

This episode is brought to you by Peek. That's P-I-Q-U-E. I have had so much tea in my life. I've been to China. I've lived in China and Japan. I've done tea tours. I drink a lot of tea. And 10 years plus of physical experimentation and tracking has shown me many things. Chief among them, that gut health is critical to just about everything. And you'll see where tea is going to tie into this. It affects immune function, weight management, mental performance, emotional health, you name it. I've been drinking fermented Puerh tea specifically pretty much every day for years now. Puerh tea delivers more polyphenols and probiotics than you can shake a stick at. It's like providing the optimal fertilizer to your microbiome. The problem with good Puerh is that it's hard to source. It's hard to find real Puerh that hasn't been exposed to pesticides and other nasties, which is super common. That's why Peek's fermented Puerh tea crystals have become my daily go-to. It's so simple. They have so many benefits that I'm going to get into. And I first learned about them through my friends Dr. Peter Atia and Kevin Rose. Peek crystals are cold extracted using only wild harvested leaves from 250-year-old tea trees. I often kickstart my mornings with their Puerh green tea, their Puerh black tea, and I alternate between the two. The rich earthy flavor of the black specifically is amazing. It's very, very, it's like a delicious barnyard, very peaty if you like, whiskey and stuff like that. They triple toxin screen, all of their products for heavy metals, pesticides, and toxic mold, contaminants commonly found in tea. There's also zero prep or brewing required as the crystals dissolve in seconds. So you can just drop it into your hot tea or I also make iced tea and that saves a ton of time and hassle. Their fermented teas have never been discounted, but for you, my dear listeners, only for you and for a limited time, Peek is offering up to 20% off plus a free sampler pack with six of their best-selling teas when you order their Puerh teas. This all comes with a 30-day satisfaction guarantee, so it's risk-free. Check it out.

This episode is brought to you by Eight Sleep. Temperature is one of the main causes of poor sleep and heat is my personal nemesis. I've suffered for decades, tossing and turning, throwing blankets off, pulling the back on, putting one leg on top, and repeating all of that ad nauseam. But now I am falling asleep in record time. Why? Because I'm using a device that was recommended to me by friends called the Podcover by Eight Sleep. The Podcover fits on any mattress and allows you to adjust the temperature of your sleeping environment, providing the optimal temperature that gets you the best night's sleep. With the Podcover's dual zone temperature control, you and your partner can set your sides of the bed to as cool as 55 degrees or as hot as 110 degrees. I think generally in my experience, my partners prefer the high side and I like to sleep very, very cool. So stop fighting. This helps. Based on your biometrics, environment, and sleep stages, the Podcover makes temperature adjustments throughout the night that limit wakeups and increase your percentage of deep sleep. In addition to its best-in-class temperature regulation, the Podcover sensors also track your health and sleep metrics without the need to use a wearable. So go to 8sleep.com slash Tim. I'll spelled out 8sleep.com slash Tim and save \$250 on the 8sleep Podcover. That's 8sleep.com slash Tim. 8sleep currently ships within the US, Canada, and the UK. Select countries in the EU and Australia. Again, that's 8sleep.com slash Tim to save \$250 on the 8sleep Podcover. Good afternoon.

This is Edward Mu. Ladies and gentlemen, this is Tim Ferriss. Welcome to another episode of the Tim Ferriss Show. Ladies and gentlemen, I have one of my favorite people in front of me,

Kevin Kelly. Who's Kevin Kelly? Kevin Kelly helped launch and edit Wired Magazine. He is written for The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal, among many other publications. He is the author

of the new book, Excellent Advice for Living Wisdom. I wish I'd known earlier. I have a lot to say about this book. We will get into it. Other books by Kevin Kelly include Out of Control, the 1994 classic book on decentralized emergent systems, The Silver Cord, a graphic novel about robots and angels, what technology wants, a robust theory of technology vanishing Asia, his 50-year project to photograph the disappearing cultures of Asia, and the inevitable understanding

the 12 technological forces that will shape our future and New York Times bestseller.

Kevin is currently co-chair of the Long Now Foundation, which is building a clock in a mountain that will tick for 10,000 years, of course. He also has a daily blog, a weekly podcast about cool tools, and a weekly newsletter, Recommendo, a free one-page list of six very brief recommendations

of cool stuff. You can find that at recommendo.com. That is R-E-C-O-M-E-N-D-O.com. I was going to say

R-E-C-O-M-E-N-D-O.com. You get the idea. So recommendo.com. Take a look. He is also a senior Maverick at Wired and Lives in Pacifica, California. You can find him on Twitter at Kevin2Kelly, Kevin the number two. Kelly and all things Kevin at KK.org. Kevin, nice to see you again.

Tim, it's always a pleasure. And just seeing you makes me happy.

Likewise. I was so glad to be here.

Hey, I saw you walk in. I was chatting with Harley of Shopify earlier today, and you walked in and saw you across the room with your yellow baseball cap on. It doesn't hide the beard, though. So I spotted you. And also just maybe very happy to see you. I was thinking about that. And how incredibly valuable that is. What a gift.

It is. And I'm glad to be seen. And so I'm so glad to be able to share with you another time of exploring some ideas and just see where they go.

Now, ideas, you're a man of ideas. And I thought for comic relief, we might start with a list of possible topics to discuss with Kevin Kelly. So I just want to read these because people who are perhaps not long term listeners may not have heard our previous conversations. And I believe the title I used, you did not choose this. I chose it for our first conversation was Kevin Kelly, the real life most interesting man in the world, something along those lines. And people may say, what hyperbole? What is this nonsense? But wait, allow me to list the possible topics. And I ask every guest to send possible bullets for exploration. So here we go. And then I will return to a few of these. The most popular thing I've ever written, 1000 True Fans, 2008, why we built a clock that will tick for 10,000 years inside a mountain. I've had a daily block for 20 years for five years a weekly podcast. At Wired, we invented the click on advertising banner for the web. Next, I spent 11 years creating a huge graphic novel about angels and robots released on Kickstarter. This will record, we're going to come back to that my failed campaign to discover all the species of life on earth. In 2003, I made a long bet on the collapse of the global human population by 2060. My TED talk on why we should be optimistic in 10 minutes, the most important article I've ever written my case against belief in an AI singularity. My most recent piece in Wired, extolling the glories of generative AI engines of wow, I co-founded the Hackers conference in 1984, still going my 50 year passion project,

and this goes on weighing 30 pounds about vanishing Asia. I rode my bike across America twice, once west to east, once north to south, I make a piece of art every day. My biggest audience and most of my fans are in China, where I'm known simply as KK. I have a screen credit for working with Spielberg on the sci-fi concept for Minority Report. With a friend, I built a two-family house from scratch, cutting down the trees. It goes on and on and on. The story of my religious conversion on this American life in 1997, I made a music video in 1969, 12 years before MTV. So, last people think I'm exaggerating. It does sound ridiculous and thank God I'm a specialist in the ridiculous. So, I thought we would start with this bet. So, in 2003, I made a long bet on the collapse of the global human population by 2060. So, what is a long bet and which direction did you bet? Were you betting on or against? Sure. And why? Long bets is a service that we set up at the Long Nail Foundation, which I can explain a little bit more about that, which is meant to encourage long-term thinking. So, we made a place where we could have a long bet, meaning more than two years, about some socially significant wager. And the idea would be that there would be a public bet and you'd be accountable for it and there'd be money involved in the wager. And the idea was to also require people to put the logic of why they were going in a certain direction and that over time, if you had enough of this, you could see which kinds of logic and what kinds of thinking would win more often. And to get around the laws of betting at the time, which basically is illegal to make a bet, that's been kind of slowly changing, but we engineered a kind of a hacker, which you could make a donation to, you would use the money and the money would go to the foundation, the non-profit of the person who won the bet. So, my bet, and by the way, there are a lot of people who bet on including Warren Buffett. I made a million dollar bet that basically index funds would beat any investment hedge fund that he won, his charity won. My bet about the population was that the population of the world, the global population of the world by 2060, I think it was, would be the same as it was at the time of the bet, which is I think 2003. So, the idea is that we are coming up to a peak of human population that would then on the other side go down. So, you very commonly see the chart of the rising population, but it's interesting to me that you never see what happens on the other side. And what happens on the other side, as far as we can tell, is that it plummets. And that's because... Resource scarcity. No. No. Education falling birth rates. Just falling birth rates, because modern people on average are not having more than two kids per couple. And fertility is falling all around the planet, including right now even in the U.S. And everything that we've tried, we, being humans, have tried collectively to counter that has not worked. So, Japan is famously losing the total number of people, not just having a lower birth rate, they actually have a declining population. But they're actually not the lowest birth rate, which is South Korea. And China is aging. Mexico is aging faster than the U.S. So, all the people that have been coming from Mexico, Mexico will want to have come back at some point. It's a really significant change. And again, it's possible that we could use technology to change it, maybe have artificial wombs or who knows what. But right now, for the average person, they're not inclined to have a lot of children. And the people who do have children don't have

enough to cover for those who don't. In terms of the world population, you can have immigration, which is what the U.S. has been doing all along, basically stealing people from other countries. But that doesn't help you globally. So, here's where it's a problem. From a lot of environmentalists, this is good news, because there's less people who are going to consume sources. But throughout history, we've always only had rising living standards with rising population. We have no experience. Do you think those are causal or correlated? That's the question. I think there's obviously some feedback loop where the more people you have, the more ideas you have, the more wealth you have, and that allows you to have more kids. But we don't know. And so, all we can say is we have no experience in having living standards with a smaller population, a smaller audience, a smaller market every year. So, what do you think are the implications of this? Is 2060 just after the apex, will it have been declining for a period of time? When is the projected apex, if you have a projection? So, that's one of the evidences, is that this peak keeps moving closer because... Right, it's not static.

Well, it's not static, but it also means that there are all the projections about the increasing population that people were assuming and built into some of these demographic models are being revised all the time. So, that peak keeps moving closer and the height of the peak, the numbers of actually how high it is, it's changing. And I think one of the things that's really important to understand for us in our society right now is that if you ask any question at the global level, the answer is we have no idea. And the one thing we have, we know most about is human population. And I think our number or counting of that is probably off by 10% plus or minus. And that's the thing that we know the most about globally. But if you ask like, how much freshwater is there? How much electricity is being generated globally? The answer is, is that we really don't know. We have a very poor view of us globally, partly because there's areas of the world that are so undeveloped, we don't have very good counting.

I see poor view, meaning we just have very incomplete...

Yes, we don't have a global census, we don't have a global way of viewing. We have now satellites that can help us see, but they can't count everything. And so, I think what we're doing as a species is moving into this era, we'll become a global... We have a global economy, we've had a global view, a global machine, all the Internet's connected together, and we'll act more globally and maybe increasingly some global governance, but we're not there yet. And so, even something as primal and essential as our population, I think we don't know.

Have you had any exposure to or interaction with the Santa Fe Institute? I have not, but I've recently had conversations with a number of people, Bill Gurley and others, who are involved complex adaptive systems, and I'd just be curious to know what your exposure has been.

So, my first book was written about basically the Santa Fe Institute. So, the Out of Control was based from a conference that was initiated by conferences I went to at Los Alamos, and Santa Fe was hosting one of the first conferences, and I would go down there and talk to all the scientists, and this is in the late 80s. That was the beginning of the sort of a complex adaptive system view of the world. And so, that's what Out of Control is about, is looking at that view and saying, you know, the way biology works and the way this complex

technology works are very similar. They have very similar dynamics because they're complex adaptive systems. And what we want to make with like the Internet, which is all its penetrations, that you can kind of like think of spam as like an invading virus that you have to, you can't eliminate, but you have to treat it like an immune system where you keep it at bay. And so, they're adopting some of these biological dynamics and apply it into machines. And a lot of the work in trying to make robots and early AI, again, were modeling off of what was being learned and often reported or sponsored by the Santa Fe Institute and that kind of approach to complex adaptive systems. So, yes, I think it's incredibly important. And for me, it was a transformative framing of the complicated things was to think of them in these terms. And my whole book was about the fact that the world of the made and the world of the born are basically the same, the two faces of the same kind of dynamic. And so, you can look at how meadows work in ecosystems. And then you can look at the Internet, which was just beginning. And now, of course, it's in full bloom. And you can see how social media, they have similar behaviors. Yeah. And you can find things in one that you then find in the other in surprising ways, life imitating art and art imitating life in the sense that we think we have invented gears. And then we were like, Oh, wait a second, actually, there are insects that use gears for types of jumping. Right. How wild is that? Right. So, there's biomimicry was the field, which was kind of using those as models for ideas and frameworks for trying to make mechanical things. And that only takes you so far. I mean, that was the kind of maybe the genius or the breakthrough in The Right Brothers, which is like, we didn't make flying machines by strapping wings to people. But by flapping our wings, it was like, you put a big surfboard on it and you fly. There's limits to it. And right now with the AI stuff, there's lots of looking at the neurology and, of course, we call them neural nets. So there is huge amount of influence. But what I'm saying is even maybe a little stronger, which is that it isn't as if these mechanical systems are imitating biology. I'm saying they actually have the same dynamics, the dynamics that are powering biology are powering the technium in the technology. I think we are quite close on that in the sense that both paths end up in the same places. And I tend to agree. Los Alamos, is there any particular reason they chose Los Alamos? So, Los Alamos, there were a lot of physicists left over, the Manhattan Project, who kind of liked living there. And Mary Galman was the prime mover. And so he liked it. And I think he might have been instrumental in finding the funding for it. He was on the chair for a very long time. And there were spaces to convene and people. And so Santa Fe was close to Los Alamos. And that was the reason why I was in Santa Fe. Got it. I've been revisiting some of Richard Feynman's writing. And he might have been part of that whole thing too. I mean, he was. Oh, he was there for sure. I mean, in terms of the worth of Santa Fe. That I don't know. But certainly that is part of the reason I asked about Los Alamos. It's on the brain. So let's take a hard left, which is I think going to be common in this conversation. And we will probably come back. We almost certainly come back to the AI, but I don't want to open that. Exactly. All right, you spent 11 years creating huge graphic novels about angels and robots, silver cord. I am, you may or may not know this, but deeply interested in comic books and collected for a very long time, spent all of my allowance, all of my work money, almost all of it on comics for a very long period of time, wanted to be a pencil. Why did it take 11 years? And what did the process of translating your thinking and writing to that form look like? What were the steps?

I met a friend who actually was an actual comic book artist and had published and wanted to do another one. And I'd kind of always wanted to try my hand at it because I thought this was a brilliant genre for communicating lots of things. And particularly if you're interested in science fiction, it was sort of like, to me, a little better than a novel because it had that kind of immersive visualization, which I love. I'm a very visual person, but it wasn't as so detailed that you needed to make a movie of it. But we thought we could do both. And we thought that maybe we could write something that would have some appeal to be making movies. So we would try to write a script as if we were writing a movie. And so some of the other associates that we had worked for Pixar, some story writer. He associates. It sounds like a law firm. What do you mean?

My friend and these other friends all went to the same church. We all went to the same church and there were people who worked at Pixar and some people who worked at ILM. And so I had this idea

of doing this book. It's a story. The premise of it was I was imagining that there would be these interdimensional beings. We were calling them angels. They're made out of light because they're intangible. And that they would look down on humans and weep when they saw us. Because we

were getting the ride that they craved, the embodiment, and we were squandering it. So that's the basic premise is that there is this realm and there's these beings and they're waiting their turn to be embodied. And they're looking at us and what we're doing with you. It's like you have the ultimate ride and you're blowing it. It's like what would I do? I would smother my face with mango juice and I would take a dive into the ocean and swim underwater at home. And so that was the premise of it. And then the added part of it was that some of these angelic beings would try to cheat by becoming embodied into robots. They wouldn't go through the traditional preparation that you

require of moral guidance and whatever else it needed to be before you're allowed to be in the human. But they were going to cheat by coming into robots, skipping a few steps and that these would

be kind of unhinge your rogues. So anyway, that's the premise. So you have these angels and robots and with graphic novel and we would tell stories. And the issue was I'd never written fiction in my life, although the Pixar people had, they were from the story side. And I couldn't draw to the level necessary. So we worked on it. And the reason why I took 11 years was we made it way too big. Instead of doing it like little 20 page things, we started the whole thing.

Lord of the Rings in one go.

Exactly. No, actually, we got to advance from Simon and Schuster to do it. And we were late in delivering and the guy who bought it left, they wanted it back, blah, blah, blah, occupational hazard. Right. So it took us that long just to finish it. And we actually kick started it to print it. When you were generating the story, were you doing it in effectively screenplay form? Yes, it was written as a screenplay script.

And what did you hope? What did you collectively and maybe it was different person to person hope this story would do? If anything, it's a really good question. And that's the most important question you always want to be asking yourself when you're doing these. What effect do you want to have on people? How do you want them to feel after they're done? Do you want them to change your behavior? And for me, it was this idea of the genesis of it, which was to nudge people a little bit more to take advantage of this special time that we have

to interact with each other. This is what you get by being embodied is that there's far more influence. We can influence things through the physical way that we can't when we're intangible beings. And that was the issue that these other dimensional beings had is that they don't have as much influence. It's really hard for them to influence because having a body means that you can influence things by interacting with them physically. And that's very powerful. And experience things. And experience things, right. And so that's what it was. It was an ode or a nudge for people to maybe appreciate their own lives, meaning literally their life, much more than they do. I dig it, Kevin Kelly. You're good at helping friends, myself included, to do that IRL in real life, too, through experiences. And we may come back to that. But first, the iconic 1000 Truefans, the most popular thing you've ever written. Why do you think that is the case? And what would you double down on or revise if you were to take another stab at it today? So the honest answer, one of the reasons why it's very popular is actually through you. The fact that you included it in one of your books, that sort of lifted it out of my little realm. The reason why maybe it kind of resonates with people is because there is sort of an assumption that the goal is to hit it big, the big time, best seller at hit. And most people kind of associate that those numbers, that kind of large scale with success. The idea that success could look differently, that you could have a more modest size scale and that be successful, sometimes this dismisses lifestyle businesses or whatever. And I kind of realized that the technology would allow a different version of that. That it was possible and that it would be good. It would be good for people. I think people can resonate with that because it's a viable alternative option to things that was not spoken before, it was not even really on the radar. And when I wrote it, when I first wrote it before you even saw it, there was no Kickstarter, there was no Patreon. And I was challenged with people like Gerlener to say, well, you know, that's a nice theory, but there isn't any evidence that this is actually working. And it was actually at that time I did a follow through and I tried to find evidence and there was evidence of established artists from publishing or music or studios who had already an audience and could move off of that to their own. But there wasn't any evidence of an indigenous organic growth from nothing. Now there is. Every day people write to me and meet me say, yes, I have been able to do that, inspired somewhat by hearing of that possibility. Is there anything that you would modify in that piece or emphasize more? So I did a modification for you, which was where I talked about the fact that one benefit and one disadvantage. The one benefit is that part of what we're doing is if all you need is a thousand true fans, then even if your interests are one in a million, given the population of the earth of billions of people, that means there's a thousand people potentially on the planet who will share your interests. So if your interests are only one in a million people can identify with that you still have enough. And then the second thing was that just to emphasize to people that this is not for everybody, that tending the fans and interacting with them is almost like a half time job, at least maybe even more. And not everybody's suited to do that. An artist might just want to paint. They don't want to deal with fans and we're seeking for dealing with fans. What it means, it's not always pretty and it can burn you out. And so I just want to emphasize that this is an option. And secondly, you don't have to go all the way. You can have your thousand true fans and then you can have lots of other casual fans and other fans, which would allow you to have other people help you. So it's not just you. And then secondly, for some people, you want to have intermediaries. It's just not something that you want to spend your time doing. And that's

perfectly fine. But it's a really great place to be able to start from. So maybe you don't want to land there. But that's one of my pieces of advice is that where you start, it's not where you're going to land. And so this is a good place to start. That's exactly what I was going to say, which is even if you want to hypothetically build a huge company and change the world, although I'm very skeptical of people who lead with that. I think most businesses, fundamentally, are lifestyle businesses. If you really double click and look at it closely enough, even if someone aims to be Fortune 500 CEO, in any case, the point I want to make is, even if you have these very lofty, large scale goals, beginning with the exercise of reading one thousand true fans, and at least considering what your approach would be to accomplish that first is a great fundamental step. And partly that is because you get a thousand true fans by accumulating them one by one. If you're focused on like, today I'm going to get one more additional customer, that is tremendously powerful. Customer by customer, are they happy? Am I giving value to them? If you can focus on that, that is incredibly a super power. Yeah, for sure. And if you can take those one thousand true fans and some subset of them become your PR slash marketing forces, then things can multiply very quickly. I promise left turns, we're going to take another left turn. You failed campaign to discover all the species of life on earth. I wanted to hit a highlight. And maybe this is also a highlight, but I would love for you to expand on this. Lessons learned, what happened? So there was a conversation I was part of, and I was sitting next to a billionaire who said, you know, it's actually hard to give away a billion dollars. And for some reason, I thought at that moment, well, actually, I know what I would do. And that would be, I would hire all the local indigenous people and have them be barefoot taxonomists and go out and discover and catalog all the living species on this planet, because we never done that. And by the way, if we found life on another planet, that's the first thing we would do is a systematic survey of all the life on that planet. But we haven't done that on our own home planet. And because you're paying the locals, you would distribute that money down really, really fast. And a store brand was sitting next to me and we kind of thought it was a cool idea. And then I didn't think anything more of it because I have ideas every have a lot of ideas, I'm giving it away. And then like a week later, Stuart said, let's do that idea. And I said, what idea had forgotten it about it already? He said, you know, the idea at dinner about counting all the species. I said, yeah, you know, I don't know if like, I'm not taxonomist, I'm not biologist. And Stuart's hunch was that with new technology, and this is my bias too, we might be able to do that. Could you just briefly explain for people who don't know who Stuart Brand is? Oh, yes. So Stuart Brand is close to the person who first hired me, he invented the whole earth catalog in the 1969. And the best way to try the whole catalog is it was kind of like your information guide to the world before there was the internet. And Steve Jobs famously called it the internet before there was an internet was internet printed on newsprint because it was a reader generated. So before YouTube, before anything, if you wanted to find out how to build a house or repair your VW bug or start a home school or keep bees, where would you go? There was literally no place to find information libraries didn't have that information. There was no internet to look it up. But the whole earth catalog started to accumulate those and there were readers of it would send in their versions like, oh, the best book on gold panning is this thing. And then Stuart would run it print it and run it right away. And there was no advertising was kind of reader supported. So that was Stuart Brand. And

he went on to do things we started the well together, which was the first online access to the internet and other things. So he's my hero. And he's kind of just had a recent book, a biography written by him by John Markoff, the New York Times tech writer. And so anyway, Stuart has been sort

of at the center or at the leading edge of almost first the beat next and then the hippies and then the digital thing. He's like the forest gump of 25, 25, seven moments in history. Right. He was kind of always there. And his background was biology. He was a biologist for a study with Paul Erlich, who was the population bomb guy on the other side of this argument about population. So Stuart was sitting there. It was along now sort started along now with me and Danny Hilles and Peter Schwartz to encourage long term thinking to be a good ancestor. How do we be good ancestors?

And at that dinner later on, he said, we should really try and do this. There would be kind of a great thing. So we actually started a foundation called All Species. I named it All Species Inventory, All Species Foundation. And we were going to try and raise money, not from the usual sources that funded taxonomy. We didn't want to take any money from it because it was really pitiful, the amount of money. But to find it from like Silicon Valley and get money for developing the technology that would be able to do that. And it was just too early. It was just too early.

Too early in what respects? Right now on my phone, I have Merlin, which will identify a bird song. I have ISEEC, which will identify almost any plant or mushroom. That's what we needed.

ISEEC, technologically speaking. Yes. And you needed it because even those, those aren't going to identify a new one. If you have an app that can identify the known ones, then you're only going to bother the taxonomists with one that isn't identified. Otherwise, people are just sending them out. Oh, this is a brand new species.

Replication. No, this is not a new one. Don't bother me with that one.

So that's what we needed. And we were just 25 years too early in terms of technology being available to be able to assist this. And so it became kind of a catalog of existing species. And that was the thing that shocked us was, okay, first we need, we need a list of all the existing species. And this is whatever this is, 2008 or something. There isn't one.

It was like, what? Well, there's all these taxonomics publications that are all buried in these obscure publications that haven't been digitized yet. So it's like, oh my gosh, this is even further behind than we thought. So that is sort of what it became. It became kind of a program just to digitize the existing known species. And then the other thing is that as they started to do that, they realized that there was this huge duplication of species having more than one name because they're being, you know, somebody in Germany and somebody in Japan and not even knowing that they're talking about the same thing. So it was failed in the sense that we still don't know all the species on this planet. We don't even know how many we don't know. And we're still only beginning to have a central, integrated, comprehensive, complete catalog of what we do know. And it's called the Encyclopedia of Life and E.O. Wilson before he died was involved in that. The legendary E.O. Wilson.

Right. Mr. Consilience.

Yes.

Stuart Brandt. Let's spend a little more time on Stuart Brandt.

He's been a guest on your show.

He has been a guest. He's spectacular. He is, what would you say his age is now?

He's 86 maybe.

Something like that. And I interviewed him not that long ago.

And he was doing CrossFit two or three times a week.

Right, exactly.

And also military background. You just have to read his bio to even begin to try to believe it.

He would be also maybe on your short list for real world most interesting man in the world.

Yes, exactly.

Now, I recall chatting with Stuart, I believe, about resurrection of species. So the potential of Jurassic Park style resurrecting, say, woolly mammoths and reintroducing some of these large terrestrial herbivores for any host of reasons. What do you think the future holds for those types of plants?

The Stuart, Ryan Fielding and I who did all species and Stuart and Ryan went on to do revive and restore is the name of their program. And it is to originally the totem animal was the mammoth, the woolly mammoth was to bring that back. And there are a lot of very interesting reasons why to do that. And the way they do is basically to take existing Asian elephants and winterizing them through breeding, accelerated breeding. So you can actually just kind of like hatch out of a test tube, a brand new woolly mammoth. There would be a sense in which you would kind of use the line of existing elephants to try and reverse kind of engineer that. You take a Mendelian approach to.

But that's a little bit long return. Actually, Stuart and I went to, and George Church went to Siberia to go get samples of the mammoths that were being exposed by the following permafrost to get the DNA from the the Tron.

Tresopark 7C1 opening. Exactly. So that was quite an experience.

But there are other animals that they're going to be able to be easier to do it.

Just a quick thanks to one of our sponsors and we'll be right back to the show.

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deliberately. It's kind of like a learned optimism. And I think the reason we should be as optimistic as we can is because it is how we make really good things, good complicated things. It's very hard to make good complicated things work because generally there's more way things can fail than they can

succeed. And it's very unlikely that we're going to make something really good that's complicated inadvertently. They're hard to do. So we have to kind of see it and believe that it can be done. And that is where the optimism comes in, is envisioning something and then believing that you could make it real. Because when we look back on history, and that's where a lot of my optimism comes, we realize that most of the things that we have now have been made by people who are

optimistic, reviewing that it was possible to make them and believe that they were going to make them and could imagine them. So I think of it as a work of imagination where you kind of imagine a good scenario, which is harder to do than imagining a scenario where it fails or collapses. It is much easier to imagine how things break than it is to see how they work. And that's why entrepreneurs and all the others are rightly lauded because they're going against that grain. It is hard to imagine how we could have this thing that seems like it is improbable. And most things that work are improbable. That's the definition from McSanta Fe complexity theory, is that things breaking down is the probable. Things, complicated things working are improbable by definition. And so you're against the improbable and that work of imagining the improbable and having the improbable succeed and believing it can is optimism, which means that the optimists are the ones who shape our future. So I'd like to give a little story of a car. You need to have brakes on the car to steer the car. I'm with you so far. But the engine is actually the more important element. So there are people and there are organizations and there are methods that are going to be doing the braking. And I think they're essential. I want brakes on the car.

But I just feel that the brake can overwhelm and plus like nation in that we also want to remember to focus on making the engine even stronger. So I emphasize the engine. So I want to take a closer look at the engine. So if things breaking down are the probable and there are many more ways things can go wrong than they can go right. If I'm hearing you correctly and maybe also bringing in some of my own position, it would be that active optimism is probably more valuable than passive optimism in the sense that the belief that you can make things turn out all right as opposed to the belief that things will turn out all right. And therefore I can go about my day and not concern myself with worries about ABCD

E all the way through Z. And I'm curious if you suddenly had the Kevin Kelly Institute for active optimists. How you would cultivate this or maybe encourage it in more people because I do see optimists who are not panicked, not necessarily paranoid, but they are very interested and excited and feel some moral obligation to focus on solving really high leverage problems or creating new technologies. I also see techno optimists who are like, well, if A, B and C gets bad enough, if the temperature of the earth gets to X, Y and Z, then we'll have these technologies and all be fine. And if this happens, then that'll all be fine. And people thought oil was going to run out by this year, but they didn't factor in that as the number of barrels per year produced went down, the price would go up and then all these other technologies like fracking became viable and voila, no problem. I view those camps as somewhat different. And I'm just wondering if you have any perspectives on that. I'd love your distinction between passive optimism and active. I think that's brilliant.

And right on the reality is that you can't be active about everything. You have to kind of select and choose. And so there is a sense in which, okay, there is a greater than zero chance that the earth could be impacted by an asteroid. And it would be really devastating. One of the most devastating things that could ever happen to this planet far beyond even what climate change should do. It would definitely change the climate. Exactly. Very fast. It's really good that there is now a group of people who are thinking about that. And there's, you know, the B1612 Foundation, which is just cracking all the asteroids. What was it called? B1612, after the little prince, right? Got it. It's a viable thing that they've been behind all the tracking of all the asteroids, kind of upping that. And then recently, we just actually sent something to hit the asteroid and deflected it. So it's the first cosmic impact you really had on the, you know, in the cosmos. Pretty wild to think, but your monkey's on a spinning rail. Exactly, right. Figured out a deflect. So it's good that there is a small group of people, but we don't need to have that be our concern for making national policy every year. That probability is so low, it shouldn't really be a factor in us making our decisions about what we're going to do this year. So that's passive in that sense. I can be passive about because there is another group of people that is active. And you know that a group is active. Right. So what might help other people? I think for me, one of the major things for me was the more I thought about the future, the more I became interested in history, and the more I read history, the more the reality of progress became. And I think just acknowledging the reality of progress would go a large, huge step in helping our optimism. I'm interrupting not to push back, but just for definition of terms. What do you mean by progress? Because that word can be used to mean a lot of different things. It's a very loaded word. I'm using it to mean simply that angels have our better nature type stuff. Yes. It means that overall and average, this is a better place to live than at any time in the past. And this is the kind of Obama test. I don't know if you heard about that, but it's like if you were to be born randomly in any time period, it could be male, female, poor, rich, you totally at random on some average thing, what time do you want to live in? What time period? And like there's no way you want to be anything before at least 50 years ago, and maybe not even within 50 years, because we intuitively understand that this is actually the best time to be alive. But there is a recognition of what are the currents that made that, what has allowed that, what's operating, is it still going? And from my view of history, and I had the chance to live in the past on a time machine, we'll talk about that in a minute. Wow, didn't see that coming. Yes. Okay. I'm taking a time machine. Time machine. I have been in the time machine. And it's very, very clear that we've been on a momentum and a trajectory of progress. And it's possible that that could stop tomorrow. It's highly unlikely that it's going to stop tomorrow. So there is just all the conditions that make that suggest that it will continue. And so part of our optimism can come from that. Okay. Time machine's coming up. Yeah. I won't be able to stick around right after this commercial break. No, I'm not going to take commercial break, but I do want to ask you, given the bet that on collapse of global human population, do you think that by 2060, if we've peaked out from the top of the roller coaster, do you think this progress is inextricably linked to population growth and population density? And if that's the case, do you think we might be looking at regression? There's a movement, the degrowth movement.

I'm not familiar. So these are people who basically the troubles of the world, in particularly climate, when coming from our addiction to growth, growth is kind of the consumer capitalistic kind of idea that grow, grow, grow, grow. And they're saying it's finite. We can't continue to grow. And we have to degrowth, stop growing. There's a little bit of a confusion in English because there's two meaning of the word growth. There is growth to add more pounds, to add more and more stuff, to get bigger, wider, heavier, to have more things, to sell more refrigerators, to sell more bottles of wine. But there's another meaning of the word growth, which is probably closer to what you're interested in, personal growth, developing, maturing, knowledge growth. I guess in a sense, it's the same as the first, but it's... No, it's increasing this complexity. It's taking the same number of atoms and having a more complex arrangement. It's going from a jellyfish to a chimpanzee or something. And so that complex adaptive system where you have increasing levels of complexity and more exotropy in it, that is a different kind of growth. What is exotropy? And I know what entropy is. The definition of entropy is increasing disorder. And there's something called negative entropy, which is what I'm talking about. But that's a double negative. I don't like double negatives. So exotropy is basically an increase in order. So exotropy is this idea of this increasing order that comes at the cost of increasing entropy. So that's the thing. So you get your system like a living cell, it's actually increasing the generation of entropy as it increases its order. It's like a magnifying glass with the sun. Have you ever seen that? There's a little bright spot in the middle of the lens in the sun, but all around it is a shadow because it's taking all the light and concentrating it in. So it generates a shadow. Right. So they go together. So they go together. So what type of growth is an increase in complexity? So you have an economy where instead of trying to sell more bottles of wine, you try to sell the same number of wines, but better wine. Okay. That's different kind of growth. That's the kind of growth that we can shift into. We're just increasing the quality of things. Do you think there are incentives that will drive that? Well, the decreasing population. How are we going to keep our revenue numbers the same? Well, everybody's leaving. Right. You have a smaller market every year, a smaller audience. So one way is to make things better, to make better stuff. Okay. And we have. So refrigerators, you know, if you just count how many refrigerators are being sold, you can have increasing numbers, but you could sell refrigerators and make them better every year, which is what we've been doing. And that's actually not often accounted for in economics. GDP is how many refrigerators per unit are you making? But they're not saying, well, we actually, these new refrigerators are better because they use less energy. They make ice as well as refrigerate. They, you know, they do all these other things that's not really accounted for. And so we can change how we account for things. When we start to measure something different, just other than expansion, the more, the more stuff, so we can need some new metrics. So yes, I am optimistic that we can change our understanding and what we aim for. It's not inevitable, though. Well, time will tell. And make me want to be a better student of history also, as you pointed out. So the time machine, I know that you're going to. Time machine. I know you're going to ask about the time machine. Oh, it's there. It's right there. Top right. Time machine question mark for those who think I'm lying. It's right there. The time machine, I took like a \$20 bus ride in Northern Afghanistan in 1975 somewhere. And I arrived in a different century, literally in a different century. I had no map. I had not

met anybody, heard of anybody who ever went there. I mean, there was obviously lots of askings, but I mean, no tourists. I had no idea if I could get there. It was literally a name on a very poor map. How did you choose it? It was so remote, and I wanted to see what was at the end of the line. And here is a town. I don't know how, you know, maybe there's 100,000 people in this town. What's the good size? The good size town. There was no electricity in the town. They didn't have street lights. They would have a guy at night go and light kerosene lamps in the street lighter. They would throw their shit into the street. I mean, not the window kind of stuff. It was like, and of course, the feudal, there was a feudal structure. I mean, they had basically slaves and child brides and the whole thing. It was just me, the evil in every way, very little metal. There was no signage on the town. There was no science. They didn't need science. So it was like, I mean, a different century. I mean, a different century. And that experience of seeing what you get when you had development in technology. And of course, you could see all the challenges and problems. But the main thing that I learned from that experience is the thing that we get is we get choices and options. That's ultimately what we get from the technology. So the people growing up there, their occupations were faded through distance. If you're a male, you're going to be a farmer, maybe a blacksmith. If you're a woman, you're going to be a wife and a mother. And that was it. If you took the bus all the way into the city and went somewhere else, you'd be in a grimy, gritty, slum. But you had a choice for the first time of what you could do. And maybe not then, but now, if you took that bus ride, you might be a web designer or a yoga teacher, a mortgage broker, whatever, you have choices. And that's what they did not have. They had very strong family, good identity, tremendous support, maybe organic food, but no choices. AI. From the 15th century to today. Even as I understand it, some, let's call them AI researchers, computer scientists with familiarity with AI, couldn't have even predicted several years ago us having today. Many choices, maybe some difficult choices, maybe some difficult outcomes, I might go so far to say. And I wanted to read something. This is from your wired piece, November 2022. And this is after spending months creating thousands of images using AI. Excellent piece. I think it limitless creativity. And there's one line that stuck out to me. And I was like, man, that's a strong statement. I kind of wish Kevin hadn't included this because I think it's going to be hard to defend. And I would like to talk about it. And this also pairs with an article I only started recently reading from Mark Andreessen. And as I understand it, the basic premise is that AI will not cause an increase in unemployment, which is a bit broader than the line that we have here. So let me read. I've spent the last six months using AI's to create thousands of striking images, often losing a night's sleep in the unending quest to find just one more beauty hidden in the code. And after interviewing the creators, power users, and other early adopters of the generators, I can make a very clear prediction. Generative AI will alter how we design just about everything. Period. Side note, I completely agree with this. Oh, and not a single human artist will lose their job because of this new technology. So maybe I should ask you to clarify this, because I work with tons and tons and tons of contractors. And there are artists right now I've worked with who are going to be replaced, at least some of their functions will be replaced by AI. So I would predict they will lose that specific job, not necessarily with me, but at some point in the next few years, they will probably lose that job. If they have adapted to using the technologies or carved a niche for themselves, they will find another job.

But they will lose jobs. So how would you expand on this statement?

There might be a little bit of semantics here, because I would say that it will replace many tasks, but not their job. So this is what AI does. It replace tasks or tasks that we do. Most jobs are complex and different tasks. A lot of these tasks will go to the AI, but not necessarily the job. The job will shift and you'll have different tasks. Part of the strength is that I would actually maybe even expand this even broader. And I welcome feedback on this. My claim would be that I don't

think there's anybody in any field that's lost their job because of AI so far. There's tasks that have gone away, but not jobs. And a lot of the worry about this AI is what I call third person worry. They're saying, my job hobby, I'm not going to be replaced, but I can imagine somebody else or maybe I can imagine my friend losing it. But I'm still waiting for someone to say I lost my job. A real person with a real name who lost their job because of AI. And so far, I haven't, I've maybe even offered like a \$200 bounty. If you could tell me the name, specific person who lost their job because of AI of any sort. Yeah, why take such a binary bet? I know you like these bets. I would take the opposite side of that bet, but please continue.

Well, you can take it by giving a name. I just have to fire somebody and then you take the \$200.

Well, no, but you're at the AI. That's what I'm saying, because of AI.

Well, I would have to replace them with AI and then I could blame it on them.

Who would be able to do that right now? Let's take an example, if I may. Yes.

Logo design. Yes. That is what somebody does, day in, day out. They design logos.

Right. And I have gone to some of the logo designers. There are logo AI designers right now and they're amazing. But here's the position. And this is my position, is what we get from these AI's currently right now are universal personal interns or interns. They're doing the work of interns. UPS. UPS. Okay. And they're really amazing. But you have to check their work. It's embarrassing to release their work without improvement, the intern work. So I've used these logo AI generators and I'll work with them over and over again. And this is what the artists will be doing. The artist is going to be working with their interns, generating all these possibilities, tweaking them. They're kind of like a director or conductor. They're managing the interns and they're not releasing the intern work, unedited, unpolished, un-chirrated. And that's what their new tasks become, the artists.

I'm not totally convinced. However, I think that will happen. But I do think some rank and file

will perhaps need to find new jobs. At the very least, if someone has AI as the UPI,

I would imagine if you have a brand design studio that focuses on logos with 30 employees, some of which are junior, there might be some shuffle.

There's got to be a lot of art generated from these entities, these AIs. And I always want to say plural, always plural. There's not one AI. There's AIs, all different species.

But most of that work is being used for areas that are blank now, where there is no pictures, where there isn't anything. So my assistant actually has for years woke up in the middle night to write her dreams down. And now she feeds those dreams into the AI and she illustrates them. And they're just amazing. There were no illustrations before. Now they're illustrations.

I use them to generate images for my slides. There were no pictures before. Now there are pictures. So it's not like I'm replacing somebody. I'm filling it in. So the major, and by the way, there's about 30 million brand new, never seen before images generated every day with these image generators. 30 million. And I would say about maybe 95% or maybe 98% of them,

there's no audience of one. It's for the pure pleasure of seeing this. It's like you would take a walk out into nature and just see a beautiful scene. It's like, I'm just enjoying this. This is why they're mostly being generated, the predominant number of them, just because they're beautiful.

Okay. And so they weren't there before. You could not have your own private museum of these really cool images. Maybe no one will ever see again. Okay. And so that's what they're being mostly used for,

is filling in the blank spaces. And that's also true, again, of a lot of the other intern work, that may be writing things that nobody else but the boss sees.

Let's look at this a little more closely. So I will say just as a means of setting the table, I'm deeply, deeply interested in these tools, which is why and the effects that they will have on the creative economies, the economy period, broadly speaking, society. I think they're very underestimated. And I'd love to get your take on that in a bit. I've run AI art competitions related to some of the fiction that I put out and have been absolutely blown away.

I also sympathize with some artists, say on Art Station or Deviant Art, who are part of the training set who are popularly mimicked. So prompt yada, yada, yada in the style of fill in the blank. And I can understand why these artists would be upset, feel threatened, maybe be financially impacted. I imagine their commission work might be. How do you think that will shake out? And I know, based on some of the conversations that we've had, that I believe your perspective is if people are relevant, they're going to be copied anyway. If they're not, it doesn't really matter if they're in the training data, something along those lines.

So Picasso's influence is going to be seen all over the place, no matter what.

But how do you think this will shake out in the next handful of years? Because I understand why people would have an aversion as artists. I think there will be people, companies, who will make training sets. They're all opt-in in some capacity. Maybe most of it's already out of copyright. And they'll be sold as green washes, ethical training sets, whatever it is.

They're trade AI artwork. Exactly. And then there could be a lot of them where people will use, they'll train the things on their own work and help me make more images in my style.

I am doing some experience with that right now. Exactly. And then there's going to be this ability over time to require less of a training set. For right now, we can only way we train these is the more, the billions, the better. But human toddler can learn the difference between a cat and a dog, just with 12 examples. And when we start to have more targeted like that, I think people will start to clamor to be included in the training set.

What needs to happen for the AIs to require far fewer examples in these training data sets?

We don't know. That's the short answer. But it may require, right now, there's kind of a brute force, these neural nets, brute force, meaning that they're very flat. And they didn't work in the beginning because they weren't big enough. And the bigger we make them, they seem to overcome

a lot of the problems. But it's really clear to most people that we can't get all the way to where we want to go, just with these flat, because of these models, basically, they do one and a half things. They do pattern recognition and pattern generation. That's all. They don't do symbolic, logic, inductive reasoning that they're not the current ones aren't capable of that.

Irony. Tough.

Irony. And so it's just amazing that they have gone as far as they have. And we keep expecting

that they can't go any further, but they keep surprising us. But we're pretty sure that they can't go all the way. And the example I would use is like Wikipedia. Wikipedia is a flat. The idea was to find it comes up from the bottom. It's bottom up. It's like, how far can you make it reliable? It's like, get it just from the bottom up. Well, a lot farther than you would initially thought. But we also know that Wikipedia has succeeded because in recent years, there's been more top down control of the editors. And you have to have, for ultimately what you want, a combination of mostly bottom up that's somewhat regulated by some top down control, editorial control, all that kind of stuff. And that's what we don't really have in AI right now. We have just the bottom up. It's very, very bottom up. And there's just a suspicion looking at kind of the Santa Fe work on complex adaptive systems that you will want to have some top down governance to assist this bottom up to get where you want to go. You've interviewed just about everybody. You can get to just about everybody. And I know you've spoken to the who's who of AI and any adjacent field that you want to investigate. You know a lot of people and you know a lot of people who know a lot of people. So you've spoken to so many and you have, I would say, one of the more impressive, you know, Nostradamus like predictive track records. What would be your predictions, speculations for the next, within the next five to 10 years, could be a shorter timeframe of what you think. In AI? Yeah. Here's what I would expect. The thing I want to emphasize is that there's Poro. There's AIs. So this idea of the monolithic AI taking over, they're just, they're like machines and they're, they follow the general engineering maxim, which is that you cannot optimize everything. There's always tradeoffs. So we're going to engineer these AIs to be good for certain things, but not as good as something else in another dimension. And we already see that with say the image generators, some favor artists, some favor photography, there'll be different personalities. The one that does painting the best probably isn't going to be the best for writing. There'll be some kind of transformative. They're all equally bad at hands. I say that the general stance we're going to have is what I call dumb schmarming. They'll be really smart. Is that Pennsylvania Dutch? I don't know. It's kind of like that. It's Amish. It's dumb schmarming. We're just going to be furious. It's like, how could you be so dumb when you're so smart about these other things? This is going to be their typical reaction. It's like, you're insanely brilliant, but you're so dumb here. Sounds like half of Silicon Valley. Exactly. Dumb schmarming is going to be engineered and will have multiple, so it'll be more and more difficult to kind of generalize. What I'm saying is that they're going to be engineered for specific tasks primarily, and there will be a general one, but the general one would be kind of like, like the Swiss army knife. You know, it's like good generally, but not really the best in any one tool. That's the engineering maxim. So we should expect multiple varieties of these. And I think the other thing is that for me, the best stance is to think of them as artificial aliens. Aliens mean that they could be like Spock or Yoda. Very, very smart, but they're just doing things differently than we would do. If they have a sense of humor, it'll be a little off, but that is actually their benefit because they help us think different, and that's what we're going to be using them for. That's what people are already using them for is generating ideas. There's probably an idea that no human would ever have come up with, and that helps me come up with a new idea. The third thing I would say about the AIs is that most of them will be unseen. They'll be behind the office operating things, the plumbing, the infrastructure,

and that's actually a sign of their success. Technologies succeed when we don't see them anymore. We don't think about them. They become boring. The majority of the stuff won't even be outward facing. They'll be just behind the scenes. Then this idea of consciousness,

consciousness is a liability. You don't want your car to be conscious. You want it to drive. You don't want to be worrying about whether it should be due to finance. You want it to focus on the road. There will be advertising AIs as conscious free. Dumb and obedient.

Yes, exactly. Extra \$30 for a month. I think that, I would say a couple of things. One is, I think AI overall is underhyped, but the current version, we won't even call AI in 30 years. We'll look back and that wasn't it. It means that there's no AI experts right now. In the short time, we're probably overestimating this idea of vast unemployment and stuff, not in the next couple of years for sure. Everything you've said makes sense. Tools will get specialized.

They will become so embedded that we will cease to think about them, hopefully. In the same way that you waved at the lights. We have all sorts of lights in here, but it's not like we walk into any room with artificial light and we think, good Lord, what is this miracle of engineering and human ingenuity? I think most folks will be like, okay, okay, so why is it underhyped? What should surprise people or what are people not appreciating?

I was involved with the internet. I was living online for at least 10 years before 1992, 93, when wires started. In a certain sense, it was like, we can get anybody to take it seriously. It was dismissed as teenage boys stuff. That's what it was, but I felt like, this is really significant. This is really powerful. What changed it was that interface change became visual for the first time and the web was pictures and stuff, and that's when everybody got it. Most of the AI happening today has been happening with all these chaps, has been happening for years. What's new is that we now have an interface. We have the conversational. This is the idea of the large language model. We have a conversational interface, and that's suddenly, the power that's been there for years is now suddenly accessible, like having the pictures on the web. We're suddenly thinking about it, suddenly in people's faces, in the same way that the internet was completely fringe, and then when the web came along, it very rapidly became mainstream. I remember the first time I saw on my gas station, the pump, there was like a URL. It's like, oh my gosh, it's here. I have the same feeling right now happening with the chatbots and the image generators. These capabilities have

been around for at least a decade, but now what's new is we have a language interface, a conversational interface with them, and the power is to serve completely in our faces now, and so where do we go from there? I think we are going to then start to apply this to everything, right? It's going to be, as we speak every day, there's people embedding this, and they're going to embed it with this interface, so I think we're going to move to this having a whole other level of interfacing with this machine with language, and that's very, very powerful. We'll just go through the whole thing, like take X and the language interface to it.

That's really powerful. What are you hoping to use AIs for over the next six or 12 months? First of all, I generate posts, AI picture every day in the half bin.

When did you switch from manual to AI? Last June, almost a year ago.

Which tools do you mostly use? I tend to go to mid-journey still. Mid-journey has a very curious interface. It's a discord channel, and at first I was completely, Dan Buzleden, infuriated with that, but I came to see it as genius. Why is that? Because everybody's working in the open. It's like the ultimate learning vehicle, and I learn something every time I go on.

Being a student in the surgery theater back in the day.

Exactly. You're seeing how other people do it. It's not behind closed doors. They're doing it in public, and oh my gosh, you learn so much that way so fast. Most things, and what's interesting, the year before that I did a piece of art every day on my iPad with Procreate, and I spent almost as much time on the AIs making an image as I do when I make it myself. Because again, the accusation among the painters in the 1800s when the photography came along was,

oh you guys, you just push the button. And we realize of course now that photography is not just pushing the button. There's a lot more involved in making a really great photograph than just pushing the button. You have to be in the right position, all this kind of stuff.

And the same thing with the AIR. It's all you're just clicking. No, no, it's like photography.

I feel I have some of the same kind of a stance that I have when I'm photographing. I'm kind of hunting. I'm searching through it. I'm trying to find a good position, a good area where there's kind of promise. And I'm moving around, and I'm trying, and I'm whispering to the AI, how about this? I'm changing the word order. I'm actually interacting and having a conversation with it over time. And it may take a half hour or more to get an image that I'm happy with.

And I'm, at that point, very comfortable in putting my name as a co-creator of it,

because I have, me and the intern have worked together to make this thing.

So you have the art application. Any other applications?

In the future, in the next six months, well, I'm actually using the chatbots to help write.

Chatbots, chatGBT? ChatGBT, you know, Bing stuff, and Google. For me, I've always had problems making the first draft. It's just a killer. Yeah. And I know the feeling.

You know the feeling. I find it helpful in making the first draft.

How do you prompt it? What would be an example approach?

All different ways. I've been collecting this, and here's the thing about...

Book of spells.

Yes. Here's the thing about it, is that this is an important lesson about technology, is that we have to use it to figure it out. There's something I call thinkism, which is this reliance on trying to solve problems by thinking about them, which is very appealing to people who like to think. And you can only go so far with thinkism, because all the things we're discovering about this, none of the inventors of this had any idea that they could be used this way.

That's cool.

Right? And so we're discovering, we collectively, by using it, are discovering as capabilities and eventually as harms. But that's important because this is how we steer the things. And so the problem with trying to prohibit or turn it off or ban it, is that you don't get to steer then, going back to that metaphor. So right now through use, we're uncovering all these things, and I've been trying to track how people are actually using them. Like for instance, chat, like there's a couple prompts. So here's the thing. These chat models, basically what they generate are wisdom of the crowd kind of knowledge. The wisdom of the crowd was very famous, counting

the jelly beans. Like if you average all the attempts by humans to count the number of jelly beans in a bottle, the best guess, the most accurate was kind of like the average of them.

And that's what we're getting with the chat. It's taking everything is written, the plus and the minuses, the geniuses and the jerks, and it's averaging out. And that's what it's giving you,

is kind of an average. So most of the content generated by the chats is sort of broadly correct, very kind of average, very kind of bland. And a lot of what you're doing with the intern is kind of pressing them. So one of the tricks is that you can ask for it to be a little bit snarkier or more professional. So let's say you're starting tabula rasa, idea popped into your head of shower. Okay, I want to give a rough draft of shot. What is the step number one, step number two? So it depends. I might ask it to do a summary of what's known about this. Tell me everything that knows about it. And then maybe write a first draft with bullets. Those are the five bullet points.

Could you give a real example or an example you might use?

I'm trying to think of the last one I did.

The Egyptians influenced Roman architecture, I don't know, making it up.

You could do that. Give me the five bullet points and stuff. And then you could say, you could have questions about some parts you didn't understand or like, expand this bullet one, plotting more sources or give me an example of a day in the life of this or 10 more examples of how this might play out. You could kind of expand it that way.

You could also shrink it in terms of like summarizing, making bullet points or what's the key takeaway? Or how about if I wanted to have like a teachable moment out of this?

And so you would have all these kinds of things flowing around. And then again, it's the intern at work. It's like good, but you're not going to use it. You're probably wind up rewriting it. It's maybe give me some ideas I didn't have or maybe the structure of how it organized it was. That's pretty good for four of them. And so it's a start. And for me, it gets you past the breath hold of the empty page. Right. For me, this is really big.

It's just getting going. And then you can also use it later on. I have a friend who writes scripts and they do show me all the weak plot points in this. Or could you explain that?

And you put the script in and they'll say, what are some of the contradictory plot points or that's a great use. Right. Just kind of like where's continuity broken or things like that.

Also, to hear something I used, my book, which we'll get to my publisher asked for talking points.

Talking points. So I said, make a list of nine talking points for this book. Time machine, number one. For this book. And Willie Mammoth, number two. And it made a good list. Again, I couldn't really use the list, but it was, I could use it to make the list. It was a starting point. And here's another thing. So I have a friend who has a blog, a daily blog. They generate 40 posts a day. Okay. I can probably guess who this is. I was like, that's a lot. Yeah. Yeah.

40 a day. So they use it to help write headlines. They'll give the thing and say, give me five headlines. Now, I've actually not used, say, chat gpt for this. There's an upload function where you can upload your document and then use that as the basis or part of the basis for the prompt.

Yeah. Write some headlines. It says it's really, really good with suggesting something that they hadn't thought of. Or he said, also the, sometimes a little has given the little posting. It said,

give me a great punchline at the end. That's cool. And again, it's the intern. You know, they're bad, pretty good. It's going to give you something though. Give you something to start.

You know, I'll give you an example from my own life. Just a friend of mine suggested this because he sent me a text. He said, this is pretty interesting. And he used chat gpt. He's been exploring all these tools in great depth. And I've played with a lot of them, but not in the depth that he has. And he had suggested a podcast guest, John Vervecky, who was on not too long ago.

And he simply put in a prompt along the lines of what are questions that Tim Ferriss might ask John Verwey on his podcast in the style of Tim Ferriss. And they weren't perfectly polished, but they were not bad. And not bad is I think the title. I mean, that's what we're talking about. It's a not bad intern. Okay. It's the not bad interns, not bad universal, not bad personal intern. They'll get better. And I think we'll also again, they'll get specialized. So in 15 years, 15 years. So here's my reluctance about that. I saw VR for the first time in Germany in 1989, '87. I could see that in five years, I could see like, I mean, it was so good. It was so amazing. We'll be at ready player one in 1992. Exactly. So what's happened in the 30 years since then, the state of the Oculus, whatever, it's about the same as what I saw with general linear. But it's a million times cheaper. But it really isn't a million times better. So I don't know. I think this is the time for scenarios. I think I could have a bunch of different scenarios rather than making a prediction. Sure. And one of the scenarios is that it doesn't get exponentially better, but it just gets exponentially pervasive. But you would think would automatic, not automatically, it's a strong word, would make it better in terms of access to larger datasets and. Yeah. Again, I think one of the things that might, we might have a much more tailored version of this. So going back to your attempts to train it on your own stuff, or to maybe have a more customized version of stuff that you want. So it's maybe relatively the same level, but it's much more personalized and tailored and customized to what you do and how you do it. Also tailored for my audience. I want to, and I've already seen a few people do this because my transcripts are available on the website. I want to train an AI on my transcripts and also a lot of material that I produce so that the most common questions I get can be sourced from actual answers I've given. So I have a doctor friend who runs a popular pediatrician site, ask the doctor these questions, and he has trained it on all his 20 years of answering questions to his patients to do a chat. And it works pretty good. And as they say, better than no doctor. And that's just on his, is literally just trained on his replies. And I think more of that will be coming even better. So whether we get to the point where we can do the deductive reasoning or the transfer of learning, I don't know, because we haven't really seen that much. So that's one scenario is we suddenly make another big innovation leap and we have another, besides just being able to synthesize pattern stuff, we can actually do these other times of cognition, that would be huge. But there's no evidence that that's going on. So another scenario is just that we have more of this at a larger scale, more pervasive, more Taylorized, kind of like in the way that probably you've seen no real advances in social media in the 10 years that's been around. Excellent advice for living. Damn it, Kevin. I've been trying to get you to talk about this and you keep pushing back. I was going to segue to this because you mentioned using AI to think differently, catalyst for thinking differently. And it made me think of advice that I've certainly read of yours and you've probably, we've probably had conversations about it, which related to career advice for people say in their 20s and exploring avenues and creating for themselves or attempting to create for themselves jobs and activities that don't have clear labels. And using that, among other tools, as a way to learn to think differently. But let's zoom out. So I'm holding two copies of the book. One is very, very tiny. This is a priced possession now. I've read it probably 12 times. I have many, many notes and there are all sorts of notes in here. Excellent advice for living. The tiny version I have says seeds for contemplation, which I also like. And then there's the very beautiful cover of this galley that you

hand to me just before we start recording. Excellent advice for living. Wisdom I wish I'd known earlier. How did this come to be? What is the Genesis story?

So I would write down bits of advice to help me change my own behavior. I'd like to kind of reduce something that I could say to myself to repeat to myself to remember something as a way of changing my behavior. And that kind of encapsulation and reduction to a little tiny sentence for me was like a handle to grab hold of it and bring it forth when I needed it. And an example would be if I know I had something in my household and I can't find it, then when I finally do find it, I'd say to myself, when I'm getting ready to put it back, don't put it back where I found it, put it back where I first looked for it. Okay, so my flashlight, put it back where you first looked for it. So I'm reminding myself that. And so I would start to write things down like another one would be if I'm invited to do a talk or go meet somebody or have coffee, whatever it is, I would say to myself, would I do this if it was tomorrow morning? It was just kind of a filter to really make sure it passed that hurdle, because eventually it will be tomorrow morning. And so I would say I got this invite. Oh, that's kind of interesting. Good. What would I do this tomorrow morning? So this kind of making it into some portable way that I could remind myself very easily. And I start getting the habit of writing these down. And I realized a lot of it was sort of advice I wish I had known earlier. I have three kids. And the way of our parenting was the opposite of helicopter parenting was very hands off. And I we did not give them much advice ever. When I was growing up, I didn't really pay attention to what my parents said. I paid attention to what they did. And I figured that's what our kids were doing too. So we try to model behavior rather than to say it. So neither my wife or I or ever really gave much advice. But I thought that now that I was writing it down that I should give them advice. So I began this idea of trying to extract out and put into a little handle something encapsulated that I could give to my kids. I did a bunch. When I was 68 on my birthday, I kind of released it to my son at that time, who was a young adult coming just becoming an adult. And a lot of people loved it and a refrigerator around the Internet. I did it for a couple more years. And I realized that I had a lot to say. But it's kind of scattered around the Internet. And I thought we really needed to have it in a book. So I made a prototype myself just made a little book. I made five copies. And I sent it around to see if it was kind of worked as a book. And this book also has my little doodles in it. And it worked. And so I sent it to a publisher. They loved it. They didn't like the doodles. And it did no art by you. It's in a portable form. And actually, I realized afterwards, although it was not in my head at the time, but it's very tweetable. These are tweets. And so they work at the kind of attention span of a young person these days. They transmit well. So the version you have here has about another 100 that aren't even in this. Oh, look at this. Just when I thought Christmas was far away. I tried to make them as practical as possible, actionable, not conventional, positive, if at all possible, and short. You can find no better medicine for your family than regular meals together without screens. Let me throw a few out. Just because I have so many notes in here. I'll mention a couple. And one that I may not get verbatim, but I've thought quite a bit about because when I look back at all the places I've spent time, it's totally true. It's something like if an outdoor patio is less than six feet wide, no one will ever use it. A balcony. No one will use a balcony. Never. And I thought about it. I was like, that 100% maps to all of my experience. So we have what you do on your bad days matters more than what you do on your good days. This is also overlaps with a lot of my thoughts on ritual and routine versus relying on, say, discipline. Greatness is incompatible with optimizing in the

short term. And it goes on and on. I'm just mentioning a few that I've highlighted for myself. You don't marry a person. You marry a family. That's a big one. I decided you don't marry a family in a married country because my wife is from a married country. Who knows? Maybe 100 years from now, you don't marry a person. You marry a species. If you can't tell what you desperately need, it's probably sleep. Don't aim to have others like you. Aim to have them respect you, which also helps in saying no to things you won't want to do tomorrow morning. Are there any that come to mind for you here? It is. A balcony or porch needs to be at least six feet deep or it won't be used. Then there are some very, very specific recommendations. Learn to tie a bowling knot. Practice in the dark with one hand for the rest of your life. You'll use this not more times than you could ever believe. True. I only learned that not, I want to say, in 2012 and I've used it a million times since. What are some here that people have responded particularly well to? Are there any that pop out that come to mind? I'll buy you some time. When you feel pressure to pick a choice, don't forget the choice of not choosing any. That's when I start for myself. One thing that has surprised me is that there's been no overlap in people's favorites, no overlap in people's favorites. I don't know what to make of that, but anyway, that's what it is. I'll tell you some of my favorites. When you're in your 20s, you should spend a little bit of time doing something that's crazy, insane, unprofitable, unorthodox, orthogonal, because that's going to be your touchstone and the foundation of your success later on. Try and deliberately don't try for something successful or crude. Do something very, very strange and weird. It's kind of like to the other bit of advice of like the thing that made you weird as a kid can make you great as an adult if you don't lose it. Yeah. I mean, this is like. It's true. It's very true. So one of my favorite bits of advice that can be expanded, which is don't aim to be the best. Be the only. Category of what? Right before us. You are living that. Even if, you know, 10 years ago, I don't know when you started your podcast. Almost 10. It'll be 10 years next year. You want to be doing something where it's hard to explain to your mother what it is that you do. It's like, wow, it's not quite radio. It's, you know, I don't know. It's like talking. And so that's where you want to be. You want to be the only. You want to, and that's a very high bar because it requires a tremendous amount of self-knowledge and awareness to get to that point to really understand what it is that you do better than anybody else in the world. And for most of us, it takes our lives to figure that out. And we also, by the way, need family, friends, colleagues, customers, clients, everyone around us to help us understand what it is that we do better than anybody else. Because we can't really get there by yourself. You can't do thinkism. You can't think your way there. You have to try and live it out. And that's why most people's remarkable lives are full of detours and dead ends and right turns, because it's a very high, high bar. But if you can get there, you don't need a resume. There's no competition. And it's easy for you. You're doing it. You're not looking over your shoulder. You're just right there. So don't aim to be the best. Be the only. On the easy front, the question that I've sometimes asked my friends, because the things that are right in front of us all the time, or sometimes the hardest to see, is what do you think is easy for me that is harder for other people? Because sometimes you take, I shouldn't say, oftentimes take it for granted, because it's just what you do. And you don't even see where you have something that falls into that category. I actually use that in a similar form of the question at dinner parties when I'm sitting next

to buddy. So one of my bits of advice is that almost everybody knows a lot more about something than anybody else around them. And so I will sit down and it's like, what do you know more about than most people? And it's like, I feel like my job to kind of find out what that is. And it's not obvious. It's not always obvious. You kind of have to work at it, but it's whole. He's amazing. Yeah, totally. If you can get there, they know something that just blow your mind. So that's my assignment when I go to a party. It's like that person knows an amazing amount of something, but it's not going to be obvious, but they'll tell me. I have a close cousin of that that I sometimes use myself, which is once someone has shared or maybe it's already known what they do professionally, their primary gig, let's just say it's finance in some capacity. And I might just ask, could be anything though, doesn't matter. And I would just ask, if you had to give a TED Talk 20 minutes long, but it couldn't be on anything that people at this table know you for, including finance, what would it be? And you get some of the most out of left field responses. And it opens the floodgates to a really interesting conversation. I'm going to mention a couple more. All right. Your enjoyment of travel is inversely proportional to the size of your luggage. This is 100% true of backpacking. It is liberating to realize how little you really need. And if people are not familiar with our first conversation, they should listen to it and they will realize that you walk the walk with that. You have certainly walked the walk with that and are minimalist in so many ways. I want to ask a follow up question to one of these. For the best results with your children, I start this one, spend only half the money you think you should, but double the time with them. Yeah. One of the letters, don't get a lot of physical letters, but one of the letters that I most look forward to every year, I think it's your year in view or Christmas perhaps, but you give a recap and you talk about the family and adventures and so on. What have you found to be some of the best investments of time with your kids? Because abstractly, I bet most parents would nod their heads and say, of course that makes sense, but not always of spending time with kids are equal, I would imagine. For building intimacy and a relationship with your kids, or maybe other things, what have you found to be really good uses of time? I don't know enough about this generally, but I can only tell you what we have done ourselves. That's what I'm asking. Yeah. What I've seen is a couple of things. One is making things together, and I'm a maker, and so I have to kind of, or he gets me better instincts to be too involved or take over too much, but to really allow that kind of cooperative joint making together, and it's fun for the kid, and it's fun for me, and you get to see frustrations, overcoming frustrations, making mistakes, overcoming mistakes. There's a tremendous amount of going on, both of them learning and me learning about them, and that togetherness is really great. What kind of stuff have you made together? We've made go-karts, we've made gingerbread pastels, we've made styrobat, I don't know if you're one of my office men. I remember a styrobat with my son, who was made from recycled styrofoam, it's was nine feet tall. Just art projects, helping in the garden, doing chores together. I would say travel is undoubtedly one of the best learning experiences, so much that I think as a nation we should subsidize travel, but as a family if you can afford it, and I don't mean that it's like going on vacation, the kind of travel I like is where you're learning, it's kind of like a learning experience, it's an experience, and oh my gosh, does that so powerful, and I would say one thing about that I've learned doing it, and that is that I was a little concerned when we were doing very intense travel with my kids at a younger age, they kind of at times didn't seem to be paying attention. They seemed not to be aware or they were kind of maybe

wanting to stay in the hotel and play cards or things like that when we were in Tibet, you know, whatever, but later on I found out that actually they were paying attention, but they couldn't process it at the time, so the experience were there and they would reprocess it over time and it would become more and more valuable as they had more and more to kind of interpret it, and that trip which I kind of thought was a failure at the time because they were sort of not really appreciating it or actually grew in importance, and so don't be dismayed if you take your kids on a great adventure and they're kind of like not impressed or they're not changed or whatever. No, no, no, they haven't yet been able to process it and they'll process it over time. Any other tips for traveling with kids? Because I can imagine a family trip that is almost certainly very different from Kevin Kiley family trip where a family has gone to five countries, they've stayed at the four seasons in each one, the kids have been on their phones the entire time, and you can fill in the rest of the picture. So what would be perhaps some recommendations?

And I'm not saying people should sleep on the sidewalks, it's just that you can travel and not actually leave the comfort of your own usual scaffolding. Yeah, no, one of the bits of advice is like a vacation plus a disaster is equal to an adventure. So I, one of the times I rode my bicycle across the US was from Vancouver down to Mexico on the coast and I rode with my son who was a teenager and I had his nephew who was a teenager along. That was an incredible experience. And doing that together kind of like an adventure together was tremendous for them because it took them out of the San Francisco bubble and you could see the real world. And again, was a learning experience about overcoming doing things that seemed hard but turned out to be things that you just could do. I would say yes, try new things. Another thing that I think is really good for travel is almost goes somewhere at random. I mean, literally like this. So what we, our policy for our family was to follow passions and interests rather than destinations. So every kid, we would say, we're going to follow your passion for our vacation this year. Whatever you're interested in, you know, if you're interested in Anne of Green Gables, okay, we're going to go to Nova Scotia and visit all the Anne of Green Gables sites. What is Anne of Green Gables? I probably should know. Anne of Green Gables is a popular children's or young adults story. I see. Anne of Green Gables and there was like a series of books and it was based in Nova Scotia and there was kind of a big following about that. Got it. So our son was interested in dinosaurs when he was very little. Okay, we're going to go to all the dinosaur digs and dinosaur museums, dinosaur excavations that we could find. And that was the theme and they were very engaged in that vacation. We were in an RV and we're going around visiting dinosaurs because that's, so the kid, the child got to pick. The follow question I had after the bicycle story was whether your kids have always been game for these adventures or whether you've cultivated slash did I mind check them into being more game because I would have to imagine this speculation but their parents were thinking like I could never convince my teenage son to go cycling for weeks at a time or months at a time, whatever it might be. Maybe that's just out of the box. They've been ready to go. I guess I would say it was not an issue that we had. They were up for, particularly again, if you have something that's surrounding their own passions and interests. I was imagining that if you folded them into the process of making these decisions from an early age, they relate to these things differently than if everything has been an assignment. Right. I think that's how you do it. We homeschooled our son for one year

and part of that home year of homeschooling, we were at home, we were traveling. And again, it was this idea of where we do it to go, you get to kind of set some of the things and that was total engagement. You want to make sure that's invested. Yeah, you're invested. I'm going to grab a few more here. If an elementary school student is struggling, first thing, check their eyesight. Yeah. Great advice. This is something I need to get checked because my family has quite a bit of glaucoma and intraocular pressure issues and I haven't had them checked in a long time. So I'll get there. Purchase the most recent tourist guidebook to your hometown or region. You'll learn a lot by playing the tourist once a year. This is something I did. I went out and I actually got the guidebooks and you do pick up a lot. You pick up a lot. I did this in San Francisco too. It's shocking how much you miss. I remember growing up in New York, I never made it

to the Statue of Liberty or the Empire State Building until a German friend visited me like 10 years ago and was shocked that I had never been to either of these things. I was like, maybe I should at least spend an afternoon and go see these things and it was a blast. One Thanksgiving day, we went into San Francisco and rode the cable cars, which we had never been on and it was the perfect day because there was nobody else on them. It was like a Thanksgiving day. It's a way of, again, I favor things that help you learn, give you new experience and treating your own neighborhood is a great way to do that. So I'm giving some more examples. I could keep going because there's so many good ones. But I'll give an example of highly tactical and specific, to signal an emergency, use the rule of three. Three shots, three horn blasts, or three whistles. And then you have the more, I would say, still practical but conceptual. When you're stuck, explain your problem to others. Often simply laying out a problem will present a solution. Make, quote unquote, explaining the problem part of your troubleshooting process. I wish I knew that so much earlier.

I would not have been able to write before our work week had I not taken this advice. I was totally stuck on an entire section. I was roadblocked, could make any progress. I was really starting to panic and a writer friend of mine said, just have someone interview you about why you're having trouble and record it. And I did that. I had somebody who was a ghost writer. I've never used a ghost writer, but she knew how to ask questions. Recorded the conversation. Didn't even need the recording because it helped me walk right through it. And by the end, I knew what the solution was. Problem solved.

Yes. Well, I have an assistant and when I get stuck, I'll start to explain to her my thing. And then by the end, it's like, wait a minute, I get it. I was like, I didn't need you. But actually, I didn't need you just to walk you through it. What would you hope? I'm going to ask you the same question I asked about the, is it the silver cord?

The silver cord.

It is the. I just wanted to make sure I was adding the article or not. So the silver cord, what would you hope this to do? What will be a success for you? Or is it already successful? You're like, ah, I've done it.

Generally, my books have an audience of one. I did this big Asia book, 30 pound, three-value spectacularly beautiful, gorgeous, gorgeous, gorgeous book.

9,000 images. There wasn't one of them.

You took every image.

I took every image.

Wrote every caption.

I did all the layout. Every, there's a thousand pages. Each one has a different design.

I did the whole thing. And there's nobody who enjoys that book more than me just going through it.

Of course, I was there, but I made up one prototype book like this book here is a prototype.

And all I wanted was one book. If there was no other books made, I would have been happy.

But since I was making one, it's so easy to make others.

And so it's like, if I can share with you, send it to my friends, that makes me even happier.

So the success for that was having the book.

This one is not so much for me. It is, if other people are also can gain and find ways to repeat these things and improve their lives, that is a success for me.

So I would hope that a young person like me would hear some of this advice and be able to encapsulate it and repeat it to themselves and make their lives better.

That would be a success for me.

I'm going to take a slight detour because that is my want.

I'm going to take a slight detour because this is on my mind.

Do you still recommend sabbaticals and how would you suggest, maybe for people who have not heard our prior conversations, think about sabbaticals.

The value of how to actually take a sabbatical. What does that mean?

Right. No, I'm a huge fan of sabbaticals.

And I think I had some advice in the book.

I put it, I think we overemphasize our productivity and efficiency.

But the best thing for your work ethic is to have a rest ethic.

Actually, that's one I've started.

Something along the lines of the key to a great work ethic is having a great rest ethic.

So this idea of, I think goofing off, wasting time, sabbaticals, sabbaths, taking a sabbath are all essential to the creative life.

They're just absolutely, it's almost like sleep.

You just have to do it.

And it does it by rejuvenating you and shifting your perspective, by releasing you from, I mean, there's so many things that it works on.

And most, I think, for me, in my own experience, the best things I've done came after, you know, taking shifting. It's like the clutch.

When you're shifting, you want to put the clutch in.

Otherwise, you just kind of grind.

So I think it's really valuable, and again, not just every seven years, which is a technical sabbatical, but like sabbaths, it's like vacations.

But more importantly, time off and goofing off.

I find that the young people, believe it or not, the ones that I am associated with, don't goof off enough.

They go right from college, and their first job, and the life.

No, don't, there were people that wired.

They came right from college, and after seven years, they were still there.
It's like, I sit down like, why are you here?
You should not be here.
I mean, it's like, when was the last time you goofed off or wasted time?
So no, I'm a big believer.
I imagine the rest of management must have loved that.
I wasn't a manager.
No, we're the only management.
We don't have to belabor the point.
I'm just imagining, wait, why did some people quit last week?
I've probably been talking to that Kelly.
So I think it's essential.
And so your question of like, whoa, this is why I love you.
It's like, give me some practical stuff about how to take a sabbatical.
Or just what might it look like for someone who, I mean, let's personalize it.
For me, what might a sabbatical look like?
What would you consider the minimal viable duration, and what would make it a sabbatical versus me just being in a foreign locale thinking about the usual stuff?
So it's just because my wife's, both of her companies she'd been at, she was at Genesec for 30 years, and she's at 23 and me now.
Well, Genesec had a sabbatical program, an official one.
It was six weeks every six years, which is basically a European vacation.
Yeah, right.
An annual vacation.
I think six weeks is probably, for me, the minimum for a sabbatical.
But man, it could be very attractive in six weeks.
For me, I've done things like doing art.
There's something I like, in the old days, professors would get sabbaticals, and they would do their own project that they were working on, or go to school somewhere, or have a visiting appointment.
Travel is a very, very common one.
For you, I think your effort right now to work in animation and stuff, I guess the general pattern is you want something that's different in the structure and rhythm from what you normally do.
And so our temptation, those of us who like to make things, is to make something different.
But that's not really a sabbatical.
We're in the same rhythm.
We're learning.
And so it's sort of like you want to go in a different direction.
And I did a sabbatical once where I just read books.
And it was like, literally, it's all I'm going to do.
I'm going to get up in the morning, I'm going to read books, and I'm not going to do anything else.

And that was really different from my normal behavior,
but incredibly powerful.
And by the end, I went to travel because I had it.
It was like, blew my gas because I had to go.
But that sabbatical of only reading books and reading books all day long.
And I could read them with like about an average of a book a day
because some books are really short and some were really long.
I mean, the synapse associations that you get from reading book after book after book,
you begin to think that they're all talking to each other, the authors.
It's like, they're talking about the same thing.
They must have known about each other.
It's impossible, but you have this sense of this all knitting together.
Yeah, saturation.
Yeah.
So I think the recipe is to have a different rhythm
in a different mode than you normally have.
I'm also used to making, making, making.
It could be interesting for me just to shadow somebody for a period of time.
Somebody who's really good in the world of say, animation using that example,
and just watch.
I'm not allowed actually to make anything for a while.
I just have to watch.
That would actually be very challenging.
That would be.
That's right.
Yeah.
So like you have to watch somebody.
But you know, I get, I do that every evening on YouTube.
Again, I could rant about YouTube forever because I think it's way underrated for an
influence.
I heard that.
I heard a story.
I'm not going to name names.
Actually, I can name one name, but I don't want to mention all the names.
So mutual friend, Matt Mullenweg.
We were just spending time together and he said,
you went on a walk with one of his friends.
And the two of you just talked about YouTube for two hours straight.
So why don't you, why don't you expand a little bit?
What do you do on YouTube?
I watch.
No, no, no.
I'm sorry.
So think of YouTube.

It has videos too.

Yes.

No, I watch people work.

You watch people work?

Yeah.

I watch people making things.

Like what?

Like people restoring cars, people making boats, people making clay things, people making, just watching people make things.

And because I'm a maker and because I learned so much by watching people work, much more than you ever learned in the book.

And are these just full capture videos?

Or are they giving commentary as they go?

Are they just a kind of a peek over the shoulder as they do their thing?

All of the above.

All right.

All of the above.

Sometimes your time lapses them just in the shop.

Sometimes you're giving lessons.

Sometimes you're showing a technique.

Sometimes they're walking through it.

Some record their mistakes.

Some don't.

I mean, I subscribe to so many that it's hard to generalize.

But the point is that why I think it's underappreciated is that it's an accelerant on the learning, the process of people discovering something, putting it up, other makers watching it, seeing, oh, that's a good idea, modifying it, putting their version up, and then two days later, someone else has improved it.

And brain surgeons are using this right now, where a brain surgeon will have an operation.

They'll be filming their operation.

They have a little bit of a technique, an improvement that they'll watch.

Other brain surgeons are watching brain surgeons.

On YouTube.

On YouTube.

And within days, they'll have an improvement.

And it's going this fast, unlike years and years of waiting to a paper being published in a paper.

It's like, how can you do it?

So it's just an incredible accelerant.

And the problem, not the problem, but the thing about YouTube is all invisible.

It's not like a bookstore where you see what's there.

You have no idea that this is happening.

And it's like, it's tremendous.

It's all being in the libraries of Alexandria with a blindfold on.

Exactly.

And you're only allowed to take it off once you grab something at the shelf.

A little tiny people.

Well, there's some books there about astronomy, but no, there is like this huge world.

So for me, that's, but anyway, I liked your idea of watching people execute at work and not having to produce them.

That would be a tremendous sabbatical or true sabbatical.

Yeah.

It would also be such a shift for me because so much of what I do is virtual or on a screen doing it, say via YouTube would not be much of a behavioral shift and doing it in person.

I also travel and move around so much being in, say, a fixed location for a period of time would be a very novel experience.

Yeah, exactly.

I was thinking of the productivity.

There was one little bit of advice.

Actually, I was telling you this to a David Elwin of all people who was the get things done guy.

Of course.

There is a tendency, the normal approach to organizing your life is that you want to kind of like be productive.

So you want to get through the things that you need done the most productive way in the least time as possible, but I find it's better to kind of shift over to say,

what are the kinds of things I want to do that I want to spend as much time as possible doing?

That to me is the focus is to shift from minimizing the amount of time on things,

but to maximize the amount of time to do things that you don't ever want to stop doing.

Know where you want to maximize the time.

Right.

That was one, I'm not going to go through all the pages to find it, but that was actually one I had my thumb on, literally, that I was going to bring up because that is a piece of advice in the book.

I have to ask because I've never been able to figure it out, probably because I haven't asked you specifically, why are you, you're like the David Hasselhoff is to Germany, where you are to China, like you're huge in China.

What is the reason for that?

It was an accident.

I wrote a book out of control in the early 90s that was ignored in the U.S.

It was way too early.

It was just too early.

It was talking about the centralized system, that whole chapter on crypto in 1994 that actually that I gave to Steven Levy and assigned him to follow up and he later wrote the book on the crypto stuff, crypto not being the money, but mine was about digital money.

It was just too early, but it was translated into Chinese at the beginning of the aughts,

I don't know, 2006, maybe, five, I don't remember exactly.

It was actually crowdsourced translated, which was even more interesting.

Because there was so much demand by the native Chinese?

There was just some fans in China, basically.

That's a task.

It was crowdsourced.

Yeah, so there was one guy, all to one guy, a real true fan, and he organized the crowdsourcing translation of it.

And it came out at the right moment that Jack Ma and Pony Ma were beginning to build their internet things.

And it was hugely influential on them and they talk about the book.

So every entrepreneur in China has to read the book because Jack Ma recommended it.

Right, Steve Jobs at China is talking about it.

Right.

And that's primarily why I kind of disseminated from that.

And then all my other things were translated.

And I became the prophet of the internet or something.

Because I was talking about these things before there was the things.

And so-

Kind of what prophets do.

Right, and so in China, there is a little bit of more of a herd mentality

where people read it because other people have been reading it and need to read it.

And so most of my fans are actually in China.

You know, I still was going there on a regular basis giving talks about the future of X and Y and the major difference there was that they were actively listening and then executing and doing the stuff.

They were so eager to build and to get ahead of, you know, we were talking about whatever it is, blockchain, whatever.

Okay, we're going to start doing blockchain.

It was like they were absorbing it and actually acting upon it rather than just kind of all that's a nice idea.

They were really looking for things to do.

So it had a huge influence in that way.

So you said you're known as KK.

Yeah.

Do they write it in the English KK?

Or is they-

I'm sure they have a Chinese name for you, but-

There isn't characters.

It's just-

Just the letter K letter.

They can read the letters.

No, I'm sure they can.

I mean, no, but I mean, it's just KK.

I have a Chinese name.

What is your Chinese name?

Kaewin Kaivi.

Yeah, it is a great name.

You could slightly change that and sell yourself as a K-pop star in the U.S.

It's all the rage.

You can do really well.

Shwaige.

Cool older brother.

Yeah, right.

That's you, man.

That's how I think about you.

Well, is there any other advice you would like to give or anything else you would like to say about excellent advice for living, wisdom I wish I'd known earlier, or any other thoughts you would like to share, any closing comments, requests of my audience? Formal complaints you'd like to lodge, anything at all?

There is one little piece of advice at the very end which maybe sums up the assignment, which is kind of your goal in life is to be able to say on the day before you die that you've fully become yourself.

I'm really going to emphasize this idea of fully becoming yourself and the difficulty and the challenge that is to discover what that is and how powerful that is.

And that's true whether you're starting a company or becoming an artist or a teacher, whatever it is.

And the reason why I'm very pro on technology is that I think it enables us, helps us generally to become more of ourselves.

That we all have mixtures of talents in us that actually need external tools to help us express things.

And so I am interested in kind of increasing that pool of possible tools in the world so that all of us would have some chance to really expressing our genius and fully becoming ourselves.

And that includes like having clean water and education and access to transportation.

Those are all the fundamental tools in addition to the kind of high tech stuff.

But I really do believe that all of us have a unique genius.

Every evidence I've seen in the world and people around the world suggest that that's true.

And so if I can at all unleash people to attempt to fulfill their best self, to be more of their selves, to be fully them, then that would be a success for me.

Kevin, so nice to spend time with you.

So much fun, always does.

It always is, Tim.

You make me happy.

I just love your sincerity.

Thank you.

You too, man.

Thanks so much.

And I have read my little bootleg copy of Excellent Advice for Living probably 20 times.

It really is something that you can refer to again and again and again.

And each time you read it with a new pair of eyes because you're in a different state, maybe a different place in your life, you also glean different things.
So I really can't recommend this book enough.
It's so easy to read.
Excellent Advice for Living, Wisdom.
I wish I had known earlier.
Kevin Kelly, go get it, folks.
You will not be sorry.
He will thank me later.
And you can be found on Twitter, tool of the profit, Kevin to Kelly.
And on the website, certainly kk.org, where people can also find 1000 true fans, which everyone should read.
And for those listening, we will have links to everything in the show notes as per usual, tim.blog slash podcast.
Until next time, be just a little kinder than is necessary to not just other people, but yourself and strive to become fully yourself.
And tools are part of that.
Advice is certainly part of that.
And maybe the combination is part of that.
So until next time, thanks for tuning in.
Hey guys, this is Tim again.
Just one more thing before you take off and that is Five Bullet Friday.
Would you enjoy getting a short email from me every Friday that provides a little fun before the weekend between one and a half and two million people subscribed to my free newsletter, my super short newsletter called Five Bullet Friday.
Easy to sign up, easy to cancel.
It is basically a half page that I send out every Friday to share the coolest things I've found or discovered or have started exploring over that week.
It's kind of like my diary of cool things.
It often includes articles I'm reading, books I'm reading, albums, perhaps gadgets, gizmos, all sorts of tech tricks and so on that get sent to me by my friends, including a lot of podcast.
Guests and these strange esoteric things end up in my field.
And then I test them and then I share them with you.
So if that sounds fun, again, it's very short.
A little tiny bite of goodness before you head off for the weekend, something to think about.
If you'd like to try it out, just go to tim.blog/friday.
Type that into your browser, tim.blog/friday.
Drop in your email and you'll get the very next one.
Thanks for listening.
This episode is brought to you by Eight Sleep.
Temperature is one of the main causes of poor sleep and seat is my personal nemesis.
I've suffered for decades, tossing and turning, throwing blankets off, pulling the back on, putting one leg on top and repeating all of that ad nauseam.
But now I am falling asleep in record time.

Why? Because I'm using a device that was recommended to me by friends called the PodCover by Eight Sleep.

The PodCover fits on any mattress and allows you to adjust the temperature of your sleeping environment, providing the optimal temperature that gets you the best night's sleep.

With the PodCover's dual zone temperature control, you and your partner can set your sides of the bed to as cool as 55 degrees or as hot as 110 degrees.

I think generally in my experience, my partners prefer the high side and I like to sleep very, very cool. So stop fighting. This helps.

Based on your biometrics, environment, and sleep stages, the PodCover makes temperature adjustments throughout the night that limit wakeups and increase your percentage of deep sleep. In addition to its best in class temperature regulation, the PodCover sensors also track your health and sleep metrics without the need to use a wearable.

So go to 8sleep.com slash Tim. I'll spelled out 8sleep.com slash Tim and save \$250 on the 8sleep PodCover. That's 8sleep.com slash Tim.

8sleep currently ships within the US, Canada and the UK. Select countries in the EU and Australia. Again, that's 8sleep.com slash Tim to save \$250 on the 8sleep PodCover.

This episode is brought to you by Peak. That's P-I-Q-U-E. I have had so much tea in my life.

I've been to China. I've lived in China and Japan. I've done tea tours. I drink a lot of tea and 10 years plus of physical experimentation and tracking has shown me many things.

Chief among them, gut health is critical to just about everything and you'll see where tea is going to tie into this. It affects immune function, weight management, mental performance, emotional health, you name it. I've been drinking fermented Puerh tea specifically pretty much every day for years now. Puerh tea delivers more polyphenols and probiotics than you can shake a stick at. It's like providing the optimal fertilizer to your microbiome.

The problem with good Puerh is that it's hard to source. It's hard to find real Puerh that hasn't been exposed to pesticides and other nasties, which is super common. That's why peaks fermented Puerh tea crystals have become my daily go-to. It's so simple. They have so many benefits that I'm going to get into and I first learned about them through my friends Dr. Peter Atia and Kevin Rose. Peak crystals are cold extracted using only wild harvested leaves from 250-year-old tea trees. I often kickstart my mornings with their Puerh green tea, their Puerh black tea, and I alternate between the two. The rich earthy flavor of the black specifically is amazing. It's very, very, it's like a delicious barnyard. Very peaty if you like whiskey and stuff like that. They triple toxin screen. All of their products for heavy metals, pesticides, and toxic mold contaminants commonly found in tea. There's also zero prep or brewing required as the crystals dissolve in seconds. So you can just drop it into your hot tea or I also make iced tea and that saves a ton of time and hassle. Their fermented teas have never been discounted but for you, my dear listeners, only for you and for a limited time, Peak is offering up to 20% off plus a free sampler pack with six of their best-selling teas when you order their Puerh teas. This all comes with a 30-day satisfaction guarantee so it's risk-free. Check it out. Go to peaklife.com. That's P-I-Q-U-E-L-I-F-E dot com forward slash T-I-M peaklife.com slash Tim and the discount is automatically applied at checkout. Enjoy.