

## [Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E229: Cole Sprouse: My Narcissistic Mum Sacrificed My Childhood For Fame

Have you ever had a conversation like this one?

No. I think it'll be fun.

Were you pushed into acting?

I would hardly call it pushing because I was eight months old.

Single mom, two twin boys, put food on the table.

So the choice never really existed.

You guys are big stars now.

Yes, sir.

What do you think about that?

My mother was living vicariously through the success of her children.

A person that grapples with mental illness, drug abuse, but primarily narcissism.

A wicked narcissism.

But that selfishness is something that the legal system also observed and said that she was unfit.

The court had to step in.

Your relationship with acting and the entertainment industry, it's been a journey.

I loved being on stage.

I didn't like the shit that came with it.

This industry encourages the worst qualities of you.

Selfishness, greed, authenticity and vulnerability are not really encouraged traits.

How do you feel about that?

You're given these lessons in your life so that you can triumph over them

and use the traits that you've acquired from those lessons over time to carve out who you are.

I've got two pitches here then.

What are the words unsaid to this individual?

I'd probably kick his ass.

Cool.

Yes.

Much of what I do here, especially at the start of these conversations, is I'm trying to understand somebody.

I get to see the finish line.

I get to see their achievements, their behaviors, their personality during my research.

This is ultimately why this podcast came to be.

On one hand, in the name you hear, the Diary of a CEO,

and it was really me trying to show that there's this other side of these people, including myself, there's this other side that we don't often talk about.

On the other hand, just from a very personal perspective, I've come to learn,

I'm so interested in human beings, why they do what they do,

and what causes them to do what they do at the very core of it.

What do I need to know about you?

If we zoom back to your earliest years to understand the most influential things, moments, influences that caused you to be the complex, inspiring individual you are today.

I'm really glad I'm doing this podcast with you at this time in my life,

because for the last year and a half, I've really been thinking about questions like this.

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What is it that still compels me into certain professional pursuits or artistic pursuits now?

I think when I was younger, it was definitely a financial pressure.

There were kind of two kinds of kids working kids, really.

There was the kids that were doing it to put food on the table for mommy and daddy,

and then like the thespian children, you know, like,

mommy, I want to go into acting and they would show up and it would be this huge gap between philosophies,

between like, yeah, man, it's a job and like, no, this is a, this is a craft, this is, you know, this is an art.

And those kids kind of showed up around 14.

And for me, I think I had trained to kind of work a holism since I was a child

in order to, one, feel valued by my environment,

both immediate family and audience in very many cases,

that has stuck with me a work ethic that has stuck with me now to this day.

Like, I do not feel good when I am not working.

And I think a lot of people can say that.

And that's something I've been trying to unpack over the over the last year and a half is

what would happen if I just simply stepped away for good and enjoyed my life, which is really the purpose of why we're all here.

Would I be content with sitting down and fishing and growing my own vegetables and, you know, living sustainably?

Or would I get so disenfranchised and bored that I would have to take back to the arts and somewhere or another?

And I think, I think the pressure of my upbringing really compelled me to continue doing what I am today.

I cannot live without the arts. I mean, I cannot live without performance or expression and some kind,

because it's truly all I know and have known since I was eight months old.

Since you were eight months old, you hold the record for being the guest on this show that started working the earliest.

Tell me, tell me.

Well, to be fair, I don't know if we can call it work.

I don't believe I cued into consciousness until about like 10 years ago.

When you're a baby, you have that kind of lantern consciousness where only, you know, whatever exists is only in your immediate purview.

And then as you age, you know, when you start to become less present, you're like, wow, I'm an adult and I feel like shit all the time.

So I don't know about if I perceived it as work, but it certainly infused within me a kind of work ethic as I have aged.

But yeah.

It established a relationship with work.

It did. I mean, it started for me financially.

Single mom, two twin boys put food on the table.

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She is still able to be a mother while we can still pursue a sort of improvement of our lifestyle. And in very many ways, she was living vicariously through the success of her children. But I think it certainly developed a relationship to professionalism much earlier than almost anyone else.

I know.

Will you use the word pushed earlier?

Were you pushed into acting in your view?

Well, I didn't, you know, I would hardly call it pushing because I was eight months old.

I don't even think I knew, you know, I was on screen.

I don't remember much of like the early, early, the diaper commercials and things like that.

So the choice never really existed.

I was there.

That's it.

How do you feel about that?

I think gratefulness and ungratefulness can exist simultaneously.

And I am tremendously grateful of the financial stability I have acquired now as a 30 year old.

And being able to say, yeah, I'm OK now.

I think in many ways I traded sort of the lantern consciousness of youth and sort of the carefree presentness of youth for financial stability that I would come to appreciate as an older man.

But I don't regret too much.

I don't.

I think if I were to sit here and talk about regretting my childhood within the industry, I think that would be silly.

It toughened the hell out of both my brother and I and many kids that go through that same thing.

But I'm grateful.

I'm grateful for the financial stability of it.

Yeah.

And I also am grateful to have done it in a time where you could get your Gladwell 10,000 hours in anonymously.

You know, if you did a crappy direct to DVD movie just for kicks, I'm looking at you for anyone knows this.

If you did your crappy soccer movie, it would go to the back of Blockbuster and no one would see it.

Now with social media, I mean, there's no way that you can that you can cut your teeth in silence anymore.

Everyone sees your portfolio globally and you're expected to put it on display.

But you know, I feel quite afraid for young actors now who have to hone their craft over time, but do it to a global audience.

That sucks.

You've got a twin brother.

Yes.

15 minutes older than you.

Yes.

As he always likes to help people.

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Yes, shove it in my face.

Your parents, you mentioned single mother.

As I read through your story, I saw a ton of similarities between the way you described your relationship with your mother

and the way that I often described the relationship still to this day with my mother.

Can you tell me about both your mother and your father and the journey you kind of went on?

I know at five years old, roughly they divorced.

Sure.

I don't remember the exact timeline of divorce, but I remember only having one memory of them being together when I was very, very young.

And then from that point on, my father was in Switzerland and my mother was in LA. He would eventually move out to LA in order to try and repair the family.

But my mother was still is the kind of tortured artist type she struggled with in very many ways her place in the world.

She, she, I think she found a tremendous amount of self identity through motherhood and tried to turn it into a profitable business at the same time,

which for identical twin boys going into acting is sort of economic loophole through labor laws that can be incredibly profitable.

So that's what she did.

And as I've thought about it, it seemed like to me it made a lot of financial sense to her to put us into acting.

It made, I think it satisfied some sort of narcissism that she probably had in order to be recognized as this sort of artistic success.

She was a wonderful painter.

So she always wanted sort of artistic legitimacy and validation.

But as time went on, I think the entertainment industry just kind of broke her.

You know, this, this, this industry in very many ways, it encourages the worst qualities of you as a person.

Narcissism, selfishness, greed, a lot of these things that we have come to know as practically cardinal sins.

It's one of those things that encouraged a kind of selfishness that was directly opposed to the very fundamental idea of motherhood.

And as I grew older, in my case, the court had to step in and rend my brother and I towards our father, who's an incredible guy.

But that selfishness is something that the legal system also observed and said that she was unfit.

And I think as I've aged and I've looked back on a lot of the circumstances of that entire environment,

I see a person that grapples with mental illness, drug abuse, but primarily narcissism.

A wicked narcissism.

The inability to perceive anything outside your own perspective would probably be the biggest sickness I see.

And that just doesn't work with me and the mother.

That just doesn't work with being in a family in general.

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You know, when it rains, it rains on everyone's roofs.

That's how it goes. It takes a village, man.

And selfishness that is encouraged very much, like I said, from the industry just doesn't really work. It doesn't really work for being a mother.

It's easy to look at that situation objectively and go, okay, just don't speak to them.

But this is your mother's.

Yeah, that's something I've dealt with a lot too.

That's my question, which is like, how have you tried to separate the two?

There's so many people listening to this right now who have a member of their family that is a toxic influence in whatever way.

And they struggle with this idea that because they're blood, I have to persist with the relationship.

I have to tolerate it.

Whereas if this was someone who I just met on the street or in school, I would chop off the relationship straight away.

How have you dealt with the duality of both of being blood, but also being unacceptable behavior?

Yeah, it's a great question.

I don't think you ever fully reconcile it.

I think it's the difference between this kind of immortal, abstract connection to someone, this thing that we call love, this energy, not to sound too California.

But this sort of immortal connection between a mother and a child or a father and a son or whatever it is.

And how do you distinguish that from anyone else who you would immediately cut off?

And I think for me, I've recently arrived at the philosophy that almost everything is some sort of lesson that we must take.

And I think lessons like this, when it comes to parents, when it comes to people who are supposed to be these sort of immortal, almost godlike figures in your life, especially during your youth.

That is the greatest lesson for your humanity that you can acquire.

The distinction between love and care and abandonment and pain as you grow.

I wouldn't call myself a religious man, but I do believe that everyone is put here in your life to have these interactions with you for some kind of reason.

And I know that sounds like fatedness, which we'll leave that for another podcast.

But I think it's a lesson that you have to learn.

And it's all in a way reflecting back and carving you into the person that you're supposed to be.

I also think it tests your patience and your love and the people that really persist and continuously try and find the love after all the pain.

Consistently we arrive to the care and the connection and the love, even though you've been deeply wounded by the ones who are supposed to be at your round table.

Those are the strongest individuals, in my opinion.

If you can consistently come to the other side of that conversation and go, I will still choose to care.

I will still choose to love.

That speaks a lot about you.

At some point, you have to put your love for yourself first.

It's the old oxygen mask analogy.

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Your journey with your mother, you're very young, you don't really know what's going on.

You're acting, you're doing these things at some point in your adolescence or beyond.

You figure out that this is not normal behavior.

This is not acceptable behavior for a mother and a son.

When was that?

I guess when social services came knocking is usually when it happens.

I don't know, I would go over to my father's house because the court gave primary custody to my mother.

I don't know too much about the UK legal system in this regard, but the United States legal system is incredibly biased towards the mother in cases of divorce and custody.

In this case, it certainly should have been my father taking custody.

This is obviously a case-by-case basis, but I would go into...

We'd spend some time with my father once a week and we wouldn't be able to eat candy and do whatever the fuck we wanted.

He would make us go and exercise and play outside.

There was a regiment.

There was a healthy regiment.

We weren't allowed to do whatever the fuck we wanted.

I think at that point, when you're a child, you go, man, this is no fun.

But as you pan out for a moment and you go, wow, I'm actually feeling a lot better here.

I'm present here. I'm happy here, even though I don't get to eat ice cream all the time.

Am I making sense with this?

Social services don't get called for eating ice cream.

No, no, they don't.

And I won't go too much into that because I don't want to make this whole podcast about another young man in LA with mommy issues.

But I do think that the circumstances of my life, or at least my childhood, are much like the sort of cliché narrative that you hear a lot about child stars.

But I don't talk about it too much because I don't ever want to be perceived as a victim of it.

I have never been and never will be a victim of any circumstance that I am in.

I don't wear victimhood on my shoulder.

I don't like to act like I am my wounds and to repeatedly be reminded of my wounds.

What happened in my youth happened and carved me and forged me into the person I am today.

For better and for us, right?

For better, for purely better, even through pain.

We trade trauma for wisdom.

That's what we do as humans.

When we go through heavy experiences, it deepens our eyes.

You know, I think for me, the reason I haven't really talked about it too much in the past is because, one, the media has a way of sensationalizing scars and victimhood like this is a person's character.

And in very many ways it is.

But they don't talk about the strength that is the byproduct of pain.

They talk about the pain, which is useless.

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All it does is perpetuate the past, which I think is a pain that existed in the past rather than going, my God, look how well he's done for himself, even though he's had such a tough upbringing. I think Oprah is another wonderful example of this where her story, her origin tale, so to speak, is very well known.

And look at what a beautiful example of success that she's become over time.

That, to me, is the most beautiful way that I think media can sensationalize the story of pain.

But I find that it's oftentimes not.

And I also feel like we're in a climate right now that really encourages people to talk about the victimization of pain more than they do about the triumph over it.

The strength that comes as a byproduct of that pain.

And so that's mainly why I don't talk about it too much, because I don't want to be that guy.

You know, I don't want to be that guy that's like, all the time.

No, man, you're given these lessons in your life so that you can triumph over them and use the traits that you've acquired from those lessons over time to carve out who you are.

One of the things I've mulled over from speaking to people on this podcast is about this idea that trauma you describe.

If it ever goes away, you know, should it?

Ask yourself that.

That's a good question.

It probably, I have to say, it probably shouldn't, because as you said earlier on, it's a lesson that you learned so that you could deal with your environment or circumstance.

And just like the lesson I learned of not putting my hand into fire, I'm not going to unlearn that at 30. No, there's no therapy that could help me.

Yeah, of course.

And unfortunately, I'm speaking for myself here.

I don't know about you, but I'm a dumbass that needs to learn by his own mistakes.

I mean, I can watch my father go, Hey, man, you need to drink water at this watering hole, but I, you know, you can't drag me there and make me drink.

I have to make mistakes in order to learn from my mistakes.

And a lot of my friends are very similar.

But I don't think I don't think those lessons should ever go away.

Like I said about my validation thing sticking around with me, what stuck around with you?

The workaholism has definitely stuck with me.

I need validation a lot.

I think that's a pretty common thing for most artists just to have.

But I am the byproduct of the byproduct of moments of incredible narcissism and moments of severe self-loathing and right in the middle is when I do my best work.

But a lot of that operation and the fluctuation between those two things is determined by people going, God damn, you're good.

What if they say, what if they invalidate?

What if they say, God damn, you suck.

I spiral, of course, but I don't let it hang on me.

I try not to let it hang on me.



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What does a spiral look like?

Man, maybe I should just run away and not do this and get some chickens and get some eggs and live off the grid and whatever it is.

It also manifests as the inability to say your desires out loud for fear of looking like a fool.

I think LA does that too because I think vulnerability is just something that we don't really encourage here in Los Angeles.

Why is that?

Because it's not cool, but it's not cool to Angelino's because someone that is cool hasn't said it like that before.

You know what I'm saying?

It's a lot of imposter syndrome in Los Angeles and so authenticity and vulnerability are not really encouraged traits.

Before you arrived, I was saying to my team, I was like, I watch all these interviews with people like yourself from LA.

That's a star's actors.

And I go, no one's ever asked them an interesting question, it seems.

Genuinely, before you walked in, this is what I was saying.

Because Lucy Hale was the same.

She goes, this is the first time I've had a deep conversation.

And I'm like, why?

And then I mimicked what interviewers are like.

Hey, where'd you get your shoes?

So can you speak to your twin and your mind?

Yeah, of course.

But who the fuck wants to talk about that?

Do people actually, you know?

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

I mean, because it's safe.

Yeah, right.

Because it's a safe thing.

You know, this is why I love the podcast space is because the podcast space creates.

Nuance.

Yeah, nuance and context.

It gives you the whole context right there, which is something that a lot of people, you know, in interview settings or otherwise are completely devoid of.

When you're selling a publication, when you're selling an interview with someone on paper, you don't really get the context.

Oh, well, the context was it was pouring rain outside for the last blah, blah, blah.

And you arrive to the studio and you got to sit down and have a teta-teta.

And we talked about having similar birthdays and we talked about Botswana beforehand and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

You know, you get the context, you get the connection, which I think is gorgeous.

Yeah, same.



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And I think it also creates a really beautiful way to discover the honest humanity and opinion of people.

Because we're, you know, entertainment media, it's sensational.

We're only going to sell the worst person in the world and the best person in the world.

We're not going to sell the humans in between, you know, and most of us fit within this kind of gray morality that doesn't really, you know, we're not all of us are these fucking outliers that are like these really firm, radical fucking people that are saying these radicalized things in order to preach to the sensationalism of the internet.

Most of us have these kind of moderate places that we sit.

So I think the podcast space is fucking awesome for that man.

You really get to sit and connect to people and have a conversation.

And for people that are interested, they fucking listen.

It's great.

As you might know, the show is now sponsored by Airbnb.

I can't count how many times Airbnbs have saved me when I'm traveling around the world.

Whether it's, you know, recently when I went to the jungle in Bali or whether it's when I'm staying here in the UK or going to business in America.

But I can also think of so many times where I've stayed in a host's place on Airbnb.

And I've been sat there wondering, could my place be an Airbnb as well?

And if it could be, how much could I earn?

It turns out you could be sitting on an Airbnb gold mine without even knowing about it.

Maybe you have a spare room in your house that friends stay from time to time.

You could Airbnb that space and make a significant amount of money instead of letting it stay empty.

That in-law, that guest house, that annex where your parents sometimes stay,

you could Airbnb that and make some extra income for yourself.

Whether you could just use some extra money to cover some bills or for something a little bit more fun.

Your home might be worth a little bit more than you think.

And you can find out the answer to that question by going to [Airbnb.co.uk slash host](https://airbnb.co.uk/host).

Your journey with your relationship with acting and the entertainment industry.

Yeah.

It's been a journey.

It's been tough for sure, man.

Can you give me kind of like a timeline of that journey and how you've felt through the process?

Yeah.

With your relationship with acting?

Absolutely.

Started at eight months old.

When you say that, it's still bad for my mind.

Diaper commercials, things like that.

Did commercials.

Worked on a sitcom for a bit.

Still wasn't really fully conscious.

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We were still doing the baby acting thing.

Did a sitcom called Grace Under Fire, a couple of other little TV spots here and there.

Identical twins, switching places, blah, blah, blah.

Then we booked Big Daddy with Adam Sandler when we were around six.

And that was like the big thing at the time.

This point about the use of twins in acting, some people might not understand the context.

Oh, okay.

You'd like me to explain?

Yeah, just don't play for this.

Children can only work a certain amount of hours, which is a very strange thing to say out loud.

In the button factory, in the coal mines, we can only work for two hours a day.

No, but we can only work for a certain amount of hours.

And so if you have two twins that look identical to each other, that people can't perceive as anything other than the same character, you double the amount of hours you can work,

which is an incredible economic loophole for a lot of young actors.

Like hitting the jackpot.

Yeah, yeah, of course.

Of course.

It was great.

Worked the system, baby.

But the problem is, when you start, at least from that philosophy,

and you go into an art, we've commodified almost all of the arts that exist.

But when you enter into a form of expression in a professionalized or work dynamic, it's hard to see that as a pursuit of passion.

So my journey through acting over time has been one of trying to balance art and commerce in a way, one for the money, two for the show sort of thing,

where I need to be reminded consistently to myself that I love this thing.

You know what I'm saying?

Making my money, becoming financially stable, getting financially stable,

taking jobs that aren't paying as much, but doing cool projects

and making yourself feel more in love with the discipline.

And I think, you know, this is a particular approach

that has to come from a certain socioeconomic background.

If you are, you know, this nepo baby conversation has been huge out here in LA.

I don't know how big it's been out in the UK,

but if you come from a financially stable background

and you can see it with any actor that has a really stellar resume,

where you're like, God, you've picked great movie after great movie after great movie.

You've been a part of all these really cool projects.

Well, they probably had a lot of financial stability

because those projects pay you fucking nothing, right?

So if you have the sort of patron that is allowing your freedom of expression

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to take these artistic projects and reinvigorate this passion for you, even in the face of commodification of an expression, then you can have a really stellar career.

But if you also have to make money alongside it, you're probably not going to take the super cool jobs.

You've got to sell drinkable yogurt for a little bit in order to go to college.

You know what I mean?

This is the balance between art and commerce that a lot of people don't understand.

In almost every other art, at least in photography, this is a great example,

no one looks at someone doing a commercial gig

and then going back to the editorial world and going, why would they do that commercial gig?

That's so strange.

But in acting, they do.

There's a huge division between those two people.

Massive.

Big Daddy.

Yeah.

That's what we left off, wasn't it?

Yes, Big Daddy.

So got Big Daddy at six.

Adam was just incredible.

We shot that movie for far longer than it needed to be shot in New York City.

It's my first time going to New York.

And then that was a whirlwind.

Were you cognizant at this point of your feelings with acting, your relationship with the industry?

No, it was super present, which is good, which is what I think we're all trying to get back to, is the sort of lantern consciousness of youth in terms of acting.

This is the state of play.

No one should go into acting and be like, I'm going to act.

I don't think that's right.

But I was still very present at the time.

And then Big Daddy came out and alongside it came this whirlwind of opinion and conversation and fame and all this sort of stuff, which would then, which was very polarizing, but would lead me into, I worked on a couple other director DVD movies at the time for some cash money.

And then did Friends.

I was a recurring role on Friends.

And then Dylan and I would end up booking The Suite Life on Disney, which of course was another huge lifesaver.

And your relationship with acting at this point is what?

Very commercial.

Okay. Are you enjoying it?

Not really, because now it had become a thing that was taking me away from playing in the cul-de-

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with the Friends.

You know what I mean?

So I loved school.

Like, I loved going to school.

I loved playing with my friends and all that sort of thing.

So at the time, I couldn't see it as anything other than that.

But that's, you know, that's what a child does.

And then we did The Suite Life.

And then I actually really did not mind not going to school.

So we were homeschooled from The Suite Life onwards.

And then every conversation, because I kept a lot of my super close friends.

You were 12 and 15 at this point?

Yeah, so we did that from 12 to 18.

12 to 18 on The Suite Life on Deck?

Yes, would be The Suite Life on Deck to spin off.

And when we got to high school age, all of my friends would tell me these stories from high school,

American public high school that was just like,

God damn, you lived through that shit?

I don't want to be part of that at all.

This sounds horrible.

And so then I was quite thankful to not be doing that.

And then I went to college.

You picked up photography around this time?

I did around 18.

I actually went to London.

And the first time I went to London, I said,

I should give myself a camera and document my brother and I's little journey through London.

I found a really curious quote that you said about the reason why you chose photography.

Sure.

Relating to it allowed you to escape your depression.

Yeah.

Yeah, I think a lot of people have sort of discussed that one quote.

I think I was certainly, I had gone through a huge break up after college right at the end of college and re,

I picked my camera up again.

And you put a lot of my emotional state into just shooting, hobbyism, which is a real wonderful thing to do when you are feeling sad.

Just pick up a hobby, dive into hobbyism.

And so I pushed myself into a lot of that.

And in very many ways, it allowed time to pass more quickly and for me to heal more effectively.

Yeah.

But I also did it because I wanted to express my vision in very many ways.

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When you're an actor, you are the byproduct of the writing, the direction and the editing. And a lot of people assume you have much more creative agency over a project than you do, but I don't find that to be the case when you're a commercial employee actor. When you are working on commercial projects in very many ways, they're controlling the image of you that people are seeing. And they control the takes. And you're as bound to the project as the writing is good or bad and the directors are changing week to week. So it's a difficult relationship to expression and self-identity. And I think at the time, I was really looking for a way to tell people, hey, this is what I can do if I'm given creative freedom. I think I've achieved that. No, your work is amazing. I was saying to you, I wasn't just blowing smoke up your ass. I went on your website and I thought, oh, we're moving into a new house. Me and my girlfriend. I thought this would be brilliant if we come out. I'll just send you something. Yeah, I hate anything I do after two weeks. So I'll send you some of the newer stuff. Textbook creative. Yeah. When's the moment in your life where you both loved and then the moment where you hated acting the most? I came back to it. Yeah. You know, I was college. Yeah. I was at real fork in the road and I made a promise to someone that I would return to acting, but I never anticipated I would. And I was reminded that I love performance, which is I love to perform in front of people. And I love the presentness of a performance like when you wake up at the end of the take and you go, man, I barely remember what I was even doing right there. I just felt that. I love that. I love performing for the crew. I love being on stage. I didn't like the shit that came with it because when I was young, you know, acting was like the grilled chicken of the dish. It was the biggest part of the course and the side salad was like the red carpet stuff and whatever the fuck it is. And now social media has made it so that the whole thing is just a grilled chicken salad now. I mean, like the salad is almost a bigger part of your success than the act of performance.

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And I think in very many ways, you know, your celebrity profile has become far too intermingled into your work as a professional.

And all of us within the industry are recoiling and trying to figure out a way to, you know, figure out how to deal with that.

I was, I have to be honest, I had a good laugh at your other Instagram account.

Yeah.

That's polarized a lot of people.

But at the same time, I thought I just I read about your sort of social anxiety that came with came along with the fame.

And then I heard you'd created this Instagram account of taking people taking pictures of people taking pictures of you covertly without asking permission.

And then I thought to myself, this is a great idea, but it's going to encourage it.

Yeah, of course it did.

Yeah, no, it totally did, which I don't mind as much that it encourages people because all it's done is just further reinforce why I've done it,

which is like, hey, people are not going to care about anything other than bragging about a place they've been or a person they've seen, you know.

How do you feel about that?

I don't mind it because all of us kind of just do it.

We're taught to do that sort of thing.

But I don't know if I'd necessarily make those people my friends.

How does it how does it feel to be on the receiving end of it every day?

I understand it.

Did you always?

Yeah, actually, I did.

Did you struggle with it?

Of course, I struggled with it for sure.

I'm asking this for myself.

Yeah, yeah.

Well, I think, look, man, we're always searching for a much deeper emotional connection to another human being.

You know, I would much rather have someone be like, like this podcast is a great example, tell me about what it was like growing up in your position.

And if anyone ever asked me that, I would be an open book.

You truly could come up to me and ask me any question on the street, and I would probably hold a tet-a-tet with you.

But people want to show other people.

But don't, please.

Yeah, but don't.

Don't do that.

But I think people want to want to show what they're up to right now.

And that's totally fine and natural.

Well, I don't know if it's natural, but we're, you know, we're conditioned to do that.

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But I think, you know, whether it's, you know, you're doing it ironically or authentically or you're truly excited or you admire someone or you want to just prove to other people.

I think most people have to understand that there is probably a greater connection to be made that exists.

There's a choice that you make when you're asking for a very surface level shallow interaction with someone.

And that the alternative did exist where you could probably deepen your relationship to an individual that you've wanted to talk to.

So I don't really mind when people do it. It just means that person's not going to be a cool connection to me personally.

Like I'm not going to remember that connection in my life when I'm telling stories and things.

Whereas, you know, I did a movie called Five Feet Apart, which dealt a lot with cystic fibrosis.

And I've had a lot of people who live with cystic fibrosis come up to me and talk to me about cystic fibrosis and talk to me about that film.

And those are connections in my opinion that have lasted with me.

I remember almost every single conversation I've had with something like that because it's not a, you know, let's take a pic.

It is, hey man, I want to let you know that I go through this something that you were trying to portray in this and, you know, it affected me like this.

And it's a discussion that enriches both people.

And even if you don't like the individual, you know, let's say you see someone that you really don't like the work of or you don't like the persona of,

going up and asking them a question is probably going to yield so much more to you than the alternative.

But we want to show everything on Instagram and social media and TikTok and whatever it is because we want, you know, we're all creatures of validation.

We want to see the likes and whatever the fuck it is and I've done it too. I'm not saying I haven't done it.

You know, I've taken a picture or tried to take a picture of John C. Riley, who I really admire.

You know, there's a lot of people that I deeply admire, but if I were given the choice between asking them a compelling question and taking a photo,

I would probably choose the compelling question for sure.

That's social anxiety.

Fuel really know what that's like.

People without fame will often experience social anxiety for their own reasons as well.

Sure.

When you say social anxiety, can you give me a picture of what that feels like in reality?

Oh, sure. Paint an image of it.

You're very good at painting images with your words, by the way.

Oh, thank you.

It's great. You're enjoyable to listen to.

You know what?

My social anxiety feels a lot like sitting in a sauna when it's just a bit too hot, like the sauna right



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before you have to get out.

You know what I mean?

It's like this warm sort of blanketing feeling, but it's not warm. It's fucking hot.

But it's a blanket over me, for sure.

For me, anxiety is really present, even though I'm thinking about future possibility or past actions that I have made.

It is a consistent, I'm living in this, I'm living in this, I'm living in this, I'm living in this, I'm living in this.

And so in that way, it's almost blanketed over me.

What I'll do for that anxiety is I will activate my five senses.

What do I see? What do I smell? What can I hear? Can I taste anything? What do I feel on my skin?

And it immediately grounds me in the present.

These things are grounding mechanisms that I really enjoy when I start to feel social anxiety.

Have you learned that somewhere?

Yeah, I think I did.

Where did you learn that?

Well, I did, I went to therapy. I've gone to therapy often all my whole life.

But he was a wonderful man up in Vancouver that taught me the sort of grounding techniques.

And he's right. But I mean, it can be a therapist, it can be a father figure, it can be anyone that teaches you.

Essentially, the root of it is be present, grounded in the present.

All the Eastern philosophers and the Buddhists were trying to tell you to do this shit the whole time, meditate, ground yourself in the present.

Grounding yourself in the present is the greatest enemy of anxiety.

What are the tools have you learned from therapy? I feel like I can learn a lot from you without having to pay the therapist.

Sure.

That's flattering.

Yeah, I try not to talk too much about mental health just in general.

Because everyone has an incredibly personal relationship to it.

And I feel like there's a lot of armchair experts on the internet right now acting like, you know, or diagnosing people or doing stuff like that, which I find that is so atrocious.

I can't believe people even do that.

And I think the conversation around mental health, unless it's being done by truly a trained professional, is probably not the greatest thing to listen to.

So with that disclaimer, I will say, whenever I'm feeling heightened emotionally, I will take a break from whatever I'm doing.

I will truly walk away from whatever I'm doing.

I will tell if it is an argument with someone, I will go, hey, right now I'm feeling some heightened emotion.

If you don't mind, let's pick up this conversation about 20 minutes.

Give yourself time.

You know, I try to approach everything with a kind of logos that, you know, allows me to think more

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clearly and calmly about what I do, which can be off-putting to some people.

Because not a lot of people like being met with logos when they're heightened emotionally or being met with solutions when they're just trying to vent.

It's one of the first things you learn when you're in a serious relationship, especially as a guy.

For sure, because a lot of us are solution-based people, you know?

I can relate.

But I'll take a break.

That's honestly the most helpful thing I've done.

I'll also try and remind myself of, you know, grounding myself in the senses, or I will remind myself that, one, you're not the only person that's ever gone through anxiety or will ever go through anxiety.

And two, the problem as you perceive it, the vastness of the problem as you perceive it is not the way other people perceive it.

What about your relationship with boundaries?

What? Please explain.

So, you know, the very first story you told about being eight months old.

Eight months old, you don't have boundaries.

Of course, yeah.

So they are obviously easily exploited.

As you grow older, sometimes when those boundaries weren't firm when they were young and you were maybe people pleasing or you were seeking validation, that can have a sort of cascading effect into adulthood.

What's your relationship been like with saying no and protecting boundaries, whether it's professionally, personally in relationships?

Well, that's a great question and one I'm far more qualified to answer now than I was even two years, three years ago.

I can honestly God say that I did not love myself enough as a younger man, especially my mid to late twenties, for sure did not love myself enough, did not respect my own boundaries.

What did that look like?

That looked like rolling over in the face of a lot of adversity, especially when it came to romantic relationships.

I was a people pleaser.

I was a people pleaser professionally.

I was a people pleaser romantically.

I was practically a fucking nurse to whoever needed my help in very many ways, likely as a byproduct of my upbringing.

But what that meant was oftentimes crossing my own boundaries as an attempt to make others feel better.

And as I've gotten older, I've become more OK with turning people off, which is all right.

You know, you're going to polarize individuals.

You are going to get along with certain people and not get along with other people.

That's totally OK.

And I think as I've aged, I've tried to remind myself, yeah, that was an awkward interaction.

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That was a bad interaction with someone, but you're going to have those men.

That's OK.

Move on.

And as I've loved myself now, and thankfully, I'm in a relationship right now with a woman who's so emotionally understanding and just the best.

And, you know, it helps when others can be like, yeah, dude, encourage you in the right direction and be like, yeah, it's OK.

Because I know myself, I will fall back on like, are you all right?

Like, is everything OK?

Like trying to control a situation through making sure everyone is happy, you know?

But it's not a fucking video game.

You can't get like the best solution where everyone is OK.

Sometimes you're going to really have to polarize some people, and that's all right.

My only boundaries, I would say, when it comes to my professional career or otherwise, I really don't like condescension.

So, like, if I feel condescension in any sort of way, if I see other people being condescending to others, if I can sense a kind of pretentiousness or condescension, that's usually something that will either take me to leave the room or confront another person about it and be like, hey, why'd you do that?

What is that relationship you described?

What has love taught you about yourself?

Oh, so much, man.

I've had the pleasure of being in love three times.

The pleasure.

I've had, I'd say, three big relationships in my life.

Three girlfriends in my life.

I mean, my first one when I was like a kid, but that was just kind of puppy love stuff.

And then I had one in college.

I dated a co-star on Riverdale, and now I'm in love again.

And every time it has been pretty distinct, I think maybe the first two, college and my last girlfriend, were far more similar because of me.

Because I was still approaching it the same way.

And then I did a lot of self-work and I fell in love again, thankfully, and it has taught me a lot.

Like I mentioned, I was a people pleaser.

I was deathly afraid of being perceived as anything other than perfect for a long time.

And so I would roll over quite a bit in order to make sure that as long as they were happy, that's what love is, you know, as a sort of consistent happiness.

And I was also actively suppressing my emotions and like not really discussing what I actually felt about a situation because I was afraid of retaliation in very many ways.

I was afraid.

Where did that come from?

Oh, I mean, certainly my youth.

Certainly my youth.

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Your youth?

I think growing up and, you know, building an entire life and business model off of the validation of other people certainly made me open to it.

But I also think the first relationship I ever had with a female figure, which is the mother figure in everyone's life, was an incredibly tenuous and fractured relationship with a tortured individual.

Which made me go, I can fix things.

Don't worry.

I got it.

You know, no, you're all good.

It's okay.

And I brought that in.

I brought that in a lot.

Were you trying to make her happy?

Oh, of course.

Yeah.

I think so.

When I was younger, especially, but even now as an adult, you know, I even now.

Yeah.

Yeah.

Of course.

You don't speak to your mother anymore.

I don't.

I don't.

But she put me on this path and there was once a woman who was very clear headed and who had a beautiful vision of the kind of people my brother and I could be.

And in very many ways, I honor the dream she once had so that if she were lucid enough and came back and saw what I had become, she would go, man, I was right.

And in that way, it would validate the entire life of pain and trauma that she has gone through.

Are you sad about where your relationship is with her?

Of course.

Everyone is.

Everyone is sad about something that could.

I mean, unless you're a sociopath.

When something beautiful and and lovely goes rotten, it can be a very sad thing.

And it does make me sad, but it's also life.

And that's the lesson that I've had to learn from it is that, you know, that sadness is okay.

It means I'm human.

It means I loved something outside of myself in a way that was so beautiful and so boundless that it.

That it makes me feel one of the strongest and most eternal of human emotions, which is sadness, like real sadness.

And that's okay.

Do you, do you, does part of you like hold out?

And this is kind of speaking from my experience as well.

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Sure.

Does part of you kind of hold out for things to just.

Get better or go completely wrong.

Get better.

No, I don't do that anymore.

What about the opposite?

You seem to more compelled by the opposite outcome.

Go completely wrong.

I mean, I'm sure you've reconciled this as well, but there's a part of you that goes, oh, what if this is my last communication with an individual?

You know, of course you have.

How would that make me feel as a consequence thereof?

How would it make you feel if this was your, you'd never go to speak to your mother again.

You know, and going back to the previous question, I tried for very, very many years to try and to try and do everything I could.

But at some point or another, it comes down to the individual, which is the hardest part.

Like you want someone to change or do something.

And this also goes to romance.

This goes to friendships.

This goes to blood, to whatever it is.

You can really yearn for someone to do the right thing.

And the hardest part is even if you set up the entire environment for them to do so, unless they choose it for themselves, it's just not going to happen.

And so I used to blame myself quite a bit for not just my relationship to blood, but, you know, I used to blame myself for all of the relationships in my life going wrong until I realized that, yeah, in almost every relationship, it takes two to tango.

Friendships, romance, blood, some, the other person has to be a participant in the dance just as much as you are participating in the dance in order for the outcome to be the one that you guys both desire.

When you say that you used to blame yourself for relationships in your life going wrong.

Does that mean that you originally blamed yourself for the relationship with either your mother or father, all the relationship between you and your mother going wrong?

I did because unfortunately as a consequence of being a working child, you are forced into an authority position when you're quite small, right?

Which is now you're the breadwinner of a family, over the adults.

So in very many ways, you take this very strange like role of authority and positioning when it comes to the subsistence of a nuclear family, which is not a role a child should be put in.

So when it does go wrong as a natural byproduct of the authority that you feel as a consequence of, you know, your professional life, you can adopt some of the blame on yourself, which I will say I do not do anymore.

Are you talking about the divorce there or are you talking about relationship with your mother?

Yeah, just everything, work, mother, whatever it is.

Super interesting.

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Yeah.

I mean, dude, this is also like, it should be said that the working child, a child that has worked since they were eight months old, you have to understand that that is a, not to sound like a fucking special snowflake as an identical twin.

You know what I mean, which is the greatest contradiction, but that is a life, an upbringing that is very, very, very, very rare, very rare.

There's only a handful of people that have that really weird path through the world. Most of them are in the United States, and most of them, you know, the sensationalism of their upbringing is talked about all over.

So that comes with a lot of bullshit, and it affects to tie us all back.

I'm getting us back.

Good.

Thank God for that, because I couldn't see how we'd make it back.

That affects how you navigate everything in your life, your relationships, which is what we were talking about, friendships, blood, all that stuff.

And my relationships were deeply affected by my upbringing.

Of course, my friendships were affected by my upbringing.

My relationship to my family was affected by my upbringing.

But at some point or another, you have to go, yeah, I'm on the right path.

And even if it's not, I'll try and make it the right path and I'll grow from it.

What makes you alive then? What brings your heart alive these days?

Passionate conversation.

Really?

For sure.

Without a doubt.

How many of them have you had?

Lots.

Publicly?

Not publicly.

No.

In fact, I've only done one other podcast, and these kind of public conversations are quite rare, which is why I love this medium so much.

But thankfully, I've surrounded myself with individuals that are capable of all having these conversations and for really diving into what it is that makes us all feel alive.

And I think truthfully, I think seekers of this kind of conversation find each other.

It's weird.

They really do.

And you can see it in others' eyes.

You can see people that love this shit in their eyes.

And so I think, I mean, I host inner parties and stuff and try to get as many people together to have these sort of conversations.

And it can be a little bit awkward for the first one.

Why are we talking about?

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But that's incredibly enriching to me.

Okay.

So you've just teed this up so perfectly.

Perfect. Hit it.

Everything you've just described, the type of person that likes deep conversations is very much the type of people that listen to the Diary of a CO.

And we have a closing tradition on this podcast where guests write a question in the diary for the next guest.

They never get to see who they're writing it for.

So because we know that the type of person that listens to this is by clear linkage, terrible use of words, the type of person that likes deep conversations.

We wanted to take all of the questions out of this diary that have ever been written into them and allow people to play at dinner parties.

The Diary of a CO, which is they can ask their friends deep conversations that have been written to this book.

You also get to see who wrote the question for the first time.

I want to play with you.

Yeah, please.

Right now.

Ask me some questions.

I took some cards out.

There's about 100 cards in total, but I took the ones that I thought were the biggest stitch up.

Oh man, that's a great idea.

I love that.

So what I'm going to do, I will also answer one.

Yeah.

But I'm going to lay them out here.

You pick one that you want to answer.

Whichever one feels right for you, then I'll pick one as well and I'll answer it.

We'll go through all of them.

So we'll pick one at a time.

One.

Okay, I'll pick one.

So you answer that one.

I answer this one.

Yeah.

This is by Tim Grover.

This is what is your dark side?

I think the dark side of myself is definitely the narcissistic side of myself that can come out when I am feeling super proud of something that I do.

And I will oftentimes try to humble that.

It'll get me seeking decadence, it'll get me seeking external stimulation from my environment and yearning for that, which is what every Stoic philosopher would be like, dude, shut up.



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And I really relate to that.

I think my worst side is the side that is seeking validation from other people rather than understanding and placing myself in my environment and going, wow, I'm so privileged to have what I have and where I'm at.

I believe that's the life side.

Okay, mine is from Wallstore, who is an expert on the topic of status.

Cool.

I wrote a book about it, which is kind of about validation and wanting to be famous.

Who is the person you'd most like to say sorry to but haven't?

A little bit.

I picked these questions to stitch you up, but I decided to answer them when I laid them out.

So mine would actually be my mother.

Yeah.

I've often framed her in my story as being, I don't know, like she's been the center point of difficult moments in my life, but she is also like the 95% of my story with her is just this woman that absolutely to her called absolutely loves me and my whole life, her whole life is me.

And, and, you know, like growing up, she did everything for us.

She raised us five days a week.

She can't read or write herself growing up.

She raised these four kids that I think are all pretty good, decent kids.

So I'd say that I'd probably say sorry to her for not spending enough time in conversation talking about her brilliance and the fact that I am the reason she is the reason I'm an entrepreneur.

Great answer.

Great answer.

Okay.

You pointed at one, but I'm not going to pick it up.

I don't know.

I don't know it.

No, no, no.

We're Shell Humes.

Cool.

If you could turn back the clock on one day this year and do it differently, what day would it be and why?

Oh, that's difficult.

I try not to live doing that too much where I feel like I need to change something.

But so I am sober.

I've been sober for about a year and some change, and it's been a wonderful thing in my life.

But I have thankfully had the self-awareness to apologize to some people in my life in the past in a similar way to the card that you just pulled.

And in order to protect another person's feelings, I did not tell them that I was going to be apologizing to an individual because I was afraid of the consequences of that face-to-face meeting.

I know this is a little confusing.

But if I could turn back and do it differently, I would be so transparent about that meeting over

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coffee to the affected individuals in order to be like, hey, I'm letting you know this is happening. I know that this is blah, blah, blah, but I just want to let you know with full transparency, this is what it is, blah, blah, blah.

Got you.

But otherwise, I try not to live like that.

So I'm clear, you apologized to someone and there was a repercussion of that apology, which you wish you'd kind of foresaw and addressed?

Yeah.

Exactly right.

Exactly right.

Because sometimes meeting with other people makes others uncomfortable.

Like, you know, especially as you grow older, some people are like, why do you meet with that individual?

But I think for me, I would have just been super, super transparent about it.

And be like, hey, this is happening blah, blah, blah, blah.

And that's been a consequence of the work I've done as I've cleaned my life up.

So I look back on that one day and I go, hey, man, the work you did should have told you that you could have been fully transparent with that, even if it made other people uncomfortable.

And I probably would have done that different.

But otherwise, I try not, I really try not to think like that.

Because they're lessons, right?

Because it's all lessons because I made that mistake for a reason, you know, and now I'll never do it again.

And the fact that I even said that as an answer means I've already learned my lesson.

You'd rather the lesson was in the past.

Yeah, of course.

Of course.

And in the future at some point.

So please.

Okay.

Here we go.

Tell me something about yourself that nobody knows and would be surprised to know about you.

Fucking hell.

Let's hear about your internet history, bro.

We're a superior.

So I had a guest on this podcast called called Steve Peters, who's just this incredible, like psychiatric, psychiatric therapist, et cetera, et cetera.

After he left, I contacted him and spoke to him about something I was dealing with this predicament in my mind.

And I was bouncing between two outcomes.

And it's the first time in my entire life.

And I've spoken to so many therapists that I've ever spoken to a therapist privately to try and resolve something.

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And I say that because I say that for one, honestly, just for one reason, which is I've spent so long on this podcast talking to therapists, including Marissa Pear, who wrote this question.

And Marissa Pear.

But I've never spoken about the fact that I too have spoken to a therapist about personal challenges that I've faced.

And Marissa Pear is just one of the best ever.

And so is Professor Steve Peters.

Do you feel embarrassed?

I think I did.

I think I did.

I think I always have.

I think it's funny because this is therapy for me.

And I laid it all out.

The Diary of a CEO started as like my therapy.

It was like me writing things in this diary and sharing with them with the world.

But I, despite my guests telling me about the profundity of speaking to someone else as you have today, as you did in Canada, I believe,

I've never done it myself until that moment where I spoke to Steven said, this is what I'm dealing with.

Like how do I navigate through this?

And it's incredible.

I think it.

Your brain can't think yourself out of the fucking.

No, I also think a good therapist is like, you know, your first house, like, like it arrives to you precisely when it's supposed to.

You know, because ultimately what we're all seeking, at least in therapy with the help of a trained professional,

but as a human connection to another person, you know, we all want our goodwill hunting.

You know, we want to, we want to sit down and have someone who has a deeply enticing personal connection to you and goes, I hear you, man.

I hear you.

You're okay.

Like, have you thought about it this way?

And so I do find a lot of these kind of conversations can be inching close to that.

And then that way I'll say, I do think there are a ton of different forms of therapy, you know, of self soothing of methods.

I find a tremendous therapy by going into the wilderness as an example.

You know, I find that really healthy thing for me to do to sort of disconnect and leave and go into the woods and do all that sort of stuff.

But I also think the other stuff is super valuable too.

And I don't think there's any shame in talking about it.

I think that's great.

I've thought about it so many times in my life, like there's been so many moments in my life.

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I think like 10 where I've seriously considered like, I need to go speak to someone else about this because I can't figure this out myself.

I remember like maybe two, three years ago, I was there was some like business challenge I was facing.

And it was just like keeping me up all night.

And I remember going on the internet, contacting someone and being like, can I speak to you about this?

And it's because I'm looking for a trained professional like that can coach me through my thought processes.

What you've described is so interesting to me because you said two things.

The first thing you said is therapy in essence is like a pursuit of connection with someone.

And then the second thing you said is about how nature is therapy.

These are all things that humans knew very well in our natural life 10,000 years ago.

Oh man.

Look, I studied archaeology.

You don't got to tell me that we've become movers and franchise over time because I know that shit.

Isn't that funny that therapy is just being more human?

Oh, I also think, look, we just want to, we want to be heard, man.

We look for soul.

We all look for soul in other people.

We want to know that soul exists.

We want to justify our soul by looking for soul in other people.

And when you find people with soul, you want to hang on to people with soul.

That's what we do.

You know, and I think when you're bearing your soul, especially in a sort of therapy environment, you want someone to pick it up and go, God, I see this thing, man.

Yeah, I see it.

I did something like this.

So, I mean, for me, it took me a while finding a therapist that was willing to be hands-on.

You know, there's this sort of hands-off approach to a lot of, you know, mental health work just in general.

And I just, I can't do that, man.

I need someone like, you know, in a sort of similar way to this is two people sitting down and going, God, man.

Yeah, for sure.

If therapy is therefore connection, then the thing that drives us to therapy must be disconnection, a feeling of disconnection.

Of course, man.

Of course.

Well, that disconnection could be anything, disconnection from nature, from people, from life, from purpose, whatever.

Yeah, it's, you know, you become afraid of your own soul being too disconnected from everything around you.

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Or that you feel so entirely alone or unique that no one else really understands you as a hard thing. So, when you go into therapy as an example and someone goes, yeah, dude, I hear you.

You know?

But then if the fucking alarm rings and they go, you're hours up, okay.

That to me, that's disconnection.

That's disconnection because then it feels like a monetary exchange.

I'm like, I don't want that.

All right.

Okay.

Haven't I done two? Oh yeah, that's the other one, okay.

How could you be more authentically you by Fern Cotton?

Is that pronounced correct?

Yeah, nailed it.

Perfect.

How could I be more authentically you?

I mean, I think stuff more like this.

I got to be less afraid of people going, wow.

He said, what?

I just don't care anymore.

I'm like, dude, I'm 30.

I lived a lot of that anxiety shit in my 20s and I truly believe that your 20s are meant to be a Petri dish for mistake that you're supposed to learn lessons from and go into your 30s and be better at.

And I don't know.

I think I am practicing authenticity in a way, but I think it's complicated because I don't know if a life in entertainment, people actually seek authenticity, which is something I'm dealing with.

And I think for acting, it's also a real dilemma because the more you show an authentic version of yourself, the harder it can be for people to suspend that and see you as a character, which is something I'm sort of sitting down and having a conversation with myself about.

But I'm not going to control what other people think, you know?

And I think I am practicing authenticity in very many ways.

How could I be more authentically me?

Stand on my ground, set my boundaries, you know, recognizing my own bottom line behaviors before I stumble into that shit.

Have you ever felt the cost of authenticity?

Of inauthenticity.

Yeah.

What is the cost in your view?

The personal toll.

Exposure.

If you're exposed to be a fraudster.

Yeah.

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If you're exposed to be a sort of snake oil salesman, that can be quite embarrassing. Inauthenticity can also get you into a place where you actually don't have the skill set to perform whatever you're trying to perform.

But I also think inauthenticity or feelings of inauthenticity are a natural part of courage. You're going to doubt yourself a little bit before you go into anything.

And I don't know.

I always find my most effective means of surviving anything is just kind of being thrown into the fire and being like, all right, I'm here.

What are we doing?

Let's go.

Oh, here we go.

Another stitch up.

James, what?

What is the belief that you hold that most people disagree with you on?

So many, in fact.

Yeah.

That's great, man.

That's good.

The first one I'm going to say is something that most people disagree with me on trying to decide between.

I'm going to say, I'm going to say the point about manifestation.

I think this is super controversial because anything that gives centers people on a sense of personal responsibility is typically not well received.

Like people don't love the concept of personal responsibility.

Obviously, there's lots of nuance to this.

But I would say that when the way that society and culture and Instagram have described the process of manifestation is largely bullshit.

And I think that manifesting, like knowing the example I always give is getting in the current set in the sat nav is, of course, important because if I just drove without direction, I'd be lost.

But if I don't drive, I'm also just sat in my garage with a sat nav set all day.

I don't think you can just manifest yourself your way there in life.

I think luck plays a huge role.

Circumstance plays a huge role.

Where you live.

If I was still in Botswana, there's not going to be a driver CEO interviewing you today, right?

Sure, maybe.

If my mom hadn't met my dad.

So there's circumstance.

There's luck.

There is will.

There is hard work.

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And then there is also an importance to know the direction you're going in.  
But I think manifestation as an idea is oversold because it makes life easy and comfortable.  
And it also obfuscates us of the responsibility of work and personal responsibility.  
I think it is.  
I think it's absurd to pursue comfort, absurd in anything you do.  
I think at some point or another when your hands are on the wheel in this car with the sat nav, you're going to have to fucking drive.  
And if the sat nav goes out, okay, man, you're still behind the wheel driving a fucking vehicle.  
You know, I think you also have to really strongly believe in yourself, really strongly believe in yourself because there's a lot of things that people love gatekeeping shit.  
It's crazy.  
Everyone loves it, especially on the internet.  
They love gatekeeping.  
It's like the first thing you're going to interact with when you jump into something new.  
You're going to go, not that guy, you know, what weren't you doing this or don't do it.  
Don't talk about that.  
Don't do this.  
People love gatekeeping, which is so funny because the idea that we have to be like these incredibly specialized needle fine, like kind of people is ridiculous.  
You know, I try everything, go into it boldly, but you got to believe in your success and you have to take accountability.  
Have you struggled with that late, that idea of being labeled as something?  
Oh, of course.  
You know, there's people listening to this now who are like a lawyer or they are a whatever, right?  
And they want, they have this passion for something else.  
It could be photography like you, but they're a lawyer.  
Their bio says lawyer.  
Their LinkedIn says lawyer and the resistance, the social resistance, but also the psychological resistance of that label is creating keeps them confined in a way that is not fulfilling or conducive with a happier life.  
So breaking out of those labels, when you're a, you know, a star from such a young age, you get your label super early called you are an actor.  
There are many ways a child star is what I'm called quite often, which okay, but dude, I mean, look, anyone that doesn't think outside of terms of labels, it's just useless to me.  
I got to be real.  
Like anyone that cannot find a deeper humanity in whatever, whatever kind of person they're sitting across at a table is probably a pretty useless person to talk to, in my opinion.  
I think labels can be difficult and also helpful in very many ways.  
Let's say you're a lawyer, yeah, man, make that money on that, on that label.  
Sure.  
Make that money on that label and then surround yourself with the people that don't see you as this is my lawyer friend, you know, because you don't need that many people.



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You need a round table of people that are going to be like, yeah, that's cool, cool, wow, what a renaissance human that guy is.

You know, that's what you really want people to say, oh man, what a good person that person is, you know, that's great.

The label thing can be difficult, but I think it's useless to think like that.

I think anyone that goes, wow, you know, this, anything outside of human, you know, is silly.

And I know this sounds a bit woo-woo and pretentious because it doesn't be like, don't label me.

But I think it's true, I don't think thinking in terms of labeling is useful in the slightest, in the slightest.

And I would like to think at the end of all of our lives, we've surrounded ourselves with, you know, a rich enough body of experience to go, yeah, man, I tried blacksmithing for a period of time.

Yeah, dude, I crafted a little necklace.

I was a silversmith for about a year and I tried that shit out and it went really well.

And I think people are going to try and gatekeep you, but I think what I mean is that you're always going to have to fight against some sort of label, regardless of what it is.

And if there's a bouncer at the door gatekeeping you from getting inside the club, guarantee you that there's a fucking side entrance.

Guarantee you.

And you got to fight your way to get there, man.

I'm a firm believer in that.

You have to also recognize the kind of restrictions that are being put on you, but I think you always got to fight for yourself.

If you don't fight for yourself, legitimately no one else is going to.

Early on, you said something to me.

You said, have I ever sort of hypothetically played out the scenario that that person in my life, my mother, might not be here and reflecting upon that being the last conversation I'd had with her.

How would I feel?

I've got two pictures here.

What are the words unsaid to this individual?

That's my father.

And that could be my brother or myself.

I have no idea.

What are the words that are not said to that individual?

You were at the exact place that you were supposed to be right when you were supposed to be there.

For sure.

My father was 27 when he had two identical twin boys.

That's big.

You know, I'm 30.

I can't imagine having two identical twins.

I'm sorry to expose you, but he immediately got a vasectomy right after he found out he

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was having two twins.

I just find that hilarious.

That's my favorite story about him.

He was an idly at the time.

I'd say, man, what is your hair routine?

It's looking great.

He looks like a stud in that photo.

This is a stud photo.

Yeah.

Yeah.

For sure.

Good job, pop.

You're at the exact place you need to be right when you were supposed to be there, and whatever happens in the following years are all the lessons that you need to take for the future of your life.

But every step of the way you've been exactly where you're supposed to be, for sure.

The words unsaid to this person.

It's funny.

The thing about writing that in this journal is, what would you say to your child itself?

That's funny.

This kid, this is me on the left, Dylan on the right.

I wouldn't want to condition this kid at all.

I see a kid that's like so present in this moment.

And I've had this dilemma because I have some step siblings.

And I find myself wanting to ask them, hey, you've been thinking about college.

Hey, what are you thinking about in the future?

I think I'd probably just talk to this kid about hippos or platypus or some fun shit, you know, Pokemon, whatever it was.

I don't think it's wise to put the future or past tense thinking of an adult onto a child.

And I think it's your responsibility as an adult who loves a child to encourage that lantern consciousness and that presentness for as long as you can and as far as you can.

And anything that takes them away from that presentness should be the enemy of your life and that child's life.

Isn't that what happened to you?

Yeah, it is.

It is.

And that was the perfect lesson I needed to know for my eventual children.

What about Dylan?

My brother and I have made it this far and have been as okay as we have become because we did not feel lonely.

We always had each other as a frame of reference to grow up and alongside and I think I'm incredibly

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privileged for that and he is too.

We thankfully got to go through everything we went through alongside each other and I think that's built him into the exact kind of person he's supposed to be and me as well.

And I really am living my life now in a place where I don't look back with regrets or anger or pain or anything like that.

So I don't know, I'd probably kick his ass, honestly, if I'm thinking about it now.

I'd probably smile at myself and then beat the hell out of Dylan and I'd have reach advantage and stuff too, it'd be great, just throwing by his legs like Bowser.

We have a closing tradition this podcast where the last guest asks a question for the next guest.

The question that's been left for you.

You have one last piece of work to do.

What is that piece of work and why?

If I had children, make sure that they were okay.

Try and make sure, ensure that whatever I could do is my last action would create more easiness for them because life is going to roll over you regardless of how easy you've had it.

I would try to have one last thing said or done that helped them in the future.

You went straight to children?

Yeah.

And if I was a grandfather, I would take all of my cash and convert it into some sort of gold doubloon and I would bury that shit, I'm not telling you where, but I would send them on the greatest treasure hunt ever.

I mean, really give them one thing that they said, God, grandpa wasn't a snake.

But what a story he gave us, you know, Goonie style.

I want to be the guy that sends his grandkids, I'm like, oh, grandpa Cole was just insane, man.

He was a wacky guy, he found the treasure.

I wouldn't make it too hard, you know, but I'd want them to go someplace.

Sounds like a great movies plot.

Yeah, maybe.

Maybe they'll write it.

Who knows?

Grandfather Cole.

Work is interesting, that's a really interesting question because I hope I'm not working.

Really?

I don't like, I hope I don't see it as work.

Okay.

You don't see photography as work?

No, no.

I don't see acting good at like the stuff I feel really passionate about as work either.

Have you ever had a conversation like this one publicly?

No.

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I think it'll be fun.

Cole, thank you.

Yeah.

A huge honour.

And tremendously valuable for me more than I could probably tell you, but meeting people like you that have gone through unique life experiences and are able to look back introspectively and sort of historically and depict that in such a self-aware, honest, vulnerable way is the very reason I started doing this and the very reason I continue to do it.

So I thank you because it's a real, I feel like you've, I feel like, I feel like I owe you something for being, I know this is how I always feel for all of the lessons I now, for the rest of my life, get to go on with from your journey.

And as a fan of yours now, both your art and your photography, I guess are the same thing.

But just for semantics, I'm going to follow, I'm going to continue to follow you with a renewed perspective on your humility, your talent and your humanity.

Well, thank you.

And by the way, every conversation like this we trade just as much.

For anyone that's empathetic, which you seem to be, you trade just as much.

This is the beauty.

You and I were both August 1992 from very different backgrounds and yet we can still sit around a round table and go, man, I know the feelings of what you've gone through even though you and I are very different people.

And I think that's the beauty of it.

You know, that's the beauty of that connection I've been talking about.

I think empathy is the currency of all this stuff.

And you've asked some really wonderful questions and I'm glad that I was able to answer in a way that hopefully brought out something.

But thank you again.

Thank you for having me.

That was really wonderful.

Thank you.

I've now been a Huell drinker for about four years, roughly, so much so that I ended up investing in the company and I play a role on the board of the company, but they also very kindly sponsored this podcast.

And to be honest, I've never said this before, but Huell believed in this podcast before anybody else.

The CEO, Julian, told me before we even launched the podcast how successful it would be and that Huell would back it.

And I absolutely have a huge amount of gratitude for them for that support, but an even greater sense of gratitude for the fact that they've helped me stay nutritionally complete throughout the chaos and hecticness of my tremendously busy business schedule.

So if you haven't tried out Huell, which I hope most of you have at least given it a go by now, try it out.

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busy schedule and let me know what you think.

Send me a tweet and a DM tag me, let me know what you think.

Quick word from one of our sponsors.

I have to say I've been on a bit of a journey with this brand because when I started my business in new territories, when we first moved social chain to New York City, the first place we went to was WeWork.

We moved four of our team members out to New York City and we built the business from there.

I have to say there's something magical about WeWorks.

I've spent the last two or three weeks in LA in a WeWork and as you walk in the front door every day, it's almost like that sense of community, that sense of magic, excitement, camaraderie is tangible and you don't get that when you're working at home.

You don't get that often when you're sat in your bed on your laptop.

There's something about getting out and getting into a WeWork that makes me feel a sense of entrepreneurship and creativity and building and the way that WeWorks are designed both in the way that they offer subscriptions so that you can work on demand, but also the flexibility of the contracts means that it's just the perfect place for businesses to scale their companies.

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