They give some money to the club promoters. They give some money to the DJ. It's just keeping the electronic music scene going. And I was like, what are these guys doing? And of course, they were dealing the drugs.

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[00:07:00] Now, I looked back to my teenage years, and I thought to myself, this is going to be amazing. And then I look back to my original life of crime where we were selling contraband in school, gum, nudie magazines, whatever.

[00:07:13] **Dave:** This is in 8th grade before you dropped out.

[00:07:14] **Shaahin:** Yeah. Before I dropped out.

[00:07:16] **Dave:** You're the ultimate bad influence so far.

[00:07:19] **Shaahin:** Yeah. And I just realized that I was really fucking bad at crime because we'd be really good at making money and always getting caught, a 100% getting caught. So I was like, dude, I can't fucking do crime. It's just a bad idea. And then it occurred to me, what's the main drug that's happening?

[00:07:39] And it was this drug, MDMA, methylenedioxymethamphetamin, ecstasy. Here's the problem. It was now illegal, and the supply of ecstasy had dried up. So people were taking all kinds of shit, trying to get the effects of ecstasy. They weren't really taking ecstasy. So I thought to myself, man, if I could come up with a natural alternative that wasn't illegal, I could maybe do something. Now, I didn't realize that I was broke. I didn't have any money. I didn't have anywhere to live, but went about the journey of creating.

[00:08:16] **Dave:** Wow. Okay. So you put together herbal ecstasy, and what was in it?

[00:08:23] **Shaahin:** So initially, what I did was I went down to Chinatown, and I was like, give me all the herbs that do something. They're like, what do you mean? This is for heat. This is for cold. This is for cough. And I was like, fuck. All right. I got to go back to the drawing board. So I did what anybody in the early '90s would do. I pulled out this big book called the yellow pages, and I went to the library and got all these books, and I found this guy. His name is Andrew Weil.

[00:08:49] **Dave:** I've interviewed him on the show at his restaurant. Yeah. He is old-school. I love Andy. Okay.

[00:08:53] **Shaahin:** Old-school guy. He had written the textbook for drugs in the early '80s for schools that taught people, this is what LSD is. This is what mushrooms are. I'm like, this guy's going to be the perfect guy. And of course, I dialed, and the first ring on the phone was him. And I said, hey, man, this is what I'm trying to do. Can you help me? He's like, who the fuck is this?

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How old are you? And I'm like, 16. I think I was just a little bit older than 15. I said, 16. He goes, okay.

[00:09:23] And he gave me some suggestions, and I went and got some books, and I started getting ingredients. I somehow managed to get myself a girlfriend at that time. I don't know how, being dead broke. And her dad was some school administrator, so he would leave early in the morning. I would sneak in through the back as soon as the dad was gone, and we'd be mixing stuff up in the kitchen.

[00:09:48] **Dave:** This is like some Ferris Bueller's Day Off kind of story is what it sounds like.

[00:09:54] **Shaahin:** Yeah. And so eventually we came up with a formula that really worked, and we would just test it on the teenagers in the neighborhood. I'd be like, hey, you guys like going to raves? They'd be like, yeah. You guys want to try a new drug? And at first, I didn't have the money to buy the capsule machine. So we would roll them up into balls and put them in the oven. I tried to get as close to the capsule size as possible, but you have to take 20 goo-filled tablets. But when we got the formula working, it felt in-fucking-credible.

[00:10:25] **Dave:** Ephedra can get you loopy. Yeah.

[00:10:28] **Shaahin:** Oh yeah. But it wasn't just Ephedra. It was like about 10 or 12 different ingredients that made it, because if you take just Ephedra, it'll make your heart beat really fast. Yeah. It's not a well-balanced formula. So the Chinese rarely use it by itself in traditional medicine. Yeah. So we got a formula that worked, and in all my youthful exuberance and wisdom, I decided to take it to a club, and now I was like, all right, how am I going to sell this fucking stuff? I got to find distribution for it. And I was like, you know what? The drug dealers. They don't have any money.

[00:11:04] **Dave:** The organized-crimes must have loved you. Okay tell me what happened here.

[00:11:08] **Shaahin:** Walked into the club. From my club days, I knew who the biggest drug dealer was. Man, I was sweating. 16 years old. Walked into the club.

[00:11:16] **Dave:** Did you wear a suit?

[00:11:17] **Shaahin:** I should have. I had no money for a suit.

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[00:11:20] **Dave:** Just like Miami Vice or anything.

[00:11:22] **Shaahin:** No, but what I did do is I had little baggies that looked like they would be a drug, with this butterfly on the front and just the letter E. And I walked up, and it was like-- the older I get, the more and more I believe in just a little bit more woo woo, and I don't know how it was possible, but synchronistic events. There's a guy, his name is Kirby. He wrote a book about that called Synchronicity. I don't know if you read it.

[00:11:49] **Dave:** I haven't read that book, but you can manufacture synchronicity. I know people who teach that stuff. Yeah.

[00:11:54] **Shaahin:** Okay. Yeah. So it's an amazing thing, but the older--

[00:11:57] **Dave:** By the way, I meditated you appearing here.

[00:11:59] **Shaahin:** You manifested me. So I walked up to this guy, and he was a rough-looking dude. Now everybody's got a tattoo on their face, or maybe two. Back then, if you had a tattoo on your face, it was serious.

[00:12:10] **Dave:** You were a murderer pretty much.

[00:12:11] **Shaahin:** You were a murderer pretty much. Yeah. It was not normal. And this guy had tattoos on his face. He had the gold teeth. He had body guards. I walked up to him. He was like, what do you want kid? And I was trying to get the courage to do it, and I was like, fuck it. I'm going to do this now. I pulled out the backpack, and I was like, you got to sell this. He's like, get the fuck out of here.

[00:12:29] And just in that moment, two people walked up to him. They wanted ecstasy. Guess what? He didn't have any. And so it was a choice for him in that moment between selling what I was selling, and selling nothing. And I just held my ground. He said, don't fucking leave.

[00:12:46] And so I'm staying in that club. I am sweating. He took the whole backpack, which was like, 500, a 1,000 doses. And I came back. They motioned me forward. The bodyguards moved aside. I thought the dude was going to kill me. I was thinking, I'm going to wash his car. I'll walk his dog. I'll do anything. This dude doesn't kill me.

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[00:13:04] Turns out he sold out and everybody in the club was pointing and hands up in the air. We love this stuff. We love it. And the guy's like, how soon can you get me more.

[00:13:21] **Dave:** Wow. And how much did you pay for it?

[00:13:23] **Shaahin:** So it cost me in those days, and the price didn't change for the majority of time, just like Coca Cola. It was 25 cents a dose. And we were selling it between 20 and \$25.

[00:13:29] **Dave:** That was your retail price. But what was your wholesale price?

[00:13:30] **Shaahin:** It was half.

[00:13:30] **Dave:** So you're getting 12.50 for 25 cents. Oh my God.

[00:13:33] **Shaahin:** 25cents. And it was cash. It was all cash business. So after that, we did Lollapalooza. We did the entire tour with Beastie Boys and all those guys. We were doing easily 2 to 5 million a show. Cash. I had to buy vans to move cash.

[00:13:54] **Dave:** How did you handle security for that?

[00:13:55] **Shaahin:** It's a really good question. Again, in my youthful exuberance and intelligence of a 16-year-old, I had none.

[00:14:03] **Dave:** You probably got a lot of it stolen off the--

[00:14:05] **Shaahin:** So much of it stolen.

[00:14:06] **Dave:** It happened with my t-shirt business when I was 16, yeah. I was selling t-shirts at Santa Barbara for Halloween. Halloween t-shirts. Yeah, one time, I'm like, how come I have no more money than-- one guy with the bulky jacket. I should have jumped on him and pounded him, but I was a kid too.

[00:14:21] **Shaahin:** I write about that in book, actually. It's really interesting. And I had a total solution for it, and it's a great business act. I know it's Bulletproof, biohacking. So my business hack for that was what I called suicide margins. If you make enough money, you can solve any problems. So that was my solution. It was just, hey, throw money at it. So I can just make more money. Solves all he problems.

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[00:14:43] **Dave:** It's true, I know some wealthy people who spend all of their time trying to avoid taxes. And the easiest thing to do is make more money. And then if you pay the taxes, you still keep more, versus taking all these legal risks and going to jail for 18 months for fucking around and finding out and all that.

[00:15:00] I'm not a friend of taxes, but you don't need to be hyper aggressive on that stuff because, like you said, improve your business a little bit. So you figured this out at a young age, and you lost some money, but there was so much left over. Did you buy convertibles, and strippers, and all that stuff?

[00:15:17] **Shaahin:** We had all that stuff. Any vehicular thing we had--

[00:15:22] **Dave:** You were 17 at the time?

[00:15:24] **Shaahin:** Yeah. I was under 21 for all of the herbal ecstasy days.

[00:15:27] **Dave:** With unlimited money, under 18, and no parenting.

[00:15:31] **Shaahin:** Yeah, we were printing money.

[00:15:32] **Dave:** Did you ever call your parents up and just be like, I left a million dollars in the garden or something?

[00:15:38] **Shaahin:** Look, I took care of my parents. Afterwards, I came back. I don't if you know much about Persian culture, but as long as you made money, all sins are forgiven.

[00:15:50] **Dave:** That's the difference between India and Persia. India's like, you're not a doctor, not a lawyer, not an engineer, you don't exist. And they're like, show me the money. Yeah, I got you. A key member of my team is Persian, and I hear the stories. Yeah. So this is amazing. So you came back. You made good of yourself despite yourself, but then you got seven different state governments coming after you. What was their charge? What did they say?

[00:16:18] **Shaahin:** So nobody had ever done what we had done, and this is the really interesting part. Back in those days, I'm sure you remember because you're an incredible pioneer in this industry, was that vitamins and supplements were not sexy like they are now. You didn't have--

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[00:16:34] **Dave:** It weren't them sexy, dude. The whole biohacking thing was not about making them sexy. Okay.

[00:16:38] **Shaahin:** Back then you went to the natural products expose, all the big trade shows, and it was fucking boring, man. It was like round label-- it was all like [Inaudible]. There was nothing sexy about it. So here we are. And they were like, well, if it's a drug, we can regulate it and get these guys out of here.

[00:16:57] And mind you, right at that time, there was a company which will remain nameless, but they had spent billions, with a B, creating a little blue pill. And this blue pill was the answer to what? To Prozac, which was in the '80s. And what did Prozac do? What was the main side effect of Prozac for males and females?

[00:17:17] **Dave:** Gee, I wonder if it's similar to what high dose methylene blue does, because it's also an SSRI. And it rhymes with ED?

[00:17:24] **Shaahin:** There you go. There you go.

[00:17:25] **Dave:** There you go, guys. Wake up without a kickstand if you're on SSRIs.

[00:17:30] **Shaahin:** Yeah, definitely a lot of guys waking up without a kickstand. But then their plan was foiled. They were going to be making billions and billions, stock price going up, everything crazy. But here's this little Persian kid. He's not even 21, and he's creating a billion dollars in revenue with a product that's unregulated.

[00:17:53] **Dave:** And this was actually going to you in a corporate forum at this point?

[00:17:57] **Shaahin:** Yeah, so they came after me directly. I met every three-letter agency known to man. It was like someone's got one of those strings, and they pull it open, and the trap door opens, and the pinata breaks, and all the stuff comes out. I was like, where are these guys coming-- the IR this, the CI this, the ND this, the FD this. And all of a sudden, I'm on TV. And I'm on TV in a big way. I did every major station, every major talk show.

[00:18:22] **Dave:** So you even had the FTC and people come after

[00:18:25] **Shaahin:** Oh yeah.

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[00:18:26] **Dave:** Of all the regulatory agencies, they have some of the most power. But they also are the ones that enforce truthfulness to the best of their ability, which I like. You are not allowed to lie. That's a really good business rule. Don't lie to your customers. So I'm like, if all the three-letter agencies that, I would say, are doing the right thing, the FTC is probably at the top of my list.

[00:18:51] **Shaahin:** Yeah. Look, I think it's all good on paper until you realize the bureaucracy of big government. And then it stops working because you've got a lot of lawyers that are given a directive. And now, as opposed to doing what's better for humanity and for the public, they're just trying to meet their directive. And that was a problem because we weren't hurting anybody.

[00:19:17] Still to this day, Dave, billion dollars sold, not a single report of an adverse reaction with herbal XC ever. Challenging. We had lawsuits. None of them stuck. Nobody proved anything because the product was safe. In general, supplements, if they're put together correctly--

[00:19:38] **Dave:** Okay. And they don't have lead, and metals, and they don't inhibit liver function because you're taking too much of them. Some of the Chinese herbs are a little aggressive that way, but okay. Well-formulated are very safe. I got you. I got you. I just don't want listeners to believe all herbs are safe. There's a lot of shit on Amazon right now that is really concerning. Some of the he shou wu for gray hair. Yeah, go 20% above the recommended dose, and your liver shuts down. Oops.

[00:20:04] **Shaahin:** Oh, yeah, you can die from herbs, for sure. No question. If it's incorrectly formulated. But look at the Chinese, man. They've been taking all that stuff since the dawn of time in hospitals. They give it to you in China, and they're doing just fine.

[00:20:17] **Dave:** They know a few things.

[00:20:18] **Shaahin:** They know a few things. So what happened is all these agencies came after us with the directive of getting rid of this key ingredient, and really with the directive of getting rid of us because nobody had ever used plan recreationally in a product. So they're all going like, dude, we've got supplements here. We've got drugs here. How do we get this guy? This is not even on our radar. And he's making hundreds of millions of dollars a year.

[00:20:48] **Dave:** Yeah. They didn't get their cut.

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[00:20:50] **Shaahin:** They didn't get-- okay.

[00:20:51] **Dave:** Did you think of just paying them their cut in food coupons? I don't know how you--

[00:20:56] **Shaahin:** When you're a rebellious teenager, you don't think that. Okay. I'll tell you this. And by the way, there's a film coming out about this. It'll be on the next two years. It's a big studio that's making my life story based on the book.

[00:21:09] **Dave:** Guy's, the book is Billion, by the way.

[00:21:12] **Shaahin:** Yeah. Billion.

[00:21:12] **Dave:** When did you write this? Is this new? During COVID?

[00:21:16] **Shaahin:** Yeah. Billion: How I Became King of The Throw Pill Cult. But because of the strike and everything, the film's on hold, but it'll come back. So the thing of it is this. When these agencies come after you, they usually just ask for money. And you can pay them, and then it goes away, which, what the fuck? And my lawyers came to me, and they're like, dude, just pay them. You're not going to beat the government.

[00:21:43] This is how aggressive things were. I had on staff close to a dozen attorneys, on staff. I'm not talking of outside firms. I'm talking just my staff of attorneys.

[00:21:52] **Dave:** Yeah, you were definitely the young testosterone-fueled kid. And this is a lesson learned for you. If you're an entrepreneur-- there's a lot of entrepreneurs listening to the show-- it's a bad idea to get in a fight with your government because they have a monopoly on guns.

[00:22:08] Unless you live in Texas, but even then they have more than you. Seriously, governments have a monopoly on violence. They can take anything they want from you at the end of the day. If you think it's not legal, if a judge says that they can do it, they will. So you should be respectful of them and recognize the actual game you're playing, which is that some agencies, they're sponsored by a business.

[00:22:30] So you should be a good corporate sponsor in whatever the way your industry is. And oil and gas does it one way. Big pharma does it another way. But at the end of the day, the

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government wants business to happen. So there will be jobs. Because if you have a lot of peasants without jobs, they get pitchforks, and then you get a new government.

[00:22:44] And this is just how the world works. So be a good entrepreneurial citizen, and you can be disruptive, but it doesn't mean that you get to break all the rules or even follow the rules the way you want. Because you'll experience what you experienced, right?

[00:23:00] **Shaahin:** Yeah, yeah. So they came after me. I should have. You were absolutely right. And no one's ever said that to me. So I appreciate you for saying that because I really think that way. I'm like, dude, if I was smarter, I would have kept a lot more of my money, and I would have just paid them off. You just pay them. But I was so rebellious, Dave.

[00:23:16] **Dave:** I was the same in my 30s. I had ODD, oppositional defiant disorder, and OCD. It's like never. Over my dead body, which is just a lack of wisdom. And also, some people say without selling out, you're in a system, and there are some things where if it's unethical, you just don't do it. I don't lie, for instance.

[00:23:41] And if there's two paths forward, one of them is a better path that allows your work in the world to reach what it's doing, and it's not harming others. That's how the game is played. 48 Laws of Power actually got me to think differently. That changed my whole life, but I read that when I was 26. That explained how tech VCs work.

[00:24:04] So just in the interest of coaching our listeners and sharing some knowledge, it doesn't feel good to realize, oh my God, I'm up against a power that's greater than me. And it's not fair. And you can heal your sense of injustice and just recognize the world is quite often unjust.

[00:24:25] And once you do that and you don't have roll on the ground screaming, and whining, and asking someone to change your diaper or whatever, you'll probably be a happier person, and the amount of injustice in the world won't change at all.

[00:24:37] **Shaahin:** Now you're talking like a hacker, and I love that about you. I'll tell you why. What I'm hearing you say is you don't always have to go through a brick wall. Sometimes you can just stop and go around.

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[00:24:50] **Dave:** All right. This is a story from Iran. Actually, was this Iran? No. It was probably in Kuwait, if I'm remembering right. When the invasion happened, some generals were like, let's get into this vault full of gold. This actually really did happen. And I'm probably telling the story poorly.

[00:25:09] So they threw tanks and explosives at the doors of this big heavy vault. And when the place was retaken, the doors were destroyed. And they're 10 feet thick or whatever. They could have, with two of the many things they tried, just gone through the wall. Just go to the side and blow your way in. But they didn't.

[00:25:30] They threw everything at the doors because that's how you're supposed to do it. And there's a certain mindset as hackers and entrepreneurs, like, well, that seems like a lot of work. So we're fundamentally lazier than other people, which means we do it in the way that was the least amount of work, which means we got more done, which is the beneficial side of laziness, even though people don't like to think of it that way, but it is.

[00:25:51] **Shaahin:** It's true. It's true. And I think probably one of the things one of my mentors has taught me in the last few years, which I think has been most impactful for me, is really the concept of you don't know what you don't know. And when I was in my 20s, I felt like I fucking know everything. And it's probably the reason why herbal XC isn't around today and not a multi-billion-dollar company, was because I thought I knew everything. If I knew then that I didn't know, things would be different.

[00:26:21] **Dave:** So part of this is you probably have a traumatic childhood. People who have traumatic childhoods are more likely to be rebellious, especially in the early 20s. I have the same thing. So I was unwilling to ask for help. It's like I'll do this. I already know everything. I'll do it myself. So back in 199-- let's see. Good God. This would have been in 1994. I've already been in Entrepreneur Magazine. I'm the first guy to sell anything over the internet. Did you know that?

[00:26:49] **Shaahin:** Wow. I didn't know that.

[00:26:50] **Dave:** Yeah, the t-shirt said, "Caffeine, my drug of choice."

[00:26:54] **Shaahin:** Oh, I love it.

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[00:26:54] **Dave:** And e-commerce didn't have a name. And we didn't have web browsers or online payments. So people would mail me a check, and I would mail them the shirt out of my dorm room. I was just trying to pay for my college. But I got in my fat picture. I was like, you weren't 300 pounds. I'm like, here's my Entrepreneur Magazine picture when I look like a 300-pound lesbian. And I say lesbian because my testosterone is 200, and I look very androgynous in that photo. It's on my website

[00:27:16] **Shaahin:** Don't cancel Dave.

[00:27:17] **Dave:** You can cancel me if you want to. You should at least ask my preferred whatevers. So you can skirted the line.

[00:27:24] **Shaahin:** I skirted that line pretty well.

[00:27:27] **Dave:** I don't think I crossed any-- do you?

[00:27:33] **Shaahin:** You are safe, my friend.

[00:27:34] **Dave:** Are you feeling triggered?

[00:27:35] **Shaahin:** Just slightly, but the coffee made it better.

[00:27:38] **Dave:** You should unload that gun. Do you need to get a therapist? There. Now we're all offended equally. This is great.

[00:27:48] But what I was trying to say when I distracted myself with my bad sense of humor is that that unwillingness to ask for help-- that story, I'm there. I was also working in an auto parts warehouse, putting car parts in boxes.

[00:28:03] It was the most mind-numbing work, but it paid three times as much as working at Dairy Queen, which was the other option in the small town, where I was. So I did also weld Toyota truck frames. If you ever drove a Toyota, I worked on, I'm sorry. I wasn't good. So I didn't it for very long because I sucked.

[00:28:19] Regardless of all that, I had this idea, and I remember it so well. I'm like, the best product on the internet is books. It was 1994. And the hairs on the back of my neck stood up. And as an entrepreneur, when you get a really good idea and you can see the path, like this is-- because you can organize them.

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[00:28:39] So what did I do? I thought [Inaudible], and I didn't do anything with it. I kept selling my t-shirts and shut the business down because it was too much work to put them in envelopes. And I did not ask for help. I don't need to hire people. Much less, I was 60 miles from Silicon Valley.

[00:28:55] I could have driven there in 300-pound computer hacker and probably done some Amazon level stuff. But the point here is unwilling to ask for help. Meanwhile, Mark Andreessen, same thing. He does the first web browser, and I've got this first ecommerce. He goes to Silicon Valley, finds a guy who's 50, Jim Clark, and says, hey, will you teach me?

[00:29:14] And Jim's like, sure. And I'm like, I'll do it all by myself. So who's the idiot here. It was clearly me because I didn't ask someone at least twice my age for help. I didn't do that till much later in the aging space. It took me until I was about 27 to realize I don't have to do it by myself. What age were you when you realized maybe you should get some good advice?

[00:29:33] **Shaahin:** I think it was long after because my ride was so wild, and crazy, and fast that I was just like, fuck it. Make more money. You got a problem? Make more money. Mob coming after you? Make more money. A government come after you? Make more money. It was my answer to everything.

[00:29:48] **Dave:** Yeah. Kind of the war ship of [Inaudible].

[00:29:49] **Shaahin:** And I learned later that, look, money has two parts. And this was mind blowing revolution to me. Part one is making it. Part two, like we were discussing earlier, is fucking keeping it. That's a whole other science.

[00:30:05] **Dave:** I made \$6 million before I was 28. I'm with you, man. And people lose money easily. How did you lose it all?

[00:30:12] **Shaahin:** I didn't lose it all. I had the wherewithal to keep a good amount of it. And I did the right things with that. I went on from there to inventing digital vaporization, which really, we were the first vaporizer company. I exited it, and the company went public. It was the first vape company to go public. I don't endorse vaping at all. I think it's not a good thing.

[00:30:34] **Dave:** Was this heated tobacco product or natural vape?

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[00:30:37] **Shaahin:** So I had the patents and wrote the first book on the technology of actual vape.

[00:30:43] **Dave:** You didn't do anyone a solid on that one. You're going to do four lifetimes of karmic debt for that or what?

[00:30:48] **Shaahin:** No. Actually, the way we had built the devices has nothing to do with the vapes that you see now that cause injury, which, primarily is based on the fact that they had to get them small and convenient. The first vape that came out was ours. It was called the Vapir, and it was about the size of a ketchup bottle. And I had done deep dive. We use plastics that would not erode when exposed to amounts of heat.

[00:31:11] The heating element, and this was key, was made from ceramics. because when the heating element is metal, you get little metal parts, especially degrading as they go up and coming into the lungs. You don't want metal in your lungs. So our device was revolutionary.

[00:31:24] Plus we had patents on digital regulation of temperature. So turns out that you heat tobacco up to a certain level, you get smoke, tar, carbon monoxide, but if you can heat it digitally accurately to just below the point of that, you get all the active elements without any of the smoke, tar, carbon monoxide.

[00:31:43] **Dave:** Yeah. So you did that. I was in Dubai and Turkey last week or a week before, and you see it all over the place, the heated tobacco products. They're doing exactly that. I've even met with Philip Morris because they're like, what else could we do besides tobacco that wouldn't be harmful?

[00:31:54] **Shaahin:** Yeah. You will appreciate this because I know everybody rips off your stuff that you did earlier on, is that I'm watching this fricking documentary called Big Vape that's on Netflix, fascinating, about the-- what are they called? The Juul company. It's sold billions of dollars to whatever to, I think-- she ended up buying them, and I was like, fuck. That was all my shit. I'm looking at him. The pitch that they're giving was my pitch a few years before they even came around. And I had all my stuff patented. I had it all set, but they were smarter. They were smarter, again.

[00:32:30] **Dave:** European patents or something?

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[00:32:31] **Shaahin:** No, you don't know what you don't know. I sold the company. I exited in 2006 for reasons that were not reasonable, again. Like you're saying, it's so important to ask for help. But I was going through the brick wall rather than going around it. And I think they were willing to make the compromises necessary to make it convenient.

[00:32:56] The smallest we got it down to was a cigar because I didn't want to make that metal heating element. I wanted it to be ceramic. I wanted it to have all these things, but they were willing to make those compromises, and they got it very, very small by using certain chemicals evaporated with lower temperatures, which meant lower energy usage on it.

[00:33:14] **Dave:** Wow. What a crazy story so far. Now, I want to ask you something that's maybe a little bit more psychological, emotional, metaphysical. So you've pretty much made and crashed the herbal ecstasy thing. You've been fighting really hard. Sounds like you exited your vape thing not on the best of terms. Did you feel discouraged, defeated, like no matter what I do, it's not working right? Or were you still like, I have so much money? It doesn't matter.

[00:33:47] **Shaahin:** Money helps a lot.

[00:33:48] **Dave:** It does. Absolutely.

[00:33:49] **Shaahin:** Yeah. I think a good friend of mine and a teacher of mine would always say, the guy that said money is the root of all evil didn't have any. So I definitely think money makes life easier. It makes it more convenient. I was very happy with the money that I had. I don't have to work anymore. I didn't have to work back then.

[00:34:06] **Dave:** So you're comfortable at least.

[00:34:08] **Shaahin:** Yeah, it's not like I was so crushed, but when you're a high achiever and anytime you have an exit-- this is a very common thing for guys and girls who have exits in their companies. They exit. They open up their phone. The bank account pops up. There's a few extra zeros at the end. And they're like, dude, where's my ticker tape parade? What the fuck? Nothing.

[00:34:29] **Dave:** It's actually very lonely when that happens because you can't tell anyone or they just become jealous.

[00:34:33] **Shaahin:** That's where you find out where your real friends are. For me, those exits were okay. I made the money. The money was there. It was great. But you probably understand

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this as well. You also end up selling your baby. For me, I've never chased money. Money's been easy for me.

[00:34:49] **Dave:** Hold on a second. When you were young, you were chasing money.

[00:34:51] **Shaahin:** I wasn't chasing money.

[00:34:53] **Dave:** It was just coming to you because you cared about it, but you weren't chasing it. Okay. I see what you're saying.

[00:34:56] **Shaahin:** Yeah, I genuinely was in the buzz of what I was doing. And I think back to this. I was like, was I chasing money? No. Every time I've tried to chase money in my life, it's been the biggest waste of time. So I learned early on in my 20s that that doesn't work for me. I got to work with people who I enjoy working, with first and foremost.

[00:35:15] If you're an asshole, I don't want to work with you. There's no price for that in my life. And I want to work with people that are doing cool shit where our missions can meet and where we can create a bigger impact. Steve Jobs would say a dent in the universe together. That's what's important to me.

[00:35:33] A lot of people will say bullshit or whatever, and at the end of the day, they end up just chasing money. I really don't give a fuck. I've had enormous amounts of wealth, and I've been as broke as you can get, reverse debt. And honestly, it's better to have money, but at a certain point, there is something as enough, and then you can do cool shit that really matters to you and that you enjoy doing, like stuff that like you and I are doing.

[00:35:57] **Dave:** It's important. And for the average person listening to this, if you're not an entrepreneur, even if you are, it's not like the opportunity to make 10 plus million dollars comes along even for entrepreneurs. It's exceptionally rare. Bulletproof, when it had a \$100 million dollars, there's only 17,000 companies in the US of any size above a 100 million a year in revenues. It's a very small number.

[00:36:21] And each time you add a zero, you're taking out 99% of the likely things. So it's exceptionally rare. And so you can have that sense of gratitude. But once you have an exit like that-- that's why you see so much enormous wealth concentrates these days. Because you have

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many millions of dollars, a million or two here, a million or two there, and some of those are going to pay off.

[00:36:42] But if it's your first million, taking half of whatever you make and locking it in a bank where you can't spend it on stupid shit, I wish I'd have known that the first time I made \$6 million. I've made that mistake more than once, I'll just say. It's easy to lose what you make.

[00:36:56] **Shaahin:** Yeah, boring, non-sexy investments, real estate, blue chip stuff, treasury bills.

[00:37:02] **Dave:** Right, right. Although in the US, treasury bills-- I'm not sure how the US currency is doing over time, and debt, and all that, but that's a whole different discussion.

[00:37:12] So you didn't get discouraged, but you also didn't stop. A lot of people I've known, they make their money, and they put on some weight, and they stop doing stuff that matters. And John Gray just talked about this. Your testosterone drops when that happens, when there isn't a challenge, there isn't a mission, there isn't a little bit of adversity that you're overcoming. I don't know. I'm going to buy some art. So how did you avoid becoming that guy?

[00:37:40] **Shaahin:** I started a family, so family first. My family is the most important thing. We've got a beautiful boy who I absolutely love, and it's been one of the greatest challenges and adventures in my life, having--

[00:37:55] **Dave:** Still pretty young?

[00:37:57] **Shaahin:** Yeah, he's 10 now, which is incredible. So I think that's been really inspiring. And also, one of the things I learned along the way is that, especially guys like us, we have a diverse range of interests, and we have a tendency to be like, man, I'm interested in this. Let me make it into a business and make fucking money from it. It's just naturally what comes.

[00:38:20] But what I've learned is to have a whole series of things that I'm interested in that have nothing to do with making money. And that I will never make money from them. I'm not anxious, but I will spend time doing it. So I think Kotler talks about it in his book. He calls it following your fascination. And so I think having things that you're genuinely interested and fascinated in is a big deal for me, friends and social connection.

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[00:38:41] I mean real friends, not just bullshit people, but people who you really connect with, super important. And we were just talking about doing shit that makes an impact, that makes a difference. That's everything.

[00:38:58] **Dave:** Yeah, and funny enough, that raises dopamine and testosterone. Service to others also puts you in a flow state.

[00:39:04] So you figured that out somehow early, which is really cool. So you turned to Amazon after being a drug kingpin.

[00:39:14] **Shaahin:** Yeah. Look, I found out about this little guy named Bezos who had launched the platform. And I was like, this is cool. They're selling books on there. Like you. We probably had a similar thought at a similar time. It was going in air. And I was like, man, similar to you, I don't want to deal with the platform. I don't want to deal with the whole thing.

[00:39:33] And then it turns out that he opened up the platform to third party sellers. We were one of the first on there. I knew somebody who worked there, and was like, hey, you can just reach out. Back then, you could email Jeff, jeff@amazon.com, and he'd write back. You can even get on the phone with the guy. So we did that, and I was like, this is really easy.

[00:39:53] We launched the first product on Amazon. The first product was a brand of matcha tea called MatchaDNA, which I no longer am a part of, but it's an amazing product. And overnight, we had done hundreds of thousands in sales. And back then, there was no regulation. It was all new. We got 5,000 reviews. The product was selling like crazy.

[00:40:14] **Dave:** How many of those reviews were your own people?

[00:40:17] **Shaahin:** Not a lot. Not a lot. Yeah.

[00:40:21] **Dave:** Not a lot. That's the most honest answer ever.

[00:40:23] **Shaahin:** You get what would they call friends and family to start you off.

[00:40:27] **Dave:** Those are legal.

[00:40:28] **Shaahin:** Yeah, I think those would be illegal.

[00:40:30] **Dave:** No, those are legal. Friends and family are allowed to do it.

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[00:40:32] **Shaahin:** Are they?

[00:40:32] **Dave:** Yeah, as long as you're not paying them to do it. It's when people use bots and all that stuff.

[00:40:36] **Shaahin:** Everything's great.

[00:40:37] **Dave:** I think my mom reviews my book. I'm okay with that. There's nothing wrong with that. Thanks, mom.

[00:40:42] **Shaahin:** And so very quickly, I learned, hey-- and this is probably a lesson I've learned from you, is if you play by the rules, you won't always get what you want. You'll get what they want you to have. And I thought to myself, man, let's figure out how to hack this Amazon thing.

[00:41:00] So we became Amazon hackers. And at the same time, a lot of guys were becoming Amazon hackers, and we created a seven-figure, eight-figure company that's close to becoming a nine-figure company selling on Amazon. And we owned that real estate, and we learned how to blow things up on Amazon and make money. And I started a course, teaching people how to do that. Yeah. So it was very exciting.

[00:41:23] **Dave:** As I'm recalling, you had a cognitive enhancement product on Amazon.

[00:41:28] **Shaahin:** Yeah. Again, from the XC days, I was really interested in that field. We partnered, believe it or not, with one of the same pharma companies that had railed against me with the government back in the days. And we created a really bad ass brain supplement. It was in liquid form. It was in capsule form. It was called Accelerol. And it was the first brain supplement to be sold on Amazon.

[00:41:54] **Dave:** Wow. So you, me, and Tim Ferriss have that in common. So back in, I think 2004 when I was finishing up business school, my final project was I'm going to make a nootropic, a brain supplement, but it was going to be called unfair advantage. It was going to be marketed to parents of college students.

[00:42:16] You're spending 80 grand a year to put your kids through college. You might as well give them this 50-dollar supplement so their brain will work after they're done partying. And so I

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had it all lined up. And it's funny. At Bulletproof, we did use that name, Unfair Advantage for a cognitive enhancement thing years later, but there's that.

[00:42:31] Actually, Tim Ferriss, he started a nootropics thing around the same year, as I remember, and that was part of the story in 4-Hour Workweek. So there's something about entrepreneurs and cognitive enhancement. And now half the entrepreneurs on the planet are doing nootropics. I like to think I helped on that. So did Tim. So did you. There's a lot of us working on that, but it's pretty cool.

[00:42:50] **Shaahin:** Yeah, yeah. You were a huge mouthpiece for that. And that was super important. I actually remember finding you-- back to talking about synchronicities, Bradley Cooper was in my house in Venice. And we were hanging out. This was before he became famous, and then he came out with that film, Limitless. And I was like, that's the pill that everybody wants. What a badass film, except for the fact that you ended up becoming a psychotic murderer.

[00:43:13] **Dave:** Yeah, yeah.

[00:43:13] **Shaahin:** Get rid of that part.

[00:43:14] **Dave:** And it was based on modafinil because when you take modafinil, color saturation changes a little bit if you're watching for it. And I know, or at least the director or camera crew did, because every time he would take the drug, it was shipped into a green spectrum, like, I know that shift. So I was on ABC Nightline. I was like the only guy without a bag on my head. I took modafinil in business school so I could graduate. That was the limitless pill, was the prescription cognitive enhancer.

[00:43:39] **Shaahin:** You caught that. There's something about filmmakers who know how to show those experiences. There's a series on TV now called Britannia. I don't know if you've ever seen it. It's fascinating. It's about pre-Roman and just Roman times, and the foundation of modern-day London, and the drug scenes, the psychedelic scenes are so spot on. You just know those guys have had some experiences.

[00:44:08] **Dave:** Yeah, you can tell if it's real versus not real. One of the guy who wrote for years for NCSI, NCIS, whatever, LA, he had some really realistic scenes, and he did my 40 Years

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of Zen neurofeedback training. I got to know him. And it turns out he's a very well-respected trainer in an esoteric knife fighting form, world class sort of things. He knew combat scenarios, and that's why they could design these scenes the way they could do it, because not fake.

[00:44:47] And so knowing that those people are out there is interesting, but you're also into jiu jitsu. How does that play a role in your mindset?

[00:44:57] **Shaahin:** I think jiu jitsu is really interesting. I've been training martial arts since I was 13, and I trained at a studio where the guy was one of Bruce Lee's prodigies, a big legacy place. And I think one of the things that martial arts has taught me is discipline. Brazilian jiu jitsu is unique, is a high, like you say, releasing dopamine because in that moment, when you're grappling-- Brazilian jiu jitsu is all about grappling.

[00:45:27] Every class has constant hand to hand combat. And even though, you can just tap, and all the pain goes away and it stops, your brain doesn't recognize that. So when you're training, you instantly put yourself in that state where it's like tunnel vision. You are there to survive. So there are no other thoughts when you're grappling.

[00:45:52] You're not thinking about the rest of your day. You're not thinking about your taxes. You're not thinking about your fight with the wife or girlfriend. And all it is in that moment is survival. And so people know people who train jiu jitsu, when you're done with a really hard, we call it rolling, when you're done with a hard roll, at the end of it, everybody is like, ah, there's just this release of dopamine where you just feel incredible.

[00:46:16] **Dave:** Like a cold plunge

[00:46:18] **Shaahin:** Like a cold plunge. Yeah, that's right.

[00:46:20] **Dave:** A very similar neurochemistry. Anything that hurts briefly and then resolves will create the same dopamine.

[00:46:25] **Shaahin:** Have you ever tried Brazilian jiu jitsu?

[00:46:28] **Dave:** I did a bit of Judo when I was younger, but not formally. I have a little question for you about that.

[00:46:36] **Shaahin:** Yeah. Tell me.

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[00:46:36] **Dave:** Have you heard the latest Joe Rogan, Elon Musk interview?

[00:46:40] **Shaahin:** I have it on my phone. I haven't listened to yet. Tell me.

[00:46:42] **Dave:** Okay. So they talk about the Zuckerberg-Elon fight. Elon's like, anywhere, any rules, anything. And he's been in real fights. I've been in a lot of real fights, too when I was younger. When you're the biggest kid in school, the little guys always go after you. At least a 100 real fights. And never threw a first punch, by the way, and always threw the last one, because physics.

[00:47:05] So when Elon told Joe Rogan-- which is funny, because Joe's a bit of an expert in fighting. And he's like, I'll use my patented walrus technique. And he's like, what? And then Elon's like, look, physics. He's like, I'm a rocket scientist here. So it doesn't really matter if Zuckerberg has some skills. I'm literally going to lay on him.

[00:47:30] And I have so much extra mass that, yes, it's possible he could win, but it's like I'm also trained, and I don't even need to be in good shape. I just need to get on top of it. And so I've also seen, was it Zuckerberg and Lex Fridman Spard? So if I try Elon's walrus move on you, what's going to happen? Because I outweigh you by-- how much do you weigh?

[00:47:53] **Shaahin:** I'm 180.

[00:47:54] **Dave:** All right, so I'm 20 extra pounds. I'm 200

[00:47:57] **Shaahin:** So in the words of Mike Tyson, everyone's got a plan until I punch them. This is one thing I love in all areas of life. We're in the world of business, in the world of health and wellness. There's a lot of bullshit out there. There's a lot of bullshit people who can just talk shit and get away with it. We were talking about that earlier. There's so many people who do that.

[00:48:23] One of the beautiful things about jiu jitsu-- today I guess I'm being an evangelist for martial arts in general, but maybe Brazilian jiu jitsu in particular, is that there are no liars on the mat. Once you get on the mat, all that bullshit goes away. Because it's you and somebody else.

[00:48:41] And some of the guys I know, like my old teacher, who was an amazing guy, he was 125 pounds, and he could take out guys many times. He would just put you to sleep man. And I don't care how cerebral you are. There are things like muscle memory, muscle-- there's unknown things that just can't be learned any other way than through experience on the mat. So while I

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think Elon cerebrally might be correct, I think he might be in for a rude awakening should it actually come to the combat?

[00:49:15] **Dave:** He might. He also has a point. He's done training for 10 plus years, and he's been in a lot of real fights. I somehow don't think Mark Zuckerberg has ever actually faced down three bullies who are intent on causing him real harm. And Elon's done it way more than one time. And so there's a little bit of like street fighter in there that doesn't match Harvard. I know a lot of guys who've never been in a fight in their life.

[00:49:39] And it's a very different vibe because if I walk into a place and it's risky, I know in my bones I'm okay. One of us is going to die. And if I go in, I am literally going in, and that's how it is. And that's okay. But the thing is, thugs, they know that because they can feel it. And they're like, you're not a good target. I'm going to pick someone who's smaller and someone who's never been in a fight before.

[00:50:03] So I'm like, you might hurt me, but I'm going to hurt you more. And I'm okay with it. And so there's a bit of a vibe there that everyone's okay until they're hit in the face. And I think I wouldn't want to wrestle Mark either. He'd probably kick my ass too. The reason I know that is because I sometimes date a woman who is very strong in jiu jitsu, and she's 5'6 or something, and she can pin me. There are times where I'm like, okay, I actually can't get out of this.

[00:50:29] It's embarrassing because I'm substantially larger. So the walrus move does not work on her. So I wouldn't think it would work on you. And so Elon, if you're listening to this, I wish you luck. I want to see it. Do some pushups for the walrus or something. I don't know.

[00:50:45] **Shaahin:** I should preface it by this. While I don't think his walrus move would work, I think that he would be one of the people that if he were to invest the time--

[00:50:55] **Dave:** He has, it sounds like.

[00:50:56] **Shaahin:** In Brazilian jiu jitsu?

[00:50:58] **Dave:** In a bunch of different styles. He talked about them with Joe.

[00:51:00] **Shaahin:** Then I think that 10,000-hour rule might be a 1,000-hour rule.

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[00:51:05] **Dave:** Yeah, 10,000 hours plus the-- I've been knocked unconscious as a kid multiple times and almost died. He talked about that on the show too. And I've had knives pulled on me, but I haven't been knocked unconscious. I've been kicked in the head a few. Maybe that explains it.

[00:51:18] He was in South Africa with real crime, and I think that's one of those things where you can go into a deeper level of survival mode, but dude, what do I know? I'm not an MMA announcer, or a professional comedian, or any of that stuff. But I would like to see the results, and I don't think I'd want to wrestle you. And if I did, I would probably have pepper spray in my back pocket because--

[00:51:43] **Shaahin:** Yeah, look, it's interesting too, what you're saying, Dave. Because back in our days, as kids, you got knocked out. That happened to me too. And now there's so many boys I see growing up. They've never gotten into a fight. They've never had that kind of confrontation. They might talk a lot. I'll knock you out. Whatever. How? That's a great question to ask somebody if it's not a life-threatening situation. When they say, I'm going to do this to you, you go, how? And when you see that blank look come across their face, you know that they're just full of shit. It only takes a second, right?

[00:52:12] **Dave:** It only does. God, it's making me think about this. There was a time, I don't know what grade. It was probably 9th. The Golden Globes champion of my city comes into my room and starts picking on me. This guy's a trained boxer, and I'm like, I know a little yellow belt. I know judo.

[00:52:30] So I thought about it. I'm like, if he gets one punch on him-- so I looked at him. I kicked him in the shin as a soccer player as hard as I could. He started jumping, and I tackled him and put him in a judo headlock. And he came to school the next day with a neck brace on. I totally cheated.

[00:52:45] I'm like, oh, he's a boxer. I'm not doing that. Which is why I would pepper spray you and then rustle you when I have a gas mask on. But otherwise, you just don't do it. You should run. I just thought of that, but it's one of those things where if you're listening to this and you've never been in a fight, you probably should do some jiu jitsu or some other kind of thing. Especially if you're a guy, I think it'd be really important. And if you're a woman and you love it,

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it might be important, but there are self-defense methods that are more important for you than jiu jitsu.

[00:53:16] **Shaahin:** Yeah. And what I heard you say that I think is probably the single most important thing is-- I tell my son that. Why do we train? Because my son's training now too. He's been training since he was three, and I tell him we train so we don't have to fight. And the fact is, if you learn this stuff, it's not that you can just defend yourself if a situation comes to it. It's that those situations won't come. The predator walking across the street catches that vibe, and he'll go pick on somebody else because they don't want somebody who's going to fight back. They want the person who's scared.

[00:53:49] **Dave:** But years ago, I was with a partner, and she came across the story of a black belt woman who was assaulted, and froze up, and didn't use any of her skills. And was like, what is wrong with me? And it's because it's normal to freeze up if you've never been in a real fighting situation.

[00:54:07] And so they designed a thing-- in fact, that partner went through the training of like, that's better self-defense, and then do jiu jitsu or any martial art you like. But you need to do the thing so you will default to taking a specific set of actions to protect yourself that probably isn't grappling. And then learn grappling or whatever you like, but learn self-defense first, if you're into that.

[00:54:29] My advice just from watching this over the years. And then don't be in unsafe areas. And if you are, have a big, strong guy who knows jiu jitsu with you, and then you're fine. All right. What other advice would you have for entrepreneurs or just people? Because you've lived a very interesting life so far.

[00:54:44] **Shaahin:** Yeah. We talked about this, I think, briefly before, but I think your power as an entrepreneur now, a lot of the times comes from your reach. And you gain that reach by being able to get your message out. I think that's one of the reasons why you're such an incredibly positive influence on people, is because you not only have that mouthpiece, but you know how to create it. You are a master curator. All the stuff that we talked about, the butter coffee, maybe you weren't the first person to drink butter with coffee.

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[00:55:18] **Dave:** Turns out it was Ethiopian warriors thousands of years ago, but I didn't know about them.

[00:55:23] **Shaahin:** But it doesn't fucking matter. You might as well been the first person to come up with it because you're the first person that brought it to all of our attention because you know how to craft that story. And through doing podcasting, which now all my efforts are around my podcasting company, PodcastCola. Give it a quick plug. Which gets people booked on podcasts.

[00:55:43] But through this medium of podcasting, you have the ability to get your message out. And especially what we're doing now, long form, you get to really get to know the person on the other side. And even though we're not really selling anything, we get to have a conversation that is impactful and important. And I think that's something that's so powerful.

[00:56:06] But I think as an entrepreneur, you want to do what you've done, which you're one of the best in the world at, which is curation. You want to become a curator of these ideas. And I tell people this all the time. There's no fucking money in innovation. I fucking created--

[00:56:22] **Dave:** They steal it. As soon as you do, it's terrible.

[00:56:25] **Shaahin:** Yeah. I created the modern digital vaporizer, digital vape. You guys can look it up. I wrote the book on it. I've got the fucking patents. Nobody came before me. All that technology, I put out. Did I make the billion dollars from it? No, it was somebody else who came after. Innovation is a quick path to losing money unless you're a big company, in my opinion.

[00:56:45] **Dave:** The big companies can't innovate, which is funny.

[00:56:48] **Shaahin:** That is funny. But being able to become a curator of ideas and being able to get your message out there, particularly on podcasts, which, by the way, now is one of the highest ROI methods of marketing out there. It's the ultimate hack, which is why you've been doing it for how many years now?

[00:57:05] **Dave:** Ten years. We're almost at 400 million downloads. Won a Webby award, and it's got to be, what, 1,150 episodes or somewhere around there? But the real thing is, I got to talk to really interesting people who were teaching me stuff for 1,100 hours. With all the extra edits, it's probably closer to 1,800 hours. You think about that, a full-time job, eight hours a day, is

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2,000 hours a year. So I've almost had a full-time year of just eight hours a day talking to smart people, learning from them. So I might have learned a few things.

[00:57:38] **Shaahin:** Of course, you know how to do it, which is my next comment, which most people don't understand, is most people think you go on a podcast and use that person's audience to sell some stuff. It's wrong. The way you've been doing it is the right way. You use podcasts tactically. You use podcasts to get your foot in the door.

[00:57:54] If you want to meet somebody, maybe you wouldn't normally be able to get in to meet that person, a billionaire or somebody who's famous, whatever, but are they interested in becoming famous? Are they interested in using your mouthpiece or having you interview them? Probably more so than they'd be interested in having a cold call about you about some great business opportunity. Not that you would ever need that, but for the general people out there--

[00:58:17] **Dave:** Yeah. When I started this, I was well known in computer security and cloud computing circles, which are these big circles that no one cares about unless you're a nerd. Yeah. This is an excuse to talk to authors. I get to call Robert Green and talk to all these interesting people.

[00:58:35] And I'm really good at predicting the future. And there were very, very few podcasts when I started, which is why I could win a Webby and grow the way I have and gain the audience. And also, I'd spent 15 years either running an anti-aging nonprofit and being media trained and giving keynotes.

[00:58:55] So I knew how to interview people, which is a skill most people on podcasts, they just sit there and goof off. There's no structure. So I'm incredibly fortunate. Right time, right place, right skills. But man, it pays off. So my advice for anyone who-- you run a podcast booking agency, you should learn how to interview people. It's probably a good idea.

[00:59:14] **Shaahin:** Yeah. And it's a learned skill. With our clients, the first thing we do is we teach them how to do that so they can not only be guests on other people's podcasts, but also, like you said, do it on their own. And when you can do that, now you've got the use of other people's audience that you can borrow and bring over to your own show.

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[00:59:33] But also you have the power to use podcasts tactically. So you're 10Xing the power in that pocket. It doesn't matter if one person is watching or 10. A lot of the deal flow that I have in my different businesses come from me being on shows, not necessarily from other people listening to the show contacting me, but just connecting with the show hosts.

[00:59:55] Because who has a podcast? Entrepreneurs, people who are in your industry, people that are in your niche, and people that are so active that they decided to create a fricking show and put the time and energy into creating that. And there are now over 8 million podcasts out there.

[01:00:11] **Dave:** So essentially you guys do media training, but does your mother know that PodcastCola is totally a scam?

[01:00:19] **Shaahin:** Yeah, right? In what way?

[01:00:23] **Dave:** I'm just testing your ability to handle hostile questions to see good your media training is.

[01:00:27] **Shaahin:** Yeah. Dude, you're dealing with a guy-- they would put me in a room, back in the herbal XC days, and they'd be like, great, we want to have you on our-- a perfect example of this is Montel Williams. You remember Montel Williams talk show? Montel would be like, we want you in.

[01:00:40] And they would put me on a nice plane. They'd put me in a nice car. Drive me to the studio. And so often-- not just Montel, but other people-- I know there's a studio audience there, but I'm like, why am I in a room with a camera facing me here? Why am I not on with the rest? And then all of a sudden ushered into the room.

[01:00:59] And you guys can watch this stuff on YouTube because it's all online now. Would be like FDA, FTC, all the three-letter agencies. And I'm talking to a screen, and they're talking to a studio audience. I was young, and again--

[01:01:14] **Dave:** Not trained.

[01:01:15] **Shaahin:** Not trained, but it worked out perfect because people saw right through it. And every time the government came out with a new law, they will come out and be like, oh, this

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product is really dangerous. And I'd be like, fuck, we're going to lose everything. You know what people were hearing? People were hearing, this shit works. That's what people were hearing.

[01:01:35] **Dave:** The government wants to ban something? It's twice as good.

[01:01:37] **Shaahin:** Oh yeah. And I tell the story. I tell it in my book, Billion, if anybody reads that, is that I went on Montel Williams show, and when I went on his show, I knew that one time that it was going to be a sabotage. So I got there a day early. We gave free pills and t-shirts-- before the internet, we have this thing called 800-numbers. 800-numbers on the shirts.

[01:01:58] And we gave people sweaters, and the deal was you got unlimited free pills for the next year, and I'll give you a bunch of free ecstasy. Take it now. Take it later. Whatever you want. Herbal ecstasy, by the way. I didn't give them real drugs. And I said, when the show comes on, you take your shirt off.

[01:02:12] **Dave:** You did not. That is so brilliant. That makes me happy.

[01:02:16] **Shaahin:** You got to hack everything. And the show came on. And of course, there's Montel, and he's got this guy that he dragged out from the FDA, brown suit dude. And he's out there talking about it. And then he had some mom that died from somebody else's product on a show me.

[01:02:33] Talk about forging connections. And so I was like, oh, okay, she's looking at me angry, and I looked at her, and I'm like, lady, that's terrible, but it wasn't from my product. So I'm really sorry about your kid. I think he took real drugs. That was the problem. Which he did. And then Montel's like, oh, this stuff's terrible, whatever.

[01:02:52] I took my shirt off, and I've got this video on, and I write about in my book, with the 800-number. We made a million dollars in airing. And it took them about five airings on national TV to catch on and blur it because they didn't realize. And those are the kinds of things that we did. Going around the wall, not through it.

[01:03:13] **Dave:** That was so good. You're natural at that. You can actually be trained in how to handle hostile questions from media. And I disrupted a lot of things. I made grass-fed a big thing. And I'm not the only person. I'm not taking all the credit for that. But I was a major voice in

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making grass-fed beef. First restaurant that I know that only served grass-fed beef in LA was my restaurant. I've been pushing on this, and I piss a lot of people off. Eat butter.

[01:03:37] So I'm used to that. And I'm also really well-trained from corporate America, same thing. If people say, how do you deal with trolls online? You can play with these guys. They'd have no chance with someone who knows, essentially jiu jitsu with hostile questions.

[01:03:52] So it's cool that you teach people that, which means you go into a situation where there's a takedown. They're trying to ask you the questions. Like the one, does your mom know? And you're like, what kind of question is this? And it's designed to really bypass your prefrontal cortex, get to your amygdala, so you'll be reactive. Yeah. I could tell it. Even though you're trained, it got you off for a second, but probably because of your jiu jitsu, you got right back on. Right?

[01:04:19] **Shaahin:** Yeah.

[01:04:20] **Dave:** It came out of left field too.

[01:04:22] **Shaahin:** Yeah, it came out of left field, so I'm trying to figure out what the angle is. But interestingly enough, you can always ride that. You can be like, it's a scam because it's probably too good to be true. And we just keep producing results for our clients at PodcastCola, but the fact is, for a lot of people, if you don't work it, it's a scam. You can work it a lot of different ways.

[01:04:43] **Dave:** Yeah. And there must be a reason you're saying that. And that buys you time to think, and they're like, all right. By the way, that's from Chris Voss, who's been on the show as well, FBI negotiator. He's a great guy. So there's all these things, but just for sharing knowledge for people who want to be hosts and all that, you definitely want to do some training on media, learn how to interview, learn how to be interviewed.

[01:05:08] There's a reason that when Bulletproof started and the biohacking movement started I've been in every major men's magazine. I've been in Vogue. I've been in Mademoiselle. And I was the fat computer hacker from Jurassic Park I. But I was a good guy. There's no way I should ever have my shirt off in a magazine, except I can now. But it's so unlikely.

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[01:05:27] But all that media stuff happened because there's a skill to working the media, and now there's a skill to working podcasts. So it sounds like you're teaching a generation of entrepreneurs to do that. So it's a worthy skill, and it's not easy.

[01:05:39] **Shaahin:** Thank you. And thanks for mentioning Chris Voss because he wrote the foreword to my book.

[01:05:43] **Dave:** Absolutely. Chris is a gentleman, a scholar. I've called him a few times when I needed ninja-negotiating moves.

[01:05:48] **Shaahin:** He's the ninja and a master at doing podcasts. He was just on Andrew Huberman's podcast.

[01:05:55] **Dave:** That's right.

[01:05:56] **Shaahin:** And there's a big one that I think he's getting very close to being on, but I'm not going to mention it because I don't want to jinx it.

[01:06:00] **Dave:** Yeah. You don't want to jinx it. And it's funny. Andrew Huberman was on this show around episode 400 before he had a podcast. Yeah. My job is to curate. I'm going to find the good ones. I'm like, good for you with Huberman's Performance Lab at Stanford. So I'm happy he's structuring the content the way he's doing because a lot of people are listening, and it's epic. So lots of friends have been on the show. Shaheen, how do you handle this? I can send people to your website, but they'd have to spell your first and your last name. It seems like that's hard.

[01:06:31] **Shaahin:** Yeah.

[01:06:32] **Dave:** Is there a hack for this? Do you have--

[01:06:33] **Shaahin:** Yeah. If you guys want to get ahold of me, you can just go to podcastcola.com and email me there. I'm on there. Or you can get me at shaahincheyene.com spelled S-H-A-A-H-I-N C-H-E-Y-E-N-E.com. Either of those links will get to me. I've got a link tree on both of those websites, and it'll tell you about all the stuff I'm doing.

[01:06:54] And the book obviously is on Amazon. You can get the audio book on Audible. Yeah. And then I've got a podcast called Business Story of The Week, where we interview

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entrepreneurs and what they're doing. And Business Story of The Week's doing really well now. So if you guys want to check that out, that's amazing too.

[01:07:11] **Dave:** Thanks for stopping by.

[01:07:13] **Shaahin:** Thank you, Dave. Appreciate you having me on.

[01:07:16] **Dave:** If you like this episode, pick up the book. It's an interesting read, and you're going to need to drink something while you read the book, dangercoffee.com. Support the show. Support my work. This is my new coffee, ultra clean, best I've ever made. Plus trace minerals. Plus electrolytes. You feel the difference, and it tastes like really good coffee.

[01:07:38] **Shaahin:** Legit good. Actually, I just had a cup, and I was like, fuck this stuff's actually good. It's really good.

[01:07:45] **Dave:** Thanks, I think. I'll see you guys later.