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[00:00:00] **Dave:** [00:00:05] [00:00:10] [00:00:15] [00:00:20] [00:00:25] You're listening to the Human Upgrade with Dave Asprey.[00:00:30]

Today, we are going to talk about [00:00:35] experimentation, about skipping the line. And my guest today [00:00:40] ran and started more than 20 companies and only failed at 17 of [00:00:45] them. He's an investor and advisor to about 30 more companies now from tech to [00:00:50] energy to healthcare biotech. He's also a well known author and podcaster.

And I'm [00:00:55] talking about James Altager, who's by the way, Hey, James,

[00:00:58] **James:** Dave. Thanks so much for having [00:01:00] me on the podcast. It's a, it's a reunion. You know, I remember the last time we did a [00:01:05] back to back podcast, you know, you were on mine. I was on yours was right around the time I was [00:01:10] starting to do. Stand up comedy and, you know, I even asked you for advice then.

And, [00:01:15] and you said, you know, just take a deep breath and, and feel love for the [00:01:20] audience right before you, you walk out. And I've since then performed probably well over a thousand [00:01:25] times. And I, I always do that right before the second, before I perform.

[00:01:29] **Dave:** That's [00:01:30] awesome. You never told me that before. Yeah, I think it connects with that.

And so I do that every time I, I go, [00:01:35] even if I do an Instagram, you know, live, I, I make it a practice to just, you send something, I think people feel [00:01:40] it. you're doing something right in comedy. Cause I mean, I have a whole bio [00:01:45] of stuff you've done, you know, you've lost 15 million down to 143 and [00:01:50] you've experimented and just ridden things up and down every time I interview you, like you did [00:01:55] what?

And this time you, uh, you wrote a an opinion piece, you know, a high integrity, this is what [00:02:00] I think. And Jerry Seinfeld, which is a comic a few people have heard of, wrote a rebuttal [00:02:05] piece to it. So you've been kind of. Out there lately, just talking about the future of, [00:02:10] of what you think is happening in New York and you looked at the whole experiment or the [00:02:15] whole experience as an experiment and that's what your new book is about, which is about [00:02:20] experimenting and how you can skip the line and all, how did pissing off all New Yorkers, [00:02:25] including Jerry Seinfeld, how was that really an experiment?

[00:02:28] **James:** It wasn't, I didn't, I [00:02:30] didn't write the article. Designed to piss people off. I really saw, you [00:02:35] know, as part of this economic lockdown, there were things happening in [00:02:40] New York City that were starting to get at a critical level, and I felt everybody was in the [00:02:45] denial. The, the governor and the mayor and the, the average man on the [00:02:50] street a lot of business owners were not in denial because they were going outta business.

A lot of [00:02:55] employees of those businesses were not in denial because. They were going unemployed. New York city is the city with the [00:03:00] highest unemployment rate now in the country. Like everything I wrote about in August has been coming [00:03:05] true. But at the time, and, and by the way, in the article, I write about my love [00:03:10] affair with New York since I was born.

And I write about how I don't want this to happen. I write about how I [00:03:15] was searching for solutions. I think people didn't really think about that. They, it triggered [00:03:20] their cognitive dissonance. And rather than engaging [00:03:25] with the S with solutions and with the issues, people just attacked me, including Seinfeld, [00:03:30] who signed, I will say this about Jerry.

He loves New York city and [00:03:35] like everyone else, he was sort of offended by what I was saying. And, but nobody addressed the actual [00:03:40] issues. They just Jerry included. And by the way, then some family members, [00:03:45] ex girlfriends, people started writing articles left and right, just like insulting me, no [00:03:50] one actually addressing any of the issues.

But just like Jerry Seinfeld, it's the first op ed [00:03:55] piece he's ever written in his life. He wrote it on a full page of the New York Times, and he spent the whole article just [00:04:00] insulting me. And he's a very good, he's very good with insults. He was very powerful with [00:04:05] his insulting. And, uh, and so, yeah, it was, I, I, I, [00:04:10] the, the experiment there was a you know, I'm always trying to push the [00:04:15] envelope a little bit with my own writing.

It's always very important for me, not just to write a story, [00:04:20] but to have an impact and write something that no one else has written. [00:04:25] Otherwise, if somebody else has written it, what's the point of me writing it? I'm just going to add to some echo [00:04:30] chamber. So every article I always do a test and I'm sure you do this as well because [00:04:35] we've even discussed this how you always.

I always hear you say things like, and nobody's ever written about [00:04:40] this before, but I wrote it in my book this. So I do the same thing. I always do a gut check has, [00:04:45] is this new? Is there some part of this that's new, either in terms of the content, the [00:04:50] facts, the story, whatever. Then the other thing I always ask myself is, [00:04:55] am I afraid to publish this?

Is there something that I'm a little bit [00:05:00] afraid of? Because then I know I'm pushing past my comfort zone and I'm going to learn [00:05:05] something one way or the other. And so the, the, the interesting thing that I asked [00:05:10] myself, like, I said to myself, why am I afraid to hit publish on this right before I hit publish?

[00:05:15] And it was because this is the first time. In, in at least over a decade. [00:05:20] I can't remember ever. This is the first time I ever wrote an article where I talked about [00:05:25] something very pessimistic that I was seeing all around me, which was the, [00:05:30] you know, some conditions in New York city, but I did not have optimism [00:05:35] at the end.

I did not have a solution for the problems I was mentioning. I was just trying to get [00:05:40] people out of denial, but I didn't, normally I will say, Oh, this and this and this is [00:05:45] happening, but don't worry because this is what Looks like we'll be happening after that. And it's [00:05:50] optimistic because I'm usually an optimistic person, but this time I was struggling to find a [00:05:55] solution.

And that's what I basically was, the article was that I couldn't figure out a solution. So I [00:06:00] think a lot of my initial readers were sort of like, this is odd. He doesn't have, [00:06:05] they were expecting kind of a way out of the misery by the end of the argument. I didn't have it. And I felt bad about [00:06:10] that. But which, which again was for me, the experiment, the real experiment was, can I [00:06:15] sit with not being.

The optimist everybody expects by the end of this [00:06:20] article. And then I saw this massive, massive [00:06:25] reaction. I mean, We huge radio hosts were reading the articles [00:06:30] live on their shows or podcasts the next day. Joe Rogan

[00:06:33] **Dave:** read your article, right? [00:06:35] Like Joe,

[00:06:36] **James:** Joe Rogan. Yeah. He mentioned my article on at least three or four different [00:06:40] podcasts.

You know, I was on every media outlet about it and, and then, [00:06:45] and then, you know, all these people were really trashing me and I want to say. [00:06:50] I was getting about 10 hate tweets a second for a while. In that [00:06:55] first week. And then I thought it had died down. And then a week later, Jerry [00:07:00] Seinfeld has this op ed in the New York Times where he calls me a putz.

He, he, he basically [00:07:05] insults me in a variety of ways. And I figure, okay, I try to look at the upside, which is that, hey, at least, [00:07:10] My writing hit home enough that all these people reacted strongly to it. I hope [00:07:15] maybe that will make a difference. And for, in fact, it was the one thing mayor de Blasio and [00:07:20] governor Cuomo agreed on was how much they hated me.

And so it was the first time I'd seen them agree on [00:07:25] anything in like years. So I thought, okay, I'm accomplishing something, but, but then [00:07:30] it was weird. Just how many people I knew started unfriending me, [00:07:35] including in the case of some family members, some people who had been. You know, [00:07:40] friends of mine for many years.

And then some friends of mine told me they were being [00:07:45] unfriended by their friends because they were defending me. And I, so I have, I have somebody I work [00:07:50] with who was wearing a t shirt that said the James Altucher show, and he was harassed walking [00:07:55] his dog in, in the middle of the street in New York.

And so all these [00:08:00] strange stories, like everywhere I went, people were like, Oh, you're like that New York city [00:08:05] is dead guy. And then one. And even four months later, [00:08:10] one person, a well known guy insulted me. And, and [00:08:15] I'm like, I, I, I called him and I said, look, you were accused of X, Y, and Z, [00:08:20] and I had your back.

You were on my podcast. You explained your side of the story. Like, why would [00:08:25] you say that about me? And he, and he was just like, well, enjoy your [00:08:30] moment of fame. And I'm like, I'm not trying to be, I've written, you're already kind of famous,

[00:08:34] **Dave:** James. [00:08:35] I don't think you needed more.

[00:08:36] **James:** And you have like a million followers

[00:08:38] **Dave:** on LinkedIn.

Like you're, [00:08:40] people listen to you, right? You're not doing that for fame.

[00:08:42] **James:** I know you're going after that. I said that. I'm not even [00:08:45] trying for that. I'm trying to help New York City. I said, I specifically said, I'm not trying to be famous. And this guy, [00:08:50] his response was, I know, you know how I know? Because I am famous.

And [00:08:55] just everybody, tell me who it was, who was this? I'll tell you after the podcast, I'll tell you after the podcast. He's been [00:09:00] on your show. Come on, we're going to, everyone's going to go on your show and look fine. No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. Cause he's a good guy. I think he was just, [00:09:05] I don't know, agitated for whatever reason.

Everybody, that's the other thing I learned is that everybody has their own [00:09:10] agendas and I can't really assume. It's always a mistake to assume malice. [00:09:15] Although, you know, who knows what he was going through that day. I don't know.

[00:09:19] **Dave:** You know, I [00:09:20] love it. Yeah, it was intense. The, it's a, it's a mistake to assume malice.

Cause if [00:09:25] you. Think you know what's going on in someone else's head. That's ego. Cause there's [00:09:30] no way you can know. You can only measure behaviors. Right. And they can be out of trauma or they can be done out of malice. [00:09:35] You just don't know.

[00:09:36] **James:** And the reality is I did write an article that [00:09:40] in, I didn't realize, and maybe I should have, I didn't realize how much cognitive dissonance it would [00:09:45] trigger.

So I wrote an article with facts. So, so people couldn't really argue with the [00:09:50] article. It was just facts. But a lot of people have made life [00:09:55] decisions, very important life decisions to either buy a place in New York or move their family to New York [00:10:00] or take a job in New York. And here I was questioning these decisions at a time when maybe [00:10:05] they were scared.

And again, the only reason I did that is because I felt people were in denial that, you know, maybe up to [00:10:10] 80 or 90 percent of restaurants might have closed. One third of small businesses might close in New York. And [00:10:15] so I wanted to get, you know, For people to get out of denial. And I've even tried [00:10:20] searching for solutions since then.

And I've talked to a lot of government officials or, or [00:10:25] economists or whatever, but it was also an experiment on, [00:10:30] on writing in a variety of ways. Every time I write or start a business [00:10:35] or let's say do standup comedy or do investing or podcasts. I always [00:10:40] try to push some. Envelope, I try to do an experiment because that's the fastest [00:10:45] way you learn.

It's the, it's the, you know, people off, you know, there's this rule [00:10:50] popularized by Malcolm Gladwell. And before that professor Anders Erickson called the 10, 000 [00:10:55] hour rule, which says if you do 10, 000 hours of deliberate practice, which [00:11:00] means repetition with a coach and fast feedback, and then more repetition, that's rough, [00:11:05] but that's it.

Uh, you'll, if you do that, you'll be among the best in the world by [00:11:10] the time that you hit your 10, 000th hour, roughly. And I don't like that role. You and I are [00:11:15] both in our fifties and if we, and, and many people, whether you're in [00:11:20] your twenties, thirties, forties or fifties, it's okay to change your interest, it's okay to change [00:11:25] jobs, change careers, it's okay to do what you love, and if you think that you need [00:11:30] 10, 000 hours, once you switch interests.

I wanted to prove that wrong. I was getting very, I was [00:11:35] getting personally frustrated and, and I was almost tying my hands behind my back because I [00:11:40] was following that rule. And I'm like, I don't, when I switch interests now, I don't want to spend 10, 000 [00:11:45] hours. And so that's what I realized through much trial and error [00:11:50] that all my theories about the 10, 000 hour rule, we're not working out, but this other [00:11:55] aspect experimenting where you're always trying to push the edge, push the envelope of [00:12:00] whatever it is you love.

And you know, and I could get more into detail, but [00:12:05] it was through the T what I call now the 10, 000 experiment rule that I really was [00:12:10] learning anything I wanted in a very quick amount of time, you know, combined with some [00:12:15] other techniques. And so I decided, you know what, this has been so life changing for me.

I'm going to write about it. [00:12:20] Well, I wasn't going to write another nonfiction book. I was going to, I wanted to write a novel. And then I ended up writing [00:12:25] this, this book. I was so in love with these ideas and how much it had helped me. [00:12:30]

[00:12:30] **Dave:** It's a powerful book because the 10, 000 hour rule, it's [00:12:35] actually crippling.

Because it says, because with no [00:12:40] enhancements, no proper technique, you just put your head down and plow through it, [00:12:45] you'll eventually get some results. This sounds suspiciously similar to what they told me when they said, [00:12:50] just eat low calories and exercise all the time. And eventually you'll lose [00:12:55] weight.

And I'm like 18 months later, I'm still 300 pounds. Like maybe this advice sucks. Maybe it'll work [00:13:00] someday, but no. And the reason the 10, 000 hour rule works is [00:13:05] because that's how long it takes to myelinate nerves. Assuming that you insulate your [00:13:10] nerves so that they can carry electricity faster, assuming you do that at the standard rate.

Well, [00:13:15] gee, what would happen if we hacked the rate of myelination of nerves with the electrical currents [00:13:20] or with nutrients so you could learn faster? Oh my God, maybe it's a 5, 000 hour rule. [00:13:25] Like assuming it has to be 10, 000 hours, it makes me mad. So you kind of blew holes in [00:13:30] it in your book and I like that and that you have 10, 000 experiments instead of 10, 000 hours.

I could get behind [00:13:35] that.

[00:13:35] **James:** And I like it. Yeah, because think about, think about your career and, and Bulletproof Coffee. [00:13:40] It's not like you became the quote unquote best guy out there, [00:13:45] or one of the best in the world developing a food company. No, what [00:13:50] you did and what many successful people do is they change the, the [00:13:55] industry of what they're trying to be the best at.

And so what you did was you basically [00:14:00] figured out through hacking on yourself and through scientific research, you figured [00:14:05] out what combination of nutrients and foods and drinks. Thanks. would, would [00:14:10] create health for you and others. And then you create a food company around that. And if you go to [00:14:15] any industry or career or passion or interest, the best people [00:14:20] don't just become like, The best guitar player doesn't just become really [00:14:25] proficient at guitar.

He plays guitar in a different way, or she plays the guitar in a different way than [00:14:30] anybody else has previously. They, they change the nature of the industry and, or the interests they're [00:14:35] trying to be great at. And through experimenting, that's how you can do that. Oh, what have I, [00:14:40] what if I'm Jimi Hendrix, I'm experimenting with playing guitar with my.

Teeth are playing guitar. So it sounds like [00:14:45] a human singing. Well, suddenly I've just changed the way people listen to guitar. If [00:14:50] I'm, if I experiment enough with that. So, and, and that's true in every single [00:14:55] industry on, on the planet, the 10, 000 hour rule you're right. It's crippling. Like it takes 20 [00:15:00] years, but if you could basically define, if you could really pursue what it is you [00:15:05] love and know why you love it, and then experiment with new ways to [00:15:10] push the frontier in, in this new interest that you love.

You're going to, [00:15:15] you're going to be the best at how you now have individually defined the category.[00:15:20]

[00:15:24] **Dave:** You sound a [00:15:25] little bit like Naveen Jain, another friend, the founder of Viant who's been on the show several times, that guy's [00:15:30] mentored me. And, uh, just to agree, by the way, he's

[00:15:33] **James:** been on my podcast

[00:15:34] **Dave:** as well. [00:15:35] Okay. Good deal. So your listeners and my listeners all know Naveen, but he's the same thing. He's like, you have to go to a [00:15:40] new industry if you want to do something different, because if you grew up in that industry, you'll just do the same as everyone else.

So [00:15:45] there's, there's a great argument for kind of the thesis behind your book, but I, I want to know, why [00:15:50] did you call it skip the line?

[00:15:52] **James:** Okay. And it's, it's interesting because I've [00:15:55] changed interests and passions many times in my life. And just [00:16:00] sometimes I'm even sort of self critical, like, Oh, maybe I'm just a dilettante.

You know, [00:16:05] when you try to be the master of many, you end up being mediocre at all and, [00:16:10] and master of none. But, you know, every single time I've ever [00:16:15] changed careers and I'm not saying, Oh, I went from being a physicist to an [00:16:20] astrophysicist. Like I went from being a computer programmer to pitching TV shows, [00:16:25] to being a venture capitalist and a hedge fund manager, professional [00:16:30] writer, standup comedian, chess player, professional poker [00:16:35] player.

I've done a lot of different things and I tend to get obsessed when I changed interests, so I like [00:16:40] have to be good. And I was, I always struggle it with this. Like I, [00:16:45] and maybe you experienced this when, for instance, when I first wanted to get [00:16:50] involved in investing and potentially be a hedge fund manager.

I remember someone telling [00:16:55] me you know, you can't, you can't do this. You got to work at a bank, you got to get an [00:17:00] MBA, then maybe you work at a hedge fund, then maybe when people know you, they, they, [00:17:05] they, you know, 10 years later, you could start your own small hedge fund and then build up like you can't [00:17:10] just start a hedge fund.

Nobody can do that. You got to pay your dues. You can't skip the line. [00:17:15] And the phrase, you can't do that. And you can't skip the line. I've been [00:17:20] told to me. Every single time I've ever changed and dress like I, [00:17:25] I wanted to try being a standup comedian and, and other comedians who had been [00:17:30] doing it for 15 or 20 years said, look, you, you got to pay your dues, man.

You can't just [00:17:35] skip the line. Like you got to do open mics and you got to do this. And I'm like, I've been public speaking for 20 years. [00:17:40] I have an audience. I'm going to, why can't I do it? And then I, you can't do it. [00:17:45] And they get angry. You can't do it. You can't skip the line. You got to pay your dues. [00:17:50] Those things have been said to me every single time.

So it starts off that this is [00:17:55] basically a message back that, you know, after all is said and done, I [00:18:00] have in many cases skipped the line now it takes hard work still, and it takes some [00:18:05] courage and it takes, you know, Ignoring the people who say can't, and Dave, you discussed this in your [00:18:10] book as well, like dealing with the can'ts of like, well, I can't, you know, eat like [00:18:15] this, or this will be too much willpower for me or whatever people don't understand that when other people tell you [00:18:20] can't, they're really, they're really, they're the ones who can't do it and they're [00:18:25] just afraid of you changing and proving and leaving them behind when they can't do [00:18:30] something.

[00:18:30] **Dave:** I, I love that so much. In fact, I miss hanging out. I want to come and once [00:18:35] travel is a little bit more doable, we're going to have to hang out again. Because man, you, you just [00:18:40] nailed so many things in there. I remember one of my favorite articles. So I came up with a new process [00:18:45] for coffee about mold toxins and coffee and all.

And it was on like, you know, [00:18:50] coffee hack or coffee snob, like one of the big coffee websites. And this guy's like, look, I did my [00:18:55] research on Dave Asprey and I have been a roaster for 20 years. And this guy comes from the tech world [00:19:00] and he can't have done what he says he's done because we've been thinking about this for a long time.

I'm like, you did [00:19:05] Vag, I flew to Guatemala and we put in different infrastructure and I have like the president of the specialty [00:19:10] copy association on camera with me doing it and telling me that I didn't do it. Right. And it's [00:19:15] cause that can't, but it's the same cognitive dissonance. Yes. They got people pissed off in your article.[00:19:20]

about, Hey guys, we have a problem in New York because small businesses are, are crashing everywhere. [00:19:25] And they're the foundation of the city's uniqueness, right? So that cognitive dissonance, when [00:19:30] you say you can, and they believe they can't, I think it creates fear. And then when people get [00:19:35] fear, they stop thinking and they start just sort of insulting, which is what you felt.

And [00:19:40] certainly, you know, we both have dealt with that from changing industries. What's the hack for that? [00:19:45] I mean, is, is, should we just ignore the people that say can't? Should we, you know, make fun of them? [00:19:50] Like what, what's, what's your best, your best advice for people who are doing things that they can't do, that they're doing?

[00:19:54] **James:** Well, [00:19:55] well, First off, all of the above about the people who say can't, and not that you should, [00:20:00] you know, waste precious time thinking about all these people who, who are kind [00:20:05] of rooting against you. They might not feel like they're rooting against you. They might kind of pretend that they're rooting for you, [00:20:10] but the reality is they're rooting against you because they don't want you to, to change or, or, or [00:20:15] literally skip the line.

But the issue is, let's say. You're, [00:20:20] you're passionately interested. Let's say you've been, I don't know, a dental assistant for the past [00:20:25] 35 years. And now you figure, or let's say you just graduated college and you're tired of your [00:20:30] major and you don't know what you want to do with your life. Well, the, the, the [00:20:35] answer is if you start exploring the space of things that you love doing, there's [00:20:40] always a way to A, get better at it so that you're in the [00:20:45] top 1 percent of your field.

And, and in order to do that, you also have to monetize what you're interested in. [00:20:50] So there's always a way to monetize no matter what you're interested in. And, and people don't really believe that, [00:20:55] but it's true. And I've seen it in every single industry. I'm sure you have as well. [00:21:00] But, and so this book Skip the Line is about not only how to get better [00:21:05] quickly.

And I gave many techniques for that, but it's also how to understand your [00:21:10] field enough that you could. Skip the line as well. From a practical level, how do you, how [00:21:15] you can monetize what it is you're interested in. Like if you're interested in making TikTok [00:21:20] videos great, but, and there's now there's also a different skillset involved [00:21:25] in learning how to monetize something and then scaling it into a full business and, and so on.

Like if [00:21:30] I had a, a new cup of coffee I was making, I maybe can make that new cup of coffee. Maybe it's the best [00:21:35] coffee in the world, but I also need the skills involved. To persuade people that this is a [00:21:40] good idea and, and I need to understand the basics of monetizing something and [00:21:45] scaling something so it could be a much bigger business.

Like for instance, you have with Bulletproof. So it's those [00:21:50] two angles, basically, like getting great at something you love, which is always a pleasure, [00:21:55] you know, mastery, a feeling of mastery is among the cornerstones of, of [00:22:00] positive psychology. And of course, if you, if you want to devote that kind of time into something, you have [00:22:05] to make money from it.

And, you know, these are the two things that try to show in the book.

[00:22:09] **Dave:** It, it [00:22:10] makes a lot of sense, but I think you missed a major theme in the book when you just summarize it there. [00:22:15] And you talk about the value of being curious and Stephen Cotler just came on the show. [00:22:20] He wrote the art of impossible recently, where he's going into some neuroscience here and it [00:22:25] turns out being curious puts you in a flow state, which magically makes it easier [00:22:30] to acquire new skills faster than you're supposed to be able to.

[00:22:33] **James:** So there's a lot of, there's, I write [00:22:35] a bit about the neurochemistry of mastery in the book and you know, I've also spoken with Stephen [00:22:40] Cotler about the flow state and Andrew Huberman about the neurochemicals and. You know, a [00:22:45] bunch of other people as well, the whole point of doing a podcast is so that I could learn about these [00:22:50] things and then incorporate them to make my own life better.

And I've talked to a lot of interesting people about peak [00:22:55] performance, including, including a young man named Dave Asprey. And, you know, the, [00:23:00] the reality is he, he's right. The flow state is important, but there are a lot of components to the flow [00:23:05] state. And one thing is you have to, you don't have to love what you're doing.

[00:23:10] To, to, to be good at it, but it really helps to love what you're doing. And this is related actually [00:23:15] to something you and I have discussed about eating and dieting and particularly, uh, [00:23:20] in regards to your last book about fasting, which is that human life [00:23:25] activity requires energy. And how you eat kind of, you know, changes your energy levels and [00:23:30] how you sleep change your energy levels.

But also if you don't love what you're doing. [00:23:35] Every day, you're going to have to, you're going to, it's going to require more energy to do [00:23:40] the activities you have to do because the first piece of energy you have to spend is you have to [00:23:45] convince yourself to, Oh my God, I have to do this again, and you have to kind of talk yourself into [00:23:50] doing something you don't want to do, whereas if you love what you're doing, which is why it's important [00:23:55] to love what you do, you'll require much less energy to get started and, and to do it [00:24:00] and to explore the nuances of it and to truly reach mastery in it.

And this [00:24:05] is, this is very important. Energy is, is everything in terms of success. The person who has [00:24:10] energy competing against the person who doesn't is going to win. So [00:24:15] that's why it's good to love what you do.

[00:24:18] **Dave:** I love that. And [00:24:20] there's kind of a debate, Gary Vee's been on Bulletproof Radio and he's kind of the king [00:24:25] of, if you don't like it, shut up and do it anyway because you're going to, you know, eat ramen for two [00:24:30] years and eat caviar for 20.

And so then you lean in and you don't follow your [00:24:35] passion, make some money already and then follow your passion. No, but, but really kind of the, the opposite [00:24:40] of what you're saying. But then Dan Sullivan, who's a master run strategic coach, who's done [00:24:45] coaching for me. And he's like, what you said, everything you do in three buckets, [00:24:50] stuff that takes energy, stuff that is neutral and stuff that gives you energy.

Don't do [00:24:55] anything that takes energy. Do the minimum amount of stuff that's neutral and do everything that gives you energy. Everything else hire [00:25:00] people. So I like Dan's approach and I'm allergic to Gary V's approach, but it seems like [00:25:05] Gary V's getting some results. So are you sure that you have to only follow what you love?[00:25:10]

[00:25:10] **James:** Well, let me explain it in a different way. When you, [00:25:15] when you want to pursue something that you love, chances are, you're not pursuing tic [00:25:20] tac toe. Nobody says, boy, I want to be the best tic tac toe player in the world. [00:25:25] Because you're, it takes five minutes to figure out how to be the best tic tac toe player in the world.[00:25:30]

Anything worth doing is difficult. So if you want to be a [00:25:35] professional race car driver, you're not just going to get in a car and hit the accelerator. You have to learn all the [00:25:40] skills and then you have to do the things I say in the book about experimenting and, and, you [00:25:45] know, some of the other techniques I described.

You have to, and, and, and by the way, it's going to suck [00:25:50] most of the time. Like when you're just starting a business for the first time, it's going to suck [00:25:55] most of the time. If you're, if you want to be a professional tennis player and you, you are [00:26:00] rising up through the ranks. Chances are you're losing more games than you're [00:26:05] winning because you keep rising through levels of resistance.

Do you play stronger and stronger [00:26:10] players? And you're, you, you probably are losing a lot and that's a miserable experience, particularly because you love it. [00:26:15] If you're, if you want to be a musician, most of the time when you're beginning, you can't play the music [00:26:20] you want to play. You have to learn it. And so most things that are worth [00:26:25] doing that you love are going to suck most of the time.

So you have to love something enough to break [00:26:30] through the suck barrier. And I see what Gary's saying. And by the [00:26:35] way, Gary loves business, so it's, he, he might not know what it's like [00:26:40] to not. He's been doing things he loves since he graduated college. Like he was [00:26:45] selling wine. He loves wine. He was, he's does business.

He does marketing. He, you could tell he's a kid in a [00:26:50] sandbox doing this stuff. Whereas. I've had jobs I haven't liked and I [00:26:55] get depressed. I, it takes too much energy. I start you know, performing poorly [00:27:00] at it. I go broke, which is something I've done quite a bit. And the flip side is [00:27:05] in, you know, the past 10 years, for instance, I mostly have focused on writing, podcasting, [00:27:10] and then doing standup comedy.

And I do business activities, but. You know, these [00:27:15] things are not the sort of things where, oh, I'm going to make a hundred million dollars [00:27:20] performing at a comedy club at night. No, it's something I love and I'm passionate about [00:27:25] and you, you know, life is over at some point and if all you [00:27:30] did was, well, I started a hedge fund, I was miserable for 25 years, but [00:27:35] now I garden every day as an 80 year old.

That's not that's not the life I [00:27:40] wanted to live. And then I started hearing, particularly during this economic lockdown, People were [00:27:45] being half, half of workers or 40 percent of workers filed for unemployment insurance. People were being [00:27:50] thrust onto the street and scared. And, but then I would ask, well, what do you, what do you [00:27:55] love doing?

Well, I've been an accountant for 57 years, but I really love cooking [00:28:00] barbecue pork. So why not, I say, why not rent [00:28:05] space in a commercial kitchen and make your 10 favorite recipes. [00:28:10] Upload a menu to Overeats and Grubhub, and now you have a restaurant. Give it a try for a weekend. [00:28:15] It's an experiment. It can't, there is no downside to that experiment.

And the upside is [00:28:20] enormous because if you get a lot of orders that weekend, maybe that'll encourage you to do it the next [00:28:25] weekend or throughout the week or add to the menu or even start another restaurant because a restaurant now is just a menu. [00:28:30] It's not a physical location. And so there's always ways to experiment.

And, [00:28:35] and potentially get good and, and validate an idea and express your own [00:28:40] vision of this industry that you love. Maybe you want to make sushi [00:28:45] with barbecue pork in it. So you're combining your few, doing fusion of [00:28:50] Asian food and Tex Mex or something. Who knows? But it's an experiment. You're going to piss

[00:28:54] **Dave:** off [00:28:55] all of Japan and all of Texas with what you just said.

I can't imagine the hate tweets you're going to get, man.

[00:28:59] **James:** I [00:29:00] keep telling people do sushi Ritos, which is like a sushi burrito somehow. So, [00:29:05] uh, yeah, cause that's one. And I, I discussed this. I [00:29:10] have a chapter in the book called idea calculus, which is ways to take an idea in an [00:29:15] area that, again, that you're very interested in and sort of massage it in various ways to, to make [00:29:20] an, even a better idea or to make it uniquely you.

And that's, that's [00:29:25] always, Key, like if you go to I, I love using comedy as an example, because it's an extremely [00:29:30] difficult skill. Like there's, there's no skill such as standup comedy. [00:29:35] People say, Oh, what if you have a good sense of humor? That's one micro skill of comedy. Another [00:29:40] is, are you a good performer?

Are you good with a crowd? Are you good improvising? [00:29:45] Are you good with stage work? Are you good with doing voices? Are you good with, you [00:29:50] know, writing? And just like business, there's no one skill to business. [00:29:55] There's sales, marketing, negotiating, ideation, coming up with ideas. There's [00:30:00] execution. All these things are, there's management, leadership.

All these things are completely different [00:30:05] skills. If you're good at marketing, you're not necessarily a good manager of people, but it doesn't mean you shouldn't be in [00:30:10] business. It just means every skill can be broken into micro skills and you should [00:30:15] focus on the micro skills you love most of all. And so this is, this is part of skipping the line, [00:30:20] which is like you just said, maybe outsource what you, what you don't necessarily love, but.[00:30:25]

experiment with the things you love that you could really move the needle on and at least [00:30:30] start off that way. And that's a good way to skip the line and make a presence in whatever industry you're in. [00:30:35] So, you know, you, you had skills as a writer because you were able to explain what, what [00:30:40] Bulletproof Coffee was.

You had skills defending your position. You had skills. [00:30:45] Ignoring people who said, Hey, you're not a food guy. You're not a coffee guy. You can't do this. So [00:30:50] you, you, you were able to go to Guatemala and figure this out and figure out what [00:30:55] experiments to perform to, to prove to yourself that this works.

And you know, that's how you, then you [00:31:00] catapulted, you're like one of the top coffee companies in the world outside of [00:31:05] Starbucks. So. There's a few other bigger ones

[00:31:07] **Dave:** all owned by a couple of big [00:31:10] conglomerates, but at least it's a known brand. I'll give you that. I'm still working on, you know, out Starbucksing Howard.[00:31:15]

[00:31:15] **James:** Yes.

[00:31:15] **Dave:** Um, okay. This is, this is totally funny and it's completely [00:31:20] irrelevant to this interview, but I have to tell you, cause you're going to laugh. Years ago I'd hired someone as a [00:31:25] consultant who was the first employee of Starbucks. Because I'm like, Hey, [00:31:30] I don't know this industry. I need someone who's got, you know, decades of experience.

And [00:31:35] this person ended up parking next to Howard outside his 10 million coffee shop in Seattle. And [00:31:40] he hadn't seen her in a while. And he's like, Hey, what's going on? What are you doing? And she says, I'm at this company called [00:31:45] Bulletproof and they're putting butter in coffee, quote from Howard Schultz. He says, I hope they paid you up [00:31:50] front.

So there you

[00:31:52] **James:** go. He just reminded me of that. I haven't thought of that in years. [00:31:55] So, so yes. So, so a, he's telling you, this is the biggest guy in the [00:32:00] business. It's just trying to squash you before you even begin. That's like a gut instinct for him [00:32:05] is, Oh, this person is even thinking of making coffee that he must be [00:32:10] squashed.

That's like a gut reflex for him. But you did something else that is very important. And I write about this in the [00:32:15] book. It's, it's called the plus minus equals technique. So you hired somebody [00:32:20] who was the first employee of Starbucks. Who better for you to learn from? You don't have to [00:32:25] take a hundred percent of his advice, but who better for you to learn from than someone who's.

Been through it and [00:32:30] kind of is at the top of the ladder. Okay. So that's the plus side. Then there's the [00:32:35] equal side. So, you know, the equals are other entrepreneurs who are at your [00:32:40] level and you compare notes like, okay, what are you doing for social media? What are you doing to track your email list? [00:32:45] What are you doing to track, you know, to process transactions or to get new customers?

So your [00:32:50] equals are people who are rising up with you and sharing some of the same experiences. And [00:32:55] if you surround yourself with good people, your equals are all hitting the edge of industries, just [00:33:00] like you're trying to do. And then there, there's the minus, which is not negative, but it's just like, okay, [00:33:05] well, who am I going to teach?

Because if I can't explain what I'm doing, then I don't truly understand [00:33:10] it. So just as much time as you get coaching from the plus, you also have to spend you [00:33:15] doing the coaching with the minus, or, or you did it through your books. Like you wrote the Bulletproof Diet, which [00:33:20] was a great way to explain what it is you do.

And that's what really got, you know, a [00:33:25] huge wave into the business. So I'll give you a quick example. I, when I was a young [00:33:30] kid, I was a chess master. And of course, you know, life [00:33:35] then gets in the way and other things. And, you know, you have kids, you have mortgages, you have [00:33:40] responsibilities. And so if you don't practice a game like that, like chess or [00:33:45] tennis or poker, you start to lose your ability, it'll atrophy.

And so I [00:33:50] decided fairly recently, I want to get just as good as I once was, if not better, maybe [00:33:55] even a lot better. So, um, and I figured this is a great opportunity to apply the techniques in [00:34:00] my book. So in terms of breaking up the micro skills, the plus minus equal [00:34:05] part, the 10, 000 experiment rule. These are all things I didn't know when I was 18 and rising up [00:34:10] through the chess world, but now I know them.

So I quickly hired a very [00:34:15] good instructor. I also started giving lessons again for the first time in, [00:34:20] 30 years and I started, I broke apart the micro skills and made sure I [00:34:25] spent time at the micro skills that I thought were most important. And now probably after [00:34:30] about a month or so I'm back to maybe my, my all time high strength and you know, [00:34:35] now maybe I'll get stronger than that.

So we'll see. But, but so far this experiment is going pretty well. [00:34:40]

[00:34:41] **Dave:** It's it's amazing. All the little nuggets that are [00:34:45] in the book about just not, not putting your head down and doing what you're [00:34:50] told to do all the time. Because it seems like that's what a lot of people do, [00:34:55] but I oftentimes, I wonder, are they as curious as [00:35:00] me?

Like people say to me a lot, like Dave, you're, you're weirdly curious or like, you're like a [00:35:05] child and you have that too. You're just incessantly curious about things. Is that a character trait [00:35:10] that you have that's driving a lot of this, or is that something that people can build?[00:35:15]

[00:35:17] **James:** I think a little bit of both. I think you're right. [00:35:20] People don't get better if they don't have curiosity, but usually if you, you know, if you're [00:35:25] And then another question is how do you find something that you love enough to be curious [00:35:30] about? Like if I, if I had to work in, I don't know, marine biology, there's nothing wrong with [00:35:35] studying animals that live in the sea, but but I'm not interested in that at all.

[00:35:40] So I would not be curious about anything. If I, if that was my job, I would not be curious about anything. [00:35:45] And the person who was, would quickly skip past me, even if we started at the same [00:35:50] level. But when you, when you love something, you figure, well, what if I try this? What if I try this? [00:35:55] What if I market like this?

What if I give a talk at a tech conference about a [00:36:00] coffee company? What will the reaction be? So you start at, or what if I decide to put [00:36:05] MCT oil in the coffee? What will happen? What will my blood look like a month later? So you start [00:36:10] to. You, you feel eager to learn things and you, and yes, curiosity is critical [00:36:15] because without curiosity, you won't be able to construct good experiments.

And experiment [00:36:20] is something that has little downside, enormous upside, and it's pretty [00:36:25] fast to do. And I'm doing experiments all the time in every area that I'm interested [00:36:30] in. And again, I'll use, I'll use comedy as an example where I was, I had [00:36:35] two problems in the very beginning. One is every comedian in the world, when they first start, they're Gets [00:36:40] occasionally heckled.

So I did, I need to learn how to deal with that. And then also [00:36:45] comedians need to learn how to have a good punchline that will get people to viscerally [00:36:50] laugh, people who are strangers to them. So here's what I did. I did a small experiment. Instead of waiting for [00:36:55] the next appearance on a stage, I went into the subway and every subway stop, I [00:37:00] went from subway car to subway car and would do standup in front of a, by definition, [00:37:05] hostile audience in New York city.

And I had to, I only had a few seconds to make them [00:37:10] laugh. So I had to be really tight on the punchlines I was doing. And so [00:37:15] this was an experiment for me and, you know, most experiments. [00:37:20] Yeah, it, it was, I, I went on there with a friend of mine who had a video camera and I said, [00:37:25] okay, I can't do this. I don't, I'm, I'm too scared.

And then I said, why don't you just turn on the video camera? And then as [00:37:30] soon as he turned on the video camera, I started going at it. And you [00:37:35] know, it, the, I don't want, like, the experiment didn't necessarily work. It wasn't like, oh my gosh, [00:37:40] this is the greatest thing ever. I'm making all these people laugh.

It was, it was as I [00:37:45] expected it would be, but. I got through the experiment. I learned, and that's the key is that you look, [00:37:50] whether, whether you, sometimes it's better to fail at an experiment because you [00:37:55] learn what not to do. And you have a story. Nobody wants to hear a successful [00:38:00] story about, Hey, I was on the, I was on the subway doing comedy, and then they gave me a Netflix special [00:38:05] people like to hear.

And it's a great story to tell. Oh, [00:38:10] everybody laughed at me, not with me. And then I made a little video of it and [00:38:15] tried to make it like a late night talk show, and I showed it to an agent and he laughed at it, meaning at [00:38:20] it, not with it. And so experiments are always good stories. And, you know, [00:38:25] I experiment all the time with.

With writing, with podcasting, with business you know, and, [00:38:30] and again, the key is if you have little downside and enormous upside, you keep doing these experiments because [00:38:35] eventually you'll not only will you learn from each one, but eventually you'll hit the, the huge upside part [00:38:40] of experimenting. And those are always pleasurable.

[00:38:44] **Dave:** [00:38:45] In the book, you talk about failure porn and you say that it's, it's not good for [00:38:50] people to, to indulge in it. What is failure porn and how was what you just said, [00:38:55] not failure porn? Yeah.

[00:38:56] **James:** Yeah. So failure porn is when you see all these [00:39:00] books or blog posts, like, Oh, you know, 10 years ago, I had just failed at my first [00:39:05] business and, and, you know, I was also a drug addict and [00:39:10] getting a divorce and then blah, blah, blah.

Now, you know, because [00:39:15] of that experience, I'm able to be a success. And I don't really think that's true. I think [00:39:20] failure is miserable and it's just the worst feeling in the world. Like [00:39:25] I hate it. I never want to fail at anything ever again. I do not think there's an upside [00:39:30] to failing. Particularly in a big way, unless it's part of this [00:39:35] experiment mindset where there is no, there's no, there's no word for failure in an experiment.

In a [00:39:40] well structured experiment, you would never see a scientist saying, well, I guess I'm a bad physicist. I [00:39:45] failed at this experiment. No, it just didn't work. So they learned something. So maybe stars [00:39:50] weren't formed by hydrogen helium. Maybe they're formed by lithium according to this experiment. [00:39:55] So it's not bad to be wrong.

It's not bad to fail. Someone asked Thomas Edison [00:40:00] how does it feel to fail 10, 000 times? Because he failed, he tried 10, 000 different [00:40:05] wires before he made a light bulb and he said, I didn't fail 10, 000 times. I just [00:40:10] learned 10, 000 ways, not how not to make a light bulb. And there really is no [00:40:15] failure in the realm of experimentation.

And it's not, and I call, I call it failure porn because I see too [00:40:20] many people think that a criteria now for writing their success story is to write [00:40:25] their failure story first. And it's just not true. Like, don't, don't try to, don't be proud of failure [00:40:30] just because that's you know, that was on the way to success.

A lot of people fail and then don't succeed. [00:40:35]

[00:40:36] **Dave:** You know, it, it's funny. There's a proven recipe. [00:40:40] It's called the hero's journey. Right. And they actually teach this in influence courses and [00:40:45] marketing courses. And you'll see, it's almost like they're filling out a form. Some people were like, I'm going to be an [00:40:50] influencer.

And then they have their, I failed. I looked out over the chasm. I closed my eyes. [00:40:55] I weeped and that's how something happened. And I mean, Hey, my, you know, I worked out a lot. I was super fat, [00:41:00] everything was screwed up in my health. And, you know, I had to take some action and this is what happened. But [00:41:05] it feels like it lets you connect with people though.

And for about two years, I'm like, I've told this story so many [00:41:10] times, I never want to say it again. Like I feel like doesn't everyone already know? So I did, [00:41:15] for a couple of years, I did a bunch of talks. I used to give, you know, three, four hundred talks a year before [00:41:20] COVID where I'd be traveling around just sharing stuff that I think matters.

And when I [00:41:25] didn't tell the story in the first 10 minutes. That experiment failed, people would just not [00:41:30] connect. It wasn't believable, but you put in the, what we call the failure porn elements where, [00:41:35] you know, it actually did kind of sucked away 300 pounds and this is what it was like and it lets people connect.

So

[00:41:39] **James:** [00:41:40] why is that a bad thing? That's not a bad thing. So when you, like you said, there's [00:41:45] a structure to every story, the arc of the hero, and when I write about business, I say. [00:41:50] Well, you know, first the hero is reluctant. That's the first part of the arc of the hero is that there's [00:41:55] a real, the hero is very reluctant and then there's some call to action.

So when, when you were [00:42:00] 300 pounds, you were reluctant to change the diet until you had some call to action, maybe a health [00:42:05] scare or a business scare, or you saw how people treated you. There was a call, there was maybe a significant call to action. That's [00:42:10] what began you on your journey. But that's just one part of the story.

I think a lot of people sort [00:42:15] of. Think failure is like the glamorous part of the story [00:42:20] and how they survive something. So that's, that's what makes it porn is that it [00:42:25] turns this, you know, it's, you know, people say, Oh, I read porn for the stories. Like, it's [00:42:30] usually a pretty bad story when it focuses just on that.

And it's usually a pretty bad story when it [00:42:35] focuses just on failure. You have to have, okay, here's what I met along the way. Here's what I tried along the [00:42:40] way. You know, and you have bigger and bigger problems until you Uh, you have, you finally [00:42:45] achieve some success and you come back to tell the story.

So, so the, the, the [00:42:50] hard times you're right. It makes you feel appear vulnerable. And it's just part of the story. It's not, it's not part of [00:42:55] the story to glamorize. And also a lot of times people say you know, they kind of, they, they [00:43:00] accentuate it because they think it makes their story exciting, but you could just tell it and it's just part, it's [00:43:05] the first part of the story.

And that's it. It's not the, it's not the end of the story.

[00:43:09] **Dave:** I know a [00:43:10] guy you should have on your show. He was on recently, Scott Barry Kaufman from, I want to say [00:43:15] Columbia. Uh, psychologist or psychiatrist. You know Scott? Oh yeah, Scott's been on my [00:43:20] podcast. He has, of course, there you go. So we, we like to learn from similar people.

But his idea of [00:43:25] suffering narcissism is what, is what I'm hearing you talk about. Where we all know about grandiose [00:43:30] narcissism. I'm so good, therefore I deserve. And suffering narcissism is, I have suffered, [00:43:35] therefore I deserve. But it, the reality is, I have suffered and I did something about it, and [00:43:40] therefore I deserve.

Yeah, and I, and I've felt a bit of both. Between failure [00:43:45] porn and a good story.

[00:43:47] **James:** Right, like, and I, I, I have [00:43:50] fallen. You know, I remember one time I went broke and I was saying, I literally was saying to [00:43:55] myself out loud, like I was so upset and I was like, how could this be happening to me again? [00:44:00] I think I'm a smart guy.

How could I be dead broke again? And so, [00:44:05] but yes, what, what gave me, let's say a bounce back from that or some [00:44:10] success after that was not that I had experienced failure was that I really studied and [00:44:15] examined what was happening in my life and experimented things I can [00:44:20] do to see what makes me happier.

What makes people call me back? What makes me [00:44:25] move the needle in terms of success in an industry that I've just changed to. So [00:44:30] I don't, I didn't learn that from failure. I learned that I had, the only thing you learn from failure really is that you've got to do something [00:44:35] different, but you don't know what it is yet because you haven't done it.

So you have to experiment to learn these [00:44:40] things and that really becomes the stories. So, you know, for [00:44:45] instance you know, there was one time I did an experiment, which, which I believe we've talked about before, where I [00:44:50] threw out all of my belongings and everything, a hundred percent of everything. And I just [00:44:55] lived for several years in Airbnbs.

I would live from Airbnb to Airbnb. That was

[00:44:59] **Dave:** our [00:45:00] first interview. Right. It was fascinating.

[00:45:02] **James:** Yeah. And yeah, it was, it was an [00:45:05] interesting, for me, it was an interesting experiment because. I, I don't like to own a place [00:45:10] and I don't even like to, in New York city, it's very hard to rent a place. It's like a full time job to try and rent a place.

You need [00:45:15] so much paperwork. You need like You need like high school teacher recommendations and [00:45:20] your SAT scores practically, like it's very difficult to, to read noise. And I figured I was [00:45:25] going through something in my life. I didn't want to deal with all that. So I figured why don't I just live in Airbnbs [00:45:30] and I didn't want to put things in storage.

I couldn't even deal with that. So I just said to a friend of mine, [00:45:35] Take all my stuff, do whatever you want with it. I never want to see it again. I'm never going back to that [00:45:40] apartment. The lease is ending. And then I just started living in Airbnbs. That was an experiment I did for several [00:45:45] years and then finished it.

[00:45:46] **Dave:** So are you renting or did you buy?

[00:45:49] **James:** I'm renting [00:45:50] right now. So I'm renting in, in, in, I'm experimenting with living in Key Biscayne, [00:45:55] Florida, instead of my usual New York city. And you know, it's an experiment. And now [00:46:00] people say, well, if you have kids, what would you do? I have five kids between me and my [00:46:05] wife and, you know, the kids are a little bit older, [00:46:10] Airbnb ing, they Um, live with their mom, but when they stayed with me, [00:46:15] they would kind of research the area I was living in.

And if there was a lot of good stores or [00:46:20] restaurants, they'd come and stay with me longer. And, you know, so I always had to think about, you [00:46:25] know, where, where would they shop, where would they eat? That, that sort of thing.

[00:46:29] **Dave:** And [00:46:30] it was cheaper in some ways. The Key Biscayne is pretty much 90 percent New Yorkers anyway, though.

[00:46:35] Right. Isn't that?

[00:46:36] **James:** No, it's like 60 percent South American.

[00:46:39] **Dave:** [00:46:40] Some parts of Florida are heavily New York in some way, but my Florida [00:46:45] geography is kind of limited to Fort Lauderdale because I used to work out there.

[00:46:48] **James:** Yeah, no, it's it's funny. And [00:46:50] by the way, socializing is very hard for me. That's part of my experimenting as I [00:46:55] fit into a different culture here.

[00:46:58] **Dave:** Okay. So you're pushing your [00:47:00] boundaries of the experiments all the time, which is, it's amusing. I'm, at least for me, it is just, I [00:47:05] was like, I wonder what will happen if, and I'll try that. I'll try that. [00:47:10] Getting back to your book, there's a lot of wisdom in here and maybe my [00:47:15] favorite part of it was chapter 11, which you call frame control.

Yes. [00:47:20] What is frame control?

[00:47:21] **James:** So at most of the time, so [00:47:25] basically it's an idea of persuasion that in a high [00:47:30] stakes situation, let's say you're negotiating for your salary with the let's say [00:47:35] You're doing standup comedy. So it's you and a crowd of strangers. Let's say you're [00:47:40] having a problem in a relationship in some high stakes situations, it's not like you're trying to [00:47:45] manipulate anyone or even persuade someone, but in those situations, at any given [00:47:50] point, one person has the frame and the other person doesn't.

So, and that decides [00:47:55] who is basically in control of that situation. And most of the time that doesn't mean [00:48:00] anything because

[00:48:00] **Dave:** you,

[00:48:01] **James:** like you and I, we don't have. Bad intentions towards each other. So we're, we're, [00:48:05] we're allowed to share the frame, but let's say you're asking your boss for a raise. [00:48:10] What your boss probably has the frame in the beginning, and it's your job to sort of get the frame, so he feels [00:48:15] almost obligated to give you the raise or something.

And so that chapter [00:48:20] is about all the different ways to kind of take control of the frame. [00:48:25] When you're doing comedy, for instance, or any kind of public speaking, sometimes you could feel the audience start to drift. They're [00:48:30] losing interest. You're starting to lose the frame and the audience. Is an x ray machine.

They can [00:48:35] see that the speaker or the comedian is losing the frame. So they start talking louder because [00:48:40] now the audience as a single body is, is in control of the frame. And then it's all over for the [00:48:45] speaker or the comedian or the teacher or whatever. So being aware of these techniques [00:48:50] and frame control is very helpful in a lot of areas that And, you know, there's all sorts [00:48:55] of techniques I give in that chapter about when to realize that you're, [00:49:00] that you're not in the frame, that you don't have the frame or what, or if you're not in the frame, how to get it [00:49:05] back.

You know, like if you're asking your boss for a raise, one simple technique [00:49:10] is what I call the advice technique. So let's say Dave, you're, you're my boss and I want a thousand [00:49:15] dollar raise. I'll go in there and say, listen you know, I'm not, You know, I've [00:49:20] been working really hard. I'm a programmer working for you, let's say.

And, you know, I've been working [00:49:25] double the hours because of these layoffs. And I think, but, but, but I, but you're like [00:49:30] the master of negotiating. Just give me advice. Like pretend you're not my boss. Pretend you're a [00:49:35] friend. Just give me advice. I want to ask for a raise. How much should I ask for? And [00:49:40] how should I ask you for it?

I'm legitimately asking you for advice. So that's what I would say to a [00:49:45] boss. And I've used this technique 25 years ago with a boss. And you [00:49:50] know, they, that now you're giving them status, so they feel a little flustered. Oh, I've [00:49:55] got all this status all of a sudden. And so they have a cognitive bias now to [00:50:00] give you good advice.

And then later they'll have a cognitive bias to not reject their own advice. So their, [00:50:05] their, their odds are stacked against them on rejecting you for the [00:50:10] raise. So that's like a frame control technique. Another one is to point out what [00:50:15] someone is doing. Like, let's say. Let's say I don't like to vote. Okay.

And I, and I didn't vote in [00:50:20] this last election. Let's say I told people I wasn't going to vote. Someone might say, well, [00:50:25] you know, this election is the most important election ever, and, uh, if you're not [00:50:30] voting, that's a vote for racism and fascism. And then you can say, [00:50:35] listen, are we talking about racism or are we talking about.

Is voting, [00:50:40] how voting is one vote out of 150 million is going to change the election. Like, what are we actually [00:50:45] talking about here? And so kind of just labeling that they're trying to move to a false [00:50:50] equivalence is an important frame control technique. I'm not going to argue about voting. That was just [00:50:55] an example.

But you know, those types of We talked about

[00:50:57] **Dave:** that the first time I was on your show. We talked about [00:51:00] voting. Yeah, totally. Yeah. That's right. You're a, you're an anti voter, right?

[00:51:04] **James:** [00:51:05] Yeah, but I'm not anti, so here's an experiment I did. So I wrote about not voting [00:51:10] and everybody debated me and they said, well, you're not, you don't have the right to a voice [00:51:15] if you don't vote, which is not true.

Voting is a, that

[00:51:17] **Dave:** was a false statement,

[00:51:18] **James:** right? Voting is a [00:51:20] constitutional right, but it's certainly taxes are an obligation. It's not a right, but voting is a right, not an obligation. [00:51:25] And so the question is. Why is everyone saying I don't have a voice? So on November [00:51:30] 4th, the day after the election, I went to FEC.

gov, which is the website for the Federal [00:51:35] Elections Commission, and I filed, I filled out all the paperwork, and so now I'm [00:51:40] officially a candidate for president in 2024, because, okay, I didn't vote, but [00:51:45] now I'm officially running, according to the US government, I'm officially running for president, and maybe now I'm [00:51:50] allowed to have a voice to, you know, to all the people who said I didn't have one.[00:51:55]

Like that, and, and everybody, [00:52:00] by the way, everybody should run for president and that [00:52:05]

[00:52:05] **Dave:** is truly awesome.

[00:52:07] **James:** Yeah. And, and there's always things to do to [00:52:10] experiment and to, and to push and to move the needle. Like, like if business, you know, I [00:52:15] had an idea during this lockdown. What if, you know, and we're always wearing [00:52:20] pajamas now because we never going into work.

Well, pajamas almost by definition are the most comfortable clothes you [00:52:25] can wear. You wear them to sleep. So what if I designed a line [00:52:30] of clothes that was outerwear for pajamas or pajamas for outerwear, [00:52:35] and, you know, so you can wear them outside, but they have unique designs, but they're made of the same materials as pajamas.

[00:52:40] So for two or three months, I wore nothing but pajamas. I wore them on planes. I wore them going [00:52:45] to, you know, the restaurant or going to travel to somebody's house or [00:52:50] whatever. So, and it was an experiment. I didn't make a clothing line. [00:52:55] You know, that's what experiments are. Most experiments don't work out.

They're just there for you to learn something [00:53:00] that you're interested in. And there was no downside of me doing this other than looking a little silly sometimes. [00:53:05] Which is usually the case, even when I'm not experimenting. I,

[00:53:08] **Dave:** I love that just sense of [00:53:10] relentless curiosity. It's a, it's a hallmark of creating cool stuff some of the time.

Anyway, I don't think [00:53:15] outerwear pajamas would have been on that list.

[00:53:17] **James:** Well, it was even more than that. I was thinking of, I did, [00:53:20] I was wearing copper infused pajamas. So I found fabric that was all, that was made out of copper [00:53:25] because copper is antibacterial. Yeah. So I figured maybe this will be a healthy thing.[00:53:30]

[00:53:30] **Dave:** Okay. That, that makes some sense. Now your book is Full of [00:53:35] knowledge. I mean, it's, it's dense. It's very readable, but it's, it's just, it's got a lot of wisdom in it. [00:53:40] One of the other things that stood out was chapter 23 towards the end. You say what to tell your [00:53:45] kids and you got a list of things to tell your kids.

What are some of the top, like, what are your top [00:53:50] three things from that list that just stand out, things that you think are most important for parents to tell their kids? [00:53:55]

[00:53:55] **James:** You know, I think it's important that kids [00:54:00] not, and this is not specifically on the list, but. Don't [00:54:05] follow the script. So your parents are going to give you a script of how you should live your [00:54:10] life because they care about you.

And they think they know best. Your professors are going to give you a script. Your boss is going to give you [00:54:15] a script. Your parents are going to, uh, your, your friends and peers and colleagues are going to give you scripts. People you [00:54:20] read about, you're going to get scripts from them about how one should live life.

And the important thing is. [00:54:25] You can live whatever life you want. You don't have to follow [00:54:30] these scripts. Many people have been miserable trying to please their parents, teachers, friends, [00:54:35] bosses, particularly when they try all at the same time. I was miserable doing that. And if you [00:54:40] decide you're really just interested in sports and you don't want to be an [00:54:45] investment banker anymore, Then you could start using the techniques in the book to figure out, well, what does [00:54:50] it mean that you're interested in sports and you're 48 years old?

You're not going to be an an NFL star, [00:54:55] but maybe there's something else you can do. And I kind of outlined, well, here's how you explore the space of [00:55:00] the possibility space of, of how you're interested in sports. And here's how [00:55:05] you could, you know, not follow the script and be an accountant all your life or [00:55:10] whatever it is you're, you're sick of doing.

So that's the important thing. You know, there's this [00:55:15] idea too of reach for the stars, but keep your feet on the ground. Do what you [00:55:20] love, pay the bills. And those two things are important, but nothing [00:55:25] else is important.

[00:55:27] **Dave:** Love that advice. James your [00:55:30] new book is, it's really, it's a fascinating read. I, I gotta say, I, I [00:55:35] get sent books every week, like a stack of them more than I could read.

You probably are in a similar [00:55:40] situation. Yes. I've done this, and like you, I've done this show, what, a thousand episodes soon? I've [00:55:45] done it because it's the best way to learn, right? I get to talk to incredibly smart, cool [00:55:50] people. In some books I skim, in some books I read. Yours is definitely a reader. It's called [00:55:55] Skip the Line because you can tell there's a lot of knowledge, a lot of study and the [00:56:00] relentless curiosity that, that James has drives him to take note of things that [00:56:05] you probably don't take note of in your life.

And that means when he takes note of them, eventually, if they end up into a [00:56:10] book, it's because it was a filtering process. That's a very long, kind of a lifelong thing. [00:56:15] So read, skip the line. You can pick it up wherever you like to buy books, Amazon, wherever you like to go, [00:56:20] skip the line. It's pretty easy to remember that.

And yeah, this is a book that it'll make you think for [00:56:25] sure. And if you're trying to figure out what you want to do in the world and you're just getting going, this is going to be a strong [00:56:30] book for you. And if you're just tired of what you're doing and you're dealing with all the coronavirus [00:56:35] whatevers there's some wisdom here.

And it's it's, it's a very unusual life lived in a way that no [00:56:40] one else has. And I can say that with assuredness. So read, skip the line. James, thanks brother for [00:56:45] being on the show. I look forward to hanging out whenever all this travel garbage gets sorted out. Me too, Dave. And,

[00:56:49] **James:** uh, [00:56:50] thanks so much for having me on the show.

[00:56:52] **Dave:** If you liked today's episode, you know what to do. Well [00:56:55] here's what to do. Go to Amazon. Pick up, skip the line, and then pick up fastest [00:57:00] way if you haven't already. And that way, everyone who buys either book will see the other one because [00:57:05] Amazon's algorithms really aren't that smart, at least for that. And leave a review, because if [00:57:10] you would tip someone who makes coffee for you, what would you not leave a review for an author?

We [00:57:15] actually really look at those because that's our experiment. How did we do? So I appreciate your reviews, and so [00:57:20] does James. Have a beautiful day. See you next time on the Human Upgrade [00:57:25] [00:57:30] [00:57:35] [00:57:40] [00:57:45] [00:57:50] [00:57:55] [00:58:00] [00:58:05] [00:58:10] [00:58:15] [00:58:20] [00:58:25] [00:58:30] [00:58:35] [00:58:40] [00:58:45] [00:58:50] [00:58:55] [00:59:00] [00:59:05] [00:59:10] [00:59:15] [00:59:20] [00:59:25] [00:59:30] [00:59:35] [00:59:40] [00:59:45] [00:59:50] [00:59:55] [01:00:00] [01:00:05] [01:00:10] [01:00:15] [01:00:20] [01:00:25] [01:00:30] [01:00:35] [01:00:40] [01:00:45] [01:00:50] [01:00:55] [01:01:00] [01:01:05] [01:01:10] [01:01:15] [01:01:20] [01:01:25] [01:01:30] [01:01:35] [01:01:40] [01:01:45] [01:01:50] [01:01:55] [01:02:00] [01:02:05] [01:02:10] [01:02:15] [01:02:20] [01:02:25] [01:02:30] [01:02:35] [01:02:40] [01:02:45] [01:02:50] [01:02:55] [01:03:00] [01:03:05] [01:03:10] [01:03:15] [01:03:20] [01:03:25] [01:03:30] [01:03:35] [01:03:40] [01:03:45] [01:03:50] [01:03:55] [01:04:00] [01:04:05] [01:04:10] [01:04:15] [01:04:20] [01:04:25] [01:04:30] [01:04:35] [01:04:40] [01:04:45] podcast.