1219 Brooks V1

[00:00:00] **Arthur:** One of the things that I recommend is having a reverse bucket list. Biggest mistake young people listening to us make is thinking they have good and bad feelings. There's no such thing as bad feelings. People who become business leaders, they're not normal. You get more dopamine when you think about something you want to go get than when you actually get the thing.

Your suffering is unbelievably sacred. Pain elimination

[00:00:20] **Dave:** is a huge mistake. When I hear a teenager say, I want to be an influencer, it's about the same as saying I want to be a porn star.

You're listening to the Human Upgrade with Dave Asprey.

This is a live episode recorded here at my studios in Austin, Texas. And our guest today is a world leader in happiness.

[00:00:44] **Arthur:** I'm a professor of happiness.

[00:00:47] **Dave:** And neuroscience and business and a bunch of other things. He is going to teach us today what happiness is and what it isn't and what you can do to be happier.

And this is a deeply personal episode for me because, you know, in my twenties, I thought making money would make me happy. I was very convinced. So I made 6 million when I was 26, lost it when I was 28. And I was sitting there on 6 million. I looked at a friend and said, I'll be happy when I have 10. And I tried the fame thing.

I'm an entrepreneur magazine. I'm 23. It didn't make me happy. I tried getting married in my 20s briefly, didn't make me happy. Damn. Being happy is hard. In fact, uh, it's really hard. So what would happen if you just studied it? And then we got to learn from someone who spent decades looking at this, especially for high performers.

And you might've heard of the book coauthored with Oprah called Build the Life You Want. Well, the co author and Harvard professor Arthur Brooks is here in the studio. Arthur, welcome to the show. Thank you, Dave. Long time follower, first time guest. Wow. Well, it's my fault that you're, that this is your first time on because I've been a fan of your work forever.

Thanks. Likewise. Finally,

we get to interview you. Likewise. This is so fun. It's

[00:02:03] **Arthur:** kind of an interesting time where academics and practitioners, of human performance actually are regularly meeting each other.

[00:02:11] **Dave:** Yeah.

[00:02:11] **Arthur:** Yeah, a few decades ago it would have been impossible. You know, writing for academic journals, you would never actually meet the people that are on the ground starting the companies and trying to upgrade the human person.

But now we get to work together.

[00:02:22] **Dave:** Yeah, it's one of the reasons that I started like the biohacking word and then the movement was I wanted to bring in the neuroscientists. And the Navy SEALs and the bodybuilders and the longevity guys are like, let's all sit down and like swap notes. And Andrew Huberman was on before he had a podcast Peter Atiyah before he had a podcast.

So we've been like finding these interesting people and saying, I don't care if you practice, if you're a high performer who's done something. Or if you're an academic, like, how do we mix and match? Yeah, and now at this point,

[00:02:53] **Arthur:** people like Huberman or me, we're fundamentally, we're academics. But at the same time, we're trying to reach out in the spirit of public education so we can share these big ideas with, with people in ordinary life.

Huberman, and me too, we specialize in strivers. We specialize in the people that are going to watch and listen to this program because they want the best possible life that they can build. And they want their life to extend as long as they can so they can have more adventures. And the interesting thing about the work that I'm trying to do is that you're the expert in how to live a long time.

I'm an expert in how to, why to live a long time. And those are the two questions you really need to answer

[00:03:30] **Dave:** if you're going to have the best life. In the, the arc of my books, It was, how do you get your energy back? That was the belief that I won. And then how do you make your brain work all the way with the next one?

And then, okay, now that you like your life I surveyed about 400 guests on the show to come up with some common elements that was called game changers who are like, let's do it. And then how do I have a lot more? Which was longevity. And after that, it's been nuances. And the next one coming up is called heavily meditated.

Oh, I can't wait. When's it coming out? Uh, it comes out in Q1, I think in May end of April. May of 25. Yeah. Yeah. Nice. Can't wait. I'll send you a copy. You have a

[00:04:03] **Arthur:** book coming up as well, right? The next book's coming out in 2026. In the first quarter of 2026 called The Meaning of Your Life and How to Find It Before It's Too Late.

[00:04:11] **Dave:** That's a cool name. Why don't you come back on the show when that happens? I will do that. To date. I want to ask you some questions that maybe you haven't heard before. Oh boy. I bet, I bet you will. I want to make like a 7th grade joke now and I'm not going to. So, you're a classical musician. Yeah, I was.

You were, and you were trained in that. What's the role of music in happiness and all the rest of the work you do? So music is interesting because what

[00:04:38] **Arthur:** it does is it connects you to who you are and the emotions that you're experiencing more intensely. So music doesn't make you happier per se. Music can help you limbic system in a very, in a way that's, you know, That, that, that goes way beyond what your prefrontal cortex can, can facilitate on its own.

So you find, for example, that if you're sad, you want to listen to sad music, you have a bad breakup, you listen to sad songs. The reason is because that helps you understand the activity that's, that's occurring in the dorsal anterior cingulate cortex of your limbic system. That music will make you put into perspective what's happening below your level of consciousness and you'll be able to recover more quickly.

[00:05:21] **Dave:** Wow. I'm remembering back in high school I broke up with a girl or she probably she broke up with me. Uh, and I call the radio station, by the way, if you're not my age, that's how you used to just go to Spotify and look up the song you had to call. What is this radio station of which you speak? Exactly. Uh, and I'm like, can you play that Phil Collins song?

He says, I don't care anymore. I don't know its name.

[00:05:42] **Music:** That's

[00:05:48] **Arthur:** what was going on. Yeah. It was going on. You were able to put in perspective these feelings that you're having. All of our emotions produced in the limbic system of the brain, what they're, what they're, they're produced in response to signals that we're detecting our environment.

And some of them are are signals of threat, some of opportunity. Negative emotions basically say there's something out there that you don't want because it's bad for you. Sadness says you're being separated from something or someone that you like or love, and you should be averse to that. And so the sadness is really, really uncomfortable.

It's supposed to be, because if you didn't have any sadness, you'd be friendless, frivolous. fired, alone, you'd be a hermit, and there are all kinds of things that would make it hard for you to thrive and survive. So that's what sadness is, a defense against aloneness is the way that this works. But you have to get over the grief.

And so one of the ways you get over the grief is metacognitively. Is understanding the nature of the emotion putting into perspective and sad music helps you do that happy music actually helps you understand the nature of the joy that you're feeling that's what happy music is an enhancement to our for for our brain processes below our level of

[00:06:53] **Dave:** consciousness.

I'm hearing so much of the language of biohacking and then some in, in this world is, okay, your body's taking signals from the environment all the time and vibration, which is music and sound. Right. It's a signal. Right. Of course, it's going to do something to you and you might not be consciously aware of what it does.

Right. Or in my case, maybe I was a little bit consciously aware, but when you study it the way you have, oh. And then you have guys like Stephen Borges, the father of Pauly Bagel Theory. He's a friend who's been on the show a couple times. He's carefully constructing music to radically shift brain states, even out of trauma states.

And Rick Rubin's been on the show talking, actually also in a similar way to you, about the role of music and art in creating emotion. It's supposed to make you feel, not think. Right. How do you explain the difference between feeling and thinking to someone who's 20 years old?

[00:07:43] **Arthur:** Yeah. So I usually try, I mean, you've, I've heard you talk about this before too, the theory of the triune brain.

[00:07:48] **Music:** Yeah.

[00:07:49] **Arthur:** So the triune brain is organized along evolutionary lines. The oldest part of the brain is what we would call the detection system or the reptilian brain. It's mostly the brainstem and the cerebellum, the stuff in the back of your head that detects things that are going out of read. You, when way below your level of consciousness.

And a snake and lizard can do it as well. That's all about threats and opportunities. So it works for politicians. Yeah, all of us, even them. The second level is newer, evolved more than between two and 40 million years ago. That's the limbic system. And the detections that you get of threats and opportunities go to the limbic system where they're translated into emotions.

[00:08:21] **Music:** That's

[00:08:21] **Arthur:** what emotions are made. Now, the biggest mistake young people listening to us make is thinking they have good and bad feelings. There's no such thing as bad feelings. There's positive and negative emotions, which are telling you what's going on around you, and then that data are sent to the third system, the newest system, the prefrontal cortex, the C suite of your brain, which is about 250, 000 years old, and there you take those emotions and say, Okay, what does that mean?

What happened? What should I do? Now that's if things are going right. Reactive people don't make that, that third link. So when I'm talking to young people, I say, if you want to have managerial control over your life, you have to have managerial control over your feelings. Thanks. And the way to do that is putting space between what you feel and what you decide to do.

And that's a whole bunch of metacognitive techniques like Vipassana meditation and journaling and prayer of petition and all of these different things that, that humans have developed to put as much space as possible. By the way, counting to 10 when you're angry before you answer is a metacognitive technique.

Yeah. And all that is doing is letting the signals have a chance to catch up. So your peripheral cortex can say, Oh. Dave is feeling a little angry right now, wonder what just happened. How does Dave choose to act according to the stimulus? And you stop feeling like your, your, your emotions are inevitably going to, to affect your actions.

And you stop seeing them as good or bad when you can do this. That's how I talk to young people about it. Including my kids, and sometimes they listen. Yeah, exactly. Well, let's go there. Why are kids less likely to listen to their parents? One of the reasons is that the parents don't have as much credibility as they should because they've seen not just the good, wise things, they've also seen the foibles and problems and their complete reactivity as well.

So, you know, my students never actually see me reacting to my feelings in an unproductive way, but my adult children have. Cause they've seen me lose my temper. They've seen me say things I shouldn't about other people. They've seen me in a, in a profoundly human state, a limbic state. And the result of that is that it shakes their confidence in my ability to be wise all the time.

[00:10:26] **Dave:** I've also read some things that say that somewhere around seven years old, kids feel like you're not infallible. Right. And then they feel like you deceived them into believing you were infallible because they believed that even though you didn't tell them you were infallible. Right. How much of that sort of, you betrayed me by tricking me that you couldn't make a mistake?

[00:10:45] **Arthur:** The biggest problem with that is actually the dislocation between what you say and what they see. So, a lot of people ask me, how do I, here's a classic case. Religious people ask me, how do I raise my kids so they will stay in the faith? So, religious Jews will ask me this, I'm a Catholic, a lot of my Catholic friends will ask me this.

I want my kids to break the faith. What do I do? I said, it does not matter what you say. All that matters is what they see. So I'll give you an example. This is especially true for boys. Boys are looking at their dads all the time and their father is the physically most imposing person that they've ever seen.

I thought, I thought my dad was so strong. He could lift the corner of the house. He was a math professor. He could not. And, and my dad was a proud man, and he never would have bowed the knee to any other person. But my dad was on his knees on Sunday, in front of a bigger power, some majesty that I couldn't quite understand.

And so I said, huh. That's what it means to be a big strong man is to take is to bow the knee to no other man But but to bow before the Lord, that's what it meant to me And so the result of that was I always had that picture I had that image in my mind now the problem comes if my dad Does one thing and says another so my dad says go to church, but he doesn't He says, be kind to others, but he's not.

If he says, don't be a drunk, but he is. That's where the problems really come in, and people lose a lot of respect and confidence in their parents. One of

[00:12:10] **Dave:** the biggest we'll call it parenting hacks, although not everything's a hack that I've found is, if I really want my kids to hear something, I can go to any of my friends who they also talk to, and say, you mind putting a good word in?

Yeah. And then when they hear it from someone besides me, it's like manna from heaven, but it's almost like it's invisible.

[00:12:30] **Arthur:** Yeah. And it must be like that for your kids because your kids. It must be weird being Dave Asprey's

[00:12:35] **Dave:** kid, by the way. I think it is. I love my kids. I think they're profoundly normal.

[00:12:41] **Arthur:** Yeah,

[00:12:41] **Dave:** but do

[00:12:42] **Arthur:** their

[00:12:42] **Dave:** friends know who you are? Uh, I think a few of them have Googled me, but I don't think it's a big deal. I've asked them about it. They said most people don't really pay attention to it.

[00:12:51] **Arthur:** Well, most of your audience is actually strivers who are a little older than your kids, of course.

People in their 20s and 30s. They're a little older, yeah. Yeah, 24 to 54 is where most of it comes from. But there is, there are pretty interesting studies on the burden of being the child of a highly accomplished individual. That turns out to be tricky because there are really two things that you want.

You want, especially for young males, Young males what they want most in life is the pride of their father and the admiration of their partner Those are the two things that really really I want my dad to be proud of me I want my wife to admire me. That's what this and that's evolved. Of course, that's about that's like you want your dad to say That's my boy is better than me because your son is the only man you've ever met that you want to be superior to you If you're a good man, and and you want your partner to say that is An incredibly big gazelle that you just dragged in that's going to feed our family for like three weeks.

You're so strong We're evolved to want that because that's you know in to we're raised homo sapiens is a tropical creature Built to live in kin based hierarchies and some of that we can get away from we can live in cold climates But we're not going to get away from kin based hierarchies And that means that we're going to be looking for these particular signals So men and women want certain things primevally notwithstanding all these You know, the, how we talk about society today and the way that we've changed in these ways that we haven't, we haven't.

So the result is as tricky if you're, you know, you're a kid because, you know, you want, you want your dad to honestly be proud of you in a way where you say, I couldn't have done that. There's nothing that feels better for a child than, than your parents saying, you're doing this thing I could never do.

Isn't pride one of the seven deadly sins? It is. It's funny because pride is, pride is weird because when we talk about pride and, you know, and it's really comes from Dante, right? Yeah. It comes from the Dante, from Dante's Inferno. And the deadliest of the deadly sins is at the bottom of Mount Purgatory where he's going down with Virgil for sin, worse sin, worse sin, and the very bottom, the pit of hell, he finds Satan.

And Satan is not in a pool of fire with brimstones. Satan is frozen up to his waist in a lake of ice, writhing in pain, and keeping the ice frozen, and thus himself immobile by the flapping fruitlessly of his wings to escape. And that represents pride. You know, his pride is he's only thinking about himself, and he's only trying to escape, and he's making the ice worse and freezing himself, and he doesn't even notice that Dante and Virgil are looking at him.

And that's kind of what it is. So that's really what it is. It's a, it's a, It's too much attention to yourself. So being proud of your child doesn't count.

[00:15:31] **Dave:** See, this is an important lesson. I think it shapes how people become strivers later in life. Yeah. For a long time, I would just tell my kids, I'm grateful, I'm happy, I'm impressed.

And I wouldn't say proud because it has a lot of negative connotations. And the last few years, talking with some parenting experts, I'm like, you know, I am proud of my kids, but I'm not proud because of my ego. I'm just like, I'm just so profoundly impressed with what they're doing. I'm happy to say it because it is what I feel, but it's not like, look what I did.

It's like, look what you did. The key

[00:16:05] **Arthur:** thing is going to be, so your kids are a little younger than my, your kids are 15 and 17. Yeah. Yeah. And my kids are 21, 24 and 26 and they're now doing things I couldn't do. That's so cool. And that's what you got to focus on. So I have, you know, one son is a data scientist and he's doing, um, large language models and then using advanced statistical techniques to, to actually comb through data in companies to find commonalities about, you know, job function and contracts and find ways to streamline the corporation.

So we can get new, do new things we never know what we could do before. You mean like fire half the McKinsey consultants? No, maybe, I don't know, but it's amazing. It's actually, so the key thing with him, he doesn't need me to say, I'm proud of your son. He needs me to be authentically amazed, which I am. So I'd have a son who is a sniper, you know, who is a sniper in the Marine Corps.

He's a special operator, scout sniper in the Marine Corps. And now he's, he's in civilian life, managing a construction company. He's 24, married, has a kid. And last week I went to his house. He bought his first house at 24. That's impressive. It is. Especially in this economy. Yeah. Yeah. And in Northern Virginia, which is expensive.

And I was at his house and he's building a porch on his, on his house. I can't build porch. I mean, I can't build a porch. I wish I could build a porch. I can. It just falls down in a year. But it's amazing. And, and I was looking at it. I said, Carlos, how did you know how to do this? And he said, well, you know, I work for a construction company, dad, you know, and I watch the trades do it all day.

And. And I watched four YouTube videos on it and I know how to do it. And I was authentically amazed. And the thing I just saw the look on his face when he saw that his dad was amazed because he's doing something well that I could never do. Wow. And so that's the key. If you, if you really want to build your kids up, don't, don't give them some line.

I'm proud of your son for being such a hard worker. No, find what they're incredibly good at and admire it with authentic amazement and they'll glow.

[00:18:01] **Dave:** So it's admiration and amazement. Yes. Pride. Yeah. Okay. That's, that's some powerful stuff. If you could go back to yourself when you were 20, give yourself one single piece of advice.

Given all the stuff you know now, what would you say? I would have

[00:18:16] **Arthur:** developed my intellectual life better, more. And part of the reason is because I was a classical musician. All I wanted to do was to be the world's greatest French horn player. Which is a pretty esoteric thing. I mean, only in America, right?

Lots of, lots of big money in that. Yeah. Yeah. When I was 20, I was not going to the dentist because I didn't have, I didn't have healthcare coverage and I needed to go to the dentist. But I wanted to be the world's greatest French horn player. And what I didn't realize is that what I wanted was not to be the world's greatest French horn player.

What I wanted to do was to learn all about the world and achieve some distinction on the basis of doing something that was generative. For the rest of the world. I didn't actually know what I wanted to do I would have gone back and said look that your aperture is too small And it's like this little thing about playing the Mozart fourth horn concerto better than any other French horn player in the world That's too little You need to open that up.

You need to learn more things. You need to see the world in all of its majesty. And it took me a long time to figure that out. I didn't wind up going to college until I was in my late twenties. And then I started taking classes and things I didn't know I was interested in. And my mind was

[00:19:26] **Dave:** completely

[00:19:26] **Arthur:** blown.

[00:19:27] **Dave:** I've come across quite a few studies showing that, you know, breathing affects the nervous system, but specifically playing instruments, brass instruments, or wood instruments, the ones you have to regulate your breathing through. Do you think you were regulating your nervous system unconsciously by being so into the French horn?

No doubt.

[00:19:46] **Arthur:** I have no doubt that I was. But, and it's so much that you learn. I mean, at some point I'll write a book called How to Play the French Horn that's not actually not about how to play the French horn. Because everything I learned, um, I learned about life. I learned about success. I learned about how to regulate myself as a person came from becoming a French horn player from, from the physiology of it, just to the discipline.

That comes with it where it's again and again and do it again and do it again, slow it down, listen to your tapes, memorize the beginning and the ending when you're going to be most nervous. I mean, this is how I, I mean, I do 150. Public speeches a year now on top of my teaching at the university and and I I when I'm working out a new talk I work it out with the same mastery that I learned when I was learning how to play the French horn Plus I can actually regulate my breath.

So no matter how nervous I am in front of whatever audience it is I know I'm gonna be able to perform. Do you still get nervous and going from an audience? Not exactly. Not exactly. I was more nervous as a French horn player. I had more stage fright as a French horn player. You know, everything in life is easy when you're not holding a horn.

I wouldn't know. Yeah, I know. Do you? Do you get nervous? Not in the slightest. Not at all. Yeah. And part of it is because you actually have mastery over, over the machine, right? Yeah. I, that's not an emotional thing. That's a, that's, that's biological

[00:21:03] **Dave:** as much as anything else. It's biological. I had Asperger's syndrome when I was younger.

And when I was about 30, I'm like, oh man, there's a signal and all that noise below the neck. I guess I'll have to figure out what to do with it. So between neurofeedback from my, you know, leadership neurofeedback company. Six months of looking at my brainwaves and learning how to manipulate them and then learning how to change my heart rate variability.

If I was feeling nervous before I went on stage, I would just change my state. And I do this before I go out. And I remember the first time I was going out on Tony Robbins stage and it's 15, 000 people in the stadium, which was the biggest audience I'd spoken to at the time. So I, I go out there and they're supposed to play.

And I was like, okay, I'm going to the cold room, this is great. I think if I'd have had my aura ring back then, my heart rate wouldn't have even changed. I got it. And, and I was, after I was going, like, I just genuinely want to be doing this. Yeah, yeah. It did take me a long time to get there. My first talk in my early twenties about, you know, the web 1.

0. And the very beginnings of the browser. I don't remember what I said. I was terrified, but it's one of those things where it's just my body doing stupid shit. I think it's just advanced metacognition with real time feedback. After a while, you just get like, okay, it is what it is. When you come to

[00:22:20] **Arthur:** understand that psychology is biology, it's incredibly empowering.

Of course, you have to learn more because you have to learn how to self regulate the biology and some of the things you can't. I mean, if You're throwing up and you have the flu, well good luck to you. Don't do the gig, is what it comes down to. But I think back to before I knew a lot of what I know now. I mean, I fell off the stage during a speech one time at Carnegie Hall

[00:22:42] **Music:** when

[00:22:43] **Arthur:** I was 22.

And it's because I wasn't a public speaker, I was a French horn player. And I was speaking to the audience and my knees were knocking together. I mean, I was playing this incredibly hard repertoire as a French horn player. Relatively effortlessly, but I had to talk to the audience and that's what freaked me out Wow, and I wasn't paying attention I got too close to the edge and I fell six feet off the front of the stage into the audience It was terrible.

It was probably the worst night of my career at that point It got worse after you can just turn into a stage dive and that quick you were cool well, yeah, actually that's it's it's something you say that because that's very adroit of you because I I remember As I was falling, thinking, thinking, because time slows down, and there's a whole lot of neuroscience about why time feels like it slows down, your life flashed before your eyes, kind of, and I thought, okay, how am I going to make this not look stupid?

And, you know, I hit the ground, everybody gasps and I jump up and say, I'm okay, folks. I was not okay.

I mean, my, my, my instrument is all wrecked. My elbow is swelling up. I mean, it was not great.

[00:23:43] **Dave:** I've had quite a few friends over the years who do get a lot of stage fright. Yeah. And, you know, I'll teach him some of the breathing things and whatnot. I can teach them how to upregulate energy production so you have enough energy to overcome the stress and it, after that, take a beta blocker.

[00:24:00] **Arthur:** Yeah, no, a beta blocker, the first generation beta blockers like Inderal and the low presser and all that, those are incredibly effective.

[00:24:07] **Music:** Yeah.

[00:24:07] **Arthur:** Incredibly effective for lowering the physical, what it does is just, it's, it slices through the epinephrine boost that you're getting. Yeah.

[00:24:14] **Dave:** So your adrenaline can't go away.

take any action on your body. So your body says you're going to die. Yeah. But the parts of your body that receive the, I'm going to die hormone, they don't hear it. So then you don't get the physiological effects and then you don't snap out of your prefrontal cortex and you're still in charge. I've never had to use it, but I've seen it radically change some people's lives.

Yeah, for sure. I actually use

[00:24:35] **Arthur:** beta blockers occasionally as a musician, but I've never done it as a public speaker. Part of the reason is I want all the energy. And I'm not

[00:24:42] **Dave:** debilitated by the nerves. Yeah. So, and I've heard the same thing. More musicians use it than speakers, because if you're on stage and your adrenaline's flat and you get a hostile question, you can't rise up the way you need to.

So

[00:24:55] **Arthur:** that's right. And so that becomes a problem. And when you're playing the violin or the French horn or the oboe or something, you don't want to dry mouth and you certainly don't want to be shaking. Oh God. I mean, that'll just ruin the, you know, the physical domination you have with your fine motorcycle.

Right. Cause you're trying to hold your diaphragm. Yeah. That would be totally, I mean, what will happen for most people, the only reason that most people would need a beta blocker for speaking is the first 90 seconds.

[00:25:16] **Music:** Yeah.

[00:25:17] **Arthur:** But you can actually work through that without the drugs for most people. And the way to do that is by memorizing your first 90 seconds.

Oh, that's smart. Yeah, just memorize exactly what you're going to say and don't, you know, don't get up there with all of the throat clearing and wasting time. And I'm so grateful to be here and, and, and calling out all your friends. You're just losing the audience. When you're doing that, just have it right out of the can.

And, and, and if you do that, then boom, you're done. You're, you wouldn't be nervous by after two minutes. Anyway,

[00:25:42] **Dave:** you ever chat with Lieutenant Colonel Grossman? I have it. He's a guy who wrote on combat and on killing. Oh, yeah. And studied the neurophysiology of first responders, which is exactly what we're talking about here.

One of the most fascinating interviews I've done, and he says, well, here's what happens if you're on a SWAT team, here's what happens if you're a, uh, fireman going into the World Trade Centers or something. Right. And he explains how you drop out of your conscious thinking into your training. Right. And what you just said there, well, memorize it.

You're going to drop out of your conscious thinking. Right. You're going to do what you memorized. The stress gets done, and then you go into You run the tape. And so that

[00:26:20] **Arthur:** introductory tape that freaked you out, or could have freaked you out, before that Tony Robbins stage that you had, you run your own introductory tape.

I normally do, but they didn't run it. No, but my point is, it's in your head. The first 90 seconds of your talk is your introductory. I don't even go onto the stage. I just stand back there and at the end, please welcome Dave Asprem and come out, and I'm just there to go. Yeah. But for people who are less, who are less experienced of speakers, make sure you got your bump date, and your mind, and you just run that when you get on the stage.

That

[00:26:49] **Dave:** is so good. It comes out of your mouth. Yeah, yeah. It's healthy. And I did for years. I've done a lot of speaker training because I gave keynotes for public companies before I became a biohacker. So I was trained. That's good practice. And I, I used to go through and every slide there's exactly beat points.

You know that? Yeah. Just that one day I'm like, I know the content so well that I am fully capable of not knowing what I'm going to say going on stage and doing a standing ovation. I still know what I'm going to say on stage because I'm good at what I do, but if it was a pinch hit. I know it's in there and, and I developed this deep trust that I already know, and that's what creates the piece.

And you got that for reps

[00:27:26] **Arthur:** and that's, there's actually no substitute for reps. So why don't you think, yeah, it really helped when I was trying to actually get much better public speaking. I took a, an engagement with a company. And I was giving a relatively technical presentation and they sent me out to the client said you want to do some of these things for a thousand dollars, a thousand dollars of speech plus a coach class ticket.

I took 50.

[00:27:45] **Music:** Wow.

[00:27:46] **Arthur:** I took 50 in a year and, and, uh, less than a year. And, and I was going, I was going to, you know, I was going to Duluth. I was going to Albuquerque. I was going to these places, these runouts. But I got reps, and reps, and reps, and I learned a lot, I mean I learned a lot about public speaking. So for example, you know, and so do I, but most people when they're starting out don't, that you can't keep people's attention neurocognitively for more than 6 or 7 minutes.

Especially if you're trying to build toward a particular point, you gotta let them off the bike for 90 to 120 seconds every 6 or 7 minutes. And so that's why you have everything modularized in a talk that you're giving. And every six or seven minutes you stop and you have a pretext, you tell a joke, you, you say, I just saw this study, it's not related, but it's blowing my mind, I gotta share it.

Or let me tell you something about one of my kids.

[00:28:33] **Music:** And

[00:28:33] **Arthur:** that's 90 to 120 seconds and you clear their palate a little bit and then they get back on the bike. And that's one of the things that you learn, but you only get that from reps.

[00:28:42] **Dave:** I think you're right. And there's probably a way of getting it from fewer reps.

by increasing neuroplasticity. So you might want to microdose while you do your reps. As long as you don't over microdose. Yeah, I know. I've done that. Make sure you know what you're doing. There's the Austin microdose for people to say, I'm like, no, you took a quarter dose. That was not a microdose. You're, you're at a party.

You're, that's good. You're actually tripping. Yeah, if you can feel the microdose, it wasn't a microdose. But so, so the 10, 000 hour rule, you can probably bend it as long as you increase blood flow and neuroplasticity. Yeah,

[00:29:13] **Arthur:** yeah. In the wrong hands, that could be a problem. The one, the one nice thing is that, is that mastery through reps always

[00:29:19] **Dave:** works.

It does. And it's good if the reps are with good form. And for me, I realized I sucked at public speaking after I gave my first talk to a thousand people. I was maybe 24. Thank you for listening. So I started teaching and I ran the web and internet engineering program at the University of California Santa Cruz for about five years.

So I taught three or four nights a week for three hours and you, you can't have stage fright if you've got that number of hours in front of 50 people, especially when they're all better educated than you. So that, that's solved it for me. And if I had not done that, I wouldn't have learned how to learn because I had to learn my materials to teach while I was busy.

And then I had to learn how to take what I learned and do it. And people, how can you explain all these medical? It's because I had to learn how to turbo learn and translate and explain over and over and over. Yeah.

[00:30:06] **Arthur:** And you're doing it when you were young too, right? Yeah. Which is unusual because that's much easier to do when you have high levels of crystallized intelligence, which is the ability to synthesize.

a lot of information quickly and see patterns. That usually happens after 40. That's when your brain is ideally suited toward it. And it's actually highest in your 50s, 60s, and 70s. Your crystallized intelligence. Yeah, no, it's unbelievable. It's, uh, it's, I didn't believe it until I started experiencing it.

I'm a much better teacher than I was when I was 30. Much better. I can lecture now on topics that are pretty new to me using pretty rich metaphor.

[00:30:41] **Music:** Mm hmm.

[00:30:42] **Arthur:** And the reason for that is because I have higher levels of crystallized intelligence, which is to say I know a lot more stuff. I can recognize patterns.

I can put things ideas together in into a synthesis. That's hard when you're 30 or 35. Not if you had Asperger's.

[00:30:56] **Dave:** It's one of the gifts. If you have autism or Asperger's, It means your brain was operating with much less power than normal brains. So it had to force the most efficient algorithms for pattern recognition.

And it means that your nervous system was all staticky because you couldn't really get good sensory input, but if you restore power and then clean up the nervous system, you still have efficient algorithms. And that's why sometimes I can just see things because I suffered a lot. You do not want to have any of that stuff, but the gift of it is pattern recognition.

[00:31:24] **Arthur:** Yeah. I mean, that's so people, a lot of this new science, you, I'm sure you know it better than I do because I had actually haven't, I'm not on the spectrum at all, but overdeveloped left hemisphere of the brain and a weaker corpus callosum. So there's less, there's less communication between the right and left hemispheres.

And so the master hemisphere is the right, asking all the questions. The left hemisphere is the analysis. This is the emissary and the emissary is in charge and you're not getting signals going back and forth between the two halves. And that's the problem. Is that, does that comport with your experience?

[00:31:55] **Dave:** Well, there isn't a smaller corpus callosum in most autism that I've seen, but my mother actually had her corpus callosum severed that's crazy, by Stanford back in the day, um, to help with epilepsy. And it was, it was quite interesting the first year after that, you know, she would answer the phone with her stomach for some reason.

It wasn't fully severed, but. I don't think it did good things for her. Yeah. Those were not successful procedures by large. No. Yeah. And what I, what I've seen in bringing people through 40 years of Zen is we're doing Q EEG brain maps. So we're comparing their brains to a set of average brains and we can compare them to other high performing brains.

And if they're not communicating between the hemispheres, it's not just like the left isn't talking to the right. It's that this one little area isn't talking to this other area or it's talking at Delta, but it's not talking at beta. So it's almost like there's a concert that's playing differently in each person's brain and when you see hot or cold areas of connectivity and you just show the brain that, it'll radically shift that.

And when you're done and you look at their cue, there's no asymmetry between not just the left and right, but between the front right and the back left or the front, right. And the back, right. And for me, I did not have this brain. I built it. It was pretty scrambled when I started. Yeah. Yeah. That's pretty interesting.

And the knowledge was incredibly helpful to you. Most people don't have it. Actually, I had a lot of fear motivation on that one. Cause I'm like, I wanted to be a CTO. I was a CTO. At least type of thing. And like I wouldn't hire myself because my brain is just trash. Like it's not working. And uh, one of Daniel Amon's, a psychiatrist said, you know, when he saw my brain scan when I was going to Wharton, he's like, inside your brain is total chaos.

I don't know how you're standing here in front of me. You have the best camouflage I've ever seen. Wow. I think a lot of business leaders have camouflage. Yeah. Because I had a, I was running technology strategic planning for a publicly traded tech company for Exodus Communications. So, you know, I got to attend board meetings before I was 30, couldn't speak, but I could listen.

And like, I'm doing all this badass stuff, but inside I'm like, I'm gonna die, I'm gonna die, I, I can't remember anything. And just profound tiredness. How common do you think that is amongst executives today? A lot. Actually, it is

[00:34:12] **Arthur:** a lot. I mean, it's people who become business leaders, particularly in highly complicated sectors.

They're not normal. How should I put it? They're not normal people, not just that they have extraordinary ability, which many do. They have high cognitive ability, etc. Most people don't want to do that. Most people actually don't want to be a striver per se. And there's a good reason for that. To be a striver, you actually have to make unbelievable amounts of sacrifices, mostly your happiness.

More than most people. Yeah. Oh, yeah, for sure. I mean, it's, there's an old axiom in the business of the science of happiness, which is woe be to the man whose dreams come true, because inevitably he finds that he had the wrong dreams. We're built to have dreams that are, that come from evolution and actually don't come from truth about happiness.

Mother Nature doesn't care if you're happy. Mother Nature wants you to survive and pass on your genes. And all of your natural impulses toward money and power and pleasure and fame and prestige and admiration These come from Mother Nature's imperatives for you to pass on your genes and survive. And you survive through the winter.

You want to be happier. You're not going to be happy because that would require no negative emotion. That's impossible. You want to be happier.

[00:35:24] **Music:** And

[00:35:24] **Arthur:** so you say, okay, I've got these impulses and I want to be happier. So therefore, if I indulge these impulses, I'll be happier. That's wrong. That's a crossed circuit.

Porn doesn't work. Porn doesn't work. Indulge the impulses, you're not going to be happy. But money doesn't work. I mean, fame doesn't work. Power doesn't work. None of it. These can be intermediate steps toward the things that actually do bring greater happiness like, like the, a conscious understanding of the divine, like a relationship with your family, like close real friendships, like serving other people through your work, in other words, love, right, which is what brings happiness at the end of the day.

And you can actually facilitate more of that more effectively with these worldly rewards. But if you stop at the worldly rewards, you're not going to get it. And the result of that is that people who are. So, if you're unusually good at getting those things like you, you're going to do that. And when you hit your mark, your money mark, your fame mark, your power mark, and you're not feeling it, you're going to conclude, I guess I needed another billion.

I guess I needed

[00:36:21] **Dave:** more. It's a terrible addiction and you see it so much in the ultra wealthy. Look, if it didn't work in your first 6 million, it's not going to work in your second 6 million. I'm just like, wait. I not only made it, but I lost it before I was ready. It's like I took a taste of it and I really wasn't happier when I had that much money.

It was kind of nice, but it was kind of nice.

[00:36:42] **Arthur:** The trouble is that well, I mean, the way that I teach my students about this, because my students are unbelievably talented and they're virtually all going to be well off. I mean, the Harvard Business School, the MBAs at Harvard, for Pete's sake, they get, I mean, I think the average starting salary is about 210, 000 coming out of their master's degree program, which is, you know, good money.

I tell them, look, your brain is going to say you will find satisfaction and it will stay if you have more. The right formula for you to have in your brain is that satisfaction equals your halves divided by your wants. Halves divided by wants. Now, we all know enough math to know that one way to increase that number is by working the numerator.

But it's not very mathematically efficient. Much more efficient is always to work the denominator. If you've got a fraction, decrease the denominator if you want the number to go up and vice versa. And that means a wants management strategy and not just a haves management strategy. Wow. And so we have to think strivers, which is, let's just round it off to a hundred percent of Dave Asprey's audience.

There's actually a lot of consciousness explorers in here too. Okay. They're striving in a different play. You can strive for a moment. Absolutely. So in the end space of different ways, you can strive. Yeah. And that's one of them. So every single person watching and listening to us right now needs to have a wants management strategy.

We do that. Well, so there's a bunch of different ways to do that. One is to think metaphorically. So your life has been a work of self creation to a very large extent. I mean, you're the sort of you're the quintessential, you know, Emersonian man. I mean you're like you're building your life, right? I mean you've done it I mean is I don't know how that works.

I'm gonna go figure it out and go do that, right? Sometimes it was a little bit more desperate than people might know But yeah for sure, but it was you know, I mean if your house is falling down, you're gonna fix it So exactly So the, that's a that's an important thing for, for, you know, everybody to think, you know, how are you going to, you know, build your own life.

But you also have to understand that that's not the only metaphor to be thinking about. So you, you might think of your life as you're an artist, you're a canvas, you've also got the brushes and paints, and you're painting on this canvas, and the work of art gets more and more and more beautiful. The trouble is at 40 or 45, Dave Asprey's canvas is full, man.

One more brushstroke. In terms of money power pleasure fame is not gonna make it more beautiful. You need a new metaphor, which is a sculptor Sculptors make things more beautiful by taking things away Oh, wow chip chip chip chip chip chip and the beautiful work of art is in there And that's what should be exposed on your last day now your last days a long time from now There's a lot of chipping we hope and that's the idea That's the goal, but there's a lot of chipping that needs to get done.

I don't think I can lose any more body fat. I know. What are you? What's your percentage? I'm at 4. 8 right now. That's insane. I don't know that it's even healthy. I'm trying to

[00:39:34] **Dave:** go back to

[00:39:35] **Arthur:** 6. If I get under 7, I'm, I'm, I'm, it's hard to be married to me. I mean, I, I look ridiculous. You're very, you're very vascular at this point.

If I get under 10, I don't like my life.

[00:39:45] **Dave:** Yeah. I, I don't know how to get fatter at this point, which is weird. Cause I've been fat my whole life, but I finally got my nutrition dialed in and it just works. But anyway, I'm there. Chipping

[00:39:53] **Arthur:** away the, the conceits, the possessions, the relationships that are not generative chipping and chipping and chipping away.

So one of the things that I recommend is is having a reverse bucket list where you make an honest assessment of your attachments. We're all conceited. We, I mean, all of us, nobody is perfect. I mean, you can find, I mean, Pope Francis has conceits, right? The Dalai Lama, maybe not the Dalai Lama, but he's a living Bodhisattva.

But most of us, look, I mean, And so make a list. And then, and again, it's, it's okay. I mean, I'm not ashamed of the fact that money is fun. I'm not ashamed of the fact that I want people to buy my books, but I'm not going to be managed by those desires because then if I am, then I'm being managed by my limbic system.

Those cravings and desires are limbic in nature. I want my prefrontal cortex to be in charge. So I cross them out saying, easy come, easy go. That's how you, That's how you can live according to a wants management as opposed to a haves

[00:40:50] **Dave:** management strategy. I'm gonna ask you a question that I'm 99 percent sure Noah's asked you and you can say you want to talk about it because you're from a big school.

Ejaculation, prolactin, dopamine, testosterone, and motivation. I don't know that literature. I've heard you talk about it. I've heard you talk about it.

[00:41:08] **Arthur:** A month or two ago, and that's, that's the extent of

[00:41:12] **Dave:** it. Okay. Yeah. Cause it, with everything you're saying there about, you know, you, you want it, you're striving, but then you get it and then.

It's not what you think like, that's kind of the, well, you still respect me in the morning or what they call post nut clarity, but it's, that's a micro, you know, a microcosm, a much larger cycle that we see where, you know, you really want to think, yeah, but then it's empty, right? And then you get back on the treadmill.

And I think that's, what's happening with, I made my first million dollars. It's fucking great to make your first million dollars, but making your second million isn't as good as the first one. And if you just keep doing it over and over and over. You're like, you know, the coke addict who just keeps, you know, well, you know, I need more.

I need more. I need more. You'll have this or

[00:41:55] **Arthur:** anything else look I mean you're talking about the the hormonal balance that you're actually altering when you're when you're finding some sort of physical satisfaction

[00:42:02] **Music:** yeah,

[00:42:03] **Arthur:** the neuromodulator activity is really interesting about this too because we We, we know a lot about dopamine at this point and people misattribute dopamine.

They talk about mis, dopamine as if it were a reward chemical. It's an anticipation chemical. It's a neuromodulator that says there's a reward out there. Go and get it. Most of the time, by the way, you get more dopamine when you think about something you want to go get than when you actually get that. The only reason you get more dopamine is if it was better than you thought it was going to be.

And that's the reason that most things are disappointing. And so what will happen is that you'll spend effort. You'll spend your sense of reward, satisfaction that you hope you'll get. And this is one of the things you're talking about, the sexual experience. But we can find it in all sorts of experiences in our life.

So neuromodular problem. A neuromodulator matter, we have to be very cognizant of this. Now, in the case that you talked about, the old jazz musicians always talked about that. They always talked about their personal lives, their sexual lives in that particular way. Don't do it, man. No, no, not before the show, man.

[00:43:03] **Dave:** It's true. A lot of pro athletes and Taoists. So this is one of those things, especially for younger guys. I've talked to enough of them who are Usually way over involved with porn, which creates dopamine. Oh, it's bad

[00:43:15] **Arthur:** for you. Porn is really, really bad for you. It's bad for you, mess up your brain. One of the biggest problems, just beside what you're doing to your dopamine system.

Have you had Anna Lemke on your show? She wrote Dopamination. Phenomenal. She's got the best book on this. It's really about this, about, she talks about pornography and about sex and about gambling and about, but cause it's all the same system, right? And by the way, for a lot of people watching us, that's how success works.

Yes. Entrepreneurship is still a slot machine. Totally. And, and you know, the truth is a lot of people, if they're very successful, very young life feels gray unless they're putting up numbers and that's all about, I'll have the anticipation of reward. And then the reward has to be better than I thought it was going to be.

And then I start all over again, such that I can actually feel something in my life. That's, but it's all the same thing. It all really comes around as the same thing. There's an antidote for

[00:44:03] **Dave:** that. I wrote about it in my next book and it's pain.

[00:44:06] **Music:** Yeah.

[00:44:08] **Dave:** A brief exposure to pain for sure. Will reset your dopamine sensitivity.

That's why in biohacking, you do cryotherapy or pull plunges. It's three minutes that suck, but then the rest of your day is much better.

[00:44:19] **Arthur:** Yeah, and also it's not, it's not artificially goosing your dopamine over and over and over again. We were ingenious about taking this natural evolved system of anticipation of reward so that we'll stay in the hunt.

I mean, the reason that you look up at the tree and there's a little yellow piece of fruit up there, and then you get a burst of dopamine that impels you to climb the tree and risk your life. Because that, those calories are going to be so delicious and tasty. That's the way the brain is supposed to work, so you'll do stuff and stay alive and pass on your genes.

But we're so good, we're so smart, that entrepreneurs have been able to take that experience. And methamphetamine, for example, gives you 10x the dopamine that you're going to get under ordinary circumstances. Pornography, well, two and a half times as much, something like that. I mean, there's all of these things that will artificially stimulate your dopamine in ways that are way be They're super physiological and they're bad for you.

It messes up your dopamine system such that you get what's, in my profession, is called anhedonia. Anhedonia is the inability to feel pleasure. That's because your dopamine is permanently under its baseline unless you keep artificially stimulating it. Wow. So what we find is that almost anything that you'll do that feels weirdly good, anything from highly glycemic carbohydrates in the middle of the afternoon to looking at internet pornography to pulling a slot machine by yourself at 4 o'clock in the morning in Vegas to taking drugs and alcohol.

These are things, and by the way, some of it's innocuous. You and I like coffee. And, and it has all kinds of good things that, you know, it stimulates catecholamines, all sorts of beautiful things that we like. And it's okay on the dopamine side, but most of it's bad for you. Yeah. And you need to fast and you need to be conscious of what's happening in your brain and you need knowledge to change your habits such that you can master yourself.

Otherwise you will be a slave to these processes.

[00:46:05] **Dave:** I always think of, of everything I write, all my books, the show. If only I'd have known that when I was 19, it would have saved me pain and millions of dollars. Maybe

[00:46:14] **Arthur:** that's my answer to your question earlier, what I wish I knew at 20. Yeah. But you know what?

I was an idiot. So I probably wouldn't have taken my advice. I would have said, sorry, old

[00:46:25] **Dave:** man. One of the secrets of, of biohacking is I ran a longevity nonprofit group near Stanford in my twenties and no one under 60 would ever come. These old guys are teaching me how to make my brain work. And so what if I rebrand longevity to make it so I would have listened early on in life.

And so now what was longevity became how do you own your brain? And everyone wants to own their brain. And what I'm looking to get from you in this interview is, you know, we've, we've shared lots of different little things. So let's say, all right, you're, you know, you're in your senior year of college, you're early twenties.

And this is an overwhelming set of information. Biohacking is in just this interview. Right. Like, what did I do first? The very first step that someone does is alright. I want to I want to do what Arthur's talking about.

[00:47:13] **Music:** Yeah

[00:47:14] **Dave:** What's the very first

[00:47:15] **Arthur:** thing to do? Get up before dawn get up an hour and 36 minutes before dawn An hour and 36 minutes.

I know that's weirdly, I mean, what that is, is twice 48 and that's that's called the Brahma Muhurta in ancient Vedic wisdom. It sounds pretty arbitrary, perhaps it is, but the whole point is start the process right. Get a good start is what it comes down to. You will optimize your brain chemistry. You will enhance your creativity.

You'll, we're more likely to engage in better habits. Get up before the sun is up according to the ancient Vedic scholars and, and the, the most common neuroscience. So that's the first, I'm talking about a small way today. I mean, obviously, because, and, and your work is all about small wins. Sure. It's all a bunch of, it's kind of lazy, the small wins to stack up and not much work.

They turn into a big win. Yeah. They turn into big wins. You don't start with big wins, but that's actually my point. Okay. Maybe it's not get up before dawn. Maybe it's something else. Maybe it's, you know, wake up and meditate or say your prayers. Maybe it is. Call your mother and remind yourself that you love her.

Maybe it is, you know, it's basically these basic small winds of hygiene are where you start. And ordinarily, we all kind of know what they are, but we see them as this bolus of habits and things that we all need to do together. Pick one. Pick one and do it. Do one thing every day that makes you better, and it doesn't matter.

And this will lead you to this sort of daisy chain of physiological, mental, psychological and spiritual wellness of betterness is what it comes down to. Other people, there's one thing that you might do is to stop being, you said something important a minute ago. Most young people today are very afraid of discomfort.

Yeah, they're very afraid of pain. Not just physical pain. They're actually even more afraid of unhappiness. So I'm a happiness specialist. I'm really an unhappiness specialist. And what I tell my students is your suffering is unbelievably sacred. Stop trying to avoid it and eliminate it. That's one of the first things that I recommend to a lot of people.

It's like, your pain is totally normal. If you're a student at Harvard and you're not sad and anxious, you need therapy. You know? And, and stop pretending as if you, you, you could have this life that doesn't have this in it. I mean, come on, man. You, you want to be fully alive. And that means all of it,

[00:49:31] **Dave:** including the bad parts, because they're not bad.

It's all just a signal. I mean, I've been awake when they took my bone marrow out. I watched him saw through the bone in my foot and heard the bone saw slow down because my bones were too dense to easily cut. Ouch. And That's amazing. Well that was, my

[00:49:49] **Arthur:** leg was numbed. Well let me ask you a question on that because I didn't mean to interrupt you but I gotta ask you this question.

Some people say they want to die in their sleep, do you?

[00:49:57] **Dave:** I want to die at a time and by a method of my choosing. I want to see it. Yeah, totally. I'm curious about

[00:50:03] **Arthur:** it. It's gotta, I want to experience that. That's heavy, man. I mean, that's like, that's like, I want to be asleep when I jump out of a plane in a parachute.

No! The point is experience, right? And if I could remember my birth even better, but I can't. Actually the memories exist. Why do you say you can't? You totally can't. Well, I don't have access to the memories in a form that I find that, that, that, you know. I know some people could get you there.

[00:50:24] **Dave:** Okay. And, and that, the reason I say that is the very first personal development thing I ever did.

Just happened to be run by the founder of the American pre and perinatal birth psychology Association. No kidding and She spotted that I had birth trauma just by the way I walked or something. No kidding She's like telling me about your birth. Like I don't know like hospitals vagina. Yeah, then I Then she led me through a regression not hypnotic Just a grieving thing and I remembered small details about my birth and I called my parents was like is this what was that?

And oh, yeah Yeah, there was a warming. I don't know what a warming chamber was, but apparently they put me in that in the hospital. So I'm like, how did I recall details? It's because

[00:51:05] **Arthur:** Yeah, well, you're trying to actually re establish. There's, yeah, it's in there. The pruning that actually occurs within the first 18 months.

So you still have the memories that are in, the episodic memories stored in the hippocampus, but You just don't have access to them in the same way because of the synaptic pruning that happened. It's an older stage. Yeah. But to your point, I mean, you wanted to be awake when they're sawing through your bone because you wanted to see what that was like.

Yeah. That's how you're supposed to approach life. See, you're an entrepreneur and you're, what, do you have 13 companies? Now? Yeah. Yeah. I mean, that's the least of it. That's hard. I got to say that's too many. But the real entrepreneur, the real enterprise is Dave Inc. That's the enterprise and every single one of us is an enterprise and you're the entrepreneur treat your life as such Wow, that's good advice.

That's super important because you know, you started you started you started you get married That's entrepreneurial you give your heart away. You have a child you take a new job. You move to a new place This is just pure entrepreneurship is all this is so Experience that you don't, you know, entrepreneurs are like, yeah, I don't want to know anything about this new company.

You're terrible. I mean, I want to know the general counsel called. We're getting sued. I want to know, right? Because this is going to be less of an interesting experience, but more importantly, it's going to be less successful. So you need all of this bad stuff in your life. Furthermore, One of the things they always say in Silicon Valley, for all the stupid things that they say, one of the things that they say that's really correct, is you learn more from your failure than you do from your success.

And that's true in your personal life as well. If you had five heartbreaking, terrible, romantic breakups, you're incompetent to get married. Wow. A hundred percent support on that one. Uh huh. Because you need to learn from that, and you better be awake when that's happening, and you better take it in. Okay, go listen to some sad music.

It feels like you're going to die

[00:52:55] **Dave:** if you break up with someone. You won't leave an unhealthy relationship because it feels like you're going to die. That's right. And that's,

[00:53:01] **Arthur:** and all of that is, once again, the psychology is the biology and the more that you can then augment that knowledge of the experience with an understanding of the neuroscience, the better off you're going to be.

That's what really changed my life. Is understanding first, as a behavioral scientist, what the emotions are and how they work, but then actually understanding the mechanism of causation. For example, sadness, classic, is a part of your limbic system largely dedicated to the experience of sadness and grief.

The anterior cingulate cortex, the dorsal part of the anterior cingulate cortex. It's supposed to be highly activated when you're feeling mental pain, especially from exclusion. It exists so you'll have an aversion to that. Now you can medicate it away. I mean, literally acetaminophen, Tylenol, will mute the, the dorsal anterior cingulate cortex.

You will feel less heartbroken. I didn't know that. But you'll ruin your liver. Well, if you take more than a thousand milligrams twice a day, but, or you can take, use alcohol or you can use opiate drugs. But the whole point is you need to learn from that. And you will suffer less if you understand the nature of your suffering.

Knowledge

[00:54:07] **Dave:** is power. And if you feel the suffering fully, at least if you believe David Hawkins, it takes about 20 minutes if you have the balls to do it, which few people do. But you can process something in three days or you can process it in 30 years. But the more you resist the pain, the worse it is.

[00:54:24] **Arthur:** Yeah, there's a lot of research on that. There's a lot of research on that. Pain elimination is a huge mistake. Treatment and elimination, treatment and avoidance are totally different things. The treatment of pain largely involves the acceptance of pain. The first step in the treatment of any pain is acceptance of it, whether it's mental or physical.

The elimination or avoidance of pain is what way too much therapy is trying to do today. And what a lot of people are doing when they treat themselves because they're being fed the lie that pain is abnormal and evidence of pathology.

[00:54:53] **Dave:** Yeah, resilience is the ability to handle some pain. And let it flow through you and be done with it and move on.

And also not do what I would do in my twenties, which was ignore the pain until, you know, there's a bone sticking out. That's dumb too. I mean,

[00:55:09] **Arthur:** we have to be realistic about it, of course. And no doubt you have a very, very high pain threshold. I certainly do now. Yeah, no, that's right. And actually coming to a healthy relationship with that.

You recognize that it's uncomfortable in this, but it's absolutely normal and you want to treat it in the best way we can learn the most and you don't have to live with it forever. I mean, this is common sense to a certain extent, yet there's so much of that is elusive these

[00:55:31] **Dave:** days. I was on stage at an event a while ago with an ABCL doctor and one of the audience members said, you know, for each of you on the panel, you know, what is the thing you struggle with the most?

And I thought about it, I said, I don't believe in struggle. Struggle is resistance, right? There's things where I fail. There's things that I'm working really hard on, but struggling is like wriggling around when there's some things happening versus just either. Working on it or not working on it. Right. So to me, struggle feels like wasted effort because of pain.

Yeah. Instead of like, I did everything I could and I absolutely failed and it hurt, but I didn't struggle. Do you see what I'm saying? Yeah, I know. What is the role of pain and struggle? Well,

[00:56:12] **Arthur:** there's a. The Buddhists always talk about non resistance, the whole idea of non resistance. And resistance is the biggest problem that we have when we have, when we have a lot of pain.

Because when resisting the pain is what actually leads to the struggle and that exacerbates the problem and doesn't actually lead to effective treatment. That, that's basically what we're talking, it's sort of Western terms. That's what the, more or less what the Buddhists are saying in this idea of non resistance.

That doesn't mean that you acquiesce to it, When something is incredibly painful, you don't acquiesce to the pain, on the contrary, but you're not going to resist it. You're not going to say, Oh, no, make it stop. I mean, what am I learning? What's happening? How do I treat it? I accept it. And now actually, how am I going to treat it?

In other words, the question shouldn't be, what do you struggle most with? What's the biggest effort for you to make a gain in your life? That's not easy. Yeah, what's the hardest thing? I'm working Yeah, what's the most difficult

[00:57:04] **Dave:** challenge? I'll do that. Although of course

[00:57:06] **Arthur:** because that's your life is doing hard things Yeah, cuz you're super into hard things because you're a striver for better for worse I mean you could be a happier person if you weren't What's the recipe for being a happiest driver?

So, that's a, that's a, I wrote a whole book on that, called From Strength to Strength. And I got interested in this because I had this personal experience that really changed my thinking. I was a CEO at the time. I was running a big, a big non profit research organization, a think tank in Washington, D. C.,

called the American Enterprise Institute. Great job. Very interesting. High pressure. 80 hours a week. And I started thinking, well, five or six years into that job, what's the end game? Which is what CEOs are always thinking because you do it you do it a little bit better Life is about progress build more buildings raise more money.

And then at some point what I mean you get the shove from the board And go golf. I mean what and then you die about six months later. I don't want to get a deep tan I don't want to go. I don't want to golf I don't want to do that and but I didn't know what the end game was I was very very insecure about that And one night while I was kind of in the midst of this minor existential crisis, I was on a plane from LA to BC, which is, I was on, I'm I've been on the road since I was a kid.

And, and so this was pretty typical typing away my laptop and I overheard a conversation behind me. It was a couple, it was an elderly couple. I could tell it was a man and a woman and his words were muffled, but her responses were not very penetrating or coming right from the seats. I'm assuming it's a married couple.

It turns out it was, he says, and she says, Don't say it would be better if you were dead. And then he says, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha. And she says, it's not true that nobody remembers you or loves you anymore. And I'm thinking, this poor, disappointed old guy. He's in his 80s. He's no Dave Asprey. I mean, that's, it's, he's no Stryver.

I mean, he probably wanted to do stuff, but didn't have the, didn't have the incentive, didn't have the impulse, didn't have the drive, the work effort. And now it's too late. Made sense to me. When we landed at Dulles an hour later, so I, I kind of wanted to put a face to it. You know, because this is my lab, I'm a behavioral scientist, and my lab is over for conversations, right?

And so I stand up and I turn around, and it's one of the most famous men in the world. This is somebody that everybody watching and listening to us knows. A real hero. For something, stuff he did a long, long time ago. And and I thought to myself, either the model of pure striverly success is busted, or this guy's busted.

And I started a research project because this is kinda like, I mean, this guy's 20X what I'm ever gonna do, but. I don't want to be having that conversation with my wife in 30 or 40 years in the plane because my adventure ended. So I started a research project to see if this was normal, which it is. Very normal.

Very normal. And as a matter of fact, the people who are most likely to become unhappier after 70 are the people who have the biggest party in their careers before 70. That's a big problem for pretty much your whole audience on your last. Okay,

[01:00:03] **Dave:** go ahead

[01:00:04] **Arthur:** Unless you break the mold unless you do a few things differently and what people do who are on autopilot for worldly success And that's what the book is about.

What do they actually do? One is understanding your brain what we've talked to it before getting on the crystallized intelligence curve where you're not just trying to be an innovator You're trying to be a synthesizer of information. So if you're a hotshot lawyer at 30, you should be managing partner at 60.

That's the teacher version. If you're a startup entrepreneur at 35, you should be a VC at 65 because then you're the teacher, the coach, the talent spotter. I was doing, you know, mathematical empirical social science that was so sophisticated at 35, I can't read the articles today. Now, I have an audience of 500, 000 readers a week in the Atlantic, and I'm talking about science for non scientists because I'm not using that fluid intelligence of innovation, I'm using the crystallized intelligence of synthetic wisdom and public education.

That's super important. The second is the chipping away. The second skill. That people who are happy, happy strivers, when they're, as they get older is they stop adding and they start learning how to subtract so they get to their, their essence. And the third. Which is that let's say third and fourth third is that they're they're serious about their relationships One of the problems the strivers have is they're lonely.

Yep They're lonely and they think that polishing their leaves the way to go is tell your roots and your roots are intertwined Get on that then last is your spiritual life, you know, or your philosophical life What do you understand about the transcendent the things that are bigger than you? What do you understand about, you know?

Maybe it's like our friend Ryan holiday. Yeah, let's here town He studies the Stoics. Great. Maybe you're practicing Vipassana meditation. Maybe you're, like me, practicing a faith of your youth. You need this. I've had a lot of people to be doing something? Because you need to be talking seriously about the why of your life when you're in your, when you're in your mature years.

So these are the big four crystallized intelligence chipping away roots, not leaves and the transcendent. Those are the big four of people who get happier and happier and happier, even though they're strivers. And that's exactly what the guy on the plane was not doing. Wow.

[01:02:17] **Dave:** I've had a lot of people ask throughout interviews, What do you want your legacy to be?

Yeah, and it always struck me as absurd. I'm like, I don't want a legacy. I go to him dead, I'll be doing something else. Or maybe I'll just be dead. Depends on whatever you believe. I'm a moose on that. But it's none of my business. I don't, I don't have any expectation anyone's gonna know my name a hundred years from now.

In fact, if you're a president of the US a hundred years ago, do you know that was? But you're with that 1924,

[01:02:46] **Arthur:** Calvin Coolidge. You

[01:02:47] **Dave:** actually

[01:02:47] **Arthur:** know? Yeah. Nerd.

[01:02:50] **Dave:** But the 90 neighbors would be like, who knows, what did Coolidge do in his top three things? Unless you studied history. It doesn't fucking matter, right?

So, people ask me, like, I would like my kids, as long as they're alive, to be like, Hey, he was a good dad. You know, I like my closest, you know, closest friends to say, you know, He loved me and he was kind. I don't care. Like, I'm not doing it for that. I think the why behind what motivates you. But if, you know, your definition of, you know, success in your old age is everyone remembering your work.

Yeah.

[01:03:21] **Arthur:** Yeah, that feels empty. Have you interviewed Stephen Cave, the philosopher at Cambridge who wrote this really great book called Immortality? Wow. I have to interview that. Oh, you'd love it. I love it. I don't know him personally, but I've read the book. It's a great book. And he talks about the fact that people think about immortality in different ways.

There's also a book called The Consolations of Mortality by a philosopher at the University of Toronto. That's also very, very good. That's more, that's newer. That talks about, you know, Kurzweil and how he's trying to, you know, the singularity But the, the cave book is more conventional in the way that it deals with philosophy.

And it talks about how the ancients had a very strong sense of, of immortality through legacy. And the best example of this is the legend of Achilles.

[01:04:02] **Music:** So

[01:04:02] **Arthur:** Achilles is, Obviously, it's a mythological figure, but he's going, he has a choice of either retiring to his farm and having a happy life or surely dying in battle and being remembered forever as a hero.

And he takes door number two because he wants to live forever. And that's really, really what it meant. We as moderns individuals, we kind of see our legacy. We see, we see the memory of other people. If we're realistic, it's kind of stopping at the end of our lives. And so we have a different attitude about that.

Now I think it also takes a lot of humility to recognize the reality of this too. You have eight great grandparents. What are their names?

[01:04:45] **Dave:** Do you know? Let's see. Yeah. I met one of them when I was really young. I know

[01:04:52] **Arthur:** one,

[01:04:52] **Dave:** Fulker

[01:04:53] **Arthur:** Hampson. Yeah, because I've heard about him again and again and again and again and again.

I can't name my great grandparents and my great grandchildren are not going to be able to remember it. They're not, even my great grandchildren are not going to know my name. I mean, except under weird circumstances. I have a book somewhere. They do genealogy or something or, or, you know, somebody finds one of my old books and dusts it off and reads it.

It's gonna be some weird thing like that, but it's not, It's trivial is what that's going to be and so the result the result is kind of a healthy humility What am I doing now? And that's a mindfulness about your own life, you know for me I want to lift people up and bring them together in bonds of happiness and love using science and ideas.

Right now.

[01:05:35] **Dave:** Yeah.

[01:05:35] **Arthur:** Right now. That's, and I

[01:05:38] **Dave:** sort of think you want that too. Oh, it's, we're very aligned on that. And it's not because I want to be a big deal. I had erased my identity because I'm a computer hacker. It was happily anonymous. Did you really? Oh yeah. You, you became. You couldn't tell what state I lived in.

My car was registered through a shell company. Like I, it was a game. It's like I had anything, but I'm a hacker. And you weren't on the internet. I know I was on the internet. You sure are now. I helped to build the internet. I was on the internet, but none of the info about me was accurate. Like it was, it was fun.

It's much harder today because of facial recognition, but

[01:06:13] **Arthur:** My wife's from Spain, and she thinks that we Americans are all, you know, in our hearts, we're just like frontier cowboys that want to just like take off and a man with no name kind of deal. We all secretly want to be in the witness protection program.

[01:06:26] **Dave:** Wow. I don't know if I would do that now. There were, there probably were times in my life where I would have said, sure, that sounds like a plan, like let's just hit reset. But it, it is. It's a weird thing when I hear, you know, a teenager say, I want to be an influencer. I'm like, why would you want that?

[01:06:42] **Arthur:** It's because of the biological imperative.

Of course, this is pure evolution. You want a rise of the hierarchy in your kin group. The problem with that is that now we're able to supercharge that into something that's utterly, I mean, as dangerous as fentanyl. It's crackin You know, fentanyl to natural endorphins is the internet to the natural amount of presiege that we can get inside a 30 person king group.

Wow. And it's as dangerous and as bad for you.

[01:07:10] **Dave:** Fame is terrible. It is incredibly toxic and I, I've, I've dealt with that and interviewed guests about it and to make it a goal, it seems like it's about the same as saying I want to be a porn star in terms of a career goal. Like if fame emerges from you doing what you love that you think is helping other people, cool.

[01:07:30] **Arthur:** Right.

[01:07:31] **Dave:** But if you do it for that reason, I think it's incredibly toxic.

[01:07:34] **Arthur:** Completely. Completely. It's like getting high to be high. I mean, it's the same thing. What you're trying to do is to juice your brain chemistry. And anytime you're actually trying to get physiologically out of the lane of where your brain chemistry is supposed to lie for your health and well being, you're going to get less health and well being.

[01:07:50] **Dave:** I have a kind of a little trick that listeners I think are going to appreciate based on something you said before. You said a lot of the most ultra successful impactful people in the world after 70 are They're unhappy because people don't know their work. The reason I'm here today is that in my twenties, I had all the diseases of aging, right?

So I hung out with people in their seventies and eighties who were reversing their aging. Right? Those are those people. These are people who were the masters of their fields, right? Who were so happy to tell me everything for free. And to this day, some of my great friends are in their 70s and 80s, and they teach me so much.

And for listeners, if you're in your 20s and you want to see something amazing, find someone who's written an incredible book 40 years ago that changed the world. And look them up and they'll probably just have coffee with you because you know who they are and you're interested in their work and they will tell you lifetimes of knowledge for

[01:08:48] **Arthur:** free.

It's unbelievable. And it's a

[01:08:50] **Dave:** gift.

[01:08:50] **Arthur:** Oh, it's great. And I'll give you an example of this where I think the same way. I remember when my dad died in my 30s and he died pretty young.

[01:08:56] **Music:** Yeah.

[01:08:57] **Arthur:** And he was a wonderful man. I loved him, but he wasn't very happy. And I thought, okay, what am I going to do differently?

Right? Because this is one of the great gifts you can give to your children too. And I said, wait a minute. So I started doing a lot of things differently than he did. I did, I stopped drinking alcohol, for example, which is, which people should, pretty much everybody should consider, but I also started exercising seriously.

Mm-Hmm. And learning about actually how my, how my body and brain and, you know, mood cycles worked and from exercise. And so I started doing resistance training before there was a resistance training revolution. Goodness. So, so for me, this is, you know, more than 25 years ago, I've been working out an hour a day for 25 years.

Wow. Yeah. You're over training? Well, I'm actually, so what I'm doing is, depending on what I have going on, it's a combination of zone 2 cardio and high interval, that way, intensity interval training and also resistance training that never more than 30 to, two days a week, the whole 60 minutes is, so I'm, I'm, I'm careful about it, but here's actually the point.

When I first started doing that, I thought to myself, this is, could be hard on my body, and I know enough to know that it could be hard, especially on my joints and tendons. Mm hmm. So I started going to old iron gyms whenever I was on the road, which is a lot of the time, and I would go find the oldest dude who was still in shape.

It'd be like the 75 year old, you know, gym rat. It looks like Bobby Kennedy. Yeah. And he's like, but except, except not necessarily, you know, on TRT, you know, somebody who, because back in those days that was a lot less normal to actually be using, to be, you know, using androgenic drugs. So it would be a guy who's like all tendons and, and you know, he's, and I would go up to him and I would ask for advice.

The 75 year old guys will give you whatever you need. And I said, I, when I'm 75, I want to be you. Tell me what you did to not get hurt. Tell me what you did to stay strong. That's so brilliant. And just do what they did. I mean, remember that back in the Senate in the old days, Strom Thurmond was like 94 years old in the Senate.

And the second oldest guy was Bob Dole, because he was only like 88. Right. And people used to say to Bob Dole, how do you stay so young and sharp? He says, I follow Strom Thurmond around and do whatever he does. Ha ha ha. Strom's eating a carrot. I'm going to eat a carrot. But that's basically, it's, it's not a, it's not a bad idea because the empirical regularities you see with people who are already successful, maybe through luck, Maybe they just happen to do things right.

Do what they do. I mean, it's just get data spoken like a true professor at Harvard

[01:11:19] **Dave:** Gather data and act according to it. Yeah, exactly Wow the American Enterprise Institute Yeah, you're kind of a champion of individual freedom Yep, yet a lot of happiness comes from our connection to other humans, right, which is less individual How do you reconcile?

You Um, individual, I stand against whatever I'm standing against with, I'm a part of a community and I've got to appease.

[01:11:44] **Arthur:** Yeah.

[01:11:44] **Dave:** I'm really all

[01:11:45] **Arthur:** about voluntary community and not forced community. And there is a certain amount of forced community that we need because we actually, I mean, I don't think any of us wants zero government.

The problem is when the state starts to substitute for what we're doing voluntarily as individuals. Yeah.

[01:12:02] **Dave:** Yeah.

[01:12:03] **Arthur:** And, you know, if we're. So, if we're, if we are in the witness protection program, it's going to actually be isolating and depressing.

[01:12:08] **Music:** Mm hmm.

[01:12:09] **Arthur:** I recommend family life. I'm all about kids and marriage and, you know, belonging to civic organizations and churches and all these wonderful things.

But I really don't want the government in that. And that's really what it comes down to. What we know is that, you know, the people, for example, are happiest. When they feel like they're earning their success. And that means you need a free enterprise system. You need a system that's going to reward a guy like you.

There's no government program that said, you know, I think I'm going to lift up Dave Asprey. If it were, if we were living in a pure socialist society, you'd have nothing because there's nothing that you're doing that would been a reward. And there would be no signals that could have come from the state.

[01:12:45] **Dave:** If we were in a pure socialist society, there would be a smoking rubble of the building I took out and I'd be gone. Yeah. I mean, it would be, and there's enough people like me, that socialism never works. You're a threat. I

[01:12:55] **Arthur:** mean, because these individual ideas that are inflecting and weird and the people want to try, that requires an emergent order that requires a distributed wisdom that can only come from the system.

So I love community. I love people banding together. I love the solidarity that comes from it. I just want it to be voluntary.

[01:13:14] **Dave:** I fully share your perspective there. You can only have one censorship or misinformation. Misinformation. Oh, I agree. Isn't that interesting? Yeah, I mean, thank God we don't have to choose entirely.

I'm like, if misinformation was a thing in the days of Galileo. I think the sun would still be orbiting around the earth. Yeah, it was, it was misclassified. It was

[01:13:35] **Arthur:** fake news about fake news.

[01:13:37] **Dave:** Yeah, and that's

[01:13:37] **Arthur:** often the case.

[01:13:38] **Dave:** Yeah, exactly. So I, I, I support that idea of ability to be stupid and wrong.

[01:13:44] **Arthur:** Yeah, and what we need to be is discerning individuals, and we have to have the courage to be able to stand up to people and say they're stupid and wrong without them cancelling us and taking our jobs away and hurting us.

[01:13:53] **Dave:** Sounds almost like all of human society except for the last 10 or 15 years.

[01:13:58] **Arthur:** Well, it's weird because you go back not too long ago and unfortunately McCarthyism? Yeah, well, McCarthyism, I mean, most of human society we would be I mean, the Enlightenment is great because the whole idea of the Enlightenment is that coercion to get somebody to think like you is not the best.

And bargaining is not always optimal, but persuasion is awesome. Yeah. And, and enlightenment is really all about persuasion. And, and, and that's what gets screwed up when we have a, when we have an environment of censorship. And so I believe in free speech. Is it possible to have happiness without free speech?

We never will have completely free speech. So for example I don't recommend that anybody listening to us, um, You should never, never, never lie to your spouse, but you don't need to say every single thing that's true all the time. And there are certain things. There are certain boundaries on the way that you talk about things.

And so you should curb the freedom of your own speech strategically in such a way that you can cultivate your love relationships. Happiness is love and everything else is subservient to that. And that requires a kind of prudential judgment. And there's no, there's no, legalistic way to get around that.

The prudential judgment comes from being a mature individual and living in the world. That's kind of sounds like a hedge, Dave. And I don't mean it to be a hedge. It's just that there's nothing you're saying

[01:15:19] **Dave:** you have free speech, but if you're dumb enough to speak freely, it might cost you. You're happy.

Really? Yeah,

[01:15:24] **Arthur:** I

[01:15:24] **Dave:** can do that.

[01:15:25] **Arthur:** Absolutely. I mean, I want free speech to be legal. Absolutely. But I don't want to use every right that I have in every single situation. But now most of the rights are, are for extremes. You need to protect them. I mean, it's all kinds of things. It's weird, right? Because there are things that are.

Impermissible, but I want them to be legal. I want adultery to be completely legal, and I want it to be totally morally impermissible. There you go. There's a difference between legal and moral. Exactly

[01:15:50] **Dave:** right. And moral is more important in real life. It is. Exactly. Yeah. And people, you make your choices and you bear the cost.

One of the things that surprisingly helped me with happiness is one of the four agreements integrity in your word Which is that you don't tell any lies even the smallest ones at least you don't do it if you're aware you're doing it Right, so I no longer say I can't pick you up at the airport Right I'm not going to pick you up at the airport because I could if I brought my day I skip an interview with Arthur Brooks Right, you know So, just being truthful has freed up a huge amount of information.

I don't have any internal resistance. I don't have to track a bunch of bullshit I would have told people. What's the role of truthfulness in happiness?

[01:16:34] **Arthur:** It's super important. Truthfulness is incredibly important. Now again, People use truth as a weapon all the time. People say, no, like, I just don't lie. You have a fat butt.

That, that's, that's unhelpful, right? You don't have to say everything. You don't have to say every true thing all the time, but you shouldn't lie, is what it comes down to. And, and that requires skillfulness, and it requires sensitivity, and it requires compassion. Yeah, relationship skills and everything.

But I'll give you an example of how important this is for happiness. A lot of people think that empathy is a wonderful virtue. It's not. Empathy is simply feeling somebody else's pain, and it can disable you and make you untruthful toward others. The real virtue that you want is compassion, because compassion is to understand somebody's pain, not be disabled by it, being truthful, and doing what needs to get done, notwithstanding the resistance that you face.

That's what compassion is. And that's why great leaders are usually not very empathetic, but they're incredibly compassionate. And that's what we need to be as parents. And that's what we need to be. That's what I need to be as a professor. That's what I need to be as a man walking about this world, in my view.

And that's an example of this, where I am much happier when I'm compassionate, I'm much unhappier when I'm excessively empathetic, and the compassion part is what it does is it layers on the truth into, and the integrity, to my word as you put it, in the life that I want to live.

[01:17:54] **Dave:** Very, very beautifully said, and you've, you've led such an interesting path, you've changed a lot of lives.

Arthur Brooks. Website is arthurbrooks. com. Thank you for coming on the show. You have my admiration. Thank you for what you're doing to make the world better, Dave. Likewise. See you next time on the Human Upgrade Podcast.