

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

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

You are listening to The Human Upgrade with Dave Asprey. Today is a fun interview because our guest is a high powered executive who rendered some health problems and actually a very successful guy. And we're going to talk about what success really looks like. So many of you when you're listening to this, you have a lens on the world of how do I become more successful as a human being? And there's many different definitions of success that I've gone through in my career, and I think you're going to find a lot of wisdom here. And this is unrelated to why he is on the show, but when he was 25, he was editor in chief of Information Week magazine. And this is something I haven't mentioned on the show before, but the first time I was ever mentioned on the front cover of any magazine was Information Week when I was maybe 24. And it was an article about how email was actually freeing up time for people. This was at the time before email became the scourge of the earth. And it was funny, I'm like, look at me. I'm in Information Week. I'd been an entrepreneur magazine before that, but I wasn't on the cover. It was just my name on the cover. But at the time I was like, look at me. I'm successful in my IT career. So Jerry Kelowna, thank you for that mention. Many, many years ago,

Jerry Colonna ([00:01:39](#)):

Dave, I had no idea that that connection was there and thank you for surprising me with that. I would've been sorely disappointed if I heard that story on email. So thank you for sharing that. Just

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

Now you've got it. You were also a founder of Flatiron Partners in New York, which was one of the biggest and most successful early stage investors. Your partner at JP Morgan Private equity and we'll say a big name VC kind of a guy. Good way to put it.

Jerry Colonna ([00:02:10](#)):

Yeah, I was a mocker. That's a good Yiddish word. I was a guy. I was a big wig.

Dave Asprey ([00:02:16](#)):

Nice. It's become something interesting for me because when I was 12 I read an article about what venture capitalists do and I'm like, that sounds like the most fun you could ever have, just helping entrepreneurs. And I was so excited. Someday I want to be a vc. And years later I had a job on Sandhill Road working for a VC and this actually kind of sucks. And then I started Bulletproof and I got schooled in what VCs really do, which isn't always aligned with partners or with the CEOs of portfolio companies. And so I've had this thing where I look at what you've done and I've talked with VCs from the generation before me, and they're all enormously wealthy, but there's a wisdom that comes in from just seeing success and failure over and over and over. But most of them, by and large, are not happy people. They're kind of burned out people. I see a lot of broken marriages, by the way. I am also divorced, but we consciously uncoupled and I would say it's not a broken marriage, it's a successful marriage that ended. And I also see a lot of alcohol drug abuse. It's not always a happy place and you seem like you've gone from what they used to call you the Yoda of Silicon Valley. You seem like you've made some kind of personal transition that's worth sharing with listeners because you're a Buddhist a coach, you run the reboot podcast and you talk to high performance CEOs to help them not do the stuff that you and I have both done. And so that's why you're on the show today and welcome.

Jerry Colonna ([00:04:02](#)):

Well, thank you for that. And I'm still stuck on a 12-year-old reading an article about what VCs do.

Dave Asprey ([00:04:09](#)):

It was an entrepreneur magazine. I wanted to be an entrepreneur since I was like seven, I'm going to start a business someday it's going to be a thing. And my friend's like, I want to be a baseball star. I'm like, that's dumb. And I'm just a nerd.

Jerry Colonna ([00:04:22](#)):

I was just going to say that was the word I was going to use. I feel kinship with your nerdy self because I was probably reading similar kinds of things, not quite business all. Although I did dive deep in some strange business biographies. I was always fascinated by the individual and to roll it all the way back. When I was at information week, my first job was as a reporter, and so I really enjoyed knowing the person behind the story. But to your question, yeah, so I'm 60 now, just to give some context, and I walked away from being a VC at 38, so quite a number of years ago, quite a number of lifetimes ago, if you will. The short story on that is that the reality of the emptiness of success of material success hit me like a ton of bricks around 38 years old where I had gotten to the point where the more outward success I had, the worse I felt inside.

([00:05:49](#)):

And the simplest way to understand it was that the inner me was constantly at odds with the outer knee and that which was proffered as the path just felt shallow and empty. And it was so bad that after Flatiron wound down, which was concomitant with the collapse of the first wave of internet companies, I joined JP Morgan and within six or seven months, the depression that had been stalking me for years instead of lifting actually got worse to the point where I was suicidal and really broken. And so I walked away from it all. Not sure what I was going to do next, but it's from that point forward that who I am today was born

Dave Asprey ([00:06:55](#)):

Talking about this hollowness. So you probably remember Exodus Communications back in the day. This is a company that created the data center industry, and I was a co-founder of their professional services group. The part of the business that I helped to start grew to a hundred million a quarter in revenue, and soon I was doing m and a, the technology m and a, I would say, should we buy this or not based on the capabilities? So I rose very, very high up in the company and I remember when I had 6 million in stock and I looked at a friend and said, I'll be happy when I have 10. And I had the same thing. I don't think I was depressed, I was just angry and probably anxious and wouldn't have recognized either the anger I knew but didn't know why. And the anxiety that's behind the anger and the fear that's behind that, I couldn't even conceive of that because why would you be afraid? You have all this money and you have a great job and you're changing the world by building all this cool tech, but there is that what you described as hollowness where you're just not happy. Why does either economic or career success seem to almost more likely make unhappiness versus happiness?

Jerry Colonna ([00:08:12](#)):

Well, we could just sort of pause and recognize the wisdom teachings that all of us have been exposed to for millennia, right? I mean, whether it's the Greek philosophers or particular religious tradition, they have taught us about the femoral nature of fame, praise money as they stand in for meaning, and yet it feels that it's something that we have to learn again and again, if I can bring it back to something you

said before in describing me, you talked about how I work with high performing folks, and I'll confess that I wince a little bit every time someone says that because first of all, my ego feels good when people acknowledge that that feels great, but I don't like the fact that my ego feels good about

Dave Asprey ([00:09:24](#)):

That. I'm still astounded that a venture capitalist knows what ego is. So congratulations on your progress, my friend.

Jerry Colonna ([00:09:31](#)):

Well, 33 years of psychoanalysis in 22 years of sitting on the meditation cushion, I've got to have learned something.

Dave Asprey ([00:09:40](#)):

There you go. And you are not a venture capitalist anymore. To be really clear, I'm just labeling you for fun.

Jerry Colonna ([00:09:45](#)):

Yeah, no, I'll take it. I have left the dark side and I've joined the force. I'm a Jedi now. No longer a sht Lord, I'm teasing. But I want to go back to this word performing high, performing this phrase because I think it's part of the answer to the question that you asked, which is that we can get fixated, can't we? On projecting who we want to be even at 12 years old onto this idealized version of a high performing successful business person only to blind to their suffering. I have a client who is the CEO of a very, very large company. They have over a hundred thousand employees, and I was meeting with him last week and he said, I wish everybody understood how anxious I am all the time. And it's not just the VCs, it's the very painful realization that ending the game of life with a millionaire acres or ending the game of monopoly with all of the real estate doesn't guarantee anything. It doesn't guarantee misery, but it doesn't guarantee happiness.

Dave Asprey ([00:11:16](#)):

There's pretty good data that happiness is independent of wealth above about \$75,000 of household income. That study though, was done pre Biden, so it's probably now about 125,000 or something when your basic needs are met and you don't have to worry about food and you have to worry about your mobile phone bill, additional dollars don't increase happiness. But if you're constantly, constantly worried, so many people in the US and around the world are today, having enough can increase happiness. But having more than enough doesn't seem to have a strong correlation there. I mean, yes, you go on a more expensive vacation, but you can still be miserable the whole time, right? When I talk about high performance at the beginning of this show and we're at 1200 or so episodes end over the last 10 years and lots of downloads and all that, lots

Jerry Colonna ([00:12:07](#)):

Of high performance,

Dave Asprey ([00:12:09](#)):

Why thank you my ego. Thanks you. And for the record, I just want to say this, my ego is smaller than yours. Oh,

Jerry Colonna ([00:12:17](#)):

I dunno about that. I've got no, you're probably right.

Dave Asprey ([00:12:23](#)):

I forgot where I was going. I've used myself so much. But the idea of performance there was I would ask guests. In fact, I wrote a whole book called Game Changers about the answer to this question. It was what are your three pieces of advice for people who want to perform better at everything they do? As human beings, you want to perform better as a human being, not perform better in your job or your sport, but in life. And from that evolved a bunch of commonalities between 400 guests on the show. And to date that book, it wasn't my bestseller by far, but it's the highest number of stars on Amazon, and it's one where people will stop me in the street and say, I read Game Changers and it changed my whole life. It was like a distillation of that, not perform better at your job, not perform better at one thing, but what should you do? And funny enough, it was mostly about relationships and intimacy and choosing who you wanted to be and things like that, that were not the world of high performance. You grind it out and all that. If I was to ask you that question, three most important pieces of advice for people want to perform better at being human, what would you say? Now,

Jerry Colonna ([00:13:42](#)):

It may be a struggle to come up with three. So I'll start with one and see where my mind takes me. I coined a phrase a number of years ago called radical self-inquiry radical. And I often say it's radical because we so rarely do it. And what is the, it is the process by which we slowly and compassionately strip away the masks that we wear. So there's no place left to hide. And I want to hold that thought and move on to an expression, a question that grows directly out of that. And this question was a quote, game changer for me personally. This question bounces around the internet all over the place. The question is how have I been complicit in creating the conditions? I say I don't want. I phrase that question very, very carefully. I use the word complicit, not responsible because when we start to do radical self-inquiry, there's a defense mechanism that kicks in and the defense mechanism goes like this, it's not really my fault, it's everybody else's fault, and this is equally powerful defense mechanism. It's all my fault. And the truth is, it's neither So complicit relates to the word accomplice, which relates to the notion of I am driving the getaway car. I'm not sticking up the bank teller.

([00:15:23](#)):

The second half of that question is I say, I don't want, I say, I don't want to be dictated to by my ego. I say, I don't want to listen constantly to my anxiety, which then might make me resentful and angry, and yet doing so has served me in some ways. Now why am I responding to your question this way? I have found that I can move away from suffering and more towards happiness on a more consistent basis when I am willing to look at myself a little bit with some love, with a lot of laughter to say, how have I been complicit in creating the condition right now that I'm complaining about so that I can then make conscious choices about how I want to live? That may not be three, but I think that's the most important thing I would say.

Dave Asprey ([00:16:28](#)):

Why do you avoid saying it's your fault and therefore your responsibility and you just say you're complicit?

Jerry Colonna ([00:16:35](#)):

So it's a good question. The challenge with it's my fault is that it's going to set off a do loop. Remember do loops from our early computing days where absolutely the processor gets stuck

Dave Asprey ([00:16:53](#)):

Or trend 1 0 1,

Jerry Colonna ([00:16:54](#)):

Right? Right. We get stuck in processing the same information again and again and again, which is, I'm a piece of shit. I'm terrible. And the truth is you're not broken, you're just stuck. So Daniel Pink writes about this, well in his latest book, the Power of Regret, when we get stuck in this guilt driven do loop where the result is constantly that I'm insufficient, that I'm broken, we actually can't move forward. But when we substitute regret or as I offer to Daniel in a conversation, we had the word of remorse, which I think is a super powerful word, by understanding that, for example, let's say that as a child, we endeavor to be an entrepreneur because it's going to give us a sense that we're in control of our own life. And the root behind that may have been the fear that we got by watching our father or our mother not be in control of their own life.

([00:18:30](#)):

In my case, it was watching my father lose his job at 10 years old and me making a deal with myself. I was never going to be dependent upon somebody else for my job. So that not understanding that that's actually what the driver is means that the choices I make remain stuck in my unconscious, stuck behind the mask. And the irony is the whole point of it was in order to feel safe, was that so that I could feel that I was in charge? Well, it turns out I'm not in charge. My unconscious is in charge. That's why that notion of complicity is really, really important.

Dave Asprey ([00:19:12](#)):

I see why you take it in that direction. I've worked with about 1500, we'll say, highly successful people who've come through my neuroscience brain upgrade program. It's a five days using computers to guide your brain into the same state as an advanced zen meditator. It also has a lot of deep inquiry and universally, it doesn't matter how wealthy or successful you are, the process is based on a very specific gratitude and then forgiveness. It's actually very Buddhist in its structure, and I've never had anyone go through who didn't have work to do with their parents because there's all sorts of things that you say, well, I know my parents did that. I vowed to never do it again. And it becomes really kind of scary. When I was 30, I was fortunate to learn this, but I thought I was free of all that. And I realized, wait, I either do exactly what my parents did or the exact opposite of what they did. But both of those are states of control, and you realize how many decisions that felt like the right thing to do were just ancient programming in your tissues before you even had a prefrontal cortex. And they're still driving.

Jerry Colonna ([00:20:32](#)):

Dude, you speak in my language. I remember bringing some of this to a Buddhist teacher of mine who said, with a fairly thick Chinese accent after I was complaining about some miserable aspect of my life, he just shook his head and said, dog tied to stick. And I was like, what the hell? He said, dog run away from stick, dog tied to stick, dog run to stick, dog tied to stick. And it was a really profound metaphor for exactly what you're talking about. I will not be anything like them. Oh, I'll be just like them. Oh wait, dog's still tied to the stick? The answer of course is to slip the collar, but that's the radical part. That's the part. Let's say God bless you if you in your thirties figured out how to slip the collar.

Dave Asprey ([00:21:27](#)):

It took me about 10 years, but I feel like I've slipped the collar at this point. Yeah,

Jerry Colonna ([00:21:32](#)):

Yeah. I mean, it's the slipping of the collar that actually enables us to realize we've been collared all along. And to your point, sometimes we're living out the, I call them subroutines, that low level programming that we don't even realize is operating right. The subroutine is, I am nothing unless I make a lot of money. Or the subroutine is if I pursue money, then I'm bad. I mean, there's all these sublevel programming going on. And for me, I recently wrote a new book called Reunion. And in Reunion, what I'm really trying to unpack is what are the submarines we inherited from our ancestors, meaning our great grandparents and our grandparents? Because the more we start to unpack those belief systems, like I had a client who just struggled to be able to relax and celebrate the wins in their company. Well, after unpacking it, we stumbled upon ancestors who had survived a genocide.

Dave Asprey ([00:22:52](#)):

It's common.

Jerry Colonna ([00:22:53](#)):

It's incredibly common. I mean, as soon as I said it to you, it's like I could see your whole body resonated. It's like, oh, right.

Dave Asprey ([00:23:01](#)):

You have so much wisdom through the path you've gone down. What I find in my own path and when I'm working with clients, it's that the first thing you do is you look at, okay, recent experiences, big financial losses, trauma in your life, and pretty soon you end up, those are reflections of childhood stuff. So you get rid of childhood stuff. Most people from there go to more like birth and even in the womb kind of traumas, which really can be effective. I was born with a cord wrapped on my neck. I had PTSD. I'm like, someone's trying to kill me.

Jerry Colonna ([00:23:38](#)):

So I was my son. Oh,

Dave Asprey ([00:23:39](#)):

You were as well?

Jerry Colonna ([00:23:40](#)):

No, my

Dave Asprey ([00:23:40](#)):

Son. Oh, your son was okay. And it affects you until you slipped that collar. Literally. Yeah. It's not a conscious thing. In my work, I call the meat operating system, the meat os like Mac Os, but better. It's below what you're not supposed to know what's going on in there. And meditation is one of the ways of looking inside and seeing what's in there. But once people clean that stuff out, they go down one of two paths. One is ancestral trauma and the other one is past life trauma. And I've chosen because I think it's rational to believe in past lives because if I'm wrong, I won't know. And if I'm right, it just makes me less

fearful in this life. So I don't even care if it's true. I think it's actually quite real, but it doesn't matter if I think it's real or not because if you're a computer science atheist, it's still the only rational way to approach life from what I've come to discover.

[\(00:24:34\)](#):

So when people do that, they tend to be called in one direction or another and forgiving, or at least letting go of a reactivity to forgiveness is a trigger word for a lot of people. So we'll just say becoming non-reactive or becoming free of what feels like someone stalking your people, right? It's a major thing, and it reminds me of Steven Porges, who was a guest on the show a couple of times. Father a polyvagal theory or vagal nerve is controlling a lot of these responses in the body. He tells a story of how he used his technology in London in a larger room full of people. He just plays certain sounds that caused you to be able to let go of trauma. And he had to stop playing the sounds after about 30 seconds in London because everyone in the room was melting down.

[\(00:25:30\)](#):

And he said, Dave, usually we have some therapists there. Usually there's 20 or 30 people in a room of hundreds who really need help. And he said everyone did. And he just realized everyone in London either lived through the bombing of London or they're displaced and they're immigrants. They had to leave their countries. And so everyone there was traumatized, at least in his room, and he said it was a much higher percentage of trauma than he's seen in other places. And we're all rational. We think adults going about our day and someone plays a sound or someone pushes an old button that you don't even know you have, and then you get this huge physiological feeling and then you become anxious or you become depressed. Why at the upper echelon of leadership, why is it worse?

Jerry Colonna [\(00:26:18\)](#):

Well, first of all, I just want to give you a word that may bring together the dichotomy that you identified before between looking at ancestors or looking at past lives. I think what we're really saying is the transpersonal matters.

Dave Asprey [\(00:26:38\)](#):

So you have to bring in Stan GR and transpersonal psychology who's also been on the show.

Jerry Colonna [\(00:26:42\)](#):

Love it. And Steven's experience was speaking to that because it was either direct experience or indirect experience, but that was in the room. To your question, I think the challenge and the reason that this shows up, and I'll give you the metaphor that comes from Plato Man is trapped at the back of the cave, mistaking shadows on the wall for reality. We're chained back at the back of the cave with our face to the wall thinking what we see is in fact what is going on? Why does this matter in leadership? Because we give folks who are unfinished, half-baked enormous power. See, when business leaders or political leaders take that privileged position and have not done their work, they're not the only ones who suffer. Everyone around them suffer. So I'll reverse it by saying the more power one has, the greater the moral obligation one has to I'll curse again. Trigger warning, get your shit together and grow the F up. Because the subtitle of my first book Reboot is Leadership and the Art of Growing Up. And I liken the work that you are doing, the work that you encourage people to do, the work that you've clearly done and elevate to the process of actually taking one seat as a fully grown adult. See, in that way, taking responsibility is very different. It doesn't produce guilt. It actually produces agency and authenticity. So it's very, very important because people are hurting.

[\(00:28:56\)](#):

I'll share one more thing and then shut up. I remember years ago I was a guest on A CNN special about depression in Silicon Valley. And after my appearance, I got a phone call from the head of HR for a very, very large software company. And she said, Jerry, we need your help because, and this is what shocked me, healthcare claims for depression and anxiety for the children of the employees had been up 35, 40 5%. And this is pre pandemic. So one of the consequences of those with power not doing this kind of work is that children suffer and they didn't deserve this. We talk about this transpersonal trauma, this interpersonal intergenerational experience. Here's a challenging question, when is the lineage of trauma going to be broken?

Dave Asprey [\(00:30:00\)](#):

It only gets broken when someone decides to break it. And then you don't give it to your kids, or at least you give as little as you're capable of giving and then you recognize the mistakes you make and you do your best to fix those. At least that's as good as I can, as good as I can make it. And as a parent of a couple teenagers, I'm exceptionally happy with them, and I do my best to not make the mistakes that I know my parents made and not to do the opposite. And I also recognize that I'm sure I made lots of mistakes. They're just ones I was blind to. But I also explain that to the kids, so maybe they don't take my word as the word of God, which is the way a small child sees their parents. You're infallible. And in fact, most kids have a sense of betrayal the first time they realize their parents are fallible.

[\(00:30:52\)](#):

Well, how could you lie to me and tell me you were infallible? And we didn't tell the kids that. They just believed it. And so that's actually a core wound that some people really have to process. My parents weren't perfect, but if you're an adult and you think your parents were perfect, you probably have some inquiry to do there because there's no such thing as a perfect parent that I've ever seen. Some are better than others, but I think it's our job to not be reactive to that. And that's a big calling. But if you're a leader of even a hundred people, and in my recent history I've had I think about 150 employees at a time, peak parenting dynamics come out there because employees in their operating system, they see either the man or the woman who's in charge as either mom or dad, and they respond unconsciously the way they would respond to their parents, which means if you're a leader, you're not anyone's daddy, but they'll still see you that way when they're not at their best. Then if that brings out something in you and you're not at your best, you end up with just a trashed company culture.

Jerry Colonna [\(00:32:02\)](#):

I often think of the Indonesian shadow puppets, meaning we think we see what's going on, but everything is just a little theater dance going on. It's not at all what it appears to be at first blush without the radical self-inquiry to say what's actually casting that shadow? What's actually creating the dynamic that we're seeing?

Dave Asprey [\(00:32:31\)](#):

This is a question from one of the upgrade collective art, my mentorship group who are logged in live with us, they're saying, is breaking free of that caller? Is it a life process or is it a wake up one day and you're free?

Jerry Colonna [\(00:32:48\)](#):

Really, really fabulous question. Thank you for that. I find comfort in the word practice and practice not only does not create perfect, but practice is actually something that is done on a lifetime basis. So

imagine the slipping of the collar as a lifetime practice and for extra credit, try to catch yourself when you're taking the collar and putting it back on yourself because there is a comfort, especially when we're distressed in returning to the old ways of being, because sometimes we'd rather be more. We'd rather be comfortable than happy.

Dave Asprey ([00:33:39](#)):

I went through a brief period years ago and my kids were maybe five, and I said, I'm only going to do things that bring me joy. And it was probably a three or six month period of this. And I said, I'm just going to be more focused with my time. Of course I'm doing some of the things of running and building a company that aren't joyful, but in my own time I'm going to do that. And then I asked my son to unload the dishwasher, and they looked at me and said, dad, it doesn't bring me joy

Jerry Colonna ([00:34:13](#)):

Kids.

Dave Asprey ([00:34:16](#)):

And I thought, how do you respond to that? Talk about a dose of your own medicine. So I said, well, I said, you have a point there and sometimes you have to do hard things in order to earn freedom over your time. And this is how you contribute right now because this is how capable you are of contributing. And the more you contribute not just to the family but to the world, then the more flexibility you have over that. And the reality now is that I today would say that there's a great argument for doing something that's actually painful every day. And it doesn't have to be all day. It can just be three minutes. And the biohacker way of doing that is a cold plunge. Or if you're an old monk, you just whip yourself in the morning to remind yourself that your dopamine sensors will be more sensitive later that day and there's all kinds of practices or go do an unpleasant workout or something and there's merit in that. What's your take on deliberately being uncomfortable as a practice?

Jerry Colonna ([00:35:23](#)):

I'm a little suspicious. It feels a little bit like running away from the stick or running towards the stick.

Dave Asprey ([00:35:32](#)):

I'm not sure I get that.

Jerry Colonna ([00:35:34](#)):

So one of my Buddhist teachers, one said, at a wedding, no less pain is not punishment and pleasure is not reward. Pain is pain and pleasure is pleasure.

Dave Asprey ([00:35:49](#)):

Exactly.

Jerry Colonna ([00:35:51](#)):

And the suspicion is that I think as a species we can be in danger of projecting into adversity the way

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

The whole everything needs to be a struggle mindset.

Jerry Colonna ([00:36:12](#)):

Exactly.

Dave Asprey ([00:36:13](#)):

And that is something that is kryptonite to me. And I've been on panels. I remember I was with a Navy Seal and a CrossFitter on a panel at a now defunct paleo conference, and someone said, well, what do you struggle with? And I said, I don't struggle. I said, I fail, but you can fail without struggle. Struggling is wasted effort, which was triggering for the Navy Seal. It was like, well, sometimes you just have to struggle through it. Like no, sometimes you pushed through it. But if you push without struggle, it's just less pain and less suffering and either you succeed or you don't. And if you put every ounce of energy you have without struggle, you'll probably succeed better. And I think the audience agreed more with the Navy Seal kind of grind your way through it. And I look at the amount of willpower that I've applied on building large companies and creating a movement and all these things.

([00:37:08](#)):

There's a hell of a lot of effort there. But if I'm struggling with something, I've got to figure out why I'm struggling versus doing to the extent of my ability. And it's almost always one of these old, I'd call 'em triggers or what you're talking about here, the collar or it's something I didn't see. And even at this point, I've spent six months of my life with electrodes on my head and I've done all the medicine ceremonies and breath work and all this stuff. Doubtlessly, you've experimented in some of those domains, all the meditation. I still miss some of 'em. I would love to know from your place of wisdom, what's the most effective way to notice when you're putting the collar back on?

Jerry Colonna ([00:37:55](#)):

Let's break that question into two. The first is, what is the most effective way to notice? Just pause right there. The one thing that I have learned more than anything else is the importance of noticing

Dave Asprey ([00:38:16](#)):

Curiosity.

Jerry Colonna ([00:38:18](#)):

Curiosity, non-judgment, inquiring deeply, I am feeling X. Why might I be feeling X? How does feeling X make me feel? To me, the big trifecta is loved, safe, and that I belong. And this is where it can get really perverse. When I feel distressed and anxious, I can feel safe because it's familiar, because it's what my childhood was like. And in that noticing, I can then start to choose the second half of the question matters a little bit less than the first half of noticing all of the freedom is in the noticing. So we're talking about doing hard things. There's a pleasure in applying one's energy to an accomplishment of a goal. There can be a pleasure in applying one's energy towards a goal even if the goal isn't met. You've experienced that.

Dave Asprey ([00:39:42](#)):

Oh yeah.

Jerry Colonna ([00:39:43](#)):

The existence of pleasure or pain in the accomplishment of the goal is not about doing the hard thing or not doing the hard thing. It's about whether or not we've attached a sense of self-worth are worthy of

love, safety, and belonging to that goal. So this is very Buddhist. It's the attachment that creates the pleasure and pain. It's not the effort. So that's why I get very suspicious about the Navy seal approach.

Dave Asprey ([00:40:19](#)):

I don't ascribe to the struggling through it every day. I'm still a fan of the brief exposure to something painful, mostly because it teaches my operating system that even though it feels like I'm going to die, if there's some pain, I'm not going to die. You

Jerry Colonna ([00:40:37](#)):

Can live, right?

Dave Asprey ([00:40:38](#)):

And so it's about being calm and accepting of that versus jumping out of the cold water and running away and screaming or whatever. And it's gotten to the point where sometimes I'll do an Instagram live while I'm in freezing water and people say, without water, you're cheating. That water is just room temperature. You're just pretending. It's like, I'm not just pretending it's actually cold water, but I've taught my body you're

Jerry Colonna ([00:41:05](#)):

Not going to

Dave Asprey ([00:41:05](#)):

Die. It's okay to be uncomfortable. And there's some neurochemistry around dopamine sensitivity and things like that that happen from it. And yes, you can over cold plunge, you can over fast, you can overdo any biohack or any non biohack. But for me, that practice has been one around calming my nervous system when it's being reactionary and maybe having a longer timeframe than I would biologically. Your operating system is a real time thing and your brain is knowing the future's coming. So being able to ask my nervous system and my meat to sit in a tub that's uncomfortable, knowing that it's worth it later, and then to not freak out, it's the lack of struggle that I'm cultivating because I feel like it brings a lack of struggle to the rest of my life throughout the day. But I wouldn't want to struggle all day long because there's no merit in that. Right.

Jerry Colonna ([00:42:05](#)):

And I like what you just did there and it helped me understand both you and say a movement, you don't plunge because of the experience of plunging. You plunge for the satisfaction that comes afterwards for the health benefit

Dave Asprey ([00:42:25](#)):

And the endorphins. I mean, let's face it, they don't feel bad either,

Jerry Colonna ([00:42:30](#)):

But initially you're not going to feel the endorphins until a few seconds later.

Dave Asprey ([00:42:35](#)):

It's terrible when you get in the cold water. No one likes that.

Jerry Colonna ([00:42:38](#)):

Right? So what I see you doing is staying mindful of the objective and that enables you to withstand that which is difficult,

Dave Asprey ([00:42:51](#)):

Very well

Jerry Colonna ([00:42:52](#)):

Put. And that feels like a philosophy. Be mindful of the objectives so that you can withstand what is difficult rather than romanticizing what is difficult.

Dave Asprey ([00:43:05](#)):

What a great way of putting it. Yeah, romanticizing pain isn't a good thing. Being able to experience pain without losing your mind is a very useful skill as a human.

Jerry Colonna ([00:43:19](#)):

If we go back to your Instagram live example, there might be somebody who's watching you, Dave and saying, what's wrong with me that I can't do what he's doing. And I want to say to that person, there's nothing wrong with you. Stay close to the objective. Stay aware of why you are drawn to this. And even if you hop in the plunge, bath and hop right out because you can't bear it. It's not as if there's something wrong with you, it's just that's where you are in this moment, which is why practice is as important as anything as accomplishment.

Dave Asprey ([00:44:08](#)):

It's the practice and it's the reason meditation's a practice or breath work as a practice versus a trophy.

Jerry Colonna ([00:44:16](#)):

Right? Exactly.

Dave Asprey ([00:44:18](#)):

Okay. Why did you call your new book reunion?

Jerry Colonna ([00:44:24](#)):

Okay, trigger warning again. I'm going to read a poem.

Dave Asprey ([00:44:27](#)):

Love it.

Jerry Colonna ([00:44:28](#)):

This is from Bell Hooks. She wrote, when angels speak of love, they tell us all is union and reunion. When angels speak of love, they tell us all is union and reunion dying? Reborn Again, there is no separation, no end to paradise, Dave. I worry about the state of the world. I worry about the way we are carrying each other apart.

Dave Asprey ([00:45:07](#)):

Yeah.

Jerry Colonna ([00:45:08](#)):

I worry about the world that my children and grandchildren and your children and grandchildren will inherit, where it has seemed to come to be normal that a child is murdered for ideology. So in this book, what I'm trying to do is ask the question of if we're endeavoring to be better leaders, what does it mean to be a better leader in a world where people are at each other's throats? And reunion for me is a hope. It's not Pollyanna. I know that separation has been a part of us and tribalism has been a part of the species forever. But my hope is that we can get to a place where we can hear angels speak of love because I don't know any other way through the pain and suffering. We're speaking in April and when I started the book, I did not envision what is going on in the Middle East right now. And here we are.

Dave Asprey ([00:46:21](#)):

When did you first hear angels speak of love personally?

Jerry Colonna ([00:46:28](#)):

Dave, I've done dozens of interviews and that is the best question anybody has ever asked me. Oh,

Dave Asprey ([00:46:35](#)):

Thank you.

Jerry Colonna ([00:46:37](#)):

Thank you for that. We were talking about the transpersonal experience before, and in the book, I tell the story of my father discovering on his wedding day that the mother he had grown up with was in fact not his mother.

Dave Asprey ([00:46:53](#)):

On his wedding day,

Jerry Colonna ([00:46:55](#)):

On his wedding, she stood at the back of the church screaming, you're not my son. She was so mad that he so angry that he was marrying my mother, and he never spoke of what it felt like to discover that for the first 18 months of his life, he was raised by someone else. While I was writing that book, there's 180 5-year-old cottonwood on the farm that I call home. And I spent a lot of time meditating under the cottonwood. And there was this one moment where my father, who has been dead 31 years now, came to me and I'm going to cry. I felt his head on my shoulder. I felt for the first time as I was delving into this, his gratitude for me endeavoring to understand his depression, his alcoholism. So when you asked me that felt like a moment when angels were speaking of love to me. I can hold two competing thoughts in mind that I wish he had done other than what he had done, and I understand why he did what he did.

Dave Asprey ([00:48:26](#)):

It sounds like compassion is what you developed at that point.

Jerry Colonna ([00:48:31](#)):

Yeah, probably for the hardest person that I could develop compassion for. So for me, that's all things are union and reunion. And look, I'm not suggesting everyone has to go through that process, but I am offering that we could all do with listening to a few more angels.

Dave Asprey ([00:48:57](#)):

There are countless people listening who would likely say that they've never experienced that. Do you think that's true or are they just not listening?

Jerry Colonna ([00:49:09](#)):

I hesitate to respond. Why? All I can feel is the empathy, the compassion for feeling as if you've never heard that. And I don't want you to see yourself as insufficient in some way for not listening. What I would offer is I have discovered in my own life that when I pause and sit still, I hear things. And I'm pretty convinced that they're elders and ancestors and angels who are saying, I am enough just as I am.

Dave Asprey ([00:49:57](#)):

This is one of those things that people in positions of leadership oftentimes don't talk about. I had the opportunity to cook a grass-fed steak with Kimball Musk at his home as we're recording a podcast,

Jerry Colonna ([00:50:18](#)):

Which is just a few miles from

Dave Asprey ([00:50:19](#)):

Here. Oh, well, beautiful. So you're in Colorado? Yeah. And no one, do you have cottonwoods there? Yeah. So I made a little crack about DMT as the sauce for the steak and for listeners, DMT is a hallucinogen, and he just laughed and said, no, I don't need that stuff. When I broke my neck, I was in a coma for three days. I experienced God and it's always with me, and he's a remarkable human and had never talked about that publicly. And of course, business insider picked it up and all this and there was a big splash about it. And he and I talked later, he said, yeah, that was kind of my coming out for talking about that. When I talk privately with leaders and I run a leadership mentorship mastermind thing with Naveen, Jane and Vish, Ani universally, when they feel safe leaders, I can't say universally, 90% of them will mention having had at least one experience like that.

([00:51:28](#)):

But it's closeted. It's not talked about because they're afraid people will think they're crazy or they'll lose their ability to lead or whatever, other voices in their heads and the few who haven't really experienced that they want to. And one story might be, well, it's because I'm not enough or I'm not worthy. But to me it feels like you just haven't learned how to do it yet you learn how to ride a bike at some point until then, it's not because you weren't good enough to ride a bike. It's that you just haven't learned. It feels like this is a skill. Is it a skill?

Jerry Colonna ([00:52:05](#)):

Let me see if I understood your question. Is it a skill to be able to speak of?

Dave Asprey ([00:52:11](#)):

No. To be able to feel it. You said when you calm your mind, when you're at peace and you're quiet, you can hear this. It feels like people who've never had a transcendent experience, it's not that they can't, don't know how they haven't learned. It's like learning to read.

Jerry Colonna ([00:52:33](#)):

I think you're right that it's a skill and I think that so much about our culture socializes us away from that. Not only do we romanticize pain, we over index on external metrics of success to such a point that the ability to would did blaze Pascal say all of man suffering stems from his inability to sit alone in a room. We don't cultivate the skill of sitting alone with one's thoughts. And then when I encounter them in my work and they're in their forties or fifties, I'm finding adults who are terrified of what will come up if they're alone with their thoughts.

Dave Asprey ([00:53:28](#)):

Oh yeah.

Jerry Colonna ([00:53:29](#)):

I want to say I have never imbibed a hallucinogenic or a psychedelic whatsoever, and that is not a judgment on my part, but I feel like I've had a number of transcendent experiences probably because I've cultivated the skill of sitting alone with my own thoughts.

Dave Asprey ([00:53:58](#)):

I'm so happy you said that. I actually worry, and I'm not, actually, that's probably the wrong word. I don't worry about this, but I am aware that there is risk of, I'm overused of psychedelics and I see some leaders saying, I've done 87 ayahuasca ceremonies, and I'm thinking to myself, when are you going to figure out it's not working? And I did in 1999, go down to Peru and find a shaman. And when I asked about ayahuasca, they said, you're white. I said, yeah, for sure. I noticed. I said, it's only for local people, you'll hate it. But I had done my preparation and I had an experience that maybe was useful. But I keep saying I have had more transcendent experiences from breathwork, from meditation, from neurofeedback than I have on any of the psychedelics. And I don't mind using psychedelics. I think they have physiological benefits, but they also have an ego strengthening effect because you forget most of your journey and your ego doesn't forget your journey. Only you forget it. Which is why I focus on integration, whether it's from neurofeedback or breath work or from psychedelics, that's where the gold is. And I worry that some people are thinking that's the path. It certainly could open a door and I think it could be beneficial, but I like it that you can talk about this from a framework of never having used those and still getting to those states. These are inherent human states that don't require anything external. They're internal states. Right?

Jerry Colonna ([00:55:41](#)):

In my Buddhist lineage, there's a lot of discussion about what's called spiritual bypassing, which is using spirituality as a way to bypass the experience of being human. And I want to be clear, I know dozens of people who have been helped by these medicines and God bless the gift that they are. And if you're bypassing your bypassing regardless of what you're using to bypass, bypassing is the problem dealing with is the solution sitting with is the path.

Dave Asprey ([00:56:29](#)):

It feels like boredom is a really big teacher and so many kids don't experience boredom because you can always pick up your phone and all of that. And I did my best as a father to make my kids be bored. Some of the time

Jerry Colonna ([00:56:47](#)):

I laughed because one of my teachers used to make a distinction between what he called hot boredom and cold boredom.

Dave Asprey ([00:56:55](#)):

Oh, I don't know about this.

Jerry Colonna ([00:56:57](#)):

Yeah. So hot boredom is that unbearable feeling. You're standing online at the post office or the DMV and God, I left my phone in the car and what am I going to think about? And cold boredom is the exact same experience of nothing and being okay with it.

Dave Asprey ([00:57:17](#)):

It's the difference between sitting in a cold plunge and struggling versus not struggling.

Jerry Colonna ([00:57:23](#)):

Exactly.

Dave Asprey ([00:57:24](#)):

So if you can be bored and not struggle, it's a different experience than if you're fighting against boredom. And I teach when people are doing neurofeedback. I teach that boredom is a manifestation of the ego,

([00:57:40](#)):

Same as yelling at people and all the other negative things. Boredom is a feeling that people recognize and something that I had to go through. And possibly because I had Asperger's syndrome before, I fixed my nervous system and rewired a bunch of stuff. I didn't have the right words for a lot of emotional states. I truly didn't know how to recognize fear. And it was a very wise teacher in her eighties, Barbara Fen, who has since passed, and she sat with me when I was really experiencing some things during a personal development retreat. And she finally said, well, do you have any feelings? I said, yeah, I'm pissed off. Why am I doing this stupid thing? And she said, no, there's got to be other feelings. I said, there aren't. And so she asked about, well, do you have any feelings in your body? I said, yeah, there's something in my stomach. And she's like, yeah, that's fear. And I remember saying, well, there's nothing for me to be afraid of, therefore it's not fear. And she looked at me and she laughed and she said, fear is an emotion. It doesn't have to be rational. And I realized there's probably a hundred different words in the English language or more to describe emotional states, and that I had a very poor mapping of those to what was going on in my operating system. How well do the people you work with actually know what feelings they're having

Jerry Colonna ([00:59:06](#)):

Before or after I've started working with them? Just kidding.

Dave Asprey ([00:59:10](#)):

We go there before.

Jerry Colonna ([00:59:19](#)):

It varies. It varies

Dave Asprey ([00:59:20](#)):

It, okay.

Jerry Colonna ([00:59:21](#)):

Yeah. Some folks are like you were in the pre-wired state. For some of the subroutines that they grew up with might have been that one set of feelings was acceptable, but another set of feelings. So for example, I grew up with the feeling that anxiety is better than anger. So every time I experienced injustice, my mind would supply me with stories about why I should feel anxious. Others, a lot of folks, it's the opposite. Anger is acceptable, but fear and anxiety are not. And a lot of times anger was used as the only acceptable means of expression. Not only are there hundreds of words for feeling states in the English language, there are thousands of nuanced feeling states. And when we grow up with a subroutine that says, anger is the only acceptable expression, we limit our palette of what's available in human to human connection, I'm only going to be angry. And that's going to push away people who might in fact provide enough emotional rapport that I can feel that I belong somewhere.

Dave Asprey ([01:00:54](#)):

There are three big religious kind of buckets that I've become aware of. And in my undergrad, I was one class away from having a minor in religious studies, not because I was that curious about it back then, except maybe to understand why people would ever believe one of those. But it was the only way I could keep my GBA high enough while I was studying computer science to stay in school. Just full disclosure there. So I became familiar with this. And if you look at the eastern religions, you find compassion is kind of the central theme. You look at the Christianity and associated, you find forgiveness, forgive them. They know not what they do. And if you look at Islam, it's around surrender. And some people are triggered by some religions versus others. Of all three of those. And I look at those three words though as different aspects of that radical self-inquiry. Like how do you let go and surrender? How do you feel compassion for someone who just did something you didn't like? And then how do you forgive that person? How do you think about forgiveness versus surrender versus compassion?

Jerry Colonna ([01:02:22](#)):

I really like the way you link them all, and I would offer another word, which I think is central to a lot of belief systems. And that is the word redemption, which is a really, really beautiful concept. And what occurs to me, and this could be my ego speaking, but what occurs to me, it's surrender,

([01:02:53](#)):

The conceit that I have of myself, that I'm supposed to be forgive myself for the ways in which I have failed to live up to the aspiration and hold compassion for myself so that I can continually be redeemed day in and day out so that I can live into the practice of being a human with grace, understanding the interconnectedness of all people. When I approach my own failings from that place, I am more likely to be able to approach others from that same full of grace position. And I loved, and I'm grateful for you,

linking it back to radical self-inquiry. I've been talking about that phrase for almost 20 years, and you making the link to those great traditions help me feel seen and understood.

Dave Asprey ([01:04:05](#)):

Do you still work on not feeling seen and understood

Jerry Colonna ([01:04:09](#)):

Every day? Why? It's an old pattern for my childhood. The subtitle of Reunion is leadership and the longing to Belong, and the mechanism by which I try to understand others longing to belong with staying in touch with my own lifelong longing to belong. It's part of my practice.

Dave Asprey ([01:04:36](#)):

I find that some of my biggest aha moments come from parenting, and most teenagers go through a phase of you will never understand me. And most adults are saying, well, this might surprise you, but I was also a teenager, so I probably understand more than you think I understand. And when I was put in a position by one of my kids to have this conversation, I said, and it's also true, no human will ever fully understand another human because we're not you. And everyone constructs their own interface for reality, their own lens on reality based on their experiences. And it's different. And so I can understand some things that happen to you. I can understand some of your feelings and I can connect my heart to your heart and all of those things. And there will always be some things that are yours that no one on earth will understand, and that that's a natural state.

[\(01:05:45\)](#):

And having that awareness brought me peace as well. Oh, of course. People aren't going to understand me. They'll only see a tiny slice on a podcast or in a conversation at a cafe or whatever, and they'll form judgments, but they won't really understand. And I just was, oh, that's just the way reality is. So my desire to be understood is a desire for something that's actually not possible. Even my closest friends who know me so well and we can meditate together, all that kind of stuff, there's still parts of them that I don't understand and that they don't understand about me, and that that's okay just to be at peace with it. Any thoughts on that?

Jerry Colonna ([01:06:30](#)):

Well, first of all, I agree with what you're saying. I often use the phrase seeing the world through another's eyes. But as I was listening and going deeper on that, I was thinking back to that moment where you asked me the question that, as I described, is the most moving question I've been asked. And I cite that because you helped me feel seen and understood, not by telling me something, but by asking me a question.

Dave Asprey ([01:07:06](#)):

That's a big leadership ability.

Jerry Colonna ([01:07:09](#)):

And what I note about the question that you asked was that you had actually been really listening to me because the question didn't come out of the ether. The question came from someone sitting still trying to hear their way to what the other person is. Glory be the questions, right? Glory be the questions, not

the koan questions, but questions that come from a place of genuine, heartfelt curiosity. I don't think we ask each other enough questions. I think we weaponize questions.

Dave Asprey ([01:07:56](#)):

So displaying curiosity towards another person makes them feel understood, even though truly being understood completely is very unlikely, if not impossible, at least when we're riding around in these meat bodies, right?

Jerry Colonna ([01:08:13](#)):

Yeah. You get more proximate, you get closer. I had an experience, I was talking to a client last week. It's a relatively new client, and they previously had six or seven previous coaches, and I had asked a question a few weeks before, and he circled back to it. He said, that was the first time in seven years that anyone expressed any interest in my childhood

Dave Asprey ([01:08:41](#)):

From executive coaches. Yeah, that's astounding to me.

Jerry Colonna ([01:08:46](#)):

He was constantly put into a place of being told he had done something wrong.

Dave Asprey ([01:08:51](#)):

It's the why you did something that wasn't what you wish you would've done. That's what coaches are supposed to help you understand

Jerry Colonna ([01:08:58](#)):

The threat.

Dave Asprey ([01:09:00](#)):

One of the things I've noticed as an entrepreneur, as a CEO, and even just as a well-known person, is that it can make you lonely. Because if you're the most powerful person in a company, there are things that you really ought not to share with your team because it doesn't work. If you're a leader and you're super vulnerable about your inner struggles, that can sabotage leadership. And if you're completely unacknowledging of them, it's also not good for leadership. But if you're having a really, really rough personal time on something and you bring it to work and you have a large organization, it doesn't work, how do you help leaders feel comfortable or give them a space where they can really, truly be authentic without having to worry about what it does to their organization?

Jerry Colonna ([01:10:06](#)):

Yeah. This actually just recently came up with another client. What I often say is share the truth, just not the whole truth. So what you share needs to be true, but there is an obligation that one has, which is to share that which can be held. And an easy way to understand the complexity of this would be, let's imagine you've got children. Let's imagine that you could go to your child and complain about your spouse.

Dave Asprey ([01:10:42](#)):

Bad idea,

Jerry Colonna ([01:10:43](#)):

Bad idea. Places them in a really uncomfortable position. Now, let's reverse it. Let's say your child comes to you to complain about what your spouse did that's appropriate. How you respond is a teachable moment. Okay, well, maybe they were feeling this way. Why didn't you try approaching them this way? And so there's an imbalance that happens in our responses. And being authentic, being honest, being vulnerable is not licensed to place all of your inner demons onto those who have less power and implicitly asking them to make you feel better. And that's hard, and it increases the isolation, which is therefore why it's critical that you have people in your life to whom and with whom you can share those things. Because the false dichotomy that we get into is going to share everything or I'm going to share nothing, and the result is we suffer. And so peer relationships are critical to being able to say, boy, this was a tough week. I wanted to fire everybody on my team. Right? The last thing I would say is go in into the next all team and say, I'm so mad I'm going to fire you all. That's an abuse of power.

Dave Asprey ([01:12:27](#)):

Yes.

([01:12:29](#)):

It's one of the reasons that I started the high level executive mentorship group with Naveen Jane, is that we both recognize that loneliness that happens in leadership, and what if we bring together a couple dozen people where it is a peer-to-peer thing. And so you can talk about leadership stuff and you can talk about things that are not working and things that you're afraid of, but have an audience that's not threatening because you control their job. And it is something that I, under-indexed on as I was growing Bulletproof, was spending time with other entrepreneurs even in different industries who just could understand my problems. Because the reality is that if you're a leader and you come home and you share your challenges with your neighbors, it's likely to either intimidate them or to create envy, and you don't want to do that. And even sharing success, it can be lonely. I remember when I raised my first round of venture capital, it was \$8 million for Bulletproof. And by the way, this listeners, I was removed from the company a few years ago. I have nothing to do with them. They've been acquired. But I was driving down 1 0 1 there and off of Sandhill Road. I'm thinking, my God, my net worth is tens of millions of, at least on paper now. And guys, there's a huge difference between having stock worth something and having actual money. Just you're laughing. We both live that. So at least at the time, like, wow, I'm a ca billionaire and am I going to call my parents? No, you

Jerry Colonna ([01:14:29](#)):

Caught the little Austin Powers there. You

Dave Asprey ([01:14:31](#)):

Did catch that. All right, nice.

([01:14:37](#)):

I still remember this going well. I could call my parents, but on the surface they'd say, that's great, but I know they have money, trauma, and it would actually freak 'em out. And even with my immediate family, I know that's going to create drama. Of course I share numbers and things like that in a relationship, but I don't have anyone that I can call to celebrate this with because it's too big and it's too rare. And I've had big ups and downs financially over the years of my career, and neither one of those

felt like it was particularly safe to share with people who hadn't had similar ups and downs. And so over time, I learned that I needed to spend time with other leaders. And maybe that's that sense of belonging you're talking about, but just to have a forum to talk about stuff that isn't on the normal menu for most of us.

Jerry Colonna ([01:15:39](#)):

Well, first of all, I'm sorry that you always didn't have that. I wish you did.

Dave Asprey ([01:15:45](#)):

Thank you. I think a lot of entrepreneurs and some very successful executives, I think we all deal with that because it's a rare thing. Likewise, you're a Buddhist master. I dunno if you call yourself a master, but an advanced Buddhist. And if you were to walk down the street with an advanced Buddhist inquiry problem and talk about it with the person who makes her coffee, it just wouldn't connect. Then it'd be, well, who does he think he is? You get that vibe at a certain point, you build a community where you belong. And it feels like we've got a breaking down of communities at all levels of society where people have fewer friends, they have fewer confidants. Is there a cure for that feeling of community?

Jerry Colonna ([01:16:37](#)):

Let's widen the aperture or change the aperture a little bit and go back to what we were seeing before about practice, the practice of joining A YPO group, the practice of joining an EO group, the practice of joining a human upgrade mastermind group. The practice of being and creating your own community is never a one and done it. It is an ongoing practice of creating community. And so there was a moment where I was feeling what the journey was like for you. And my first impulse was to just say, I'm sorry that you had that experience, and it kind of threw you. I don't think you expected me to say that.

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

And I felt closer to you by saying that. And so for a brief moment in time, there was a little flicker of community that existed between the two of us because even though the specifics of your story are different than the specifics of my story, the similarities are strong enough that I could feel what you were feeling. And I could say the thing that wasn't about me, maybe it was, but really it was a bridge. It was a hand. So I think that this is something that we can all, just like we were socialized as children in certain ways to perceive success in a certain way, we can alter the programming. Once we expose the sub routine, then we can rewrite the sub sub routine. And if we insert code that calls out empathy, then we can create community in the back of a cab or standing at a coffee shop, wait, talking to the barista. And sure, they may not understand the challenge of being worth a kabillion dollars on paper only to have it wiped away in a month or something.

Dave Asprey ([01:19:03](#)):

I've experienced that too.

Jerry Colonna ([01:19:05](#)):

But they don't need to understand the specifics in order to feel connection. You find the thing that is the connecting point and build community from that connection.

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

It's about making the connection. I like that people sometimes ask Dave, how can I build more empathy? And sometimes the people asking it almost have an excess of empathy. They feel everyone else's pain all the time. And I've come to look at empathy as much better than not having empathy, but having uncontrolled empathy as having a dark side. What do you think about excess empathy? Is it a thing?

Jerry Colonna ([01:19:51](#)):

Well, Kim Scott has a great phrase and a great construct in radical candor in which he talks about ruinous empathy. And I'm not sure that that is ultimately empathy. Empathy starts with understanding oneself. And so I don't think it's possible it properly worked with. I don't think it's possible to have too much empathy. I think when empathy crosses a line into fixing, empathy is in service to me, making myself feel better. That's actually not empathy. Empathy is to endeavor to see life through the eyes of another person. And we use our ability to stay connected first empathetically to ourselves to be able to stand there.

Dave Asprey ([01:20:55](#)):

What a beautiful explanation. I love that nuance. And that's one I haven't heard before, so thank you.

Jerry Colonna ([01:21:00](#)):

You're welcome.

Dave Asprey ([01:21:02](#)):

I teach a structured forgiveness practice through the lens of neuroscience and sometimes breath work. And people, they can forgive a bully. They can forgive a parent for doing something they didn't like, but a lot of people get stuck on forgiving themselves.

Jerry Colonna ([01:21:22](#)):

Right.

Dave Asprey ([01:21:23](#)):

How does one go about forgiving yourself?

Jerry Colonna ([01:21:28](#)):

My current teacher, Buddhist teacher is Sharon Salzberg, whose practice of meta otherwise known as Loving Kindness, has really the basis of all of her teachings. We've worked together now for 16 years, and when she teaches loving kindness meditation, we may all beings be happy. May Donald Trump be happy. May this person be happy. We start to name people and we start to get closer and closer to the people who might trigger us the most. And the one that people tend to get stuck on the most is, may I be happy? And what I have found is if I look at that difficulty through the lens of a SubT routine, how has it served me to be unforgiving of myself?

([01:22:36](#)):

Because behaviors persist because they serve a benefit, however convoluted or distorted or perverted. The benefit is. And most of the belief system that we're talking about that says, I cannot be, I am irredeemable. I am beyond forgiveness, got set early on and has a logic of a five-year-old. And if we think about that for a moment, it's a perverted logic. It says, I am unforgivable and I hold that belief. And

I was taught that belief so that I would never get so big in ego as to suffer shame or humiliation. And so the goal was to protect me.

Dave Asprey ([01:23:38](#)):

Yeah, it's there for a reason.

Jerry Colonna ([01:23:40](#)):

It's there for a reason and it persists for a reason. And if you surface the reason, then you can do a little jiu-jitsu move and use the energy of that. Oh wait, this belief system, I am unforgivable, exists to protect me from shame. So the real move is to let go of being afraid of being ashamed, to use your language from before. I won't die. If people don't like me, then we can move into that. Wait, I did my best. It wasn't always the best. I failed to live up to my aspirations, but on the whole, not so bad, just a little jitsu moved there. I have found that to be very, very helpful.

Dave Asprey ([01:24:38](#)):

Beautiful. You ever go to Burning Man?

Jerry Colonna ([01:24:41](#)):

No. Never been to Burning Man either. I'm really boring.

Dave Asprey ([01:24:48](#)):

I was guessing that would be your answer. Just checking.

Jerry Colonna ([01:24:52](#)):

Just it's, I live my life in cold boredom.

Dave Asprey ([01:24:57](#)):

There you go. Right? Not the hot boredom, at least.

Jerry Colonna ([01:25:01](#)):

Fair enough.

Dave Asprey ([01:25:02](#)):

If you had a chance to go back to the 24-year-old you who was running information week and give yourself one critical piece of advice, what would it have been?

Jerry Colonna ([01:25:15](#)):

It's all going to be okay, I'm going to show you something. I don't know that the audio people will know it, but I'm showing you my tattoo,

Dave Asprey ([01:25:23](#)):

Another black widow, which is of a

Jerry Colonna ([01:25:24](#)):

Spider. It's a garden spider, but it's a spider. And I've told this story before. I was on a no substance, no psychedelics, other vision quest, and I had had this really bizarre encounter with a spider who I was sitting by myself and I was feeling miserable, and I was just like the world, the world. And all of a sudden I saw in this beautiful glistening web, this spider, and I was just like, alright, what the hell do you have to say to me? And the spider said to me, you worry too much. Your kids are going to be all right.

Dave Asprey ([01:26:12](#)):

Wow.

Jerry Colonna ([01:26:13](#)):

And I got this tattoo 14 years ago to remind myself, you worry too much. The kids are going to be alright. So at 24, I wish I had had the wisdom to know that I'm going to be alright, and it's all going to be alright.

Dave Asprey ([01:26:36](#)):

You remind me now of another guest on the show, Lisa Wimberger, who has a big spider tattoo on her back. And she's this very peaceful person who came up with something called Neurosculpting, which is a type of meditation in specific orders to activate the brain to turn on new pathways that have had some paraplegic start moving again. Like, wow,

Jerry Colonna ([01:27:00](#)):

That's amazing. It's

Dave Asprey ([01:27:01](#)):

Super cool. She has a very active spiritual life. We're friends. And so same thing. Why would this peaceful person have a spider? Because they can have meaning that isn't about being scary, but about taking something that might be scary. It might be triggering and having a much deeper message. And I really like that.

Jerry Colonna ([01:27:20](#)):

I think we mark our bodies, the way we mark our souls with meaning, and we are meaning making machines. I'm 60 now, and I think this is the time of living into meaning for me.

Dave Asprey ([01:27:41](#)):

That's part of what you're doing with reboot.io. Can you tell me about that?

Jerry Colonna ([01:27:47](#)):

Sure. That's the company and blah, blah, blah. We're an executive coaching leadership development firm, blah, blah, blah. But really that's my marketing language really. We're very interested in this better human experience in the ways we've just been talking about with the goal of really reducing the ways in which those who hold power can create difficult circumstances for those that they work with. That happens to be the realm where I'm called to work. It's not the only realm where this work gets done, but that's the world. And so that's just a place where I have 15, 16 colleagues and we just do what we can to tilt at the windmill of corporate leadership.

Dave Asprey ([01:28:53](#)):

Got it. So guys, if you're interested in a corporate leadership thing, reboot io. And I was hoping that you would give me the magic language to explain what happens when you're in a mentorship group with peers like that. Because working on something similar with the Apollo group, just figuring out how do I effectively mentor entrepreneurs as they're growing in a really, really deep way that gets to all this, why are you really doing that? Why do you see the world this way? And it's always the stuff we just talked about. It's old programming in the operating system.

Jerry Colonna ([01:29:29](#)):

That's right.

Dave Asprey ([01:29:30](#)):

Something else that's in our operating system is a expectation of programmed death. And I received a lot of notoriety a few years ago. I wrote a very well researched book on longevity. I said, my goal is to live to at least 180 because I think what I see in the realm of longevity tech, it's actually happening and it's possible. And I deal with the longevity stuff. So I age at 72% the rate of average and things like that. But the real answer for me is I'd like to die at a time and by a method of my choosing, and not necessarily 180, but let me ask you this. You're 60. You've had an amazing life. If you could be as healthy or healthier than you are today, how long would you want to live?

Jerry Colonna ([01:30:28](#)):

I don't know. That's a really good question. I mean, when you said 180, I was like, boy, I would pretty tired emotionally assuming I'd be fine physically. I don't know. I'll tell you this, I don't want to live in fear of death.

Dave Asprey ([01:30:48](#)):

No, that's not what it's about at all. If you're curious and of service and capable and have high energy, but now you have wisdom like, man, maybe we could really fix some stuff.

Jerry Colonna ([01:31:02](#)):

I like that view of being of service. I will share that. I was always attracted to the Dylan Thomas poem. Do not go gentle into that night. Rage. Rage against the dying of the light. But the Gods honest truth is, I don't know, Dave, I don't know my answer to that question. I'll have to come back on and give you an answer. How's that?

Dave Asprey ([01:31:27](#)):

You are more than welcome to come back on. I'm, I'm laughing because the opening quote in my longevity book was the Dylan Thomas poem, so you must have downloaded that one from the ether.

Jerry Colonna ([01:31:42](#)):

That's right. That's right.

Dave Asprey ([01:31:44](#)):

The upgrade collective says, absolutely. Please have him back on. So,

Jerry Colonna ([01:31:49](#)):

Oh, thank you everybody.

Dave Asprey ([01:31:51](#)):

Let's do a second episode in a few months and I'll percolate on what I've learned. And you can percolate on that. How long do you want to live if you don't age the way that you think you will? And it's an interesting mental question because I think we actually are right at the edge of having a choice there, and I just feel like if I'm going to be around that long, I better learn how to be peaceful. Amen. I'm not going to want to live that long. Right.

Jerry Colonna ([01:32:24](#)):

Amen. That's right.

Dave Asprey ([01:32:27](#)):

Well, what a fantastic and fun conversation. And guys, if you really connected with this stuff, I would absolutely encourage you to read Reunion leadership and the Longing to Belong. I do some podcasts on cancer and cell biology and mitochondrial function and the benefits of heat and cold and all the biohacking stuff. I'll tell you though, if you turn up the energy in your body, so your cells work the way that they're supposed to, the stuff we talked about, the operating system in the body, these hidden things, when you're running at full power, you have the power to change those things more easily maybe. But if you're running at full power and you don't make the decision to change those things, you'll just be a more powerful asshole. And no one wants to create those. So that's why biohacking includes this harder personal development stuff via any technology, any pathway, any belief system you want. It's just this has to be a part of your biohacking stack because no one wants powerful people who are unconscious. What we want is conscious people who are powerful and you are because you listen to the show and because you're curious about stuff like this. If you're still listening, you're probably one of those people out in the path. And I appreciate you for listening. Thank you. You are listening to The Human Upgrade with Dave Asprey.