

[Transcript] The Tim Ferriss Show / #692: Arthur C. Brooks — How to Be Happy, Reverse Bucket Lists, The Four False Idols, Muscular Philosophies, Practical Inoculation Against the Darkness, and More

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 Pod Cover by Eight Sleep.

The Pod Cover 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 Pod Cover'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 Pod Cover 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 Pod Cover sensors also track your health
and sleep metrics without the need to use a wearable.

So go to eightsleep.com slash Tim,
all spelled out, eightsleep.com slash Tim
and save \$250 on the Eight Sleep Pod Cover.

That's eightsleep.com slash Tim.

Eight Sleep currently ships within the US,
Canada and the UK, select countries in the EU and Australia.

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to save \$250 on the Eight Sleep Pod Cover.

This episode is brought to you by AG1,
the daily foundational nutritional supplement
that supports whole body health.

I view AG1 as comprehensive nutritional insurance
and that is nothing new.

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I actually recommended AG1 in my 2010 best seller, more than a decade ago, the four hour body and I did not get paid to do so.

I simply loved the product and felt like it was the ultimate nutritionally dense supplement that you could use conveniently while on the run, which is for me a lot of the time.

I have been using it a very, very long time indeed.

And I do get asked a lot what I would take if I could only take one supplement.

And the true answer is invariably AG1.

It simply covers a ton of bases.

I usually drink it in the mornings and frequently take their travel packs with me on the road.

So what is AG1?

What is this stuff?

AG1 is a science driven formulation of vitamins, probiotics and whole food sourced nutrients.

In a single scoop, AG1 gives you support for the brain, gut and immune system.

Since 2010, they have improved the formula 52 times in pursuit of making the best foundational nutrition supplement possible using rigorous standards and high quality ingredients.

How many ingredients?

75 and you would be hard pressed to find a more nutrient dense formula on the market.

It has a multivitamin, multi-mineral superfood complex, probiotics and prebiotics for gut health, an antioxidant immune support formula, digestive enzymes and adaptogens to help manage stress.

Now, I do my best always to eat nutrient dense meals.

That is the basic, basic, basic, basic requirement.

That is why things are called supplements.

Of course, that's what I focus on, but it is not always possible.

It is not always easy.

So part of my routine is using AG1 daily.

If I'm on the road, on the run, it just makes it easy to get a lot of nutrients at once and to sleep easy knowing that I am checking a lot of important boxes.

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So each morning, AG1.

That's just like brushing my teeth, part of the routine.

It's also NSF certified for sports

so professional athletes trust it to be safe.

And each pouch of AG1 contains exactly what is on the label,

does not contain harmful levels of microbes or heavy metals

and is free of 280 bad substances.

It's the ultimate nutritional supplement

in one easy scoop.

So take ownership of your health and try AG1 today.

You will get a free one year supply of vitamin D

and five free AG1 travel packs

with your first subscription purchase.

So learn more, check it out.

Go to drinkag1.com slash Tim.

That's drink AG1, the number one,

drinkag1.com slash Tim.

Last time, drinkag1.com slash Tim.

Check it out.

At this altitude, I can run flat out for a half mile

before my hands start shaking.

Can I answer your personal question?

No, I just see the network in time.

What if I could be out of this?

I'm a cybernetic organism living this year

over a metal endoskeleton.

Me, Tim Ferriss Show.

Hello, boys and girls, ladies and germs.

This is Tim Ferriss.

Welcome to another episode of the Tim Ferriss Show

where it is my job to deconstruct world-class performers

or those performers who study world-class performers

who pick out the meta patterns,

the things that you can apply to your own lives,

whether they be tools, favorite books, frameworks,

rituals, annual reviews, perhaps.

Reverse bucket lists in the case of my guest today.

And that guest is Arthur C. Brooks.

Arthur C. Brooks is the Parker Gilbert Montgomery professor

of the practice of public and nonprofit leadership

at the Harvard Kennedy School

and professor of management practice

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at the Harvard Business School where he teaches courses on leadership and happiness. He is also a columnist at The Atlantic where he writes the popular How to Build a Life column, mega popular, and Brooks is the author of 13 books, including the 2022 number one New York Times bestseller from Strength to Strength, Finding Success, Happiness and Deep Purpose in the Second Half of Life, which is a book I've actually recommended in my newsletter, Five Below Friday. His newest book is Build the Life You Want, subtitled The Art and Science of Getting Happier with co-author Oprah Winfrey. He speaks to audiences all around the world about human happiness and works to raise well-being within private companies, universities, public agencies, and community organizations. We cover a lot of ground. He is a fascinating character with a lot of fascinating frameworks and practices that he implements in his own life and certainly those that he's studied for his class and for many other projects. You can find him on Instagram at Arthur C. Brooks, on Twitter at Arthur Brooks. And without further ado, please enjoy my very thought-provoking and actionable, highly tactical conversation with Arthur C. Brooks. Arthur, so nice to have you here. Thanks for joining. Thank you, Sam. It's great to be with you. I've been looking forward to this. Me too. I feel like we've been looking forward to meeting and we've been warming up for this for a long time. We have so many friends in common. We have a lot of friends in common. I have read your prior work from Strength to Strength, excellent book recommended to me by Peter Atia. People may know him as Dr. Peter Atia, good friend. Proud Texan, also now.

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Where all the cool kids live.
For all the Texans.
Where all the cool kids are.
And I have more questions than we will have time,
but I'm hoping to really explore broadly.
And I wanted to start with something
that I thought would peak the interest
of many people listening.
And that is the reverse bucket list.
Is this something you still do?
And what does it entail?
The reverse bucket list is something I do.
Oh boy, do I ever do it.
And it took me too long to figure this one out.
When I was 50, I'm 59 years old.
When I was 50, I found my bucket list from when I was 40.
And I was a classic thing.
And on my birthday, I would make a list of my desires,
and I would imagine myself, visualize myself,
consuming or experiencing these things.
And it would fire me up and make me,
well, kind of feel like a loser, quite frankly.
Because it was lowering my sense of satisfaction,
I subsequently found out.
And I looked at that list from when I was 40.
And I checked everything off that list,
and I was less happy.
Oh no.
At 50, then I was a 40.
And so I thought, I'm a social scientist.
So I thought to myself, obviously I'm doing something wrong.
What am I doing wrong?
And basically, this is the problem.
This is a neurophysiological problem.
And a psychological problem all rolled into one handy package.
I was making the mistake of thinking
that my satisfaction would come by having more.
And the truth of the matter is that lasting
and stable satisfaction, which doesn't wear off
in like a minute, comes when you understand
that your satisfaction is your *haves* divided by your *wants*.
Haves divided by *wants*.

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That's the model.

So, you know, it's like, I'll slow down because I know people watching you and like, I'm gonna write that down.

Haves divided by wants.

You can increase your satisfaction temporarily and inefficiently by having more, or permanently and securely by wanting less.

I thought to myself, hmm, so what does that mean?

And the answer to that, what does that mean?

Is I need a reverse bucket list.

Not that I'm not gonna get nice things in my life, but I'm gonna be consciously detached from them by going through the exercise of writing them down and crossing them out.

So on my birthday now, my 59th birthday a couple of months ago,

I wrote down all my ridiculous ambitions and desires of money or whatever, power, ambition, admiration, all these things that I want from other people that we all want because we're human and Mother Nature wires us to accumulate the rewards that'll help us survive and pass on our genes.

I got it.

I know how evolutionary psychology works.

And I know that these things are going to occur to me as natural goals.

But I do not wanna be owned by them.

I wanna manage them.

I don't want them to be like phantasms in my limbic system managing me.

I wanna move the experience of these ambitions to my prefrontal cortex, which is my executive manager, the bumper of tissue right behind my forehead.

And the way that you do that is by looking at each one of these ambitions and saying, maybe I get it and maybe I don't.

But I'm gonna cross it out as an attachment.

And I'm telling you, Tim, I'm free.

And so you find that to work.

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It does not because you don't care about it,
but because you're not attached to it in the same way.
You've made the decision to have it not be a rootless desire,
a ghost in your head.

You've made it into something that you will consciously
manage by literally experiencing that ambition
in a different part of your brain.

So you go through this exercise,
so you write down whatever it is,
receive such and such an honor,
sell so many copies of book X, whatever these are.

All the stuff that guys like you and me do.

Right.

You have 37 inch arms and in your case, possibly,
you're incredibly fit.

I'm not hitting on you.

I'm just saying, I aspire to-

You're a beautiful man, too, Tim.

Well, we go to the same stylist for our haircuts,
but I would say we will maybe get to like self-care
and physical practice later.

You go through this exercise, you write those things down,
you cross them out in a sort of idol worship,
sleight of hand move.

Right.

Then following that, I'm curious when there is,
if there is the spark of this desire,
whatever it might be,
do you have self-talk or something that acts as an interrupt?

I keep the list.

You keep the list.

I keep the list and I go back and I look at the list,
just like I would look at my bucket list later,
every six months, every year, every 10 years,
whatever happened to be,

I go back and look at my reverse bucket list
and say, am I living up to this?

Am I truly conscious?

Am I living up to not being attached?

Am I practicing the detachment
that I committed myself to?

And the truth is usually, yeah, kinda.

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I mean, the phantasm will be back.
It will be flying around in your head again.
But you brought it to your prefrontal cortex for a reason
and your prefrontal cortex is an adult
and will govern the children.
But sometimes you have to remind yourself,
remember, look, I mean, you're an adult here
and you look back on it and you say,
and it's funny.
Actually, it's pretty amusing when you look at it
and you say, oh, I can't believe that thing
is bugging me again.
But you're not governed by it in the same way.
You know what I actually put on my list?
I was reading just for clarity,
so it's okay to have the goal
and to have it as a target and plan for it.
Let's say selling X number of copies,
but not to have that hungry ghost attachment to it.
It's nothing more than an intention.
Intention is fine, but attachment is bad.
And this is what the Dalai Lama talks about too.
He talks about intention without attachment.
There's a word in sailing, the rum line.
In Spanish rumbo, which is a lot more common
in normal everyday speech.
And what it means is it's the intention of your voyage.
You have to have that,
even though you know you're not gonna be true to it.
Because if you don't know,
you're just gonna be going in circles.
You'll just be like, I don't know,
I've been out to sea for a long time.
Who knows where I am?
It'll be like one of your vacations.
It's like, I don't know where I am.
I'm just like doing nothing, man.
And it can be therapeutically important,
but it's actually not the way that you get
from Europe to the Americas.
You need a rum line.
You need a location and your endpoint on the GPS.

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But if you're super attached to it,
then you're gonna freak out when something throws you off.
And furthermore, you're not gonna recognize the fact
that it is the voyage itself that is the adventure of life,
not actually reaching the particular destination,
whether it's the original one
or one that turns out to be better or worse
or wherever you wind up.
And that's the way you gotta live your life.
So it's intention without attachment.
Now, there's another thing that I was thinking about
this year because Tick-Not Han died.
The great Vietnamese Buddhist monk.
And I wrote his obituary in the Washington Post, actually.
It was a really interesting experience
because I talked about all what he's taught, all of us.
Tick-Not Han said, and I always had an impact on me,
but I reflected on it upon his death,
that one of the greatest attachments
that people have in modern life
is to their views and opinions.
That's a real attachment.
It can be as dangerous as your attachment to money or power.
Why?
Because people treat their opinions
as if they were gold, their jewels,
and get between me and my political opinions.
Man, I'll cancel you.
I'll get you fired.
I'll denounce you on social media.
Who knows?
Maybe I'll be violent.
I mean, life is crazy these days.
And so I looked at it and I thought,
am I weighed down by attachment to my views,
to my political views?
So I wrote down five of my strongest political views
and I crossed them out.
This was after writing the obituary.
Yeah, it was on my reverse bucket list when I turned 59.
And I said, look, it's not that I don't have these views.
I just don't have the attachment to these views.

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Look, man, I need more friends.
And strong political opinions is not gonna get me there.
It's not gonna get me there.
Love is gonna get me there.
Tolerance is gonna get me there.
A sense of curiosity about other people
is gonna get me there.
And strong political opinions
is gonna put me in the wrong direction.
So, man, dead.
The attachment, dead.
So maybe this is a little too granular, but I'm curious.
Thich Nhat Hanh, this is a legendary figure.
I would be very intimidated by the task
of writing an obituary for such a person.
I've read numbers of his books,
been very influenced by his thinking.
How do you go about deciding
what goes into an obituary for someone like that?
Or for anyone, for that matter,
but in this particular case.
The Germans talk about doing something called a festrift.
It's a word that means kind of this encomium.
It's a celebration of the work of somebody.
And which I will start when you do one of these things.
Typical sort of European intellectual deal
is you look at the things that they said and did
that had the most impact.
And it was most meaningful to them in the same way.
Now, I didn't know Thich Nhat Hanh.
I've worked very closely with the Dalai Lama
in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition,
but the Theravada Buddhist tradition
I've never penetrated personally.
And so I didn't know Thich Nhat Hanh.
But I do know the things that he said and taught
that really changed the way that Westerners think.
And so that's what I wanted to talk about.
Not what did he do that changed Theravada Buddhism?
I'm not a Theravada Buddhist.
I'm not equipped to write that.
But I can talk about the way he changed me as a Catholic.

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I can talk about how he changed me as a public policy person. Because I was reading Thich Nhat Hanh when I was running a think tank in Washington, DC, how he influenced me as a happiness professor at Harvard. That's the stuff that I really wanted to focus on. That was the idea of attachment and detachment. That was the idea of the illusion of individuality. I mean, these are concepts that people didn't think about. He also was really behind the whole mindfulness revolution in the West. He starts off the miracle of mindfulness, that famous book, Big Best Seller, with this simple description of washing the dishes. And he says, when you're washing the dishes, you should be thinking about washing the dishes. Because if you don't think about washing the dishes, you're not really there washing the dishes, are you? And he persuades you with this kind of hypnotic prose to remember that if you don't think about washing the dishes, but you're thinking about doing something at work tomorrow, or you're thinking about something that happened yesterday, that you're living in the future of the past and you've missed your life. Or if you're thinking about eating the juicy peach, which is a story, may not have been in that book that I remember him telling, but it was paired with the washing of the dishes. He said, if you're thinking about the peach while you're washing the dishes, when you're eating the peach, you'll probably be thinking of something else as well. And then what you're doing is you're, while you're doing this, you're planning for a future existence that's better than now and when you reach it, it will be a phantasm as well. It will be nothing more than a mythical past while you're thinking about a new future that doesn't quite exist and you've missed your whole life. How did he change you or influence you as a Catholic? And the Dalai Lama too, by the way. I mean, a lot of Buddhist thinking has been incredibly helpful to me

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to understand exactly what I'm trying to do as a person when I'm centering myself in prayer. So for example, Catholics, traditional Catholics, they generally pray what's called the rosary. And the rosary is a set of beads that you pray repetitive prayers. It's about a thousand year old Catholic meditation. I do it every day. And I noticed that I was having a hard time focusing. I was having a hard time understanding what I was trying to do for myself for this offering. I didn't know how to make it fruitful in its way. I didn't know exactly what the point was. And studying the work of Thich Nhat Hanh and also studying that Dalai Lama's monastery in Dharamsala, India, sitting in meditation and studying meditation techniques with the Tibetan Buddhist monks, I actually learned what I was supposed to be doing as a Catholic praying my rosary. How I actually could center my prayer and make it deeply worshipful in a meaningful way. And perhaps God wanted me to learn that from my Buddhist sisters and brothers. This is gonna be adjacent to this conversation, this topic. But I'm curious, do you believe that, and we can always cut this, but I'm very curious, do you believe that direct transmission in some of these lines, which is very important in certain schools of, we could call it mindfulness, but that that is a real phenomenon or at least I suppose it's undeniably important in the tradition, but the idea that's sitting with someone in meditation with them there are teachings that are sort of directly transmitted. What is your thought on that if you have any thoughts? I don't know the answer to that. I do know that you can deeply be in communion with somebody really intimately. And my wife, Esther and I, we actually, we teach young couples that are engaged about, she teaches the theological part,

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I teach the social science because I'm just a total wonk.
And what we do tell them is that according to the best science and our experience and common sense, that one of the most intimate things that you can do with your partner or spouse is pray together.

It's super intimate.

I know couples that have been married for 25 years that will have sex together, but won't pray together because it's too embarrassing to pray together because praying together is just too intimate.

They don't know how to do it.

It's embarrassing to them.

Imagine, you'll get naked in front of somebody else, but you won't pray in front of them and that's because it's such a deeply intimate thing.

Okay, so when you cross the boundary of the greatest intimacy with another person, there's gonna be some transmission.

The idea of direct transmission rings true to me because of the nature and intensity of the intimacy that comes from that experience.

We're gonna take a hard left for a second and we're gonna come back to a through line which I am tracking because it's just what is top of mind for me.

And then we're gonna come back to possible mystical slash semi-mystical experiences in Mexico.

So I'm giving you an idea of-

All right, I can't wait.

I get to go to Mexico

if you're gonna have mystical experiences.

The imitation is now formal.

But first, for those who are not watching this video,

I mean, you are an incredibly physically fit and I know that you have some very deliberate, consistent practices including weight training and so on.

Blood occlusion training, are you still using cuffs?

I do, yeah, and I recommend it for anybody over 40.

Could you explain what this is and why you recommend it?

So occlusion training, what it effectively does is it, it's not a tourniquet but what it is,

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it's a band around your arms and or legs
so that when you're lifting,
you actually will get a much greater as,
in the vernacular, the burn from resistance training
with lower weight.

Now the reason I recommend this very strongly
is because the research suggests that it's very good
for both strength and hypertrophy at lower weight levels
so it saves your joints but gives you results
and that's what you need to do when you're over 40.

Save the joints.

Yeah, and I really strongly encourage people
to check this out, I've done some of it.

And to say that it increases the burn
or the pump is certainly true.

You gotta love pain.

Yeah, I would say exactly, I would say start conservative
because you might feel weak dialing back the weights
but just wait, just give it a bit.

It really does and you then,

but then you learn to love the pain.

And you can travel with, there are cuffs you can travel with.

I have them, I carry them with me all the time,

I'm on the road 48 weeks a year.

Is there a particular type that you use?

I don't actually remember the brand
but they're actually, they use Velcro
and they're about two inches thick
so it's too thick and I actually can't get
the kind of occlusion that I really want.

So experiment with what works with the size and shape
of your biceps and triceps

and then learn how to use them and then make them tighter
and then get in touch with the pain.

And they're easy to travel with.

Do your homework and start conservative.

Kelly Starrad, a very famous performance coach and PTU's
a friend has been on the show many times,
introduced me to that.

It's amazing.

And he had a very similar argument,
which is effectively, he doesn't say this,

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but I would say like you are kind of as old as your joints and connective tissue feel. I mean, there's certainly a cognitive component and this is a really elegant way to sort of preserve or build muscle mass without. I learned this from my friend Sal DiStefano who started Mind Pump with his partners and. Mind Pump, what is that? Mind Pump, it's a fitness and culture podcast and he's been listening to it for years and years and he taught me how to do it. He actually gives me training tips and good ideas and now it's great. It's been very helpful. And by the way, you know, when I was a younger man, you know, when I was in my 30s, I figured like what's my goal with fitness? And the answer is to still be lifting when I'm 80. Why? Because we know all the health benefits from it, but the truth is that physical fitness for me is a way to manage my negative affect. It's actually a happiness technique for me. It doesn't make me happier. It makes me less unhappy. That's what physical fitness will do. It will buy you less unhappiness. And so I manage my negative affect that way. And I know when I'm 80, I'm gonna need to manage my negative affect so I don't wanna hurt myself. So I would go to the gym when I was 35 or 40 years old and I would, I would go to these iron gyms wherever I was traveling. And I would find the oldest dude, the old guy who's still lifting heavy things. And I would go up to him and say, can I ask you advice? And they always wanna give you advice. You know, the 76 year old guy who's, he's like, don't bench press. It restricts your range of movement

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and that's gonna hurt.
You're gonna get impingement injuries along the way.
So that's why as you get older,
you should actually press with dumbbells
and then do higher rep to get volume,
do higher reps with lower weight, et cetera.
And just the sensible stuff,
but it's actually been incredibly helpful
for me to not get hurt and stay in the gym.
Yeah, a hundred percent.
All right, so naturally.
From the sublime to the ridiculous.
Well, maybe ridiculous, maybe not.
Not for me, it's not.
That's for sure.
Yeah, could you please describe your experience?
I think it was as a teenager.
Was it as a teenager?
In Mexico.
Well, yeah.
It was not out in the woods
with a shame in an ayahuasca.
When I was 15, I was on a band trip.
I used to be a musician and I started as a kid.
I was a real serious musician
and I wound up being a professional musician
from when I was 19 until I was 31.
Was it French horn?
Yeah, I was a French horn player,
a classical French horn player all the way through my 20s.
I didn't go to college until I was 30,
but it was my gap decade.
And when I was.
I need one of this.
Yeah.
And when I was 15 years old,
I was on this trip with a group
not a professional.
It was like an amateur concert band,
but doing a tour through Mexico.
And we were doing a lot of tourism.
And one of the tourist activities

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was to go to the Shrine of Guadalupe in Mexico City.
Now this is a famous place for Catholics
because it's one of the great pilgrimage sites of the world.
In Catholic teaching,
this is where when the Spanish explorers came to Mexico
and having a horrible time
because their marketing was all goofed up
for the Catholic church.
I mean, convert or die is not a very compelling pitch.
It turns out, you know, and racist
and everything that you possibly could want.
What happens then is this weirdly miraculous thing
for Catholics and fellow travelers.
I mean, just it was a mystical experience.
So there was a peasant man by the name of Juan Diego
who's out on a hill outside of Mexico City
and sees an apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
So he on his poncho is imprinted
the Blessed Virgin Mary's image on his tilma.
He takes it back.
Tilma is a textile.
It's sort of a poncho.
It's the tilma is what they would wear.
And it was based on a fabric made out of cactus.
It's beautiful imprint in color.
We've all seen the picture of the,
almost everybody has seen
the Blessed Virgin Mary of Guadalupe on this.
And if you Google it, the version of Guadalupe,
and you say, oh, I've seen that a million times
because it's in every Latino church.
For the Catholic church,
she's the patroness of all the Americas,
including the United States.
I mean, this is a big deal for the church.
So the bishop sees it, they take the tilma,
they display the tilma in public.
And for the first time, they start getting converts.
In the next nine years,
seven million people convert to the Catholic church.
Now, why?
There's worldly explanation

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and there's divine explanations for it.
Here's a worldly explanation that's pretty compelling.
Our Lady of Guadalupe is not white.
She's not Spanish.
She's a mestiza.
She's a woman of mixed race.
Now, we don't realize today
how incredibly subversive that is,
how unbelievably culturally transgressive
that would have been.
The Blessed Virgin Mary is not white.
What are you talking about?
No, no, no, no.
She's us.
She's us.
She's every person in the world.
She loves you, she loves me,
and she's one of us because she's in all of us.
And that was this weird message
that nobody really would have thought of at the time,
or so Laura goes.
And that's why people started saying,
ah, oh, this actually is for me
because she actually looks like me.
Crazy.
So I'm in this church in Mexico City,
the Shrine of Guadalupe,
and I'm looking at the tilma.
I was just sitting up there,
and I'm thinking, this is boring.
But then I noticed she was looking at me.
Now, to be sure,
I didn't realize that you can look at Elvis on velvet
and the eyes will follow you, right?
Okay, fair is fair.
But I couldn't get it out of my head.
I couldn't get it out of my head.
So, worldly or divine or mystical or not,
reasonable people can disagree.
But I couldn't get the image out of my head.
I couldn't.
And I realized I needed more in my life.

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I needed a deeper sense of the metaphysical in my life.
I needed the transcendent in my life.
And every time I thought of it, I thought of that image.
And so, I became a Catholic at 16 years old,
and I've been a Catholic man ever since.
And did you have a family history of Catholicism?
Zero. Zero.
No, I grew up in a Christian family.
So I had a little bit of wiring,
but I literally knew no Catholics.
There's just this thing, okay.
And you know, my parents are like,
ah, adolescent rebellion,
I guess it's better than drugs.
I mean, it is better than heroin.
But, and the point is,
a lot of people watching a some are traditionally religious
and some are spiritual and some are not.
But the whole point is,
we have a sense that there's something else.
We have a sense that there's something deeper.
Let something in your life take you to the deeper place.
Something needs to take you by the hand to the deeper place.
There's a lot of research that suggests this is the case.
Don't try to go to the deeper place
to find it randomly on your own.
Let someone take you.
Now, that insight is ambiguous.
But once people start to say,
I'm ready to be taken to a deeper place,
a more transcendent state,
that person, that entity will appear.
We may come back to that.
Thank you.
And I do think that many different paths
touch corners of the same thing is my impression,
which we may not have time for in this conversation,
but to be continued.
And the reason I'm asking about this experience
for those people who are wondering how this ties into
maybe the headline of the podcast
is because I want to better understand

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the influences and experiences that have shaped you
and your like perceptual apparatus and your thinking.
So another would be,
you've had multiple wake-up calls in your life.
And as you described,
you didn't exactly have the linear path to Harvard prof
that people might have envisioned, right?
Yeah, I got rejected from Harvard.
Oh, Exeter, Harvard, McKinsey.
No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no.
I actually applied to Harvard for graduate school
and they're like, no, it took two weeks for them to reject.
Part of it is at the time I was 31,
I was a college dropout.
I had a degree from a correspondent school.
I was a French horn player.
These are not the core demographics
of your typical Harvard graduate student.
And so, yeah, I got rejected,
which suggests, by the way, Tim,
that our standards for faculty today
are lower than our 10 core students.
But be that as it may, maybe, maybe.
I'm skeptical in your case.
I'd like to talk about your dad.
Yeah.
So who was your father?
What was he like and how did his life end?
My dad was a mathematician.
He had a PhD in biostatistics.
He was a lifelong college professor,
most of it at a small Christian college in Seattle
called Seattle Pacific University.
He was born to missionary parents,
evangelical missionary parents.
He was born in the Navajo Nation in New Mexico,
where my grandfather ran a mission school, actually.
And then my grandfather went on to become the dean
of a very famous college outside Chicago
called Wheaton College,
where all of our family members had gone.
My aunt went there in the 40s

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and dated Billy Graham in college as it turns out.
Yeah, yeah.
And then my dad went on to another Christian college
to the college where he ultimately taught.
And he was just absolutely in love
with the beauty of mathematics.
As kids, my mother was an artist.
My mother was a painter.
My dad was a mathematician.
And around the dinner table,
we would talk about art and we would talk about math.
Those are the things my father would pose math problems to us.
He would say, okay, okay, boys, me and my brother.
Imagine all of the integers between one and 100.
One, two, three, four, okay.
Add them all together, what's the result?
And we'd be like, I don't know.
I need a piece of paper.
He'd say, no, you don't.
Think in another way.
Think of another way.
The solution, by the way,
is one plus 100 equals 101
and two plus 99 equals 101
and three plus 98 equals 101.
And there are 51 of those
which makes 51 combinations of 101, 5,050.
That's what we would do.
That's what my father would do.
You're like, dad, I'm just trying to eat my macaroni and cheese.
I know, so I eat my macaroni and cheese.
And they always say something like,
see, isn't that beautiful?
Isn't that beautiful?
Isn't that evidence of God?
That's what he or your mom would say.
That's what he would say.
My dad would say.
The elegance of that.
My dad believed not that what we know
is what we should pay attention to
but to marvel at what we can do

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and still not know anything.
So my father would explain,
this has had a big impact on me,
that there's two kinds of problems in life.
There's complicated problems
and there's complex problems.
It's a mathematical difference,
but the technique doesn't matter.
Complicated problems are all the things
that you can solve with computational horsepower and tech.
Complex problems are super easy to understand
but you can never solve them.
Like, who's gonna win between the Patriots and the Dolphins?
I know what winning looks like.
It's more points on the scoreboard, but I have no idea
and that's why it's beautiful to watch the game
and you don't wanna simulate it on the computer
because it'll be inaccurate.
Love is complex.
A jet engine is complicated.
A cat is complex.
A toaster is complicated.
And he said, two kinds of problems.
And he said, as a basic math problem,
the reason that we're always unsatisfied in life
is because we have complex problems.
We want love.
And all we have is complicated solutions
that the world is offering us,
like computers and the internet and social media
and blah, blah, blah, blah,
and you'll never be satisfied
because it's the wrong kind of solution
for the wrong kind of problem.
So that seems like a tremendously valuable insight.
Would you describe your father as a happy man?
No, my father was a gloomy man.
And no doubt that had a lot to do with genetics
because 50% of our emotional baseline is genetic.
We know this from identical twin studies
where twins are born and separated
at birth into separate families.

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This is not an experiment that social scientists have done because that would be horribly unethical.

But three identical strangers shows how that turns out.

Yeah, well, yeah.

Do you want to watch a brutal doc?

Uh-huh, oh yeah.

That's a great documentary.

It is great.

But 50% of your baseline mood, your tendency toward abolience or gloominess is sitting in your DNA.

And this is the reason, Tim, that I came to the happiness field because I saw my grandfather who was a wonderful man and gloomy and my father who was brilliant and a lovely person and an excellent ethical, kind man who was gloomy.

And I said, no more, man.

I'm gonna live on the other 50%.

I am not going to be governed by that 50% that made my father an unhappy man.

And so he died young, 66, you know?

I mean, he had cancer and they gave him 10 or 15 years or more.

And he died in two.

And as a statistician, he explained it. He was a biostatistician by his graduate degree.

And I said, Ted, it's terrible luck.

And he said, look, there's gotta be people on that side of the curve too.

But he had a good sense of humor.

But the whole point was, he wasn't prepared to fight for life because he didn't have the hygiene for his own happiness.

And that example set me on the path to learn about this and to share these ideas.

And it has transformed my life.

I'm grateful to my father and I will be for the rest of my life for the example that he gave me and the lesson he taught me, even through his unhappiness.

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Hi everyone, Tim here, pardon the interruption.
Just a quick announcement,
the recording studio had a small glitch.
So the audio for the next two or so minutes is not perfect
but we correct it quickly.
Please bear with us.
Thank you for understanding
and now back to the conversation.
What were some decisions you made
or things you began doing
or stopped doing after your father's death?
I started exercising.
There is a little vanity to it but not that much.
The whole point of the matter is
this is one of the single best ways
to manage your negative affect
is to be in the gym for an hour a day.
Yeah, and it's a bit dated probably
but there's a book called Spark
which also goes into sort of a lot of like BDNF
and a lot of the circuitry and biochemical reasons
for exercise for this explicit purpose.
When I'm working with students,
I put them through a battery of tests
to look at whether the bigger challenge
in their life is happiness or unhappiness.
The world is really scarce
and the definitions that it gives us.
And there's a big mistake
that almost everybody makes about happiness
which is that a lot of mistakes.
Number one, that it's the absence of unhappiness.
Number two, that it's a feeling.
Both of those are wrong.
Number three is that we can get it.
So we can approach happiness
but we can't get there
because we actually need unhappiness
and unhappiness and happiness
are not opposites and can coexist.
So there's a lot to unpack.
So to begin with, happiness and unhappiness

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in terms of moods
are largely processed in different hemispheres of the brain.
A lot of neuroscientists believe
that unhappy cognitions and emotions
are largely dominated by activity
in the right side of the brain.
And the way that we know this,
there's a terrific neuroscientist
at the University of Wisconsin, Richard Davidson.
And he's done work that shows
that the left side of the musculature on your face
is more active when you're unhappy,
when you're experiencing negative emotions,
anger, fear, disgust, sadness.
And it's actually funny when my kids were little,
I would notice that when they fall down,
you get a moment where you don't know
what's gonna happen next.
Are they gonna laugh and keep playing
or are they gonna get the waterworks, right?
And the way they tell on that,
because it's usually five or six seconds
because the wiring in the brain
is actually not complete to work in progress.
So one of the tests that I administered to my students,
and I put in my new book as a matter of fact,
because it's so important for me
and for understanding ourselves,
that's called the Positive Affect,
Negative Affect Series, PANAS, P-A-N-A-S.
It's on my website and it's easy to find.
And I didn't create it.
It's been psychometrically validated
a bunch of times, a great test.
And what it does is it helps you figure out
if you're high positive, high negative,
or low positive, low negative,
and there's four combinations.
It's a two by two matrix.
You can be a high positive affect person
and a high negative affect person.
That's a high affect person.

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Who's got a lot of strong moods about everything.
That's the mad scientist.
That's the mad scientist profile.
That's me.
I'm at the 85th percentile and happy affect,
and I'm at the 85th percentile and negative affect.
So the highs are high and the lows are low.
So I don't have a happiness problem.
I have an unhappiness problem.
This is what I come to...
It's not a problem because unhappiness is really important.
You won't be happy if you get rid of your unhappiness
because you gotta be fully alive to get happier.
But you do need to manage yourself.
Some people are really high positive and really low negative.
Those are the cheerleaders.
Those people can't stay in the gym.
Why?
Because they don't feel better when they go to the gym
because their negative affect is already in the cellar.
The third is high negative and low positive.
That's the poet.
And nobody wants to be a poet,
but the truth is that the part of the rainfall,
the ventral water or prefrontal cortex
is highly active for people who are sad
and people who are creative.
That's the reason when I say poet,
you don't think about somebody who's skipping down the street.
Right?
You think of a creative person with a cigarette and a beret.
Exactly right.
You're in a French cafe thinking about,
thinking nihilistic thoughts and writing poetry.
So that's the poetic disposition.
And then the last is low, low.
So you could be perfectly happy or unhappy,
but you have low affect levels.
That's called the judge, the sober judge.
I wish it were otherwise,
but I would put high confidence
that I am right down the beret wearing way.

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How would you advise someone,
and I know this won't apply to everybody listening,
but just by way of a working example,
what does someone do with,
what are their options for how to act upon that?
Okay, so if you know that you're a poet,
this is an affect level.
It doesn't mean that you're cosmically happy or unhappy.
It just means that this is your natural disposition.
So this is important, right?
So it also means that you need to manage two levers.
You need to manage your happiness levels up,
and you need to manage your unhappiness levels,
not to zero.
There's nothing wrong with unhappiness.
You need to mute them.
You don't need to numb them.
You need to manage them.
And could you, and I may have already missed the plot,
but just define those two,
because I think a lot of people myself may be included
who think if you remove unhappiness by default,
since it's unhappiness, they seem to be antonym,
so you remove one, you have more of the other.
So how should we think about these two?
Yeah, yeah, that's a very good question.
And by the way, the answer is not obvious.
As a matter of fact,
psychologists until about 50 years ago
really believe that unhappiness was the absence of happiness.
But it's not true because we actually find
that the basic negative and positive emotions
are coming from different parts of the limbic system
and can coexist.
I see, so if you're thinking about it,
you can think about it then neuroanatomically
as opposed to semantically with the words.
Yeah, yeah.
Not to dumb it down too hard,
but it's like if your left hand performed X types of tasks
and your right hand performed Y type of tasks,
it's like, okay, you can sort of decide what ratio.

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Right.

And your negative emotions are much more intense than your positive emotions.

This has evolved to keep you alive.

Positive emotions are kind of nice to have.

Negative emotions are signals or alarms that something might kill you.

A sweet smile from somebody across the room

is very pleasant, but a frowning face

might be somebody who wants to murder you.

And so therefore we've evolved to pay attention.

This is called the negativity bias that we have.

We also have mixed states

that we go through all day long.

And so if you look, you ask people in surveys

what they're feeling at any given moment.

So you'll say, you know, in five minute increments,

what are you feeling positive or negative?

You'll find that about 90% of the time

people can tell you how they're feeling.

In 40% of the time for the average person,

it's really pure positive emotions at a low level.

It's your idol as most of the time is,

good life's okay.

It's kind of sunny today, whatever, whatever, all good.

About 16% of the time is pure negative emotion.

And that usually means something's happening

that you don't like.

Now 33% of the time, you've got both.

And usually the way that this looks in people's lives

is that you're in your positive idol,

but something's intruding.

So there's something bugging you

that you don't always remember.

You know, we go through life and on a certain day,

it's like, yeah, it's all good.

Oh yeah, that thing.

And then you go back to kind of going back

to your positive idol and oh yeah, that thing.

And so that's the mixed state.

Like Twitter.

Yeah, totally.

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And by the way, I mean, it's an unhappiness machine.

You mean X?

Yeah, sorry, exactly.

A big black X, I mean, it's like X.

It's so appropriate.

So this is important because we understand that these are separable phenomena.

We need both these emotions, but we need to be able to manage our emotions like pros.

And that's a lot of what I do.

Yeah, so what are some options?

So I go through the panace, end up poet.

There are these two levers.

What might be the process of thinking through how to pull these levers in different ways?

So happiness side is what I spend a lot more time on because it's just so interesting on how we can pull the happiness lever.

It starts by actually a good definition, which is not feelings.

Feelings are evidence of happiness.

And thank God happiness isn't a feeling.

Can you imagine going through life chasing a feeling?

That's awful.

If it feels good, do it.

Or if it feels bad, make it stop.

It's a terrible life strategy.

Happiness and its feelings are associated with three tangible phenomena in our lives that we can actually understand and manage.

Enjoyment, satisfaction, and meaning.

Those are the three things that we need in balance and abundance.

Think of these as the macronutrients of happiness, the protein, carbohydrates, and fat of happiness.

If you don't have protein and carbohydrates and fat in balance and abundance, all kinds of weird things are gonna happen to you and you're not gonna be as healthy as you should be and you won't feel good.

Same thing is true.

You need to enjoy your life.

You need to get satisfaction from your accomplishments

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and you need to have a deep sense of meaning.
And each one of these is a big challenge.
When I meet somebody through a series of structured questions, I can figure out if there's a problem along one of these macronutrient dimensions.
And it turns out that there's some very easy interventions that we can make across all three.
And I'll give you an example.
The first one is enjoyment.
I say, you enjoy your life.
They'll think about their little pleasures.
I say, that's not it.
Pleasure is not a secret of happiness.
Pleasure is the fast road to obsessive, compulsive activity and addiction.
Why?
Because all pleasure is, is a phenomenon from the limbic system of your brain saying, do more of that thing, because you're more likely to survive and pass on your genes.
If you get those calories, if you have that sex, whatever it happens to be.
The way that you can actually turn that into a source of happiness is by mixing into ingredients with your pleasure, people and memory.
Never do something that gives you pleasure alone.
That's the rule of thumb.
If you're doing it alone, it's a problem.
So Anheuser-Busch does a beer ad.
They never have in the beer ad.
A guy drinking in his closet.
Yeah, a guy pounding a 12 pack in a bar and alone.
You know, why?
Because that's pleasure and that actually leads to addiction is problematic.
They always have an ad of a guy cracking a beer with his buddies, people, and doing something he's gonna remember, memory.
That's the secret to it.
So I'll take a survey of people's habits.
Now, this is the reason that pornography is a big problem.
You're not consuming it in public

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with friends to make a memory for God's sake.
It's just some sort of weird.
That's a pretty weird thing to do, right?
I mean, it hits the dopamine lever.
I mean, they all are neurophysiologically similar phenomena.
They hit dopamine, dopamine, dopamine, dopamine over and over and over again, and they ruin your life because they become addictive.
They become monomaniacal and they're not the secret to happiness.
If you're at three o'clock in the morning in Vegas pulling the lever on the slot machine by yourself, that's not the secret of happiness to anybody I know.
And I've never heard somebody say, you know, you know what gives my life happiness? Methamphetamine, never been said, right?
And the reason for that is because these are drugs.
People say drugs of abuse.
No, no, no, it's your drugs of pleasure.
Let's not lie about it.
They give you pleasure and pleasure alone without memory is a problem.
This is a very practical example of how we can use this science and turn it into a set of guideposts for our life.
Just a quick thanks to one of our sponsors and we'll be right back to the show.
This episode is brought to you by Wealthfront.
There is a lot happening in the US and global economies right now.
A lot, that's an understatement.
Are we in a recession?
Is it a bear market?
What's gonna happen with inflation?
So many questions, so few answers.
I can't tell the future, nobody can, but I can tell you about a great place to earn more on your savings and that's Wealthfront.
Wealthfront is an app that helps you save and invest your money.
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That's the annual percentage yield with the Wealthfront cash account. That's more than 11 times more interest than if you left your money in a savings account at the average bank according to fdic.gov. So why wait? Earn 4.8% on your cash today. Plus it's up to \$5 million in FDIC insurance through partner banks. And when you open an account today, you'll get an extra \$50 bonus with a deposit of \$500 or more. There are already nearly half a million people using Wealthfront to save more, earn more, and build long-term wealth. So why wait? Visit [Wealthfront.com slash Tim](https://www.wealthfront.com) to get started. That's [Wealthfront.com slash Tim](https://www.wealthfront.com). This was a paid endorsement by Wealthfront. And so you have enjoyment, which you clarify. Satisfaction means we're next. How would you make satisfaction granular? Because I think about satisfaction. I'm like, hmm, I might conflate being satisfied with doing, say, a large project with some form of meaning. I can see how I might get my wires crossed. So how should we think about these two in your framework? Satisfaction is achieving something with struggle. It really is that project that you're talking about, which it will give you meaning as well. The project, per se, can actually cross the boundaries across the macronutrients. It's just like something that you eat has more than one macronutrient. But satisfaction, per se, is doing something that takes effort and expending the effort. So if my graduate students, they cheat to get an A and an exam in my class, they'll get the grade, but they won't get the satisfaction. The satisfaction comes from the pain. This is one of the paradoxes of life. You've got to suffer to get the satisfaction.

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You've got to defer the gratification.
When somebody's on the pleasure meal, by the way,
they also don't get satisfaction from anything
because they can't defer the gratification anymore.
These problems bleed into each other.
So one of the things that you find
is that people who are very accomplished,
the people you are good at satisfaction
because you can defer your gratification
and do long-term projects.
You're a satisfaction guy.
The problem for you and me,
and a lot of people are gonna watch your show
because they want to be better.
I mean, nobody's watching this show just for giggles.
They're watching this show because-
Not funny enough.
They're watching your show
because they want to be better in their lives.
And so they're gonna be good at deferring their gratification
and doing hard things.
Or at least aspire.
Totally.
I mean, it's like, I've read your books.
It's interestingly deceptive.
The four-hour fill-in-the-blank, the early books,
it makes it sound like it's a hack and it's easy.
No.
No, it's not.
The four hours is hard is the point.
Those four hours are gonna hurt.
Yeah, and there's a lot of front-loading.
There's also hard work without forethought and planning.
So there is built into any of those books
a strategic deferral.
Yeah, for sure.
So that's what brings satisfaction.
Here's the problem with satisfaction.
And this goes back to where we started the conversation.
Mick Jagger saying, I can't get no satisfaction.
That's wrong.
You can't keep no satisfaction.

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That's why you try and you try and you try.
And there's a reason for that.
Neuroscientists talk about homeostasis,
which is a phenomenon of always going back
physically and emotionally to your baseline.
And there's a reason for that
because you need to go back to the baseline in your life
so you can be ready to react
to the next set of circumstances.
If emotionally you were gonna be bummed out
for the rest of your life, you'd become immobilized.
And if you felt super happy when something good happened,
you wouldn't be in the hunt anymore.
Mother Nature wants you to think
that you're gonna feel this emotion
for the rest of your life
so that you will either avoid one thing
or pursue something,
but she wants to fool you and send you back
again and again and again.
Have you never figured out,
man, if I get that car, I'm gonna love it.
If I move to California,
I'm gonna enjoy the sunshine for the rest of my life.
Turns out you get six months, by the way,
of enjoying weather, but the taxes are forever.
And that experience of never learning
is called the hedonic treadmill
and it's unbelievably painful.
The way to solve that problem is halves divided by wants.
The way to get real satisfaction
is not having more but wanting less.
And that's the reverse bucket list, et cetera.
That's the set of habits
that helps you dominate that particular science
and short circuit the loop that you're on
because of Mother Nature's plans for you,
which are not really in your happiness interest.
She doesn't care if you're happy, by the way.
No.
Passing on, producing progeny is not dependent on.
Yeah, it's like good smiles.

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Big smiles.

DNA, man, it's all survival to pass on your genes.
And that's great for the propagation of the species.

It's not good for having the,
I don't know, for pursuing the divine path.

We are gonna come back to meeting.
Just take a sidebar on reducing wants for a second.
Sure.

And talk about exercises
that you've had your students do in your classes.

And I'm pulling this from memory
so I may not get the wording spot on,
but identifying their idols, am I?

Yeah.

Getting this right.

So if you could expand on what that looks like.

Yeah, we have a game.

We have a game show in my class at Harvard.

It's called What's My Idol?

Now, you can tell how old I am.

When I was a really little kid,
there was a game show on TV called What's My Line?

Yeah, sure.

Your viewers can Google it.

I'm sure there's some black and white,
grainy footage of it or something from,
you know, when I was in the 70s or back.

What's My Idol is actually based on the insight
of a medieval philosopher, St. Thomas Aquinas.

Theologian, but really a philosopher
in the Neoplatonic tradition.

Aquinas is responsible for introducing Aristotle
to the modern world.

Up until that point, nobody read Aristotle.

It was all Play-Doh, Aristotle's teacher.

St. Thomas Aquinas, he said, no, no, no, no, no, no.

Guys, read this one.

This is the one.

And he interpreted Aristotle for the modern world.

It was the same thing more or less
that Averroes was doing for the Muslim world
and that Maimonides was doing for the Jewish world

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because they were coexisting in Southern Spain
in this intellectual soup.
That's hard for us to understand today.
It was so deep what was going on.
So St. Thomas Aquinas was an unbelievably
adroit social scientist.
He was also, by the way,
a phenomenally impressive figure.
I mean, for people who aren't familiar,
just go read the Wikipedia entry and a few other things.
Yeah, yeah.
Below your mind.
And his magisterial work was the Summa Theologiae.
And the way that he does it, by the way,
is just it's a master class in the way
that we should be thinking about big topics today,
which is by saying, by starting the topic
with the best objection.
Here's the question.
Here's the supposition.
What's the best objection?
Here's why I meet that objection.
What's the second best objection?
Here's why I meet the object.
The whole book is written this way.
It's unbelievable.
And in the section on human happiness,
which he pulls from Aristotle,
who claims without any need for proof,
that this is what we all want,
whether we act that way or not,
that there's four things that we do
that distract us from happiness.
Now, his definition of happiness is seeking the divine.
You know, this is what we all want.
What do you want?
Do you know that?
Not necessarily.
Is it hard?
Yeah, and that's the reason we don't actually act
like we're pursuing the divine.
Because, you know, pursuing God or the divine

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or the metaphysical singularity
or exterior consciousness or what your thing is,
has a lot of one-sided conversations
and a lot of inconvenient morality attached to it.
So we take these divinity substitutes.
These are the idols.
Idols are biblically and in mythology.
What idols all have in common is that they're God-like,
but they're not God.
They're convenient substitutes for God.
That's all an idol is.
And St. Thomas Aquinas says there's four substitutes
for God, which we can think of as the four substitutes
for the real secret to happiness.
They are money, power, pleasure, and fame.
How little things change.
Ah.
And when he said fame, he actually said fame.
He said honor.
But that has a different connotation in English.
You know, I have a son who's a special forces in the military
and he serves with honor.
That's not what they mean.
Honor means to be honored.
It's fame.
It's reputation.
It's the admiration of other people.
Maybe it's Instagram followers or something ridiculous,
but it is something that we want in the opinion of other people.
And we thirst after it.
And he says everybody is motivated by one thing.
And even throwaway comments, like communities,
they coalesce around an idol is so true.
You know, we're recording this podcast in New York.
Money, baby.
You go to a party in New York and everyone's like,
how's your fund this year?
How are you doing this year?
And like, how much does this apartment cost?
How about money?
You go to LA, what's the idol?
I'm not going to even call it honor, fame.

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Fame, fame.

OK, OK, let's keep with the quiz.

DC, what's the idol?

Power.

Power, man, is how close are you to the president?

What senator do you know?

Right, Vegas?

Yeah, right.

I mean, communities will coalesce around this,
but each one of us has our idol too.

So here's the game.

You want to play?

Sure.

Let's play the game.

OK, so the truth is, none of us has all four.

None of us is so vice-ridden.

We don't have the energy or time to be serving all four
of these idols.

I mean, come on, life is short.

You underestimate me, sir.

But we all have one or two that really animate us,
and we don't always know it because we're not
paying attention to it.

Now, Aquinas's point and modern psychology
bears all this out that as a normal adult
with a complicated life, if you know your idol,
you will recognize the thing that always leads you
astray and leads you to do the things that you later regret
because you were following that idol.

So it's very important to figure out
which idol that is so that you can manage it.

Not that you'll make it go away because you're human,
but you can manage your idol.

OK, so I start by saying, what's not your idol?

Because of the four, there's something that you could ditch.

Yeah, power is not.

Yeah, power, immediate, I'll name one to start with.

That's why you're not a CEO.

I mean, you've got a company, but you're
not trying to run a corporation.

Yeah, there's a lot of things that are.

And I know a lot of people who are power focused, in a sense,

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in one form or another.

It just doesn't.

Do you dislike it?

Do you actively dislike power?

Like people having power over you

and you having power over others?

I don't dislike it necessarily.

I mean, I think that it's an inherent dynamic in particularly chimpanzee politics, but just in nature in general.

Speaking of which, let me react to this phrase.

Tim Ferriss for Congress.

No.

You got?

Absolutely not.

Your answer is correct.

You are not motivated by power.

It's the first one to get rid of.

OK, you got three left.

Money, pleasure, fame.

You got to kick one out.

You got to get rid of one.

What's the next one to go?

I can get rid of fame easily.

I think that there was a point in my life

where I sought a lot of social validation,

but having seen the flip side and the shadow elements of that, it holds.

Well, you got pretty famous young.

And so you saw the dark side of that,

which is what social scientists and even neuroscientists

will tell you with their research is that fame

is really the only of the idols

that you can ever be happy in spite of.

You know, when Lady Gaga tweeted, fame is prison

and everybody derided that, I'm thinking that's deeply adept.

That is a deeply clarifying comment.

And by the way, I mean, John Milton wrote that

in the 17th century that it is the idol

that we thirst after and sacrifice

the happiness of our days for that.

And you learn that by experience,

not because of disposition,

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because you did hunger after it and then experienced it and you realize that it's a very, very, very bitter fruit.

Yeah, there are a lot of footnotes and a lot of fine print in that Faustian bargain.

OK.

So I...

That 46-year-old Tim Ferriss, that's number two that goes out the door.

Don't care.

In fact, if I could put the toothpaste back in the toothpaste tube, in numerous ways I would do that.

Right.

OK, you've got two left and it's getting hot in here, right?

Right.

Money and pleasure, wealth and pleasure, which one do you know?

I would say money I can...

In the hierarchy I can get rid of.

The marginal utility of each additional dollars just makes no difference in the things that I care about. And in a middle-class life, wouldn't freak you out.

No, at this point...

I mean, I'm not talking about poverty.

I'm not talking about not getting three squares.

I'm talking about not having the money for the nice stuff that people think is really wonderful to have.

The houses, the boats, the cars.

Yeah, I don't really buy that stuff.

You don't care.

Yeah, I don't really care.

And I care less and less because also, the more financial success you have, the more time you spend with people who have even greater financial success and I've seen no indication.

In fact, might even be a contraindication that wealth produces the things I'm after.

And I think there are significant adverse side effects.

Well, there's a lot of research that shows that there is a way to buy happiness, but it's not by buying stuff.

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It's by buying experiences.
It's by buying time and by giving it away.
And you already figured that one out.
Yeah, so yeah, I mean, quick example of that for me.
In the last handful of years,
I owe Tim Urban a huge thank you
for his article, The Tail End.
I ended up booking most years
depending on my family's health and so on.
A family trip once a year that we can look forward to
for like six months and have group chats about and so on.
And then even today was discussing a boy's trip
with some of my closest friends,
probably like six months from now.
And the ROI on those is huge,
but I would say money, I can get rid of money.
So we found your idol.
Yeah, pleasure.
Tim Ferriss likes to feel good.
I do, yeah.
Yeah, and again, there's nothing wrong with feeling good.
But for you, we need to watch to make sure
that you're getting enjoyment and not pleasure.
Yeah.
And we need to be very disciplined
about enjoyment, not pleasure.
And I would also add to this
that I do think I'm pleasure junkie for certain things.
Sure.
The sensual, the sexual being very high on the list.
There's also, I think, a wrinkle to this,
like the sort of Mara sitting on my shoulder
if anybody gets the reference,
would be given a history of depression,
I fear it's opposite.
So I chase pleasure as hopefully some inoculation
against darkness.
So there are many things contributing to that.
Yeah, well, pleasure tends to be numbing.
It does tend to be numbing of negative emotion.
So people will pursue pleasure
because they're actually trying to, it's fentanyl.

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There's a reason that fentanyl,
there's nobody who enjoys fentanyl
because it's not something you,
like I wanna go hang out with my buddies
and take fentanyl and make a memory on the country.
You're trying to eviscerate memory.
You're trying to get rid of memory
with these types of things.
And so numbing things tend to work that way.
And I understand, I mean, you've actually had,
you have a history of mood disorders in your life
and you don't want them.
You don't want them back.
You don't wanna invite them back.
And so you do something that feels like an inoculation
from those depths.
The key thing is that the real insurance policy
is enjoyment, satisfaction, and purpose.
That's the real insurance policy.
Okay.
And again, because it doesn't eradicate
the unhappiness, the darkness,
but it puts it into context
such that it's part of the quilt of your life.
And so it's just one square in the quilt of your life
and not the whole blanket.
Yeah.
So I wanna expand on this.
This is thread selfishly that I'd like to pull on.
No, you got it.
And I will add maybe just one thought,
which is much of the pleasure that I pursue
is not numbing.
It's actually a volume competition
in the sense that if I start to feel like there are whispers
of the potential of an onset of a depressive episode
or maybe it's the ruminative thoughts and anxiety
that comes with that.
But let's just say those are at a two out of 10 volume.
There's fear because I worry that that is going to spiral.
And so I seek out something on the positive side
of the ledger or let me just say the pleasure side

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of the ledger that is higher volume.

Yeah.

You're trying to knock yourself out of a groove.

It's going to come to an end, right?

It's like overcoming a dread of deadness with greater aliveness.

What's one possible strategy?

It could be a substitute strategy for that.

That's why I'm here, doctor.

Yeah, so, and there are, right?

There are meditation and prayer.

A seeking for the divine, a serious spiritual practice.

These are the things that will actually do much the same things, but without the numbing and without the danger.

Because it's tricky, right?

I mean, hitting the dopamine lever has consequences.

Sure.

Hitting it hard and often has desperate consequences for it.

And we know, none of us needs problems in our lives.

We have plenty of those already.

Yeah, totally.

So yes, and let's just say spare, meditate, prayer.

Spare.

Spare prayer.

Name of my forthcoming book.

I like your prayer and meditation.

Meditation, I can see the difference.

It's easy for, say, a secular listener to consider.

What would you say to people who are perhaps secular, not necessarily militant atheists, who I think recognizes I do.

In some ways, I am deeply, just to layer on my sins here, envious of people who have strong religious conviction.

I recognize the value.

And from a, at least in the sort of monotheistic, Judeo-Christian traditions,

I don't think I'm likely to join one of the bands.

I'll work on you.

Yeah.

So I recognize we can go do some blood occlusion training

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and you can just,
and then we'll say I'm rosary together, man.
In between, in between, right, in between reps.
Lay the prayer on thick.
So what would you suggest to me
or someone who recognized the value?
I don't, I do not have a counter argument,
but I'm not sure how to embrace that.
So there are alternatives.
So I can tell you as a Catholic that that's my thing,
but I can tell you as a social scientist
that it's not the only thing
that will actually bring the same neurophysiological
and psychological benefits.
What we need is a sense of the transcendent
that makes us small.
That's what we need.
Why?
Because we need perspective and peace.
I mean, Tim, you're gonna go through all day.
It's like my podcast and you know, it's my commute.
Me, me, my lunch.
My money and my friends and my mom and my me, me.
Man, it's just so,
it's like watching the same episode every single night
of Better Call Saul for the rest of your life.
That's like having the seagulls from Finding Nemo
in your head.
Yeah.
Mine, mine, mine, mine, mine.
I mean, it's just, it's the worst.
And so you have to find a way to get peace.
But what we really need is to put ourselves in perspective.
Now most people are afraid to be little,
are really afraid to be insignificant.
Perspective requires that we see reality
and we get smaller and we stand in awe
of the universe and what it can bring.
There's lots of ways to do that.
Meditation practices are very good for that.
Prayer is very good for that.
Religion and most traditional circumstances

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is very good for that.

But walking in nature without devices before dawn for an hour is incredibly good for that for all sorts of reasons.

And this is extremely well-validated in the social science literature.

How important is the timing on that?

Well, it's good because you start the day that way and there's the programming of it.

And by the way, the experience of seeing the sunrise is incredibly awe-inspiring.

Plus, it's quiet and cool.

Yeah, all pluses.

Quiet and cool, for sure.

And therefore you get just a bigger bolus of the benefits that you actually get from being in contact with the earth and being in contact with nature, et cetera.

Another way to do this is to stand in awe of human genius that's way outside the realm of your experience.

So learn about the fugues of Johann Sebastian Bach.

Read about his life.

Your favorite.

Oh yeah.

And listen to a hundred of his cantatas and learn how to analyze them.

I mean, your life will never be the same.

Or your neighbor and our mutual friend, Ryan Holliday, read the Stoics.

Read the Stoics.

I mean, it's a quasi-religious experience.

You will feel a deep satisfaction at your littleness.

Probably for the first time in years, as a matter of fact.

There are many ways to get this, but you need to get small in front of Bach, in front of Epictetus, in front of God.

You need to get small is the whole point.

I love that.

It's easy to remember.

They're just to underscore that for myself.

I mean, a few things that have been helpful.

Nature, yes.

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For sure.

Studying or could take the form of listening
to say hardcore history and listening to kings of kings,
the Assyrians and really widening the aperture
of your historic lens,
just to put the problems of this week in perspective.

And also the impermanence of empires,
like maybe relevant these days.

This is a moment in time.

Yeah.

So going back and realizing some of the most powerful figures
in the history of humankind, you will not recognize.

Which also, I think, for me has been very relieving
and also has taken a lot of the earlier fixation
on money away because I realize it's just ashes to ashes,
dust to dust.

To quote the Ecclesiastics.

That's right.

Give me the full name of Alexander the Great.

Most people can't.

So rather than get fixed on some vague notion of legacy,
like let's actually focus on other things.

The getting small, looking at the stars.

Honestly, I did so much as a kid and I lost it
and have sort of reclaimed as this thing
that can be used as such a tool for zooming out.

And I have two friends, Ed Cook is one notable example
who when he thinks of his problems,
and I'm gonna paraphrase this,
but he will look at the stars and sort of zoom out
from his neighborhood himself to the planet
to the solar system.

And when he then returns back to laying on the ground,
looking at the stars, like the problems
that we're plaguing you just do not seem.

That's the point.

So significant.

That's really the point.

It's not just a question of minimizing your problems.

It's also minimizing the scale of your hopes and dreams
and opportunities and recognizing that what really matters,
you're in that to be sure, but you're one part of that.

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It's okay.

It's all okay.

The grade is just okay and the bad is okay too.

And that's so deeply comforting

and it leads to so many improvements in mental health.

I just don't know how you can put one foot
in front of the other without doing something
like this every day.

Now, people often ask, okay, how do I get started?

How do I get started?

Read 15 minutes a day.

Pick up the Brothers K.

Brothers Karamazov?

Yeah.

Am I saying that?

Probably not.

Yeah, you are.

Brothers Karamazov by Fyodor Dostoevsky.

If you like fiction, stop wasting your time on trivialities.

Go get the Brothers K.

Why?

Because it's a deeply awe-inspiring experience
about the human condition and the absurdity of it.

It's beautiful.

Get the meditations of Marcus Aurelius.

Who, by the way, a world historical figure

because he was a Roman emperor

and nobody remembers that practically a single thing
that happened as Roman emperor,

we remember what was written in his private diary.

It's wild.

It's crazy.

Last of the great emperors.

Mostly because he was dumb enough
to leave his son in charge.

Oops.

His waste roll.

That's like the story of humankind also.

Speaking with, I think I want to leave my business
to my kids.

What do you think, Tom?

You know, there's a long conversation.

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My kids are awesome.

I wonder if I can get them into the happiness business.

Dad, I know you're always beating us over the head on this happiness business.

It's not my path.

It's your path.

I roll.

So I'm curious, for you personally, having thought about this deeply, having tracked a lot of things also, what are some of the best uses of money that you have found personally?

What types of things?

Are there any concrete examples that you can give?

We rolled through that fast just a second ago, but it turns out there's a ton of research on this.

My colleague, Mike Norton, and my colleagues, Mike Norton and Ashley Willins at the Harvard Business School, they've done this exhaustive research on how to buy happiness.

How to buy happiness, right?

Okay.

Mother nature says, get more stuff.

Why?

Because satisfaction comes from having more.

What's the strategy for life?

More.

Mother nature tells you that she lies.

Lies and lies and laughs at you.

That's not the strategy.

You need to buy enough, but no possession will do anything beyond bring you out of misery.

That's the reason that the studies, the famous Kahneman and Deaton study from Princeton shows that happiness flattens out after \$75,000 a year, and Matt Killingsworth at Penn actually re-ran the data and finds that it's higher, but it still flattens out.

Inflation adjusted, but still.

Inflation adjusted or your results may vary or whatever it is, but the whole point is you just don't get happier

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and happier and happier as millions.

The reason, by the way, that we think that is an illusion that comes from our experience.

Most people have less than they perceive that they need when they're young, and the result of it is that a lot of people, and a lot of people listening to us, they suffer a lack of meeting some basic needs.

When I was 19 to 25, I was too poor for six years to go to the dentist for six years.

No, of course, I don't think I ever went a day without cigarettes, so I guess it was priorities, but.

But the point is that when I was.

Breakfast of champions.

Yeah, man.

Yeah, beard, cigarettes, pizza.

I was living in Washington Heights in those days.

And when I was 25, I took a job

in the Barcelona Orchestra,

and I moved to Barcelona, I had benefits.

I had Benny's man, and I went to the dentist, and he filled 10 cavities, and I felt a lot better, and I thought, money does buy happiness.

No, no, no, no, no, no, no.

Money lowers unhappiness when you move out of deprivation.

That's it.

And so what happens is I made the mental link between feeling, getting money, and feeling better, and people do that, and they chase that feeling for the rest of their life.

Because you're doing sums in your head of well-being as happiness and unhappiness and all that.

You can't tell the difference when you're just rolling through your life.

And early on, you felt a lot better.

That's all you know when you had more money, and so you want that feeling, and you chase the feeling.

You chase the high.

You chase the early hits.

It's like drugs, like any other drugs in this way.

So that doesn't work.

But there are three ways you can buy happiness,

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according to Willens and Norton, my colleagues at HBS.
You can buy experiences.
This is critically important,
because what are experiences
that where you buy happiness really have in common?
You add money, which is sort of my pleasure,
but the really important parts are the people in the memory.
People in memory are always part of experiences.
Okay, now, sometimes you want to do things alone,
but generally speaking, the greatest happiness comes
because it enhances love in your life.
The best way to improve love in your life,
if you want your love life with your partner
to get better, go away together.
Go away together.
That's always the best way to do it.
Or stay home together, but turn off the phone.
In other words, get an experience
with the person that you love.
That's a great way to spend money,
because it will reliably, unless you waste it,
do something stupid, like I'm gonna have a bender in Vegas
and then get blackout drunk
and sit in front of the slot machine.
That's not the secret.
But being prudent,
you can actually buy happiness through experiences.
That's number one.
Number two.
I'm gonna ask you for personal examples, but yes.
Yeah.
I'm serious.
Yeah, for sure.
Buy time, buy time, but use the time correctly.
If you have the money and you're cutting your lawn
and you don't like cutting your lawn,
improve GDP, hire a guy.
Now, a lot of Americans don't like to do that
because they have this kind of
this weird reverse classist sense.
Well, let me tell you,
there's a lot of people who are making more money than you,

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cutting lawns and running a gardening service.
Spread the love, give somebody a job,
and then use the time correctly.
Don't fritter away your time scrolling social media
in the house, in the air conditioning.
No, no, no, no.
Use the time specifically for something,
ideally with somebody doing something that you enjoy,
and that will truly buy happiness.
And last but not least, give your money away
to somebody who needs it, who deserves it,
and a cause that truly inspires you.
Something you really, really believe in.
I've studied philanthropy long before I studied happiness.
I was an academic beaver away
and obscurity writing books on charity
and philanthropy and nonprofit organizations.
And the reason I initially got into happiness
in the first place, besides wanting to be happy,
was that I found that the more people gave,
the happier they got.
So we don't have to tread into these waters,
but I think it would be very helpful for people,
and I'm very curious.
I'm happy to reciprocate also.
Where have you landed for where to give your own money?
I give money to things that I really care about
that I think have an impact on people's lives in a big way.
And a lot of what I do is I give to education,
to people who are at the margins of society.
So I give a lot to primary and secondary education,
specifically to Catholic primary and secondary education,
because I think it is really, really well done.
And it's an option that a lot of people don't have access to
because it costs money.
So a lot of what I do, probably 75% of what I give away,
and I give away 10% of my income.
So I'm, yeah, because, you know,
it's not that hard to do.
You just have to pay attention to it.
And then there's structures, you know,
so you get a charitable giving account.

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Do you think of that as a tithe, or?
Yeah, I do think it was a tithe,
but I really think of it as a privilege.
I think of it a lot less as a duty,
and a lot more as a privilege.
My wife and I, we just look forward to it.
And then, you know, we have a process in our family of,
you know, should we give money to this,
or give money to that?
Usually we give something kind of a big bolus one year,
and then in the smaller gifts to things
that are ongoing sources of support
that we really believe in.
How do you decide what to give to?
Well, we know the people and we do the work.
So it's not just anybody,
we get a letter in the mail and we respond with a big check.
It's like, huh, seems worthy.
No, we actually do the work.
And part of it is because I teach,
one of the classes I teach at Harvard
is on non-profit management.
And so I have kind of a strong background
in whether it's a reputable cause
and what to look for
into measuring the effectiveness of an organization.
So I do the work, I do the background work.
I see what kind of overhead rates that they're using,
how they're using their money.
A lot has to do with if I like the mission.
Sometimes if it's gonna be a substantial amount of money,
I get to know the people and the organization.
And it has to be something that I think
is gonna change people's lives for the better.
Now, I've actually changed my view on this a little bit
because early on, we'd write a lot of little checks,
lots and lots and lots of little checks
to great organizations.
And then I found that you can have a lot more effect
on your own well-being.
And again, this is kind of selfish,
but in your own well-being,

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by concentrating on turning the whole dial in one person's life.

And there's an old Talmudic phrase from the book of Sanhedrin that says, in every man is the whole world. In other words, turn the dial for one person, you've turned the dial for all of humanity because it's really had an impact.

And I remember telling my wife about that. It's like, hey, I've got these data that when you really help one person instead of a little bit for a lot, really anonymously, you can get all these benefits.

She's like, this is years ago.

This is maybe 20 years ago now.

And she's like, why don't we adopt a baby?

And I'm like, it's only a book, man.

But we did.

We actually did.

It was totally life-changing.

So that's how you give.

You got to do the work and think about it and put your heart into it.

Can you say more about that?

How did she come to the adoption?

My wife.

Yeah, how did she come to it?

Because I was saying, you know, you get a lot more benefits when you turn the whole dial on one person's life as opposed to just, you know, sprinkling just \$1 bills at a helicopter.

So she was like, let's turn this to 11.

Yeah, she's like, no, we should basically like, okay, buddy, you really?

Really?

I mean, this was like, I know you got this interesting research, you know, fancy social scientist guy and let's see.

Should we put our money where our mouth is?

And by the way, she had also been having dreams about a little girl who was abandoned.

Well, your dreams and dreams and dreams.

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If you're able to, can you tell me more about your wife and how you guys met?
Because I know a little bit of the background, but how did that happen?
Since I'm back on the playing field.
You're back in the playing field, Tom.
One of the things that I teach my students at HBS is that I would never invest in a firm of an entrepreneur who is unwilling to give her or his heart away.
Because it's the single most risky entrepreneurial thing that you can do putting every bit of capital at risk.
If you're not willing to give your heart away, I'm not gonna put my money in your fund.
Now.
And that takes the form of risk, man.
Loving someone wholeheartedly.
Giving your heart away.
Okay.
Giving your heart away.
And the reason I believe this is because I've always had this sense that part of the journey of life is just like getting in it, getting in it.
And entrepreneurs talk a lot about putting capital at risk and talking about money, how boring.
The real capital of the enterprise, the startup of Tim Ferriss' life, because this is the ultimate enterprise.
I mean, the enterprise is not the podcast and the books and the company and the, that's not it.
Those are manifestations of Tim Ferriss' ink of you.
The enterprise is you and the currency of you is not money.
It's love and happiness.
That's your currency.
So how are you gonna put that at risk for explosive, tectonic, inflecting returns?
What are you gonna do to put it at risk?
That's the question, right?
The answers are really tricky, but the one answer that's not right is don't put it at risk.
Don't put it at risk.
Right, so I'm with you.
Now there are myriad ways that if you were to sort of

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take off your flak jacket and just walk into the oncoming traffic with like emotional oncoming traffic with someone who you've been on a dating app who you meet within five minutes and they're cuckoo bananas, that could turn out poorly.

Of course, that's just Vegas.

That's not entrepreneurship.

That's just gambling.

Right, so how, well, first I wanna hear your story.

Yeah, so this gets back to the issue at hand.

And the reason I did that little prelude is because I don't want anybody to think that my screws are too loose, right?

I mean, that's not my goal.

Yeah, that's not my goal.

I'm not, it's insanity, so, okay.

I rest my case, insane, insane man on the podcast.

Deeply unbalanced guest joins Tim Ferriss.

So when I was 24 years old, I was on a concert tour and I was making my living as a classical French horn player.

I was on a concert tour in the Burgundy region of France.

Now I'm going from town to town playing concerts and I was staying at this school.

I don't know, it's just where we were housed during this, you know, we were going out from there.

And at the same time, there was a music festival going on.

And there were musicians from all over Europe that were studying at this music festival.

And I was at this concert playing at this very school and playing, you know, playing my horn, looking out at the audience.

And there was this girl smiling at me in the front row, beautiful girl smiling at me, just gorgeous.

And I'm, you know, I'm a red-blooded 24-year-old dude and I'm like, obviously I'm gonna make a mental note to go talk to her, you know?

So I go to talk to her later and I find out two things.

Number one, she's not French, even though I was in France.

And number two, that she doesn't speak a single word of English.

And it was hard because, you know, I was trying to talk to her in, you know, monosyllabic grunts and fruitless search for cognates.

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And I said, are you single?
I mean, this is like this basic, are you single?
And she says, yes, I'm divorced.
I'm like, I'm not down with that.
But what she meant was I just broke up with my boyfriend
but she couldn't come up with any Latin-based words
besides divorce, which actually comes from Latin
to try to get me to understand this point anyway.
So it was a comedy of errors.
And we went out to dinner and we went on some dates.
And I left after a week and I went home
and I called my dad in Seattle.
I grew up in Seattle.
I was living in New York at the time.
I said, dad, I think I met the girl I'm gonna marry.
And where was she?
From Barcelona, Barcelona.
And he said, great, let's meet her.
And I said, I got problems.
Problem number one is that she doesn't live in the United States.
Problem number two, she doesn't speak a word of English.
Problem number three is that she made me aware
that she doesn't believe in marriage
because she thinks it's an anachronistic institution
and she's never gonna get married.
It's a hell of a, yeah.
It's a concept to communicate in Tarzanese.
Yeah, yeah, no, no, for sure.
I mean, we're together for a week and we, you know.
You got there.
We got there.
And I couldn't get out of my head.
It was like our Lady of Guadalupe kind of.
And I thought about it.
And I thought about it.
And we exchanged letters and weirdly
somehow talked on the phone.
She started taking English classes.
I started studying Spanish.
Who knows what I'll see.
I traveled to Barcelona, saw her.
She came to New York and visited me

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just a little bit here and there.
And what I didn't tell her is that I had quit my job
in New York and I'd won an audition
to be a member of the symphony in Barcelona
because I wanted to go see if I could close that deal.
If I could change her philosophy of marriage.
It took me two years, but I closed the deal.
And 32 years later, we have three adult kids
and one grandson and I'm still in love.
So how did you, how did you end up debate teaming that?
I'm just curious, like, how did-
I just wore it down.
You just wore it down.
I just wore it down.
I was in love with Barcelona and she was in love with me.
And so she's not like, get out.
It's not like I was some weird stalker.
She really was in love with me.
And she wanted to be with me,
but nobody in her family was married.
I mean, this is not what you do in Barcelona.
I didn't realize that because I mean-
It's not like a big Catholic country.
It's a post-Christian country.
3% of the population of Barcelona ever goes to mass.
3%.
I never would have guessed that.
Denmark on the Mediterranean.
That's incredible.
I had no idea.
Yeah, nobody does for sure.
I mean, but, you know, it has a long tradition.
And she comes from a hard red communist atheist family.
So suffice it to say that our background
is a little bit different.
I mean, again, she was beautiful and smart and funny
and I was in love.
And it's just love will out.
Love will out.
And it finally, at the end of two years,
I just finally I said, I got down on one knee
and I said, you're ready to change your mind.

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She said, yes.

All right.

Once again, Envy has showed its ugly head.

And I have to admit, my French horn game, very weak.

Very weak.

Turns out the French horn was the least of it.

Tight pants.

Tight pants, big guns.

In those days, I was six foot two and 142 pounds.

My wife said that it was like hugging a tight sack of rocks.

Now she says it's like a loose leather bag of ropes.

So, you know, I've made some parts.

Hey, yeah.

Is that progress?

It sounds like progress.

It's not their bag of ropes.

Maybe that should be on my dating profile.

If you hug me, I feel like maybe not.

That's a little too silence of the lambs.

Your baby's fighting under a blanket.

I don't know.

And maybe you're so far removed
that this doesn't make sense to ask,
but what advice also you're coming from
a different orientation with the Catholicism
and I assume maybe wrongly,
but I imagine your wife.

It was mine, but not hers.

Right now she fully abhorred the Catholic train.

Fully abhorred, but that took a long time.

War it down.

That took a lot of prayer.

A lot of prayer.

As they say, this is one of those problems
that requires prayer and fasting.

Okay.

So you pray and she fasted and you're like, no food.

It will put the rosaries on it's wrist.

All right.

Thoughts on how to find a partner.

I think about this an awful lot

because this is the number one topic

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in my science of happiness class at HBS

that they want to know about.

It's gotta be.

Oh, for sure.

For sure, absolutely.

Because not only is it something that we all want,
that everybody wants, it's something that's getting harder.

Yeah.

All the traditional scaffolding is gone
unless you perhaps you're part of, say,
a Jewish community where that type of yenta
like matchmaking is a very esteemed role.

But even then the modern world is encroaching on that.

And if you look at the comparison
between in the 80s when I was in my 20s
or the 90s when you were in your 20s.

Sorry, I didn't mean to shock you with that.

Oh, that's okay.

Yeah, I know.

It's much, much, much harder.

I have the ring of Frodo,
so I'm not planning on aging anymore from this point forward.

Side note, you should look at photos of him now
and 20 years ago.

They're the same, the actor.

Anyway.

Yeah, not me though.

I mean, back when I was in the Barcelona Symphony,
I had this hair.

It was like a great civilization.

It's like the locks of Samson.

I was unbelievable.

And so, you know, then I started going bald.

I'm getting more and more bald.

My brother, my older brother,
he's very judgmental about me.

He's funny.

He loves me.

But he says, you deserve it
because of the life you've led.

Oh, he too, Brute.

He too, Brute.

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Oh, it's just a lot of DHT, man.
Anyway, so what are the guardrails?
What are the mistakes that we make?
You know, what's actually making it harder?
And there's a lot of things that go into it.
You know, the fact that we're using tech
where we would have used humans is deeply problematic.
I mean, the fact that we have so much deal flow
is making it harder.
The paradox of choice is a real thing.
Better, better, better, better, better.
I mean, there's a ton of research on this, by the way, Tim.
I mean, you've seen some of this research,
for example, on car purchases,
where, you know, you give two groups,
you know, there's the treatment and control
social science experiments, two groups,
different car buying experiences.
For the first, buys their car
and there's no refund and there's no returns.
And the other side can return it
for any reason in the next six months.
And the first group is much happier with their car
because they're not thinking about it
again and again and again.
There's no more swiping on their car purchase.
And so the same thing is when it's very easy
to have a lot of selection,
it gets much, much harder to attain satisfaction.
You're also exhausted more easily
because of the decision fatigue.
Yeah, I mean, I can take your word for it,
but I mean, that's certainly true.
That's in the data.
Well, I'm saying outside of dating, just in general.
But the bigger problem actually comes
because we're looking for the wrong thing in a partner.
The data suggests that what everybody wants
in a partner that they can curate carefully
because of the online presence,
because of the platforms, is they want compatibility.
And they look for compatibility with sameness to them.

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I like this kind of food.
You do too, great.
I vote like this, you do too, great.
I'm this religion or I'm no religion.
I grew up here, I went to college.
Where did you go to college, et cetera?
They're not looking for someone
who doesn't speak their language, who...
They're looking for a sibling.
And as my adult kids would say, that's not hot.
The truth is we're way too compatible
and we're sorting on compatibility
with these technological means.
And the biggest problem with dating today
is we're less and less attracted to people.
We're less and less attracted because they're too much like us.
We need more complementarity and less compatibility.
That can be old days used to say opposites attract, not true.
But you need a baseline of compatibility.
But on top of that, you need difference.
Difference is hot.
Difference is fun.
Difference is an adventure.
And you're just not gonna find it
because nobody's gonna swipe on you.
Quite frankly, if you're the other party,
a lot of people curate on language and culture and race.
It's insanity.
That's the reason that good old fashioned human people
who say they could fall in love.
When you talk about people who fix you up on a blind date
or the old fashioned matchmakers,
they're always looking about complementarity.
This introvert and this extrovert
can fill in the gaps in each other
in a kind of a divine and cosmic way.
That's how I always kind of felt.
I felt like my wife was...
I don't believe in magical thinking on this.
Magical thinking is a big problem
because soul mates don't exist
and there's no such thing as love at first sight.

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But I always do feel like my wife Esther was,
she was picked for me.
She was really picked for me.
And because of the difference as much as anything else.
I mean, she completes me.
She makes me a better man.
She knows when I'm going after the idol.
She knows she can see it going after the lore.
She can see it.
She's like, hmm, right?
And that's 32 years of experience together,
but it's also the deep complementarity that came to me
because I was born at a particular time
and I accidentally had this kind of experience.
And that's what we need.
That's number one.
This is clear.
The second thing is goals.
You know, when I ask people, you know,
you're going to meet the person of your dreams
or the good enough person or whatever.
What do you want to have after five years?
The good enough person.
That should be Paris's guide.
To the good enough wife.
Two passable relationships.
Wife me up with someone good enough, man.
Anyway, so yeah.
Because by the way, there are no records.
There aren't.
I'm just kidding.
I don't know, man.
Complimentarity.
Yeah, maybe.
That's why if you've been in prison,
I haven't.
We complete each other.
Surely whatever I've been trying isn't working.
Maybe I'll skip Barcelona and do the prison circuit.
All right.
But when you ask people, what do you
want your relationship to look like in five years?

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They have kind of this magical notion of an ongoing passion. And that's the wrong goal. The right goal is what is called companionate love. You want to be best friends in five years. Five years to best friends. That's the goal. And if you write it out and if you actually make it the goal and then you have interim steps in a strategic plan, you might just get there. But if you're like, yeah, no, no. It's like if the magic feels like the magic's gone, obviously there's something wrong with our love. Best friends who were married, they're going to have plenty of passion, but you can't live like that. Look, the neurophysiological cascade of the experience of falling in love is unbelievably intense. It's 4th of July in your head. The bolus of testosterone and estrogen at the very beginning of the relationship, massive increases in norepinephrine and dopamine that give you euphoria and concentration and focus on the other person. The deep dip in serotonin. Your serotonin dips, why? Because you want to ruminate on that person using the good old ventral lateral prefrontal cortex. That's the reason that falling in love is an awful lot, like being clinically depressed. So you're both addicted to meth and depressed at the same time. That's what falling in love is like. And then you're going to get that big dose of oxytocin, which is the neuropeptide that links you to the other person in this almost magical, confusing way. Man, that's just too much. You don't want that for the rest of your life. Sounds like a lot. Well, you'll be institutionalized. All right, so let's pause there for a second. That was a lot.

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It was a lot.

I want to go from falling in love as meth and depression to the lightness of death.

And we haven't even talked about meaning yet, man.

Oh, we're going to get there.

We'll get there by the 9th hour.

Yeah, I'm keeping track.

Hour 9, I have a book marked.

Also, I have a promise I made to listeners that I have not fulfilled, which is your personal examples for using money, for experiences, time, whatever comes to mind.

So we'll get to that.

But before that, death meditation.

Could you please describe your death meditation and why you have a death meditation?

Most people watching us are not afraid of death, not pathologically afraid of death.

And only about 20% of the population is pathologically afraid of death.

And I bet you that it's less than 1% of Tim Ferriss followers.

Because people watching this are in control of their lives and they understand the contours of their lives and they're looking at the truth of their lives.

But they have death fear.

The death fear isn't physical death.

And this is a problem.

For some people, it's irrelevance.

For some people, it's being forgotten.

For a lot of your listeners, it's failure.

Just straight on failure.

Because they're strivers.

They're achievers.

Everybody has a death fear and what is it?

It's an ego threat.

It's a threat to who you see as yourself.

If Tim Ferriss' Tim Ferrissness is threatened, that will provoke a panic in you.

Because that's the ultimate death of who you see yourself.

The way to get over that, and by the way, you have to get over that.

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We all have to get over that.

Or we won't be fully alive until we actually face the death that really matters to us.

This is an insight that actually comes from the Theravada Buddhists across the southern tier of Asia from Thailand and Myanmar to Vietnam and parts of Malaysia. And Sri Lanka in particular.

So the Theravada Buddhist monasteries, often you'll go in and you'll see photos of cadavers in different states of decomposition.

It's super, super macabre.

I mean, you're like, what are these dudes all about here?

And what they do is that usually there will be nine, nine states of decomposition.

Photos, bodies, decomposing, falling apart, bones, bloated corpses.

And they stand in front of each one and they say, that is me.

And then they move to the next one after contemplating and saying, and that is me.

And what are they doing?

They're familiarizing themselves with the truth of their future such that they can be liberated from any fear of physical death.

Only then can they be fully alive.

That's an important insight from Theravada Buddhism.

That's a meditation called Maranasati, the Maranasati death meditation.

Now, when I read that, I thought it was interesting, but I thought it's a good thing to do because I shouldn't be making all of these decisions about when I'm old and when I'm retired and when I die and what's gonna happen and call the lawyer and all that.

I wanna be free from all that stuff by understanding that life and death are in a very real way an illusion, particularly because I believe in eternal life, but I have a death fear.

Oh yeah.

You know what I'm afraid of?

You know my death fear?

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Who's gonna take care of your cats?

No, I don't know.

That's good, man.

Who's gonna take care of my dog, Chucho?

No, it's losing my mind.

Mm, on the way there.

Yeah, because you know what Arthur Brooks is?

Gray Manor.

Look, I'm not the smartest guy in the world.

I'm not the cleverest guy in the world,

but I make my living and I support my family

and I understand me in terms of my ideas.

Literally, my company is called ACB Ideas.

It was very revealing to me when I contemplated the fact

Did you say ACB?

Yeah, it's my Arthur Charles Brooks.

Oh, okay, took me a second.

I just can't remember the alphabet.

Little is lexic.

It's like X, Z, Y, from Long Island.

Sorry, guys.

So, and my mother was showing signs of dementia

in her early fifties and she was quite demented

by the time she was my age and it runs in families.

It's genetic.

It doesn't mean I'm gonna get the bullet.

It doesn't mean I'm not being morbid about it.

I'm not being fatalistic about it.

Probably the odds are in my favor,

but I'm just terrified of that.

And when I recognized that,

I realized I need a Myrna Sati meditation on that

and that's what I contemplate.

I'll take two minutes and I'll think my memory's failing

and I don't know why.

And then I imagine going to the neurologist

and the neurologist saying,

well, I think you need to come into my office.

And then I imagine myself telling my kids,

the future's gonna be rough.

And then I imagine my work slipping away,

my inability to have this kind of conversation,

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to write a book, to share an idea,
to help somebody with these ideas.
And then I imagine myself not remembering
what I don't remember.
And then I imagine being a beloved son of God
with no memory at all.
Now, it's heavy, right?
Seems like that ending point is important.
It's the most important because you end on the truth.
So if you're not religious,
do you just end up to use the parlance
of the kids these days just depressed AF?
I mean, are you just shit out of luck?
No, because at the end of the day
in the Myrna Sati meditation,
you recognize the illusion of the tragedy
that was your death in the first place.
Ashes to ashes, dust to dust.
New life will emerge.
Will it be you?
Will it be somebody else?
Do you care?
See, when you look into the abyss,
you can cope with it.
You're stronger than that.
My students, by the way,
at Harvard, graduate students, Harvard Business School,
best in the world, so we like to think.
They're afraid of failure because they've never failed.
They've never failed.
I mean, you and I have struggled and we're older
and I've failed a lot,
but my students are deeply afraid of failure.
I mean, I basically got kicked out of college when I was 19.
It turns out you're not supposed to drop
all your required classes and take nothing but Indonesian dance
and North Indian classical drumming.
Turns out that's not the secret to academic success.
Kids, make a note of it.
So I failed, right?
But a lot of my students haven't,
and so I asked them to do the Myrna Sati meditation

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on their own academic and professional failure.
Number one, two minutes.
I think I'm falling behind academically
and the people around me are getting better grades.
Two, I just got put on academic probation.
This was my dream to come into this school
and I'm not succeeding.
Three, the job market's looking bad
compared to other people, I can't believe it.
Four, I think I need to move home for a while.
Five, my parents feel sorry for me.
That's when they cry, right?
Because all you want is for mom to be proud of you.
That's all you want when you're a success addict.
That's all you want.
And imagine that, look into that, stare into it.
Stare into it.
And they do and they get over it and they can master it.
That's the Myrna Sati death meditation
on the self-objectification of the success addict.
See, what do you see in those students
because they come from all different backgrounds
and different orientations, religious or not,
or somewhere in between?
Some are, some aren't.
What types of effects and how frequently
do you personally do this type of death meditation?
A lot because I have my own death meditation.
I contemplate failure sometimes because I'm afraid of it
but I'm not deathly afraid of it.
The truth of the matter is the great thing
about being 46 as opposed to 26 for you,
the great thing about being 59 instead of 29 for me
is that bad stuff is gonna happen and it's gonna be okay.
Bad stuff is just gonna happen, right?
I mean, the truth is that we realize,
you and I both realize that the worst thing
that's ever happened in life probably hasn't happened yet.
And okay, that's heavy but it's not that heavy.
You know, we're gonna survive.
You've survived a lot and it's actually gonna be okay.
I don't wanna fail, you know, I've always got,

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you know, we have a book coming out.
I have a big book coming out a few weeks
from when we're taping this episode
and I deeply wanted to be successful
but I can't control that.
And so I don't have to do much more
than a couple of Myrna Sati meditations
on the market failure of a book.
But I have to do it about losing my mind
because that feels deeply existential to me.
I have to do it a lot.
I do it at least once a week actually
because I wanna remember, I need to remember.
And if I don't, I'm gonna be walking kind of on eggshells
and just sort of wondering
and having that kind of minor sense of dread.
I don't wanna live that way, I don't need to live that way.
It's not important for me to live that way.
On the contrary, it's important for me not to live that way
because I won't be fully alive now.
I'll be living prospectively in a future
and that future is dominated by fear
and then I'm really not washing the dishes.
I'm really not enjoying that juicy peach.
On the contrary, I'm breaking my teeth on the pit
and it's not even a real pit.
That's crazy.
So not yet, really yet.
Yeah, this is I think is a good tie-in to meaning.
And I'm gonna get there with a self-indulgent reference
back to Marcus Aurelius.
For people who've not read meditations, read meditations.
It was never intended for publication.
These are effectively the pocket musings
of someone deeply conflicted
but also incredibly impressive during war campaigns
and otherwise, but lots of thoughts on death.
And also for those interested,
there's a considered a stoic practice
that exists in a lot of different varieties,
but memento mori, there are these meditations,
premeditatio malorum, which-

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It's the Greek mernisati,
for all intents and purposes, or Roman.
Exactly.
And he also thought very deeply on meaning.
Let's come to meaning.
So we identified two, I guess,
of the legs on the stool, meaning.
How should we think about meaning?
Meaning is the hard one.
Meaning is the hard one.
I mean, look, I mean, enjoyment's no joke
and satisfaction takes work,
but meaning eludes some people their entire lives
because they don't know what they're looking for.
They're fumbling around for something.
They don't know exactly what it is.
And a lot of people, they deeply suspect
that it doesn't exist, that it doesn't actually exist.
And you look at a lot of 20th century
and 19th century philosophers,
and they say it doesn't exist.
I mean, there's sort of three schools of thought
about meaning.
There's the ancient Greeks and Romans
and the Christians and the Jews and the Muslims.
It's all kind of based on meaning in the following way.
Essence precedes existence.
Meaning, you have meaning in life
that precedes your actual life,
and your job is to find it and live up to it.
But it's already out there.
You just need to go looking for it, right?
In the 19th and 20th centuries,
that was relaxed with two major schools
of philosophical thought, nihilism and existentialism.
Existentialism, Sartre, and even to a certain extent,
Kierkegaard would say that existence precedes essence.
In other words, you're born and there is no meaning
until you create it.
Tabula rasa, good luck, kid.
Yeah, good luck, go make it.
And if it's no good, it's on you, man.

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And by the way, Sartre, he has a very empowering, a very muscular philosophy because he says, you have to live up to the responsibility of creating your essence and living according to it. It's sort of Freudian in its way. And then there's, of course, there's Nietzsche, our old pal Friedrich. You know, a lot of young men love Nietzsche because by the way, it's unbelievably beautiful prose. Gorgeous writer, including in English. You don't have to go like learn German to read it. But the gay science, which is one of his most famous texts where he said, God is dead and we killed him. It lands, right? But his whole point is existence is real, but essence is a figment of your imagination. So don't even try to find it. That's nihilism. We're struggling with these schools of thought. And we all suspect, it doesn't matter how religious you are, it doesn't matter what your wiring actually happens to be. You kind of wonder if maybe Nietzsche and Sartre were right. So you go and search of it. And it turns out, I wanna go find the meaning of life is too big a question. You'll never find it by, you know, sitting at the mouth of the guru's cave or with the ayahuasca shaman saying, I just wanna find meaning in life. You need to boil it down to really sub questions, which are all about coherence. Why do things happen the way they do? I need to believe something about why things happen the way they do. It doesn't have to be religious. It can be completely secular. It might even be nihilistic. You need a purpose. You need to answer a purpose question, which is what's the purpose of my life and what direction am I going? What's the goal of my life?

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What's the endpoint of my life?
And the last is significance,
which is why does it matter that I'm alive?
Now I have a test to see if somebody has a meaning crisis
in their life.
That's really just two questions.
And to pass the test,
you need incredibly true, honest and compelling answers.
There's no right answers.
There's only wrong answers or no answers.
So you wanna take the test?
Sure, why not?
It's go time.
Question number one.
This has punished me for all the Iowasca I've done.
Go for it.
I didn't say this.
There's only wrong with that.
I just think that's not...
What do we say?
It's necessary, but not sufficient.
We're just like cat and nine melons.
I have an opus day myself.
I left it back at the hotel.
Damn.
Why are you alive?
Do you have an answer to the question of why you're alive?
I mean, I have a very clinical answer for it.
Tell me.
Well, I mean, there's the physical answer,
but metaphysically, why are you alive?
Which can be one of two things.
Either who created you or what you're put on earth to do.
You can answer that in one of two ways.
Do you have a strong belief in why you're alive?
I have a strong driver for taking advantage
of the fact that I am alive,
but I don't have a story of a creator
or something along those lines.
Or a strong purpose.
It can be a creator or a purpose.
I do feel like I have a strong purpose,

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but it doesn't relate to my birth.

That's okay.

The why of your life.

Our mutual friend Simon Sinek talks about this.

Start with why.

And the why of your life can be because of a creation

or it can be because I exist to lift other people up

and bring them together in bonds of happiness and love,

which by the way, is the why of my life.

So that's number one.

If it's there, but it's in co-eight,

it's not quite clear enough.

Find out the answer to that and write it down

and then perfect it over a six month period.

Yeah, I would say that for me,

I mean, it's looking at and experiencing things

in unorthodox ways so that I can teach.

And why do you want to teach?

Mostly to alleviate suffering.

In other words, you want to lighten the load

for other people.

And so in other words,

you want to serve your sisters and brothers.

Is that fair?

Okay, that's a great why.

That's a great way.

That's a great answer to the first question.

Why are you alive?

Yeah, I don't feel conflicted about that.

Okay, so the second one's harder.

For what would you be willing to die today?

I don't have a ready answer.

It's a hard one.

It's a hard one.

What's your answer?

A lot of people don't.

For my faith, for my family, for my country and for you,

I am willing to die for others.

That's the answer.

I mean, I probably won't be called to it,

but I'm willing to do it.

I'm willing to do it.

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I come to the conclusion that I'm actually willing to do it.

And here's how I learned this from my son.

I learned this actually from my son.

I mean, I have theoretical answers that are politically correct in the Catholic sphere.

I would die for the Catholic church.

I would die for my faith.

These things are true, by the way.

I really would, but it's too pat.

Here's how I learned this from my son.

I have three kids, 25, 23, and 20.

And my middle son is named Carlos.

And Carlos is, he's a kinetic boy.

He's a fan of yours.

He's probably watching us right now.

Oh, yeah, he's gonna talk about me right now.

Sorry, Carlos.

Sorry, Carlos.

And Carlos was having a good old time in high school.

We had substantial grade problems and academic issues.

And my wife's like, at least we know he's not cheating.

But the problem was he wasn't really having fun.

I think it was a meaning problem.

And in search of the answers to the questions, after high school, he really became an entrepreneur with his life.

I asked my kids to do a business plan when they were in high school because they're entrepreneurs and I'm VC.

I'm an investor.

I deserve a business plan.

And when they weren't original,

I'd send them back for revisions.

Bank of Dad.

Bank of Dad.

Yeah, and it's really fun to be on my son, you can imagine.

So Carlos' business plan for his life was, by the time it went through several rounds of revisions was appropriately in Orthodox.

He was gonna go work on a farm by himself and find the answers to the questions.

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Work hard.

And so he actually got a job on a wheat farm in Idaho.

A real job, not some sort of hobby farm.

No, no, no, it was an 8,000 acre working wheat farm.

He lived in the farmer's basement for the first year.

He picked rocks out of the soil.

He started at the bottom, made minimum wage,

fixed fences, cut down dead trees,

ran a combine by himself 16 hours a day.

Why did he choose this?

How would he explain it?

Because he needed to see what he could do.

He needed to find out what it meant to be Carlos Brooks,
away from his family, away from everybody.

Why?

Because he was looking for the answers to the questions.

They were in co-aid.

They were like, why am I live?

I don't know.

Maybe I'll find it in the cabinet of a combine.

Maybe I'll find it when I dig rocks out of the soil.

Maybe I'll find it by doing something hard with my hands.

Then he joined the military.

He was 19 years old, he joined the Marine Corps.

And boot camp is no walk in the park

for the US Marine Corps, as we've all heard.

But then it got harder from there.

He did infantry training battalion,

and then the in dock for the Scout Sniper Platoon,

which is a branch of the Special Forces and the Marines.

Today he's Corporal Carlos Brooks,

Marines 3-5 Scout Sniper Platoon.

And he's got answers.

Now, that's a scary job for me and his mom.

He goes on field trips, right?

Field trips.

And thank God, nothing's happened to him.

He's getting out of the military in December of this year.

But he's got answers.

What types of answers?

I mean, I don't want you to...

Here's his answers.

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I don't want you to tell me his answers.
Carlos, why are you alive?
Because God made me.
For what are you willing to die?
For my faith and for my family and for my friends
and for the United States of America.
Boom.
These are not the answers
that a lot of people watching us would give.
But these are super solid answers.
I'm super proud of my son.
Because he earned the answers to his meaning questions.
That everybody watching us has got to earn it.
Everybody who's watching us has got to go on a quest,
a vision quest for the answers to the meaning questions.
There's no other way to do it.
Your dad can't tell you.
Your priest can't tell you.
The holy books can give you inklings.
They can give you shadows on the cave wall
to get back to the old Platonic metaphor.
You need to live and to try things
and to go through a process of discernment.
And the way to do that is to do hard things.
Is to challenge yourself and to say to yourself,
I will not stop until I have answers
to these questions, to my own satisfaction.
So hearing you describe Carlos' experience.
Hi, Carlos.
Congratulations on the trajectory.
He finds like, yeah, my dad embarrassed me,
but Tim Ferris just said hi to me on his podcast,
so it's all good.
It was not easy.
I have some friends who are formerly Marine Force recon.
That is not an easy path.
No, it is not.
A lot of that is easy.
I think I was over processing the,
for what would you be willing to die tomorrow?
I think it was the tomorrow piece that I fixated on.
So family, close friends.

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You would die for your family.
You just would.
Yeah, family and close friends.
I can give that answer.
I was thinking of it more hypothetically as a,
for what happening in the world,
would you be willing to basically off yourself tomorrow?
Is there an idea for what you'd be willing to die?
Is there a truth?
Because this is really where it gets super intense.
When Carlos says I am willing to die for my faith,
I am willing to die for the United States of America,
which for him is an ideal of liberty.
He's, by the way, for those of you outside the United States,
he's willing to die for our allies too.
Dying for an idea, that's super heavy.
I mean, that's like pure grade meaning,
because people are gonna say, are you kidding me?
Are you nuts?
This is not, I'm willing to kill for an idea.
That's like, you know, that's kindergarten stuff.
That's kindergarten stuff.
Now I'm willing to die for something.
I'm willing to give my own life.
I'm willing to take yours.
Yeah, you and every other half-baked, dark triad,
malignant narcissist, cancel culture, trait psychopath.
I thought you were talking to me for a second.
No, no, no.
I was like, how'd we get here all of a sudden?
Arthur Brooks got really abusive on my pocket.
No, no, no, no, no, tell him I love you.
I will reiterate your negative moments
that you're a beautiful man.
But I mean, come on.
I mean, it's everybody around the world
is willing to, you know, kill for what they think
or cancel or hurt people what they think.
But the real question is,
are you willing to sacrifice what you have for an idea?
And that's really hard.
Yeah, I'm not sure.

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That's a tough one for me to answer.
I think also thinking about what you're willing to die for,
let me personalize it.
Thinking about what I'm willing to die for,
I also want to be very aware if there are things
I would be willing to die for that could be manipulated
to make me do things that I might not
currently be morally aligned with.
Totally, totally, for sure.
I think the allegiance, I get it.
It needs to be very, or for me,
I want to be aware of their things.
Like for instance, faith has been manipulated
by politicians.
So has patriotism.
Of course.
My goodness.
I mean, a lot of people listening say,
you die for the United States of America, are you crazy?
Which is not to say that it's wrong.
It's just very context dependent.
Very context dependent.
And it requires a lot of updating and serious thought
and it's not good enough to just be sort of raw, raw, raw
and taking it to face value.
It takes serious discernment.
So we have the, why were you born?
Or for what?
Why are you alive?
Are you alive?
What would you be willing to die for?
Yeah.
Got any more?
Those are the ones.
I mean, what those do is that they really kind of wrap up
the coherence, purpose and significance
into two kind of handy dandy questions.
And the point is really this.
I mean, it's easy for me to frame that up is,
once you find those, you're all good to go.
All right.
But the truth is you're going to go through the rest

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of your life contemplating these things.
And these are the questions to ask on your birthday.
Are these still the things that I believe?
Have I updated my knowledge?
Do I have a better sense of who I am?
Have I gone backwards a little bit?
Have I lost the sense of what I'm willing to die for?
Do I need to go a little deeper at this point
and touching up on those questions?
It turns out to be a really good,
it's sort of the same thing when you go to the doctor
and they do the same test again and again and again and again.
I have a series of tests that I do.
One of these questions that I ask myself like that,
you know, about the reverse bucket list
and the meaning questions and am I pursuing my pleasures
socially and making memory with my prefrontal cortex?
I also have, by the way, a spreadsheet
of 19 micronutrients that feed into my macronutrients
and I grade myself on tenths of 1% on a one to 10 scale
weighted with respect to what my best estimate
of my well-being.
And when I'm going backwards on those things,
I set a strategic plan for my year.
So I'm getting crazier by the minute, right?
I'm into it.
I encourage it.
I wanna pour gasoline on the fire.
Let's do it, man.
So we already talked about death meditation.
We talked about your experience in Mexico
and in build the life you want,
obviously we're not gonna go into all the micronutrients
of each of the legs on the stool per se,
but I'm curious whether it's meaning
or one of the others, maybe meaning,
but doesn't have to be.
Could you give some examples of some of those,
I don't wanna say antecedents, but micronutrients,
the cast of characters and ingredients
that are important for sort of healthy functioning?
For sure.

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For sure.

And you know, you can break them up in as very gated ways you want. You could make 20,000 of them, but really there's four that we should be thinking about. So there's four fundamental micronutrients and I make it more varied than that. I've got 19 because they're really about love and relationships. That's really what it's all about. And the big four are your search for the divine or your spiritual journey or your philosophical, you know, your faith, whatever that happens to be, religious or not, your love for something bigger than you, so you can stand in awe. It's your family relationships. This is the most mystical kinds of love that we get because we didn't choose the loves that were chosen for us. And sometimes we're like, yeah, I wouldn't have chosen that. Friendship, you know, and friendship, when I'm talking about that, I talk a lot about loneliness because especially strivers, hardworking people, a lot of people watching us there, they have a lot of people around them, but what they have is deal friends, but not real friends. Your deal friends are super useful to you. Your real friends are useless, cosmically, beautifully useless. And so I go into a lot of detail with my students about how to build useless friendships. Not worthless, that's different. I've got those too. And last but not least, it's loving everybody's expressed through your work and that means serving others with your work. Your work should be a service profession no matter what you're doing. And so faith, family, friends, and work. And then there's, you know, we branch out from there.

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You know, when I'm talking about family,
I'm talking about different branches of family
that I'm trying to make sure I'm working on.
When I'm talking about, you know,
my marriage is critically important,
it gets one of the absolute highest scores in importance.
Not always in terms of quality
because I'm not the best husband,
but in terms of importance for sure.
And that's because that's the apex
of two of those columns, both family and friendship.
My best friend and also the adopted member of my family
is my wife, and so therefore my marriage
is really at the top of those two pillars.
And so I'm thinking about that a lot.
So I break it up into subcategories,
but they all go into those silos
of faith, family, friends, and work.
Work that serves, work that's meaningful, right?
Earn my success.
And then I say, okay, well, you know,
what does it mean to earn my success?
What does it mean to serve others?
How do I know, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.
When I start, you know, getting down to brass tacks,
I start putting numbers on it.
And if the numbers aren't,
I'm going backwards in a particular year.
I do it, my birthday and my off birthday, by the way.
Your off birthday?
Yeah, yeah, my six month birthday.
November 21st.
Got it.
My birthday's May 21st, so November 21st, I do too.
You got Thanksgiving week.
Yeah, I've got Thanksgiving weekend.
So it gives me, you know, a chance to actually think
about these things in some detail to be sure.
And then I've got it, you know,
I've got the data going back to about the year 1999.
I've got it going forward.
And this system has gotten better along the way

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and changed somewhat.

The most important changes you've made to the system, would you say?

Yeah, the most important change, the single most important change I made to the system was the recognition that I knew a lot about happiness but wasn't happy.

Because I was studying it, but I wasn't doing it.

The biggest change to the system was using my knowledge to change my habits.

That was number one, far and away, right?

It's one thing, I was giving people all this advice about friendships and about having a good marriage and all that, like I was looking at my life and I wasn't living these things.

I was just like everybody else, you know, waking up going, sure, hope I feel happy today.

It was pathetic.

It was pathetic.

It was like a drug and alcohol counselor getting up and, you know, taking a bunch of bong hits and having a six pack.

It was craziness.

And by the way, it was my wife who finally clued me.

She's like, you have a PhD, right?

What are you using it for?

Exactly.

I mean-

And you're like, your English is going a long way.

You're killing me sweetheart, you're killing me.

But you know, I'm writing academic journal articles that 14 people read so I can get promotion and tenure.

It was ridiculous.

So how did you, I imagine, even if you're not necessarily walking the walk as much as you would like, you believe in what you are sharing.

So it wasn't necessarily a conviction issue.

So how do you then translate it to action?

Are you just like, you know what?

If it's not in the calendar, it's not real.

Let me commit to things that I block out

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so that they are unavoidable in a sense.
How did you convert it?
Well, I started by doing habits and practices that were very, very specific.
I mean, extremely specific.
As specific as the stuff in the, you know, the four hour body specific.
And I was writing stuff down,
I held whole notebooks of protocols and things that I was trying.
I was trying things on myself based on science and when it worked, I would keep it and I would write it down, I would practice it.
Turns out that wasn't good enough.
You know, because that was too hacky.
You know, that wasn't really habits.
To ingrain a habit, you got to do one more step, which is that you got to teach it.
The reason I'm a happiness professor is because I want to lash myself to the mast and I want to be completely committed.
Because look, I mean, if I'm doing something that's clearly at odds with what I'm teaching, I'm going to hear about it.
I'm going to hear about it for my students.
I'm going to hear about it for my family.
I'm going to hear about it.
Good Lord, I'm going to hear about it on social media.
Not that I'm paying that much attention to that because I want to be happy.
And it's really, really important.
So basically there's a protocol in my life which is number one, understand.
Number two, practice.
Number three, share.
And that's the protocol that works for everybody when it comes to happiness.
You got to take those three steps.
You got to do the work and understand.
That's funny because I've done all this work over the years with the Dalai Lama and he always says the same thing.

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If you want to be a spiritual adept,
think more, feel less.
Think more, feel less.
I would not expect that to be the framing.
Okay, what does that mean by that?
Well, he first wakes up in the morning
in the first two hours of his meditation.
He gets up at three or three thirty in the morning.
The first thing that he does
after a little bit on his exercise bike
and hanging out with his cat,
the first thing that he does
is two hours of analytical meditation
which Catholics call mental prayer.
That means you take a couple of lines of sacred scripture
and you analyze it and you think about it.
Most learning doesn't happen
when the professor talks about something.
If you understand everything the professor says,
it's not hard enough class
and you don't have a very good professor.
He has to blow your mind with something
and you got to go away and think about it
and then you learn it through your own thinking.
That's analytical meditation or mental prayer.
Is the Dalai Lama using scripture in this sense?
Yeah, Tibetan Buddhist scripture.
So he's contemplating something.
You know, words of the Buddha or Shantideva
or any of the ancient...
Tactical question.
Is he choosing it or is it flip open the book
and which would not denigrate it?
I'm just wondering.
Drop the needle.
Yeah, I mean...
No, he's extraordinary.
I mean, the holy scriptures for Tibetan Buddhists are vast.
There's a library in Dharamsala
that's just stack after stack after stack after stack.
It's not a Bible.
It's not like a collection of books

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in a little library called the Bible.
It's enormous.
And the monks are going through the scriptures
again and again and again.
So he has a...
I'm sure, he hasn't explained it to me,
but I'm sure that he has actually a regular rotation
that he's going through to do his...
And that's what we need to do.
He's got the equivalent of these 10 exercises.
When you go to the gym, skip the bench press.
Like he's got his...
Yeah, kinda.
His greatest 10s.
No doubt, yeah, no doubt.
And so that's really important to do
in the science of happiness
is to look at the best protocols.
You know, what does it mean to stand up
to your negativity bias
by actually practicing gratitude
when what you're feeling is resentment?
How do you do that?
How do you actually achieve a state of metacognition,
awareness of your own feelings
such that you can choose reactions
in the face of emotions?
How can you get into the state of the I self,
which is the state in which you're observing the world
as opposed to observing yourself?
Well, it starts with knowledge
of what these concepts are.
And then you put it into practices, real exercises.
I have a column in the Atlantic
that comes out every Thursday morning.
That's next on my list of questions.
The third part of every column is do these three things.
Is taking the science and then applying to your life
in these three ways.
And so it's application and change of habits
and a commitment to that.
And the best way to cement in those ideas

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is by lashing yourself to the mast.
And that's by teaching these things to everybody else.
And everybody, look, I have a lab at Harvard
called the Leadership and Happiness Lab.
The whole point of the lab is not bench science
and pouring stuff into test tubes
or doing new experiments.
It's learning how we can all be happiness teachers.
How can Tim Ferriss be a happiness teacher?
Well, you already are, by the way.
I'm working on it, I'm working on it.
Well, you're working on it.
And there's no reason that you have to be happy
to be a happiness teacher.
This is not like playing basketball.
Thank God.
Yeah, totally.
I mean, on the contrary,
the people who have struggles are the best at it.
I'm not as miserable as some.
You're pretending to be.
I mean, the point is that you're...
But I do have struggles.
I mean, I do have challenges.
Oh, she does.
Otherwise.
So do I.
You're self aware.
You're self aware.
And part of your commitment,
because I know your work,
commitment to lifting other people up
is sharing your journey.
This is what it comes down to.
So you joke about,
ah, but the truth of the matter is we're all,
ah, we all are.
And sharing that is actually part of the way
that you're practicing these protocols.
You're not hacking anything.
You're actually trying to build these habits.
And then the teaching role,

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you're a teacher, by the way,
because this is a teaching podcast.
We're not shooting the breeze and saying,
what'd you see on TV and went to a new restaurant?
No, we're talking about heavy stuff
because we actually want to teach these ideas
and lift other people up.
So that's the secret, man.
Learn more, think more.
Don't feel, learn, think.
Second, turn this into habits and practice those habits.
Third, share with others
and commit to other people through your teaching.
That's the secret of happiness.
Commit, commit in what sense,
just sort of energetically taking
the magnifying glass off of yourself.
And committing to actually these practices in your own life.
Right.
You know, and this can often be,
I've been doing this thing wrong
and I don't want to keep doing this thing wrong.
And me telling you,
it's making yourself accountable to another person.
Like all 12-step programs work this way, right?
Honestly, 12-step programs,
AA, some of the most important
and impressive decentralized organizations I've ever seen.
Yeah.
And I've never participated,
but I'm so impressed.
But they require accountability.
Yeah.
Because basically what 12-step programs do
is knowledge of what's wrong with me,
committing to new habits and sharing it with others.
That's why AA works,
is because of those three steps as well.
They do sneak some God in there.
Well, yeah, the higher power for sure.
The higher power.
Which is helpful.

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Yeah, yeah, yeah.

I'm not going to deny it.

One facet that I really appreciate of your work and your writing is that you straddle the very old and the very new.

And you mentioned Aquinas earlier.

Again, everybody, read a few pages at least on Wikipedia about Aquinas.

And then Aristotle.

And one of your popular columns is about Aristotle's 10 secrets to happiness.

I wonder if any, I do have them in front of me.

Yeah, because I can't remember them.

Yeah, I was just going to say.

There's a lot to remember.

It's a problem of making weekly copy, you know.

Yeah, well, let me, how about this?

How about I read through?

Yeah.

And then I would love for you to pick out one or two perhaps that have been particularly impacted for you or for your readers.

Right.

Here we go.

Name your fears and face them.

Two, know your appetites and control them.

Three, be neither a cheapskate nor a spendthrift.

Four, give as generously as you can.

Five, focus more on the transcendent disregard the trivial.

Six, true strength is a controlled temper.

Seven, never lie, especially to yourself.

Eight, stop struggling for your fair share.

Nine, forgive others and forbear their weaknesses.

Ten, define your morality, live up to it even in private.

And I want to take one off the table.

Sure.

And the last one, because there's a, there's a recency bias here since we've been talking, I think fairly extensively about that.

But yeah, those are, here we go.

So start with number seven.

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All right.

Never lie, be impeccable with your word,
especially with you.

Now I know a lot of people who are pretty honest.

Frankly, the reason my wife fell in love with me
is not my, you know, my stunning good looks
and my lousy accent.

And the great hair at the time.

Great hair.

No, great hair.

Great hair, I know.

I mean, there was a spectacular, if I do say so myself.

But the reason she told me later

is because I was the first man that never lied to her.

I never lied.

Now that's part of my upbringing

and that has to do with your family, et cetera.

That was a really super important value in my home.

You had to be honest.

The only really dramatic and scary consequences

of my parents are for lying.

Don't lie, don't lie, don't lie.

And so the result is it was kind of in a way easier for me
because of the way that I was raised.

But I was the first guy she'd ever met that didn't lie.

She's like, what's up with this dude?

He doesn't lie.

And I've procured, you know, when my oldest son,
both of my sons, 25 and 23, they're both married.

And when my 25 year old-

25 and 23, both married.

They're both married, yeah.

Wow, I need to get relationship from advice from your son.

Well, my older son, he's a piece of work.

I mean, he's, I learn a lot from him.

He's literally one of the brightest
native intelligence people that I've ever met.

But he's also has this super adroit moral instinct to him.

And he asked me, he said, tell me one thing
that I should never do because I'm in love with this girl.

That I should never do.

He asked, you know, good questions like that.

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And I thought about it.
I said, it's actually pretty easy.
Never lie to her ever, ever, ever, ever, ever
until you go to the grave.
Never lie to her and ask her never to lie to you
no matter what the consequences.
That's the secret to the pure oxygen
of a true companion at love.
The mystical love of the romance
where you feel truly chosen for each other.
It has to be based on honesty.
It has to be.
And a lot of people are like, yeah, yeah, good luck with that.
I mean, right?
But, and there are lots of things
that doesn't mean you have to say, by the way, sweetheart,
your butt looks fat in that.
That's just gonna ask you.
Yeah, no, no, no.
It doesn't mean you have to volunteer
every single thing that you're thinking
because you're not insane.
But when there's a direct question,
there's a direct answer.
So I'm gonna come down to, okay, that's fine.
But that's, you say in Spanish,
that's primer curso.
That's the, that's, you know, that's a table stakes.
Table stakes, man.
You wanna really be in the game?
Never lie to yourself.
And we're doing it all the time.
We're doing it all the time.
We don't wanna face up to the truth.
We don't wanna look really in the mirror
and not so that we can, you know,
think how great our hair looks or whatever,
but so that we can actually see the good and the bad
and to say, I'm a true human being.
That's a hard thing to do when people lie
to themselves constantly.
And Aristotle talked about that,

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and Aquinas and the Buddha, and, you know,
one of the things that they all have in common
is that they have this impeccable idea of self honesty,
which is that's taking a draft
of the purest liquor of life.
It's like, yeah, I'm gonna drink that.
I'm gonna drink that.
Really?
You tough enough to drink that?
And once you start doing that,
I mean, it's just, it's hard.
It's really hard.
But it's life-changing.
Yeah, so I have a question about that.
And it also makes me think about
some of the scientists I respect most,
like Richard Feynman, who says you must not fool yourself
and you're the easiest person to fool.
For sure.
And a lot of people say,
because I'm religious, that I'm fooling myself, right?
Well, this leads not to a religion-specific question,
but rather just to a fine slicing,
which is sometimes, and I'm going off the cuff,
so this isn't gonna be polished,
but we lie to ourselves in the sense
that we have a story about ourselves or the world
that we know isn't quite true,
but we repeat it enough because we want it to be true.
Then there are times when we lie to ourselves,
but we are in the delusion.
It is because we have a lack of awareness
or who knows there are any number of factors
that have fed into this belief,
which is simply not accurate for whatever reason.
So how do you catch yourself?
Could you give examples hypothetical or otherwise of,
because I think most people say I don't wanna lie to myself,
but when it comes down to actually catching those self-lies
that's self-deception in the butterfly net,
so you can do something with that, how do you do that?
Well, you commit yourself to being uncomfortable

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for one thing.

So there's a couple of different ways to do that.

Number one is you seek outside counsel.

You ask people who really know you well,

you ask them to be committed to telling you the absolute truth,

and then you ask them incredibly hard questions

about yourself, right?

And you should have friends that can do that for you.

This is one of the ways that you can do it.

Your friends really have to be able to tell you.

Being a good friend usually means

telling you convenient lies.

That's not the right criterion for your closest friends,
your real friends.

Your real friends who should be like,

buddy, I don't think you're being straight forward

with that right now.

So this is, I'm making, I'm doing a fake Atlanta accent

because my best friend's a guy named Frank,

and he lives in Atlanta,

and we are committed to telling each other the truth,

and boy, does he ever give it to me, both barrels.

When he thinks I'm being full of it, buddy,

I don't know.

I know you're saying that thing,

but let's drill down on that a little bit, shall we?

I talk to him every week, and that's super important.

Every week.

Sure, I talk to you because he's a real friend,

and that takes work.

Right, no, I understand, but is that like you have a,
not a standing?

No, but he's somebody where we're committed to,

when the call comes in and it says,

Frank, I take the call.

Even if it's during work time, I take the call.

Otherwise, you can't take every single call that comes in.

There are certain colleagues,

certain family members, and Frank.

And have you guys explicitly made

some type of mutual commitment?

And the reason I ask is there are environments also

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that I suppose I could join,
but I haven't up to this point.
For instance, YPO forums, these small groups.
Those are quite good.
They are very good.
Six, seven, eight guys.
And no people who have benefited from it tremendously.
And they're, as I understand it,
based on my friend's stories,
that there are many hot seat moments
where you get your beliefs and stories
and approaches and strategies interrogated.
And you are committed in YPO forum
to have your BS called out.
Yep.
So if you're saying something that knows not true about you.
There's some great rules.
People can study it also
if you wanted to try to mimic or replicate it.
I guess for a lot of folks, I hate to say it,
but I think especially men,
they may not have sort of a codified setting like that.
Men, especially successful men,
tend to get lonelier and lonelier as they get older.
Yeah.
Women tend to get less and less lonely,
but men tend to get lonelier and lonelier.
So about 60% of six-year-old men
say their best friend is their wife.
About 30% of their wives
say their best friend is their husband.
Oh.
This is a story of sad story of unrequited friendship.
Unrequited companion at love at home, for sure.
But you know what that means is that
a lot of women have very, very close friends
that they've cultivated usually
through family life and community life.
And guys, you know, it's like,
hey man, it works so hard over the years
and hanging out with my friends
is stealing from my family.

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I'm not gonna go golfing for five hours on Saturday.
You know, when the kids are little,
it'll be terrible at home.
I'll get yelled at and yada, yada, yada, yada,
all kinds of excuses and pretty soon they're lonely.
So we can, and we might come back to this,
put the, I mean, learning this is a big topic, sure.
And the bonding and these types of communal relationships.
But as far as cultivating a relationship with the friends
that you have that unvarnished feedback and interrogation,
might you have any suggestion for how to approach that?
Well, there's two ways to do it.
There's the organic way and there's the manual way.
The organic way is that you don't lose those true friends
that you've had usually since you were a young adult.
And a lot of people do.
I mean, we move around a lot, we're really ambitious
and our friends wind up being our deal friends.
And our real friends, you know, when people will say,
I mean, I'll do an exercise where I'll say,
tell me the 10 people that are closest to you.
Write them down real quick.
I can do it easily.
Yeah, yeah.
I literally have it in a spreadsheet.
That's great.
And then put real or deal after each one of those names
based on the fact that, and for you, it's all real, right?
Because you have close friends, right?
Yeah, I do.
A lot of them, high percentage from a long time ago.
And you travel with them and you do stuff with them, right?
I put a lot of energy and time into ensuring
that we spend time together,
which gets harder as people have wives and kids
and everything else.
And your children, for sure.
Family life tends to get in the way of that,
but you have to do, it's like anything else,
you gotta do the work.
I'm unfettered by direct family life, since.
But you know, the data say that in 10 years,

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you'll most likely be married and have kids
and it's gonna be harder,
but you'll have to put in anything in the comments.
Folks, let's work on this, shall we?
Yeah, yeah, yeah.
Right in the comments, you're best.
Yeah, all right, so there's the organic way.
Yeah, the organic way, which is, you know,
is make sure that you don't lose track of your real friends
and you have a commitment with your real friends
to hold you to a standard of honesty
in the friendship and with yourself.
Because that's what true friendship really entails.
The manual way is the YPO forum way,
where there's a bunch of guys that you know
that are usually deal friends
and you make a deal to make them into real friends.
You make a deal, you know, it's an arrangement.
Where part of the friendship is actually gonna be
to go deeper, to hold each other's secrets,
to be honest with each other.
And that can actually be incredibly effective
because you've actually decided to do that.
And people will love those particular promises.
Psychological safety is really important in that too, right?
Because it's one thing to say,
I want you to be completely honest with me
and say, yeah, you're a jerk.
It's like, not that honest.
Or, you know, don't express it in that particular way.
You have to have enough psychological safety
where the rules of the road are clear.
That honesty is always wielded as a gift
and never as a weapon.
That's also true in marriages, by the way, Tim.
The best marriages are completely honest,
but the honesty is a gift and never a weapon.
Yep.
You know, one of the mantras at Facebook
before it was meta was Facebook is a gift.
Maybe.
Feedback is a gift.

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Feedback is a gift.
Feedback is a gift.
It was repeated over and over again.
It was put all over the place
to cultivate a culture of feedback.
And I've thought about that.
Just grabbing these little snippets,
make yourself small.
I mean, these very pithy reminders
that will have some stickiness in the mind.
And also doubling down on having your friends act
as the best mirrors available.
Very brief side note,
just to give people a Scooby snack.
Mirrors, reflections, what are your thoughts?
Get rid of them.
All of them.
Tell me more.
So I work with a guy.
He's fantastic.
He's really, really helpful for me.
I've recommended him to you
because he does incredible body work.
Physical therapy is fantastic.
And, you know, he was a fitness model.
There's almost nothing you can do
that's unhealthier, worse for your mental health
than being a fitness model or fitness influencer.
Why?
Because you're just looking in the mirror all day long
and your physical appearance is that
on which you will be judged is very emotionally warping.
And he hated it.
He hated it.
He hated it.
He was unhappy.
He never ate what he wanted for 10 years.
And the truth of the matter is
as we all know, you look great
if your body fat is under 10%
but you feel crummy and you want everybody
in the world to die.

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It can be really, really hard on you.
And he said, after a while, you know,
there's a reason that 35% of people
who lose a lot of weight, when they get to their goal
they keep going and a quarter of them
develop an eating disorder.
The reason is because you can't stop
when you're looking in the mirror all the time.
You can't stop.
You can't stop.
You don't know how to stop.
So he had the presence of mind.
He's an adept.
He's a spiritual adept.
He got rid of all of his mirrors
and showered in the dark for a year.
He got rid of all of the mirrors in his house.
The showering in the dark, I need...
Well, because he had extra abs.
I don't have that problem.
But I mean, but yeah, I get it.
He got washboard abs.
You're looking at him and going, yeah, man.
Yeah, yeah, yeah.
But, and, and bye-bye.
Watching the water cascade off your 12th back
like rocks in a waterfall.
I know.
And the truth of the matter is that...
I hate when that happens.
Extreme, but yes, I get it.
Physical attractiveness ordinarily is something
that you do because you want to become more lovable.
And you make that judgment on the basis
of what you're seeing in the mirror
and not the relationship that you're projecting
to others in real life.
It's really weird.
You know, you talk to dudes who are trying to get to,
you know, 6% body fat and get super jacked
and the whole thing.
And they have this, they imagine that women

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are going to be just super attracted to them.
And the only people who even say anything are dudes.
Oh, it's always dudes.
It's like, it's a guy of friends who have single guys
and they've been incredible beard game
or like mustache game.
And nonstop, it's just dudes coming up
and complimenting them.
We're like, I mean, I'm sure there are women who like it too.
But it's mostly guys.
Yeah, for sure.
It seems to me.
And you know, no woman has ever said, nice car.
I mean, it's just, no.
It's other guys is the whole thing.
And what that is is the other guys are just a mirror.
They're just a mirror.
The other guys are saying the thing that you think,
it's profoundly unsatisfying, right?
If you're actually in the heterosexual dating market,
to have other guys saying, how did you get those apps?
Who cares?
Now, to provide a counter example also,
and this is just something I've seen on dating apps
if you could talk about.
But I have yet to meet a single guy I like and respect
who's like, I love super intense lip fillers
and all of this, you know, Frank and Botox situation.
I've not met a single one.
I know.
And have you ever said,
I've never said to my wife one time,
that's such a cute little dress.
Is it new?
I've never said that.
All her friends say that.
And she's always like,
I have a cute little dress and everybody noticed it,
but you didn't.
For the record, I'm in a cute little dress.
I don't want people to mix up voices here.
The show notes just went.

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So why did you write this book?
And how did it come to be?
I know you have this long history
with thinking about and these catalyzing events
and tracking and I don't wanna say pursuing,
but analyzing, thinking deeply about happiness.
So why now and what do you hope that it will accomplish?
So this new book is the most bread and butter book
I've ever written about the signs of happiness.
It's two parts.
Part one is how to manage your emotions
so they don't manage you.
Part two is once you've got that down,
now you can actually build your life
and not be distracted and frigging away your time
with stupid things.
Those are the two parts of the book.
And it says deep dive is I've ever actually written
publicly about neuroscience.
It was actually vetted by my colleague at Harvard,
Josh Green, is one of the most distinguished
neuroscientists in the world.
Just to make sure, because I'm a social scientist,
so I gotta be careful getting into the biology side
of this thing.
I know enough to be dangerous, to be sure,
but I have to be very careful about that.
So I realized, and by the way,
this project was instigated to do a bread and butter
owner's manual on you and your happiness.
That's what it is.
It's an owner's manual on your happiness.
It wasn't my idea.
It was Oprah Winfrey's idea.
So you occupy some rarefied air.
So from the Dalai Lama,
how does, does it just bump into her on the subway?
Yeah, his holiness Dalai Lama
and her holiness Oprah Winfrey, right?
Yes, exactly.
Yeah, I mean, it's, you know, when Oprah Winfrey calls,
it's like, right, but I'm guessing

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she didn't get your phone number on Zoom info.
Like, how did this happen?
Yeah, she calls and I'm like, yeah, and I'm Batman.
No, really, who is this?
No, hi, it's Oprah calling again.
Your company has been verified by Dunham Bradstreet.
Oh, wait a minute.
Anyway, so we got connected because she is a regular reader
of my column in the Atlantic.
And she was during the coronavirus epidemic
when, you know, people were trying to use the time
to learn new things, et cetera.
And she was actually a serious reader of the column.
And she's a serious reader.
I mean, when she has a book on her podcast,
she reads the book.
It's just amazing how exhaustive her knowledge is.
And then when my book came out from Strength to Strength
in February, 2022, she got it literally in the first week.
She read it and that's when she called
and she said, would you come on my podcast?
Her Supersoul, which is this book podcast, phenomenal.
And we were like a house on fire from the very beginning
because it's funny because, you know,
you've met a lot of famous people
and, you know, I've met some famous people
and they're usually not exactly like they appear in public,
right?
She's like she appears in public.
I mean, she's calm.
She's smart.
She's nice.
She's funny.
She's awesome.
She's actually what people think she is.
She's truly an authentic person.
And so we really got along
and we have this synchronicity of mission,
which is to lift people up and bring them together
in bonds of happiness and love.
But we have different platforms for doing it.
I'm teaching this class on the science of happiness

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at Harvard University and writing in the Atlantic.
She has been in mass media forever.
And whenever she weighs in,
she has millions and millions and millions of people
around the world that trust her
and want to hear what she has to say.
And so her suggestion was,
let's take that class that you teach at Harvard
and that you're writing about in the Atlantic.
Let's present that to a big audience.
You want a big audience?
I said, yeah.
Yes, yes, yes, Oprah.
Can I have a big audience, please?
And she says, let's write a book together
and we'll present this book together.
And so we did.
And, you know, we got together at her home
and we framed it up.
We framed up the book over a three or four day period
last year in her tea house in Montecito, California.
And it's like, you know, I was looking around going,
you know, I'm just like the small town college professor
who fell off the turnip truck in front of Oprah's tea house.
You never know.
He's like, God bless America.
You never know what's going to happen.
And it was super fun.
It was super interesting.
This is the best country for people who want to work on.
Oh my goodness.
Oh my goodness.
So, and she's the best case study in American success
and working hard and believing in others
and paying it forward possible.
And then we went and we started working on her
respective parts of the book and passing him back and forth.
And I took a house in San Clemente in California
for six weeks in the winter,
largely to look at the Pacific Ocean to write the book.
And she was writing her parts.
And then we got to this impasse at one point,

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not between us, but because the title didn't fit.
The title now is how to build the life you want.
The art and science of getting happier.
And it was called fully alive.
And it wasn't fitting.
And I didn't know.
And finally, Oprah calls me and she says,
got the wrong title.
She's a genius.
We got the wrong title.
This is a how-to book.
This is an owner's manual book.
This is really a how-to book on your own happiness.
This should be called how to build the life you want.
And ching the whole thing fell into place.
Cause that's what happens as you know,
in the course of writing a book,
you think you have it, but you don't.
And then when the title actually completes the book
and allows you to finish the book and make it all coherent.
And we finished it up.
And it was this amazing, collaborative experience,
a joy, actually.
It was the most fun.
It was the most positive experience I've ever had
writing a book because I got to write it with her
and she's enriched my life.
What a wild, incredible experience.
It's nuts.
It's nuts, man.
You know, I told you my death fear is losing my mind.
It's actually possible that I am
and that's just a hallucination.
So then we had tea, and we had crumpets.
And we had bridge.
And we had bread in her tea house.
And I was like, but Tim, I know I want the pure truth,
but if that's not true, don't tell me.
Let me keep that one.
Let me keep that one.
Lie to me, baby.
So look.

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In this book, are there areas,
because I know in my book,
I can point to specific chapters where I'm like,
man, I really wish people would pay more attention to X.
Like maybe it didn't quite get the emphasis.
So I can own that responsibility,
but maybe they, for whatever reason,
didn't pay enough attention to this one component.
Is there something that comes to mind?
I don't know yet because it hasn't come out.
Oh, I know.
But I'm just saying.
What would hurt you the most if people missed?
So I think what would bother me the most
is the amount that Oprah and I emphasize
the role of unhappiness in living a full life.
So one of the biggest mistakes that people make
as we talked about before is that people say,
I want to be happy, but,
and then they talk about some source of unhappiness
in their life that I think blocks their unhappiness.
And that's the wrong way of thinking
because you can get happier even if you're unhappy.
Absolutely 100% all day long
because these are existing in different parts of your brain.
Number one, but number two,
happiness is not the goal and unhappiness is not the enemy.
Getting happier is the goal.
You know, Oprah coined this term in the book.
She said, we got to stop talking about happiness
because that's actually not the goal.
The goal is happiness.
That's really what we're going for is happiness.
And to get happiness, you need unhappiness in your life.
Look, you need negative emotions to keep you alive,
but you also need the deferral of gratification
to get your satisfaction.
And you need to understand the nature of the frustration
that comes such that you can start to manage your wants.
You need like serious, full-on suffering
to find the answers to the questions of meaning
that we talked about.

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You do.
My son needed boot camp.
You and I need substantial problems with mood
to put it euphemistically.
We need, no, look, we need sadness.
A young Freud's greatest student, Carl Jung,
so much greater in so many ways.
So you don't really understand happiness
until you've experienced unhappiness
because of the contrast,
but more to the point you've not been fully alive
because unhappiness is what actually the suffering
is what helps you understand what you're made of
and what you could bear.
And only then will you find the answers
to the why am I alive
and for what I'd be willing to die questions.
You don't find the meaning questions,
the answers at that week at the beach in Ibiza.
You find it in the depths when somebody you love dies,
when you're afraid of what your future holds,
when you feel hopeless.
That's when those moments become real
and that suffering turns out to be an integral part
in your journey to happiness.
So the number one thing that Oprah and I
will be very disappointed about
is that people don't actually become more fully alive
through the transcendent passage of both happiness
and the unhappiness that is a part of what it means
to be a real person.
It is a diverse and ever-changing tapestry,
that is for sure.
It is, and you know, I think about it,
one of the biggest mistakes that I think
that my students make, by the way, right now.
If I were to go back to 1968 or 1969 Woodstock,
you know, when the hippies said,
if it feels good, do it.
I remember my dad heard that for the first time
and he's like, that's the end of America.
He was kind of right.

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Anyway, if we had a Woodstock today,
it might be, if it feels bad, make it stop.
If I'm suffering, treat it.
If there's pain, it's evidence that I'm defective,
that I'm broken, something's gotta change.
That's wrong, that's wrong thinking.
The Tim Ferriss I'm talking to you right now had to suffer.
I mean, these messages that you're giving
are dramatically different
than what you were writing 15 and 20 years ago.
They're dramatically different.
It doesn't mean it was wrong 15 and 20 years ago,
but it was incomplete.
It wasn't deep in the same way.
And the depth actually comes from the,
not just from the good, it also comes from the bad.
This is, you know, Andrew Solomon
who wrote The Noonday Demon, have you read that book?
No.
It's the best book I've ever read
about anxiety and depression.
You know, Andrew Solomon's a phenomenal writer.
All right, so what is the title again?
The Noonday Demon, which was an ancient way
of talking about depression,
which comes over you like a Noonday Demon.
It's like The Black Dog.
Yeah, it's like Winston Churchill's Black Dog for sure.
The Noonday Demon in the end.
It's an incredible book.
It's a total page turner
for anybody who's actually had anything close to it.
That face value does not sound like a page turner.
I know, it's phenomenal though.
It's so interesting, it's just beautiful writing.
But in the end, he said, in the sum and final balance,
I have to conclude that I love my depression
because it's part of who I am as a person
and it's allowed me to learn what my life is all about.
I don't wish it on anybody.
I don't want it to come back.
But it is who I am.

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And so therefore I have no choice but to love it.
I'm paraphrasing, but it's, you know,
his words are more beautiful
than anything I could remember.
But it's really an important thing for us to remember.
And anybody who's watching you and who follows you
and who admires you and gets a lot of sustenance
from the knowledge that you bring to this podcast,
what they have to realize
is that they are beneficiaries of Tim Ferriss' suffering.
And if they want to lift up the world,
they have to suffer too.
It's food for thought.
Yeah, food for thought.
May not be candy bars.
Might be high fiber, but it is important food for thought.
It's a philosophical cliff bar.
And, sorry, people love those.
I don't mean not to cast aspersions.
My friend's a cliff.
You know, but I have thought about this very deliberately.
And, you know, I don't wish suffering upon anyone,
but I had someone give me very good advice at one point.
And the words can be substituted, of course,
but she said to me, after I'd gone through
very gifted therapist with a lot of experience,
a lot of mileage with different types of patients,
including some very tragic and difficult cases.
And she said, take your pain, make it part of your medicine.
And I was like, okay, meaning the medicine.
In my case, the way I think of that is
what I can teach or provide,
or just the perspective through which I can speak
and explore, given that I have the history that I have.
Right, understand, this is what the best therapists do.
They teach you about yourself.
They help you to learn and grow from your pain,
and they help you to treat yourself and serve others.
That's what the great therapists do.
The worst therapist is like, yeah,
I'll help you take care of that.
We'll make that problem go away.

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No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no.

I want to learn, I want to grow, and I want to surf.
Surf Bart has been very critical to the tether of meaning
that has given the suffering.

Meaning, exactly.

Meaning made it, I don't want to say irrelevant,
but like the greater the potency of the meaning,
the less the suffering incapacitates you.

Let me ask you, is it possible

you're not afraid to suffer more now?

Because you said, you know, pleasure,
and you know, as a defense, et cetera, et cetera,
but I don't feel like I'm sitting with somebody
who's afraid of suffering.

It's certainly less than it was.

I also think that they're just pleasurable things
that I really like.

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Well, there's that.

There's that, there's that.

Weird.

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

It's a bizarre, there is that.

I remember reading about one of your, you know,
a sexual experience in the, you know,
in the four-hour body, where it was like,
to get more testosterone,
and then I ate a single Brazil nut.

Oh.

Yeah, it was lots of Brazil nuts, cholesterol loading.

I did lots of crazy stuff in the four-hour body.

But it was somebody who knew how to have fun in the book.

Yeah, that chapter.

How old were you?

34 or something when you were 30?

Yeah, early 30s.

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

So anyway, no, I respect the fact that you like to have fun
and you like to feel good.

I get that.

But I don't sense fear from you.

Yeah, I would also say what I have done is,

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I've built into my life a lot of premeditated, deliberate discomfort to inoculate myself against the fear of unpredictable discomfort. And it's not a cure-all, but I have found that. It's exposure therapy. It's exposure therapy. Also just like wading into some of the deep waters psychologically and psycho-emotionally that I would be prone to fearing, learning how to take swimming lessons in some of those deep waters, I would say, is also an approach. So it resembles exposure therapy, but there's also a skill development piece on top of that, which is combined with the exposure, I would say, which I know is a bit nebulous. No, no, but it makes perfect sense. And there's actually a way that we can all get better at that because I know a lot of people are watching this like, yeah, yeah, how do we get better at that? Here's one way to do that. That actually is very practical way to do it. Start each day with a statement of fact and then an aspiration. The statement of fact is, I don't know what's gonna happen this day. I don't know. I learned this from a pediatric oncologist, by the way, somebody who has had cancer diagnoses to kids. He says he tells the parents to every day, start the day saying, I don't know what's gonna happen in my future, but I do know I am alive this day and I am deeply grateful for everything that happens for good and for bad. It takes cojones, man. It's hard because you're like, you catch your breath a little bit, right? Because what Mother Nature wants you to do is to look for the good feelings

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and to avoid the bad feelings
because that's the evolutionary imperative
to avoid the disgust and the anger and the sadness
and the grief and the loneliness
and to avoid those things,
not to embrace those things to say,
it's inevitable, bring it on.
But if you can actually do that to steal yourself,
to steal, as they say in Isaiah,
I steal my face like flint, right?
And that's how to do it.
Look, I don't know what's gonna happen today,
but I do want to know I'm alive right now.
I'm not gonna waste this day.
And the way I don't waste this day
is by being grateful for every single thing that happens,
good and bad, bring it on.
Here we go.
I have a gift I received quite a while ago,
but actually, I steal my face like flint.
It is a piece of, I think it is steel
and it's engraved with a quote from,
I think it is Neil Donald Walsh.
I may be getting that off, someone can fact check,
but the quote is the struggle ends
when the gratitude begins.
Yeah.
And it's such good advice.
Yeah, yeah.
You don't have to be grateful only for
the obviously good things.
No, no, no, on the contrary.
And that's what separates first course gratitude
from PhD level stuff.
And by the way, here's a practical way to do that,
to be grateful for bad things,
a very practical way to do it.
I asked my students to make a failure journal.
And so what that is, is that every time bad thing happens,
something bad happens frequently.
When you're 28 years old,
somebody breaks your heart today

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and tomorrow you're gonna be on a test
and the next day after that,
you don't get the interview for that job you hoped for.
And it's just a constant string of disappointments
and thrills.
So every time something happens
that really frustrates and disappoints you
or you screw up or whatever,
you take out your failure journal
and you write in your failure journal what happened.
And then you leave two lines open behind it
and you put reminders on your phone.
Ding, one month from now you gotta go back
and six months from now.
One month from now you gotta go back and say
what you learned from that thing
that you would forget otherwise.
And six months from now you gotta go back
and say a good thing that happened because of that thing.
And there's always entries, always, always, always.
And so it's like, I went into my performance review
and I thought I was doing a really good job
and my boss basically told me that I'm a B player at best.
This happens constantly.
That bums me out and I just wanna put it behind me
and I wanna go hang out with my friends
and have a couple of beers
and complain about my boss and move on, right?
No, no, no, no, no, write it on your failure journal.
One month from now remember it and go back.
You know what I learned from that?
Is I thought I was gonna be super bummed about that
for a long time and it bothered me for like a week.
That's interesting.
Now that's homeostasis.
There's a lot of brain science in that.
Six months later you come back and you say,
when I thought about that I realized
that that probably wasn't the perfect fit for my career
and I went on the market.
And I have a better job now.
I think that the job I have now is a better fit.

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And every single thing that happens
that you put into your failure journal,
you will realize that there's something generative
that happens from this in terms of learning
and in terms of gratitude.
And you will turn that thing into something,
sooner or later when something really bad happens to you,
you'll be like, oh good,
I get to put it in the failure journal.
It'll really change your perspective on it
because failure and disappointment and frustration
and sacrifice and pain will take on their proper perspective
which is part of your full life.
We shall see.
That's great, we shall see.
That's terrible.
I know that famous terrible.
We shall see.
We shall see that famous terrible.
We shall see.
So true.
Yeah.
Well, Arthur, this has been so much fun.
Now, the title of the book is,
Build the Life You Want,
The Art and Science of Getting Happier.
And by the time this comes out,
you will be able to certainly find it and purchase it.
Yeah, and where all fine books are sold.
We're all fine.
And also, if people like Oprah and I will read it to you,
you mean, I'm guessing, in audiobook form,
not in county.
It's in audiobook form.
Look.
No, we'll come to your house.
And with the dulcet tones of Oprah's voice,
will you lull you to sleep?
No, I mean, we read it.
You could read a lot of my book right now.
I know, I know.
Yeah, that's right.

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Sorry, Oprah.

I kind of committed us to this thing, you know.

Let's just say the book tour is taking on new dimensions.

No, but we know we read the book for Penguin Random House and I'm really super happy with the way that it turned out.

Mostly because my voice is interspersed with her beautiful voice.

One of the most famous voices in America.

What an incredible experience.

Congratulations.

Thank you.

So people can find the book where all fine books are solved.

I just love saying that.

Yeah.

And is there anything else you'd like to point people to, whether it's a social profile or a request of the audience and ask of the audience,

something you'd like to close with anything at all that you'd like to add before we wind over?

Yeah, I mean, this is really a teaching experience, both for me and Oprah and just part of my life, which is dedicated to writing, speaking and teaching about love and happiness to bring people together and bonds of love using the science and ideas.

That's really my mission statement for the rest of my life.

And that really is a teaching mission, just like yours is a teaching mission.

So there's a lot of stuff that I'm doing, ancillary to books and columns, et cetera.

I have classes, like video classes and things that people can watch.

And my goal in doing those things, that's on all of my website, or through books.com,

but when people do those things, my goal is training them to be happiness teachers.

This is really what it's all about because remember, it's understand, change your habits, share with others.

And so to learn more about exactly how to do that, we're developing a lot of resources that make that possible in a, I think, a pretty effective way.

And I would love people to do that

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for the single reason that I want a movement.
I want to be part of a movement of people whose hobby
is the science of happiness and bringing it to others.
There's a lot of people who are broken in this world
and who are sad and who are suffering.
And if we had people who are warriors
for greater happiness for themselves through others,
through real knowledge and a commitment to change,
I'm truly convinced that this is the one thing that I can do
that could have an impact on the world
that needs to be a lot happier.
Arthur, so glad that we were able to find the time,
have this conversation.
And I admire the work you do.
I respect the work you do.
I value the work that you put out in the world.
It does help people.
So I wanted to also just simply thank you
for putting out what you put out
and spending time on the things you spend time on.
Likewise, Tim, I've only met you today in person,
but I feel like I've known you for a long time
because I've been consuming your work
like so many millions of other people
and you've enriched my life a lot.
Thank you for that.
Thanks, man.
I really appreciate it.
This has really sparked a lot in me.
I've taken copious notes.
So I have a number of things that I'll be focusing on.
Getting small, brother's okay.
Muscular philosophies, I just love the phrasing.
So I wrote it down, Aristotle, Aquinas,
all things that can lead you to build the life that you want.
And for everybody listening,
we will have extensive show notes,
links to everything as usual at tim.blog.com slash podcast.
And until next time,
be just a bit kinder than is necessary
to others and to yourself.
And thanks for tuning in.

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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 subscribe 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 slash Friday, type that into your browser, tim.blog slash Friday, drop in your email and you'll get the very next one.
Thanks for listening.
This episode is brought to you by AG1, the daily foundational nutritional supplement that supports whole body health.
I view AG1 as comprehensive nutritional insurance and that is nothing new.
I actually recommended AG1 in my 2010 best seller more than a decade ago, the four hour body, and I did not get paid to do so.
I simply loved the product and felt like it was the ultimate nutritionally dense supplement that you could use conveniently while on the run,

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which is, for me, a lot of the time.

I have been using it a very, very long time indeed.

And I do get asked a lot what I would take

if I could only take one supplement.

And the true answer is invariably AG1.

It simply covers a ton of bases.

I usually drink it in the mornings

and frequently take their travel packs with me on the road.

So what is AG1?

What is this stuff?

AG1 is a science-driven formulation

of vitamins, probiotics, and whole food source nutrients.

In a single scoop,

AG1 gives you support for the brain, gut, and immune system.

Since 2010, they have improved the formula 52 times

in pursuit of making the best foundational nutrition

supplement possible using rigorous standards

and high quality ingredients.

How many ingredients?

75.

And you would be hard-pressed to find

a more nutrient-dense formula on the market.

It has a multivitamin, multi-mineral superfood complex,

probiotics and prebiotics for gut health,

an antioxidant immune support formula, digestive enzymes,

and adaptogens to help manage stress.

Now, I do my best always to eat nutrient-dense meals.

That is the basic, basic, basic, basic requirement, right?

That is why things are called supplements.

Of course, that's what I focus on,

but it is not always possible.

It is not always easy.

So part of my routine is using AG1 daily.

If I'm on the road, on the run,

it just makes it easy to get a lot of nutrients at once

and to sleep easy knowing that I am checking

a lot of important boxes.

So each morning, AG1.

That's just like brushing my teeth, part of the routine.

It's also NSF certified for sport,

so professional athletes trust it to be safe.

And each pouch of AG1 contains exactly what is on the label,

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does not contain harmful levels of microbes or heavy metals, and is free of 280-band substances.

It's the ultimate nutritional supplement in one easy scoop.

So take ownership of your health and try AG1 today.

You will get a free one-year supply of vitamin D

and five free AG1 travel packs

with your first subscription purchase.

So learn more, check it out.

Go to drinkag1.com slash Tim.

That's drink AG1, the number one.

Drinkag1.com slash Tim.

Last time, drinkag1.com slash Tim.

Check it out.

This episode is brought to you by 8Sleep.

Temperature is one of the main causes of 4Sleep,

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 8Sleep.

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 wake-ups

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.

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So go to 8Sleep.com slash Tim,
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