

Dave Asprey ([00:00:01](#)):

You are listening to the Human Upgrade with Dave Asprey.

Dr. Aditi Nerurkar ([00:00:07](#)):

One of the coolest journeys for me with this book launch is that I have been engaging in media, I'm a consumer of media, and then I'm engaging in things that I actually listen to, but this time as a guest, and this is an example of that. So thank you for having me.

Dave Asprey ([00:00:23](#)):

How fun and thank you for listening to the show.

Dr. Aditi Nerurkar

I love it.

Dave Asprey

If you guys are wondering who that mysterious voice is, the voice that sounds calm and collected and happy and all of that, that is the author of a book about stress, anxiety, and burnout. And so many people are more burned out now, mostly because of government decisions that maybe really weren't good for society over the past few years. And we already had record stress levels below or before the pandemic. In fact, in my work with Upgrade Labs, I came across a study where for the first time since we've been monitoring this stuff, more people are asking for help managing stress than for weight loss, which for years has been the number one goal. People would try to get healthier or go to a health club or something like that. So our guest today is Dr.

[\(00:01:21\)](#):

Aditi Kar, who's a Harvard trained stress expert. She's a television correspondent and she speaks globally on what stress does to us and what do you do about it, how do you manage it, how do you create human resilience, which is the original. When I started Bulletproof, it was the state of high performance, but being bulletproof means I can handle anything that the world brings my way. And today you've probably heard I have nothing to do with the company. I was removed several years ago and they've been purchased. And so I'm all about danger Coffee now, which is the next level of that, which is I know that I can handle anything that comes my way, which makes me dangerous because who knows what I might do. I'll do exactly what's right no matter how hard it is because I'm not stressed and I'm not programmable in any way.

[\(00:02:08\)](#):

And that's why I wanted to have a DT on the show today because her book is called The Five Resets Rewire Your Brain and Body for Less Stress and More Resilience. It seems like that's what we're all looking for. So you're going to learn in the show today why stress is on the rise and know it's not just a pandemic after effects. You're going to learn what burnout is, what symptoms it causes, and what to do about it. We're going to talk about screen time, so if you're watching this on YouTube, I'd like you to already feel a deep sense of guilt and shame over that. Okay, just kidding. But if you're watching this on YouTube, it is screen time and maybe this is valuable screen time, but it is still screen time. And then there are resets you can use that allow you to have gratitude and calm if you're a long time listener. You've heard me talk about the reset process from 40 years of Zen, which uses gratitude to create a

sense of calm. So a DT definitely gets how it really works. And with no further ado, welcome to the show.

Dr. Aditi Nerurkar ([00:03:09](#)):

Dave, it is such a pleasure to join you. Like I told you offline, I am such a fan of your work and it's a thrill to be here today.

Dave Asprey ([00:03:18](#)):

This is your first book,

Dr. Aditi Nerurkar ([00:03:19](#)):

Right? My first book,

Dave Asprey ([00:03:21](#)):

And you're in the middle of your book tour.

Dr. Aditi Nerurkar ([00:03:22](#)):

It's been wild. I thought it would finish in two weeks and it's just been months of lots of wonderful appearances and interviews and I have loved every minute truly.

Dave Asprey ([00:03:37](#)):

You've also probably dealt with more circadian disruption, more demands on your time and generally more stress. Launching a book is for people listening. Most people haven't written or launched a big book. It is an enormous amount of work and that usually brings with that stress. So how do you manage your stress during a really busy book launch?

Dr. Aditi Nerurkar ([00:03:57](#)):

Dave, the irony doesn't escape me. While writing this book on stress and burnout, of course, I experienced my own stress and burnout, but particularly during this book launch process, which is a finite amount of time with lots of demands and competing priorities, I doubled down on the resets. I remember throughout the past couple of months texting friends and saying, oh my God, guys, these resets really work. And then we all had a laugh. I definitely walked the talk and always have. I came into this work as a doctor with an expertise on stress first because I was a stress patient looking for answers. And every time in life when the temperature goes up and I'm under the fire, whether it's short-term or long-term, particularly this book launch, I just double down on all of the information in the book and practice all of these things for myself. And it is tried and true. You have to trust the science and know that your brain and body are responding exactly as they should.

Dave Asprey ([00:05:06](#)):

I'm always amused and grateful when a guest is on the show who lived it. It's one thing if you're sort of cultural anthropologist and you're studying stressed people from your chill academic lab, but if you've lived it and you're say, I just got to solve this, I feel like it becomes a lot more personal. In your book is both personal and prescriptive, sort of like a doctor who's never been sick, might not have the same degree of empathy or understanding as someone who's I dealt with chronic fatigue and now I'm done

and I fixed it and I know how you feel and here's what to do. It just creates trust when you have that. Why were you burned out?

Dr. Aditi Nerurkar ([00:05:46](#)):

I was working 80 hours a week. I was seeing death and dying on a daily basis. I was a medical resident. And in my second year of medical training, there was no lexicon, there was no vocabulary about self-care, burnout, stress. In fact, the mantra I was taught very early in medical school was that pressure makes diamonds and I was a diamond in the making. So all of the pressure that I endured working 80 hours a week, seeing so much suffering on a day-to-day basis, erratic sleep, erratic food habits, I was taking care of everyone else, all of my patients, but really not focusing on myself. And in my second year of medical training, I was the senior resident in the cardiac ICU taking care of all of these people's hearts and not really focusing on my own because of my poor lifestyle. And then my diamond cracked and I developed a sensation of a stampede of wild horses across my chest.

([00:06:47](#)):

The first time that Net River happened to me, knocked the wind out of me quite literally. I sat down and the nurse I was working with immediately said something was going on, give me some orange juice. We both laughed it off. It lasted a couple seconds and I was like, oh, low blood sugar. I hadn't slept the night before. We had too many hospital admissions. It never happened again at work, but it followed me home. Those palpitations, that stampede wild horses every single night for weeks and weeks. As I would go to bed, I would get that sensation. It would last anywhere from 10 to 30 minutes and then I would fall asleep. And as you can imagine, that was first terrifying. And then over time, just really frustrating. So I did what every good patient should do is I went to go see a doctor, went to see my doctor, and my doctor did the full million dollar workup including heart ultrasound and blood tests and EKG, you name it.

([00:07:38](#)):

And at the end of all of those tests, she smiled and said, Hey, good news, reassuring. Everything is normal. It's probably just stress. Go home and try to relax. And so I did. What does that mean, just try to relax. I watched movies, I hung out with friends, went to spot, got massages, retail therapy, and nothing seemed to work. And then that's when I put my scientist hat on and dove deep into the science of stress and burnout, what it does to the brain and body. And over time took me a couple of months and I found my way out of stress. And then when I came out of that dark tunnel, stress is when I said, and really vowed to myself that once I finished my medical training, I wanted to be the doctor that I needed during that difficult time. So my villain origin story is that I became a doctor with an expertise on stress, burnout, mental health and resilience because I was a stressed patient looking for answers and couldn't find them.

Dave Asprey ([00:08:36](#)):

The problem with diamonds is that yeah, they're sparkly and beautiful. They're also a abrasive and cut almost anything and they're brittle. So when those old school doctors from the seventies say that sort of thing, there is some value. I've interviewed multiple special forces and navy seal operator guys, and during their training they go through stress inoculation, which is showing you brief intense stress like Sierra School or all of the really intense things, and it's to show you that you'll survive when you're really stressed. But then they finish the training and with doctors, and I was married to an ER doctor for 17 years, she didn't practice the whole time, but lots of experience with that. It's almost like, no, we're not going to give you six weeks of stress. We're just going to beat you into the ground and just hold your face in the dirt for a couple of years where it's more about defeating you than teaching you that you can

handle it and how to recover. I want to ask a kind of controversial question to open things up. This comes from the world of biohacking where I've looked at the effect of biological stress on men and women. It seems like women respond to stress more quickly than men. Do you think that there's something just neurohormonal about that? Not that women aren't resilient at all, it's just that the effects of fasting or cold exposure or heavy exercise, they hit women's cortisol in a faster time than they hit men's cortisol. Do you see any evidence of that with the work you've

Dr. Aditi Nerurkar ([00:10:16](#)):

Done? Most of my work focuses on people overall, so not looking at differences between men and women. And my response to that would be to say that there are no biological, inherently biological differences between men and women, and a lot of this is societal forces that are placed upon us. So we might see certain changes, changes in the spike of cortisol here and there, but what is the true cause of that? Is it the actual biology or is it systems? And the systems have failed us, particularly women. And so I would say that my counter argument to that would be that it's the society and societal forces. People are resilient. It's the systems that burn us out.

Dave Asprey ([00:11:06](#)):

Yeah, systems absolutely create chronic stress. I'm really interested in knowing how to create the ideal hormetic stress for an individual human given all of their biology, all their current state. And that's part of what I'm working with AI on doing at Upgrade labs. It's a biohacking facility, nonmedical, but one of the tracks for people is how do you manage stress better biologically? So I'm like, how do I assess their stress? And then how do we know how much stress for what period of time causes the most beneficial change versus pushing someone into burnout? So it's a question of age, it's a question of nutrition, it's a question of inflammation. There's all kinds of variables that go into it, and I find it fascinating because I know like you, I burn myself out in Silicon Valley and I went through that period of the anxiety things and then a period of just low cortisol that oftentimes happens. So walk me through the HPA axis. What is it and how does it respond to stress?

Dr. Aditi Nerurkar ([00:12:12](#)):

So first off, just a big picture view. When you use that example of an ER doctor versus a Navy seal in the training, your brain and your body are expertly designed to handle short bursts of stress. That is what your brain and body are designed to do very well. And so the example of a Navy seal or the other examples that you've talked about, this is an acute self-limited episode of stress. And then the expectation is that there's a finite start and an end. The challenge right now for most of us, whether you are an ER physician, a physician, an entrepreneur, or just a regular human trying to make it in the world today, is that there are no real short acute burst of stress anymore. It is this chronic ongoing stress without an end, and that is the problem for your brain and your body.

[\(00:13:10\)](#):

So when it comes to the HPA axis, what is happening is that HPA axis which connects the mind to the body, and it's the information superhighway of stress that connects your brain to the rest of your body. It's the way your brain and body respond to stress in the moment. And the HPA axis sets off a whole cascade of hormones and chemical reactions called the fight or flight response, and the fight or flight response, which is governed by your amygdala, which is a small almond shape structure deep in your brain that is all about survival and self preservation. Now, your amygdala is again doing a wonderful job at managing the fight or flight response in the moment. It was designed evolutionarily, your amygdala

and the fight or flight response is designed, it's called fight or flight because when we were all cave people living in the forest, you would see a tiger and you would either flee or fight.

[\(00:14:07\)](#):

And then there's a whole cascade of biological processes that happen in the body. Your pupils dilate, your heart starts beating faster to get fresh blood to the tissues. Your lungs start breathing quicker for oxygen, blood is shunted away from your vital organs to your muscles, so you can either fight or flee, and there's this rush of adrenaline and cortisol and all of these different hormones in the body, but that fight or flight response needs to be equated at the end, right? So that tiger, you fight, you flee, and then you go back to your baseline, you go back to shelter safety and you come back down. That's what happens with acute stress. And that's why your brain and your body are expertly designed to handle that through the HPA axis. But now all of these metaphorical tigers just don't seem to go away. Financial pressures, the calamities in the world, marital strife, there are so many chronic ongoing tigers and they are not going away. And so that amygdala, the fight or flight response and that HPA axis stays on in the background at a low hum. And that is what eventually leads to burnout because your brain and your body can manage short-term stress, come back to baseline. But when it is ongoing, that is when burnout can set it.

Dave Asprey [\(00:15:25\)](#):

We should pause for a second and define HPA axis guys. It's hypothalamic pituitary adrenal axis. So between the hypothalamus in the brain, your adrenal glands and your pituitary gland, and it's those three things. They call them an axis because they're supposed to stay in balance. And when they get triggered or they're not working well, they're transmitted at least in large part through the vagus nerve, which is something that we've had several episodes about. So it turns out there's all these invisible systems that are meant for handling the tiger, but when they're always handling tigers, that just throws everything off. What are the symptoms of burnout?

Dr. Aditi Nerurkar [\(00:16:05\)](#):

We all know what those classic typical symptoms of burnout are. Apathy, feeling bored, unmotivated, unproductive. But what's fascinating is increasingly what burnout looks like is changing and modern day burnout. And what particular study, 60% of people with modern day burnout, their distinguishing feature of burnout was an inability to disconnect from work, which is what makes burnout difficult to identify in ourselves and others because these are atypical features of burnout that we are seeing increasingly, particularly over the past several years.

Dave Asprey [\(00:16:43\)](#):

I can see that in the people around me, people on my team, it's definitely at least it feels like it's as strong as it's ever been. But I didn't live through World War II. There's been other probably more stressful times of famine and pestilence and plagues and wars throughout history, and we tend to survive. What happens to people who go through profound long-term stress? Do they recover fully? Does it stick with them for life? What are the implications?

Dr. Aditi Nerurkar [\(00:17:16\)](#):

It very much depends. It's a case by case basis. So how you handle stress biologically, psychologically, emotionally, and even spiritually depends on many factors. So of course your biology, but also environmental factors, genetics, your upbringing. There are so many factors. We know that the brain, because of this idea of neuroplasticity, which is a fancy scientific word, that simply means that your

brain is a muscle and responds to external stimuli. So it's not like the old scientific thinking, which was like the brain you got for life is the brain you're going to have forever. It's the brain that you had at birth. It's like a real grab bag. Now we're learning through this science of neuroplasticity that your brain changes and evolves based on stimuli. And so a lot of my work has focused on this idea of neuroplasticity, that you have the ability to change your brain through your behaviors. And so even if you may have had a difficult time in childhood early, we know that early childhood trauma, adverse effects that happen in childhood can of course influence your stress response later in life. And yes, it is important to normalize and validate those difficult experiences if you have them to seek therapy, trauma-informed care and all of that. But also to understand that you can over time with patient's practice and perseverance, help rewire your brain for less stress and more resilient through the mechanism of neuroplasticity.

Dave Asprey ([00:18:47](#)):

It was a huge honor for me to interview Dr. Eric Kde, who won the Nobel Prize for his work, documenting neuroplasticity, and then to be on Dr. Daniel Amen's board of directors now for Amen Clinics where he is got more than half a million brain scans. And it proves beyond a reasonable doubt that your brain will change when you change the environment around you, when you change your stress exposure and you change your stress response. So this is something we can do. And in the book that I haven't published yet, the one I'm in the middle of writing now, I'm going through all the different ways we know of that allows you to rewire the brain more quickly, more effectively. What is the single best way for someone to turn stress off, at least for a brief period?

Dr. Aditi Nerurkar ([00:19:34](#)):

There are so many ways that I talk about in the five resets, and so there are five main resets and 15 science back strategies, but the overarching principle is to have a sense of self-compassion and give yourself lots of grace in the process. It has been a difficult time for everyone over the past several years for lots of reasons. First, because of the individual and collective trauma that we've all experienced. The P word, I won't say it more than once, the pandemic and then all the aftermath of that. But like we talked about evolutionarily, you need the stress to shut off. And unfortunately, over the past several years, we've had an onslaught, one onslaught after the other, the pandemic ended that we've had a racial reckoning, multiple humanitarian crises, and it's just on and on and on. And so giving yourself a sense of compassion and grace, understanding that if you are struggling with stress and burnout, you are not the exception. You are the rule. Studies show globally that in a room of 30 people, 21 people are struggling with stress and burnout. So if you feel this way, you are not alone. It is not your fault. And so that is my overarching principle, and I would say probably the most important lens to look at ways to rewire your brain and body being gentle with yourself. Is that most effective path?

Dave Asprey ([00:21:01](#)):

If it's not your fault, doesn't that imply that it's out of your control?

Dr. Aditi Nerurkar ([00:21:06](#)):

No, I would say that first in clinical medicine, it first, the most important thing is to normalize and validate a difficult experience. And so understanding that it's not your fault helps to normalize and validate something very deep. We are all going through this in our own way because we are all individuals seeing the world in different ways through our experiences and what we're experiencing now and our upbringing, et cetera. And so understanding that you are not alone is actually a very powerful

therapeutic tool. It's one of the principles of group therapy. When you go through a difficult experience, there's a lot of shame and isolation. And when you sit in a room with other people who've gone through that same experience, when they share those experiences, there is a healing that happens. It's called the group effect. It's actually a studied phenomenon. And so knowing that you're not alone, knowing it's not your fault, I talk about the stress paradox in the five resets.

[\(00:22:03\)](#):

And what the stress paradox is, is I would see this every single day when I would have a patch waiting room of patients, and my 12 o'clock, my 1245, my one 30, my two o'clock, every single patient would be struggling with stress and burnout. They would come into my office, shut the door and burst into tears. But in that waiting room, kept it together at all costs. And it's this idea that we are all struggling. 70% of people have at least one feature of stress and burnout right now. We are all struggling, and yet we are isolated in our togetherness. So it's a real paradox. It is not your fault. It is your brain and body doing exactly what it's intended to do. Your brain isn't broken, your body's not broken, you're just responding based on neuroplasticity to your external environment. And these times are tough for so many people, including you and me.

Dave Asprey [\(00:22:54\)](#):

It's funny, I do use that group effect as part of my 40 years as zen process because just having the ability to hear someone else who's working on something like, oh, me too. And so that feeling of loneliness goes away. The feeling of community builds. And I've gone from the, it's not my fault. I had birth trauma, the cord wrapped around my neck, and so that creates early childhood adverse effects. And I actually had PTSD that I didn't even know about until I was 30, and I've worked through all that. And at the end of the day, it started out for me as, oh, it's not my fault. And I've kind of evolved to the point where everything is my fault and it's just because I dunno how to solve it yet, right? Like, oh, it's happening to me, but it's still within my control. So maybe it's a difference of semantics about blame or just having the deep inner knowledge that this is something that changes. So I'm happy to take a responsibility. Some really bad things happen and my body freaks out. I'm like, huh, what did I do? Or what did I not do to be able to handle that right? Knowing full well that my biological response is built into my body, it's built into my meat and it's something that's changeable. How do you give people that sense of agency when they're looking at really evolving themselves?

Dr. Aditi Nerurkar [\(00:24:19\)](#):

Beautiful question. That sense of agency is so important, and especially when you're feeling a sense of stress, you are living, your amygdala is driving the train, and you are living in that moment of survival and self-preservation. And so it is all about addressing your immediate needs. The sense of agency requires strategic thinking, forward planning, looking at the future. That part of your brain is the prefrontal cortex, which is the area right behind your forehead. And when you are living in amygdala mode or stress mode, it is very difficult to access the prefrontal cortex, which is another part of your brain. They work very much in tandem. And when you are feeling that sense of stress, it is hard to get out of your own way. Again, your biology working as it should. So how can you move out of amygdala mode and into the prefrontal cortex?

[\(00:25:15\)](#):

You start with creating what I call your most goal most as an acronym. M-O-S-T-M is create a goal that feels motivating. O is its objective S, it is small and t, it is timely. You can achieve it in three months. And so when you can see it, you can be it, right? And so creating that most goal gives you your north star and your why. So it is easier for you to get out of your own way and then you take certain steps to get there.

That's what the first reset is all about. It's about getting out of amygdala mode back into the prefrontal cortex so that you can have more strategic thinking and start with one step. Because when you take that first step, as small as it is, in fact, the smaller the better. You then build your sense of confidence, you build your sense of self-efficacy, and then you can do it a little bit more and a little bit more and a little bit more. But initially your inner critic and you feel very defeated when you're feeling a sense of stress. It's because your inner critic also by the way, powered by your amygdala has a megaphone. And it's about taking that inner critic's megaphone out of its hand and get your prefrontal cortex back involved in the conversation.

Dave Asprey ([00:26:32](#)):

Do you still have an inner critic?

Dr. Aditi Nerurkar ([00:26:34](#)):

Of course I do. We all do. My inner critic is, like I said, this book launch. And there's many times in my life that my inner critic starts gets that megaphone back, and then it's the work of continually working to take that megaphone out during periods of stress. But the difference is because I've been doing this for now 25 years, when I hear that inner critic's voice, it's like meditation, right? When you've been meditating, I've meditated for many years. And so it's observing, oh, there's that inner critic again. Alright, time for me to start taking charge again. And there's these various steps that I can take. But when you are mired in stress and burnout and can't see the FARs from the trees, it's very difficult. And so then inner critic instead of being a voice becomes the voice.

Dave Asprey ([00:27:27](#)):

I've done a lot of healing work like you have, and after six months of electrodes on my head for a week at a time and just doing really deep states meditation, I can see there are times, especially if I'm just really tired or ate something that was not good for my biology, where I can be reactive, but I don't hear an inner critic in my head anymore, not like the way I used to at all. So there's times when I'm reactive or extra emotional and usually I see it as it's happening. And if I don't, I usually see it without a little while and I go, sorry about that. But there isn't the shame and guilt and critical stuff that I dealt with for a huge amount of my life. It just feels like it calmed down.

Dr. Aditi Nerurkar ([00:28:13](#)):

Yes, me too. My inner critic was very loud in my medical training also because sleep deprivation and working 80 hours a week, and I really changed the infrastructure of my life from then to now. And so that of course helps because I just have more reserves now. But of course that inner critic, it's more of a whisper. But you're right, when you do the work and you spend that time really focusing on healing, the inner critic isn't as loud, but it certainly creeps up and then you're also much quicker to recognize it. I call it the canary in the coal mine. We all have this thing. And so some people, for me it was palpitations, like the stampede of wild horses across my chest. For others it might be abdominal pain or headaches or some sort of physical hell of, wait, this is too much stress right now. Or it could be a mental manifestation, difficulty sleeping, anxiety, depression, there's so many, stress has many flavors, a million flavors, and it's about recognizing what your canary song is, what your body's trying to tell you. My body likely had many other tells and maybe I just noticed a skipped beat or something. And then only because I wasn't paying attention as a medical resident, only it had to get so bad. Only when I had that damped of wild horses is when I was like, okay, it's time to pay attention.



Dave Asprey ([00:29:46](#)):

In your book you talk about toxic resilience versus regular resilience. What's the difference?

Dr. Aditi Nerurkar ([00:29:55](#)):

So think back to 2018 and you heard the word resilience and it had a positive connotation, and we all know what that means. It's your innate biological ability to adapt, recover, and grow in the face of life's challenges. But since the pandemic, particularly during the pandemic and over the past several years, that word has changed. And what has happened is it's become and morphed into toxic resilience. So true resilience, the scientific definition which I shared with you, it honors your boundaries, celebrates your ability to say no leads with self-compassion, but toxic resilience is productivity at all costs. It's a mind over matter mindset and it is a manifestation of hustle culture over the past several years. You hear that word resilience. I really grappled Dave with putting that in the subtitle of my book because I hear the word resilience and I cringe. I have a visceral response.

[\(00:30:58\)](#):

Now when someone says something like, just try to be resilient. There's lots of toxic resilience messaging you can work and parent, we are taught, right? You, especially women, that we should work like we don't have a family and parent like you don't have a job. You are told over the past several years, particularly so much messaging around toxic resilience. They don't call it toxic resilience. It's just called resilience. You can take on another project, you're resilient, you can stay late at work, you're resilient, or oh, you can't handle that. You must not be very resilient. And it's a myth that resilient people can't get burned out. Studies show that even amongst the most resilient workers, resilience is protective, but by no means does it prevent burnout. And so this idea of toxic resilience, every country has it. The US we have the energizer bunny just keep going in the UK, keep calm and carry on. And every country has its own version of toxic resilience. And so a lot of my work has been to dismantle this idea of toxic resilience and really go back to true resilience where you really do put boundaries on your time, energy again to protect your mental health and to reset your stress. So it's not this chronic ongoing thing where you can't see the borders, but it's something that is manageable and ultimately can be taint.

Dave Asprey ([00:32:21](#)):

What I've learned to do with biohacking is to develop the sensation for where is the boundary of what I can do versus what I want to do and to be able to make a conscious decision for a brief period of time that even though I am beyond the sustainable thing, I am choosing to be unsustainable. For 48 hours, I flew to Dubai, I gave a killer speech, and I got on a plane and flew home. That's just bad stress, all that flying, all that stuff having to be turned on. But I have all the mechanisms to deal with it. Some of them pharmacological, some of them nutritional, some of them lifestyle, some of them breathing, meditation, all that stuff. So you realize that's a kind of resilience that you can only have if you know when you've hit the wall and the risk of someone who's embraced that productivity at all costs.

[\(00:33:20\)](#):

With the tools that are in your book, the tools that are in the world of biohacking, you can move the wall out pretty far, so your capacity is higher, but that means if you hit the wall because you're unaware of it, you're going to hit it really hard. You had more time to build up speed and you're more likely to get into that burnout state. So it's a matter of knowing what's your real boundary and knowing how do I stay safe if I briefly exceed it like you would in a high intensity workout, you went beyond your normal R rate, but then you've stopped and it was okay, in fact, it was good for you. How do people know where that wall is for them?

Dr. Aditi Nerurkar ([00:33:54](#)):

It takes time and practice. And that wall, like you said, changes. It's not static. It's always in flux. I think the myth is that all stress is bad and the sign shows that there are two kinds of stress. There's good healthy stress. Like you were saying, you flew to Dubai, you gave a great talk, you felt great. Yes, it was stressful, but it was a healthy kind of stress versus, and that's called adaptive stress versus scientifically another kind of stress, that bad, unhealthy, dysfunctional stress called maladaptive stress. When you and I and others use that word, oh, I'm so stressed, this week's going to be stressful. I had a stressful day. What you're referring to is maladaptive stress. That is the cascade causes lots of mental and physical manifestations, but good healthy stress can help move your life forward. Giving a talk in Dubai and flying home or getting a promotion, buying a new car, having a child, planning your next vacation, rooting for your favorite sports team, all examples of healthy positive stress.

([00:34:56](#)):

So it is not that all stress is created equal. In fact, there are two discrete types of stress and the goal is to really transform your unhealthy maladaptive stress back to healthy levels. And that is about what it means when you talk about moving that wall. It's understanding that there is a wall first, where is it? Where is it for you? It's different than where it is for me or others. And then knowing that you have the capacity to move that wall, but only with time practice and a little bit of perseverance, not much effort. Believe it or not, it doesn't take hours and hours of your day to rewire your brain for less stress. It just takes a couple of minutes and you can do it in the midst of a, you don't need a six month vacation to Bali for surf camp though. Sign me up for that plan. You can do it in the midst of your overscheduled life where you have so many priorities and it's just so difficult. We can't all just take off and be checked out for six months. We have financial constraints, responsibilities, obligations. You can rewire your brain for less stress and more resilience, believe it or not, in the messy middle of your everyday life.

Dave Asprey ([00:36:06](#)):

For me, it feels like it goes way deeper than the brain. For instance, on one of those global bender trips for public speaking, I will take extra adrenal extract and herbs like licorice root that support my body's ability to have a healthy stress response. And if I still feel burned out or like I am getting brain fog or on the edge of catching a cold or something, I just take five milligrams of cortef, which is bioidentical cortisol, which allows my body's stress response to do what it's supposed to do. Maybe in fact, I know mine is maladaptive. I don't make enough cortisol sometimes, and that appears to be a lifelong thing, not just a stress response. So it feels like you can physiologically support your biology as well as knowing those are limited time things and you've got to do all the mental and breathing and emotional and things like that. But if you did all those and you're still about to crash, you can buy a little bit of extra time. So as a doctor, shoot holes in that.

Dr. Aditi Nerurkar ([00:37:13](#)):

I have had over my decades of clinical practice, so many patients who have come to see me with bags of medication, polypharmacy, we call it, and polypharmacy is a word that's used mostly for medications prescribed by a physician. Now, my take is always that I don't prescribe nutraceuticals, her pharmaceuticals or anything like any medicine, for example, polypharmacy and prescribing herbs and supplements, et cetera. My take, and again, every sphere of medicine is different and a different focus. My take is that you can use the power and wisdom of the body to help with your stress and burnout. That's not to say that you don't need medication if you're experiencing anxiety, depression, PTSD, insomnia, et cetera. You have to work in concert with a physician and ideally a team of physicians. All of

the patients that I have ever seen have been referred to me. I'm an MD working in the conventional medical system, referred by other MDs, also working in the conventional medical system.

[\(00:38:23\)](#):

I don't see patients any longer, but when I did have a clinical practice, I very much believe in the conventional medical system, taking medication, seeing you're a physician, et cetera, but I never prescribed any. And I know this is work that you do, but it was not my focus. So when you're asking poking holes, I don't necessarily want to poke holes, but I will simply say that my work and my focus is always about fanning that flame of empowerment and that inner sense of agency because often where my patients are and where they would like to go feels like a wide chasm for many people. And my job is to close that gap, is to hold up that mirror and say, you can do this. You can take that first step. And by showing them that these steps are actually quite small and that when you take that first step, you feel a greater sense of agency and efficacy, and then you want to do it again and again and again. And over time, that's my work, is to really help people close that gap from where they are, their origin to where they would like to be their destination.

Dave Asprey [\(00:39:29\)](#):

The chasm can feel really big. I mean, I've had times in my career, especially early on where I feel like I was in a car and had the accelerator pushed all the way to the floor and it's slowing down and there's no more pushing left. And that's the symptom of burnout. But it also makes it feel helpless. And when you feel helpless, there's nothing I can do. So I like that idea of just showing people the way you're doing in your book, like, Hey, there's something you can change.

Dr. Aditi Nerurkar [\(00:39:56\)](#):

And the other thing, just thinking about that accelerator, one question that I often ask patients is, what's your end game? Especially in my young entrepreneurial patients, I had a clinical practice in Boston, which is an entrepreneurial capital, and so many young patients who are entrepreneurs who would come in with the everything but the kitchen sink like binders of information and all of the things that they were doing. My first question is always, what is your end game? And then if they say that I want to be doing this for 50, 60 years, you can't be full throttle. All systems go for 50, 60 years. That's just not how your brain and your body works. So if you want to play the long game, as I imagine many of your listeners are entrepreneurs, you have to do it in a slow measured way, particularly because your brain change, even positive change is seen as a stressor on your brain, so your brain doesn't recognize, of course there is good stress and bad stress but change.

[\(00:40:59\)](#):

So when I've had patients who come in with the binder of a million things, this is why New Year's resolutions don't always work. We want to do 20 things and we want to do them all. And the truth is that your brain sees any changes of stress. And so your brain can only do two new things at a time. I call it the rule of two, if you want those changes to stick. And it takes eight weeks to build a habit. So try two things and bring them and fold them into your life. Incorporate it into your daily life. Give yourself eight weeks, understand that you're going to fall off the wagon and get back up. That is part of habit formation. And then after eight weeks, add two more things and keep doing that until you get to your destination. But if you just aim to do all of it all at once, chances are that in a month, six weeks, you're going to say, I can't manage. It has to be sustainable. You need to work with your biology rather than against it. If you want to think about the long game, which is what we all want, right?

Dave Asprey [\(00:41:56\)](#):

It's so cool. You were saying this at the biohacking conference that's happening at the end of May, beginning of June in Dallas. By the way, guys, biohacking conference.com, if you're not already signed up, expecting more than 3000 people there, and I will be launching a tool that helps people identify their number one goal when it comes to health and performance. Because like you said, everyone wants to be smarter, faster, stronger, want to live forever, be great in bed, get a good night's sleep, get lean, have more endurance and manage stress better. You guys just do it all at once. And just like you said, you can do one or maybe two of those at a time. So it's just helping people even clarify their goals. And then knowing what do you do is really important. And it's funny because the first of your five resets is get clear on what matters most. Talk to me about the techniques of getting clear on your priorities.

Dr. Aditi Nerurkar ([00:42:54](#)):

The goal is to get out of amygdala mode and into your prefrontal cortex. Your prefrontal cortex is what we call adulting in common language, right? Memory planning, organization solving complex problems. When you are an entrepreneur or if you are working in this world and you want to solve some problem, whether it be your work or your life or whatever it may be, we all have complex problems to solve in the world. That's your prefrontal cortex. But when you are under stress, you are governed solely by your amygdala. That is cave person mode focused on survival and self-preservation. And this first reset, get clear on what matters most helps you move out of amygdala mode and back to giving your prefrontal cortex the ability to drive the train forward. And there are three strategies in this particular reset. The first is uncover your most goal. The second is creating a backwards plan, and the third is to uncover your buried treasure.

[\(00:43:54\)](#):

And so going through each of those very briefly, we talked about your most goal and having a clear why. So this is not an existential why. What is my purpose for life? This is a clear, very simple, small why something that you can achieve in three months. And there's lots of examples. So I've had patients say to me, I want less knee pain. So I can take a bike tour through the Netherlands. I want to go to my reunion and feel confident with my high school class, or I want more energy to throw a baseball with my grandson, or I want to sleep better so I can wake up feeling more refreshed and have more energy so I can find a new job. And so when you are depleted and running on empty living in your amygdala, it is very difficult to make changes for your future because you are in your own way.

[\(00:44:45\)](#):

And so creating a most goal helps you get out of your own way. And then the second backwards plan, the second step is the backwards plan, and it helps you work backwards. So looking at your destination first and then moving back to where you are, and when you have it written out, it's just easier to achieve. And then the third sort of part of that first reset is uncover your buried treasure. That is all about getting into a state of flow when you are feeling a sense of stress, that flow state, which you've talked about lots of times with many guests, that flow state is so therapeutic and it's hard to get in a state of flow and you're feeling a sense of stress because the amygdala and your flow state don't exactly jive. And so the key is when you give yourself that sense of self-compassion and grace, understanding that you are not alone. What's happening in the world has been difficult for everyone, and it's your brain and biology responding exactly as it should. But the next step, the next part of that is you are not alone. It is not your fault, but you also have the power to make a change in your life for the better, for less stress and more resilience by doing some small resets along the way. And that first reset helps you get there. It lays the foundation. It's like a roadmap for everything that's to follow.

Dave Asprey ([00:46:07](#)):

What is your most goal right now?

Dr. Aditi Nerurkar ([00:46:10](#)):

My most goal has changed, and I would say I try to have a most goal every six months or so, it's probably time for me to think of a new most goal. My most goal six months ago was to launch the book and really focus on taking care of myself in the process. I walked the talk. And so my most goal was to have enough energy and for the velocity that was to come. And so I really doubled down on my sleep. I focused on daily exercise, zone two, fitness, which works the best for me and meditation, and really just rounding myself very deeply in the moment knowing that I was about to get on a roller coaster ride. And understanding that of course there will be ups and downs and it's going to be fast and so many other things that I cannot control.

[\(00:47:07\)](#):

But what I can control, I call it the tea kettle of stress. We always try to change that dial of, we think about a tea kettle and on a stove with that fire burning so many times, we waste our time, spending time trying to adjust the dial when the heat of the moment is external and out of our control. So what can we do? We can open that lever to blow off some therapeutic steam. And so I have worked very much, my most goal over the past six months is to open that lever to blow off therapeutic steam so that I could show up fully, authentically as myself over the past several months. Now I'm at a slightly different juncture of life and I have to think about the next most goal. And that for me is going to be about sustainability and keeping the momentum going, but in a much more sustainable way. I knew that the last most goal was just a short finite period of time. And so I will be thinking about my most goal next month. That's what I had told myself. And so I'll have a new MOS goal. And it's also okay that as you're going through the process of resetting your stress to change your MOS goal, because what will likely happen is that you'll achieve it, and then it's time for the next MOS goal.

Dave Asprey ([00:48:21](#)):

Do you work with an accountability partner, a therapist or someone who says, Hey, it's been three months. Reassess.

Dr. Aditi Nerurkar ([00:48:29](#)):

That is a wonderful thing to start off with. I've been doing this for 25 years. I did a lot of these strategies on myself as a stressed patient, and while I was in medical training, and yes, I had multiple accountability partners, but over time, now I know what my tells are, like the canary when I know what's happening. And so I typically don't have accountability partners, but it, as we know, based on the science, it is proven that when you have someone that can say, Hey, did you go for your walk today? Or Did you get to bed early today? Or digital boundaries, et cetera. My accountability partner now is I can almost tell very quickly within two days of if something's gone awry and I can quickly, but that's taken years, years of work, Dave, as likely for you,

Dave Asprey ([00:49:27](#)):

You eventually get to be kind of like a Jedi master. Like, okay, I know what's going on in there finally, and I know the corrective steps to take. I still find that it helps to have a third party who has an independent view of me that's not filtered through my own biology, my own ego just to do a check-in with. And I know we have hundreds of thousands of care providers and healthcare people, and he coaches and whatnot, even executive coaches who listen to the show. So guys, there's gold here for you that check in every three months about that midterm most goal with your clients. And that can be a huge gift of just

helping them to have accountability so they don't just chase a goal that they set a year ago, even if it's maybe not the one that serves them best today. And so I like the idea of a scheduled check-in to see where your goal is now once you solve a problem, and my goal is don't have migraines anymore. Well, if you don't have migraines and you haven't had 'em for two years, maybe that's not your top goal anymore. It needs to evolve.

Dr. Aditi Nerurkar ([00:50:32](#)):

And I think for me, my accountability partner very much, I just digitally do it. Now, it's very easy to talk yourself out of certain things. So I just have check marks, I have tallies, I have certain apps that I use where I can say, did I really go to bed at 10:00 PM every night? I thought I did, but did I? And then I say, oh man, no, I got to get back on that. So

Dave Asprey ([00:50:58](#)):

Screen time is good for you, right? Ha

Dr. Aditi Nerurkar ([00:51:00](#)):

Ha. Screen time.

Dave Asprey ([00:51:02](#)):

I'm just teasing you. Your second reset is finding quiet. So your appropriate use of technologies is what you're using for accountability. But talk about your second reset of finding quiet. How does that

Dr. Aditi Nerurkar ([00:51:12](#)):

Work? Yeah, so there's two main buckets in find your Quiet in a Noisy World, and they're very much tied together. It's creating a digital boundary and your sleep. And the reason they're so tied together is because think about what you do first thing in the morning. Maybe not you, Dave, but think about what you do first thing in the morning. Most people, over 50% of people, and I think that's an under-reported statistic, you look at your phone, your second eye isn't even open, you haven't even acclimated to the light of day, and you've just woken up and your phone is on your nightstand and you scroll, scroll headlines, news, social media, email. So think about what that does to your brain. These are not benign things that are happening. They have a direct hit on your dopamine, your cortisol, your stress response. And so before you are even up fully, second eye isn't even open yet.

([00:52:01](#)):

You're not even out of bed. You've just woken up. That is what you're doing. And so that primes your brain for the whole day. Instead, take your phone and keep it off your nightstand. It doesn't have to be in another room, just people are taking care of elderly parents or maybe there's a sick relative. We're all caregivers in some capacity. And so some people say that I can't remove my phone altogether, so keep it out of arm's reach. And the reason is because digital boundaries are really important. So there's geographical boundaries, logistical boundaries. And so when the reason that digital boundaries are important is because we have a boundary in every single relationship in our life with our partners, our colleagues, our friends, our children, and yet we have no boundaries when it comes to this little device here, porous boundaries. And it's not about becoming a digital monk, it's about reconsidering your relationship with your devices.

([00:52:58](#)):

Because studies have found that for optimal health and wellbeing, abstinence is not the solution. It doesn't do as much for your health and wellbeing to abstain from digital devices. What does bode well for health and wellbeing is decreasing your reliance on your digital devices. And how do you do that? By creating digital boundaries. So the first practical step is to take your phone off your nightstand, invest in a low cost alarm clock instead, and then during the day to keep your phone away from your site, from your sight line out of arm's reach. So if you work in a cubicle, put it in a drawer or far away. And the reason is because your brain, that amygdala and the fight or flight response, you are continually scanning for danger and survival and self-preservation. Back when we were all cave people, what did we do to scan for danger?

[\(00:53:53\)](#):

There was a night watchman and the tribe slept and the night watchmen scan for danger, and now we have all become our own night watchmen. And so the modern day equivalent of scanning for dangers, scrolling, and you scroll and then you feel a heightened sense of hypervigilance and your amygdala starts revving up again. And so then you scroll some more and you scroll some more doom. Scrolling is powered by the same machinery, clickbait, news consumption. It's all powered by the same machinery that governs your stress response. And so the way you tame that, it's your primal urge to scroll. And the goal is to decrease, to be more intentional with your media use so that your primal urge to scroll is replaced by your prefrontal cortex. And digital boundaries is one very clear delineation, no pun intended, of managing your stress in the here and now, because that small effect of engaging with our devices, unabashedly of course, has a downstream impact on your brain, on your body.

Dave Asprey [\(00:54:56\)](#):

One of the most impactful things that I did years ago is I said, I'm not taking my phone off of airplane mode until I drop my kids off at school.

Dr. Aditi Nerurkar [\(00:55:06\)](#):

That's beautiful.

Dave Asprey [\(00:55:07\)](#):

And that really just creates a clear line. So for those listeners who have kids who you're still dropping off at school, that's a pretty interesting thing to do. And I said, but what if there's alerts? Everyone survived for a long time without alerts, and I sleep with my phone in airplane mode, and yeah, I have kids and I have companies and all that stuff. And bottom line is, if it's really a big deal, someone's going to have to come and knock on my door. I'm asleep.

Dr. Aditi Nerurkar [\(00:55:34\)](#):

Yeah, people will find a way to get to you.

Dave Asprey [\(00:55:36\)](#):

Yeah, I know a lot of people that, but my kids are in their twenties, they might need to reach me. They'll be okay if they reach you the next morning unless there's a specific, they're on a new date or something and you're signed up for it. Just always be on call is super toxic. And for me, getting quiet time for sleep is important. And that same part of your book, you talk about the popcorn brain, how it's always going off, and what I found is that having alerts on your phone that sets off popcorn brain, so there's almost no alerts on my phone. I've definitely gotten yelled at by my girlfriend for not responding. I'm like,

thumbs up? I was doing stuff, and it took a little bit of adjustment of expectations there because I actually don't live by alerts on my phone, but I also had to turn off alerts in my brain. That voice in our head, we talked about before that critic, it'll set off alerts all the time. So a lot of my spiritual and psychological work is just around not being triggered by stuff. So something that would've put me into that pay attention. It's just not that big of a deal. And so it doesn't trigger the alert, which creates a lot of free time in there. How do you deal with the internal alerts versus technology alerts?

Dr. Aditi Nerurkar ([00:56:53](#)):

I think with time again, what happens is those internal alerts, that sense of hypervigilance or that sense of false urgency just decreases when you are able to get out of amygdala mode and back into your prefrontal cortex. Again, it takes practice. It's just like skill building. It's like riding a bike initially, lots of wobble, lots of falling, and then when you practice it every single day because of neuroplasticity, that one lane dirt road over time can become a super highway with eight lanes because you've just practiced it enough. And so I don't really have what I typically use. So that sense of internal alerts, I talk about multitasking. And multitasking is a way that it's a scientific misnomer, a myth, there's no such thing. When you are multitasking, what you're doing is task switching. And so many of us are multitaskers. I am a reformed multitasker, I am a monotasker.

[\(00:57:55\)](#):

And what you do when you multitask, those alerts are nonstop all day and it's about getting back to monotasking. So what I have done and the antidote to multitasking is monotasking about how do you monotask in the modern world? Time blocking and those alerts are essentially kind of negligible for me at this point because of time blocking. And then I can just keep my phone really understanding the digital boundaries. I have two removed all notifications when there are times when I notice that I'm getting pulled in due to current events or what have you. Understanding the science doesn't always mean that you're immune to the effects of this stuff around you. And so I find myself quickly, there's just a greater sense of awareness perhaps. And so when I find myself getting pulled in, I will switch my myself to gray scale. That also seems to help.

[\(00:58:51\)](#):

And there's many ways tweaks that you can do to really reestablish those digital boundaries, but those alerts, those internal alerts, time blocking helps. And so setting up when you're doing a particular task, say you have four tasks to complete in the next hour, keep your phone out of arm's, reach and try to do five or 10 minutes on one task. Take a few minutes of a break, task, two, five or 10 minutes, take a break. Now, those short monotasking, that's when you're starting monotasking. But now I can do a 45 minute session of monotasking and then taking a break. The key is that you have to take a break for listeners who maybe have always been multitasking and don't really want to monotask or learning about monotasking for the first time. The reason breaks are so important when you are moving from one task to the other is because your brain, there is something called neural consolidation.

[\(00:59:49\)](#):

And what that means is that, again, a fancy scientific word that simply means that there's information floating around in your brain. So when you're working on a work task or something, there's just new information. And so it's about cementing that new information into knowledge. And when you take a break, studies have shown that it's not the active learning or practicing where that neural consolidation happens. It's during the time of rest where the break period that it happens, which is why it's important to step away from the task and do something else and honor your breaks. Another study has found that when you take short breaks, again, it can be as little as 10 seconds all the way up to 10 minutes, not just once a day, but multiple times a day. And one particular study from Microsoft found that at the end of



the workday comparing brain scans of people who took breaks and no breaks, those who took no breaks had higher levels of stress higher. All of the metrics were skewed towards people who took breaks. It was more positive. Those who took breaks had greater productivity engage, and it was a reset. So that sense of internal alerts that you may have likely due to the multitasking, the many things that you're doing, when you manage those other aspects, those internal alerts will decrease with time.

Dave Asprey ([01:01:10](#)):

It feels like we all have this amazing time blocking technology available to us. It's called the calendar on your phone. That's what it's for. And so what I do is if I've set aside time for an interview with you, I am not picking up my phone and checking messages and doing all that kinds of stuff. I do find though that my calendar looks like Tetris. Every minute is spoken for. I have a team who helps me make sure my time is allocated effectively, but at the end of the day, I'll check right now, let's see. Right now I have 1,622 unseen text messages. Now when I tell people that number, they get this sense of horror. They're almost empathetically stressed for me, and I feel bad. Some of those are from friends or important people who wanted to do something and others are just meaningless. And I respond when I can, but I don't actually set aside an hour a day to plow through text messages. Every time I send one, I get two back. It just feels like email all over again from the late nineties. How do you deal with inbox overload?

Dr. Aditi Nerurkar ([01:02:23](#)):

Dave, you're not going to be happy with this answer, but I have always, since the beginning of time when I got my email set up, I have really had an inbox of zero.

Dave Asprey ([01:02:39](#)):

Oh my gosh, you're one of those. Yeah, I love you guys. You're totally stressed, triggered by a full inbox. So you allow that stress to control your life to make sure it's empty.

Dr. Aditi Nerurkar ([01:02:48](#)):

Yeah. And in college, I remember this because I think I was like, I forget when email was invented, but it was like I remember very clearly in college, one of my professors, I asked her about how do you manage this information overload? And she said to me, it's like a tennis match. You just have to get the ball across the net. And for some reason that really stuck with me, that analogy. And so it's changing a little bit where I keep those, but it's only a handful. It's like 10 emails or something in my inbox that have all been read, but I'm holding onto it for a certain reason. But I don't know, a few hundred emails every hour or something.

Dave Asprey ([01:03:41](#)):

So your alerts are turned off? Yes. Do you set aside an hour a day to go through all your messages?

Dr. Aditi Nerurkar ([01:03:46](#)):

No, I would say that's just too trying and just mentally depleting.

Dave Asprey ([01:03:52](#)):

But you monotask, which means you're not doing emails. So when are you doing them? I do

Dr. Aditi Nerurkar ([01:03:57](#)):

Them probably three to four times a day, 15 minutes, and it's actually one of my tasks.

Dave Asprey ([01:04:04](#)):

Okay. So you do block that out. You have 15 minutes, three or four times a day. I won't

Dr. Aditi Nerurkar ([01:04:08](#)):

Sit down and do a full hour, just respond to the email, and then I check again. I also understand that sense of urgency. It's just like you, if you really need to get in touch with me, you will. And what I have also noticed is I don't check email first thing in the morning. Again, I'm a mom and a working mom, so I spend my mornings with my family and then I check my email throughout the day. But I also, because you, I travel a lot and understanding time zones and differences and time zones, et cetera, I was recently in Paris and I was there for vacation my first vacation several months because I've just had a very busy schedule. And I was once again reminded of this idea of information just never ends. And I had my inbox was inundated because I was away and I was like, ah, I'll just respond. I had an out of office message and I'll just respond when I come back. That was the only time that my inbox got out of hand. And then immediately when I came back, I was able to respond, but I just can't. I've always had an inbox of zero. I can't handle having an inbox. When I see that on friends with texts or WhatsApp, there's so many things that I just quickly see it. I quickly triage. It's the doctor in me. I can triage quickly.

Dave Asprey ([01:05:37](#)):

Yeah, you're triaging. I have a similar kind of process, at least for email. My assistant goes through my emails and the four decisions I actually had to make, she'll just ask me and they make the decisions and all the communication happens. And so I'm kind of free of my inbox at this point. I have someone who helps me with it. But when it comes to WhatsApp and text messaging, I'm like, let's see. I had eight hours of podcasts and meetings where I'm not checking messages and I'm going to feed myself properly. I'm going to have a romantic life and a social life, and maybe I'll look at 'em again, but now right before bed because that's bad too. And other people's demands on my time aren't my demands. So I've learned to just be at peace with that. Knowing full, I might've missed something. But FOMO is also built into that little critic in your head. And so I just translate it to Jomo, the joy of missing out and I did what I wanted it to.

Dr. Aditi Nerurkar ([01:06:28](#)):

I love it. Do

Dave Asprey ([01:06:29](#)):

My best.

Dr. Aditi Nerurkar ([01:06:30](#)):

I love it. And just embracing that sense of humanism, that you're a mere mortal and you particularly Dave or a mere mortal who's doing tremendous things and you are really working at capacity. And so if an email falls through, it's okay. They'll email you. Again,

Dave Asprey ([01:06:47](#)):

I'm at capacity and I do know there's a few people who are like, he's such a jerky, didn't answer my text. I'm like, okay, if that's your framing, I'm not going to argue with you. And there's a downside to it, but it

doesn't seem too bad. I want to ask you about one more little trick from the five resets because in a normal podcast, this isn't an audio version of your book. People can get that and I recommend they do if this resonates with them. But you talk about specific studies on the benefits of gratitude and expressive writing. That's as part of your fifth reset, which is about bringing your best self forward. What is the deal with gratitude and expressive writing?

Dr. Aditi Nerurkar ([01:07:27](#)):

I love these two strategies. It's a way to silence your inner critic and bring your best self forward. We talked about the inner critic and how your inner critic has a megaphone when you're feeling a sense of stress because that mechanism is powered by your amygdala. Ironically, your inner critic is trying to keep you safe even though it feels very negative when you're trying something new or trying to get out of stress and engage or be challenged. Your inner critic says, no, don't do it. It's not safe. It's scary because it's a fear of failure, et cetera. And so the other thing that happens when you're feeling a sense of stress is that your brain, because it's prime for survival with the amygdala, is focused on the negative. And it's like things happen in technicolor in your brain with the negative, but in reality, the same amount of negative and positive things are happening at all times.

([01:08:20](#)):

But like Rick Hanson, he's a psychologist, talks about the stickiness of negative experiences in your brain. Yeah, he's been on the show. Yeah, so he talks about Teflon or Velcro, right? So negative experiences, when you are feeling a sense of stress become like Velcro in the brain, you hold on tight, and gratitude can help shift that Velcro aspect of negative experiences making them less sticky to Teflon. And in scientific terms, this is called cognitive reframing. What you focus on grows. And so while the same amount of negative and positive experiences are happening to you at all times throughout the day when you are feeling a sense of stress, your lens is about self-preservation. And so you focus and hold on tight to those negative experiences. And it is about gratitude can help shift that. And so how does it shift that every day you write down five things you're grateful for and why it's important to write rather than type, because your brain uses a different neural circuitry to write and versus typing.

([01:09:19](#)):

That's why you write your grocery list on a post-it, and then you lose the post-it. But you remember what you need from the grocery store versus typing it in your phone. It's very easy. You leave your phone at home or something and it's very easy to forget what you needed when you type. So keep a little how you removed your phone from your nightstand because you created a digital boundary. So instead put a gratitude journal. There can be a small little notebook with a pen. Write down five things you're grateful for every day and why. What you will notice over time when you practice it at 30, 60 and 90 days is that you will have a better decreased stress, more improved mood, greater resilience, likely less sleep fragmentation. And the reason is because of cognitive reframing, you start focusing on the positive things that are happening and your brain gets primed over time.

([01:10:11](#)):

So when you are doing a daily gratitude practice, you go through your day and you think, oh, you know what? I need to write that down. Oh, I need to write that down tonight. Oh, I want to write that down. And that becomes more sticky initially. You may say, there's no way many patients have said this to me. I can't think of five things. There's no way I can barely think of one, two arms and two legs, food in the pantry, a roof over your head. These are things that not everyone can say they have, especially now. And there will be days when you have 15 things to write. You can only write down five. And so five things every day, date it and write down quickly why this is not a teenage journal. This is just a simple 62nd writing exercise and it can help retrain your brain.

[\(01:10:52\)](#):

The second is expressive writing developed by someone named James Penna Baker. He is a psychologist at the University of Vanderbilt or Vanderbilt University, and his work is fascinating. So what is expressive writing? You simply spend four consecutive days writing freehand, again, writing, not typing, writing freehand for 20 to 25 minutes, set a timer and start writing about a painful experience or traumatic experience that you've had. You'll notice on day three, you'll get an uptick of negative emotions. And then day four, those will be ironed out. Expressive writing has been found to be helpful in so many scenarios. I mean, talk about replicability of the science, Dave, like it's been shown to be helpful for keeping decreasing hospital readmissions, anxiety, depression, sleep stress, increasing your GPA. I mean, it is remarkable what expressive writing can do. Expressive writing is actually very helpful when you're going through, or maybe you've had a difficult or traumatic painful experience in the past and it's something that's weighing on you or you're thinking about it.

[\(01:12:03\)](#):

Rumination. I will say that the caveat is, of course, I have to say this is a clinician that if you've had a history of trauma, if you are having ruminations and feeling depressed and actively feeling this way, it's important to see a doctor or a therapist get trauma-informed care and do this in the auspices within the realm of conventional medical care because it's a powerful tool and things can get re-triggered. But those are the two practices that I've used many, many times throughout my life and continue to do so. I've prescribed them to patients and it is really a way to silence that inner critic when you're having a difficult time.

Dave Asprey [\(01:12:43\)](#):

The expressive writing exercise I first heard about years and years ago in a book called The Artist's Way,

Dr. Aditi Nerurkar [\(01:12:50\)](#):

I love that book.

Dave Asprey [\(01:12:51\)](#):

It's a well-known personal development book and for listeners, that's definitely worth your time, but sometimes you get unstuck in an artistic or creative endeavor. Expressive writing undoes some old memories. You're not even really sure what's going on there, but suddenly you're unstuck. And I think even Rick Rubin talked about some kind of a similar process in one of the chapters of his amazing new book, and he's also been a guest on the show and is a friend. And just understanding how these really high capacity people who do good things in the world are able to use writing or the gratitude journal. What I've found from recommending and doing gratitude for, geez, 15 years now on a pretty regular basis, when you first start, like you said, I can't come up with five things, and you realize your capacity to forget the things that are good that happen to you, it's profound even when you're used to it.

[\(01:13:45\)](#):

I remember there was one day I was at the end of the day, I'm writing it on all the things I'm grateful for and I only have seven. And I go through times where I'm like, how many can I come up with? And if you do that, eventually realize there's an almost unlimited number of things when you frame it. But on that day, written down 10 or whatever, and I totally forgot that I hit the New York Times that day, so I wasn't grateful for that. My brain had erased it already. And you thought, God, the automatic systems in there are just messing with you until you get on top of them, which is why that gratitude constant reframing is such a big

Dr. Aditi Nerurkar ([01:14:19](#)):

Wall. The habituation is tremendous. There's two kinds of happiness. There's two kinds of stress. There's the he don happiness and you demonic happiness, and they both work very differently on your body and your cells know the difference.

Dave Asprey ([01:14:33](#)):

They sure do. I have one more question for you, and this just has to do with mindset and framing and things like that. If you could look and feel and have the energy and mind that you have today or better, how long would you choose to live?

Dr. Aditi Nerurkar ([01:14:51](#)):

What a great question. I'm thinking a lot about longevity because it is all the rage and we're all talking about it and thinking about it because I have children, I would say as long as possible, should fit 200 years.

Dave Asprey ([01:15:08](#)):

I love it. It's really interesting, the difference in mindset from people. There are still a lot of people stuck in healthspan thinking, oh, I couldn't live beyond 85 because it's not possible. I'd be sick. I'm like, no, the question was assuming you weren't sick. But it's like they processed that out. We process out gratitude and let's think about that future. And I think it's getting built right now. That's what I'm seeing. So it's really cool to hear your mindset, look, I got kids, I got stuff to do here, and

Dr. Aditi Nerurkar ([01:15:37](#)):

I'm just an observer and a lifelong student. Even though I might be an expert on stress and burnout, I'm learning every single day from everyone. I've learned things from our conversation today. And I love the beginner's mind and aim to cultivate it all the time. I am. My recent trip to Paris sparked something in me to, I speak proficient French, but I want to become fluent. And so I'm taking French classes because learning something new and looking forward to something and being a beginner in something, there's just so much energy there and goodness. And so I love learning and the process of learning. So, and I like observing the world and seeing how the world is changing. I am an eternal optimist. I'm also easily swayed by negative things. And so that is why I've had to work very hard and now it's not really work. It's just a way of life of bringing these resets into my life. And I practice all of these things to varying degrees. But yeah, 200, 500, there's no limit. Let's keep going.

Dave Asprey ([01:16:46](#)):

Nice. I feel like curious people have the ability to live way longer because there's something exciting once there's no more excitement, why would you want to be around anymore?

Dr. Aditi Nerurkar ([01:16:56](#)):

Right? Yeah. In fact, there is data to show that your mindset and how old you think you are, there's that question, how old are you if you didn't know how old you were? But that there is some data, preliminary data to show that the age that you believe you are, your cells respond. Now of course, it's not exact. It's not like, oh, I'm 32 forever, so therefore you are 32. But there is that mindset of feeling youthful and vibrant and energetic. It does take you far and it does impact your biology.

Dave Asprey ([01:17:32](#)):

For years, I've been a member of this global group of entrepreneurs called YPO, young President's Organization.

Dr. Aditi Nerurkar ([01:17:37](#)):

I love YPO. I've spoken at several of their chapters.

Dave Asprey ([01:17:40](#)):

Oh yeah, me too. It's a really cool group. And when you turn 50, they kick you out of YPO and make you go into YPO Gold. And I emailed them and I said, I identify as being 39 and my lab work supports that. So if you won't respect my identity, I can't go into YPO Gold. And of course that threw them for a loop. They didn't know what to do with it. But I actually left the organization. Frankly, I'm not 50. I'm not telling my cells that, yes, I know I'm 51 on the calendar, but I truly energetically am telling my body very consciously that no, we're not going there. Not yet. And it's not that I'm afraid to go there, it's that I'm choosing a youthful, energetic, and I want to be around that in my life. And I have lots of friends from the entire, from twenties up to nineties, because that's what brings richness to your life. But I feel like that little tidbit you just dropped there about having a young and curious energy, it's really important.

Dr. Aditi Nerurkar ([01:18:44](#)):

I'm 32 forever, Dave, and I've had patients, I have taught patients who have been 95. The brain forever learns and changes and adapts. And I have had patients who have come to see me in their nineties, well into their nineties saying, can you teach me how to manage my stress better? And I say, of course. And they don't feel a sense of futility like, oh, it's too late. You're the youngest you are today.

Dave Asprey ([01:19:12](#)):

I love that. Aditi, thank you for coming on the show and for being a listener as you shared and for your book, the Five Resets Rewire your Brain and Body for less stress and more resilience. Guys, you can find more information anywhere you'd like to buy

Dr. Aditi Nerurkar ([01:19:27](#)):

Books. Thank you so much for having me, Dave. I loved this conversation. I've been a fan of you and your work for ages.

Dave Asprey ([01:19:36](#)):

Oh,

Dr. Aditi Nerurkar ([01:19:36](#)):

Thanks. So to be able to speak to you today was truly a gift.

Dave Asprey ([01:19:40](#)):

Keep doing good work in the world.

Dr. Aditi Nerurkar ([01:19:42](#)):

Thank you. You too. Right back at you

Dave Asprey ([01:19:44](#)):

Guys. If you like today's episode, do you know what to do? You could go out and read or listen to the five resets and pick up some more skills for just being more in charge of your stress response. Because if you own your stress, it's a lot easier to be happy. And when you're happy, you're nicer to the people around you. Actually, let me erase that. You're kinder to the people around you. You don't have to be nice. You have to be kind as called, having boundaries. And I'm working, and I believe you are too because you listen to the show on making a world that's full of people who actively choose to be kind, because they have that kind of choice, which comes from having energy, which comes from controlling their stress. I appreciate you listening, and I'll see you at the Biohacking Conference. You are listening to the Human Upgrade with Dave.