

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E233: Tony Hawk: My Name Made \$1.4 Billion! Burnout, Obsession & Regrets

Yeah, I'm either gonna make this or get taken away on a stretch
It changed my life completely
We prepared for that how could you prepare for anything like that?
Tony Hawk began riding a skateboard when he was nine years old and when he turned 16
He was the best skateboarder in the whole wide world
Being the outcast and the outcast activity I got picked on I got bullied even when I turned pro
I would leave high school for a big skate event. I'm signing autographs, and then I would come back and be a ghost in the
Hallways again. I just wanted to see skateboarding get more popular, but I got famous by accident
Suddenly I was chosen ambassador. I was making income
I owned a house in my last year of high school
So I was doing talk shows and I was doing big appearances my video game was a big hit
How much revenue of billion dollars? Wow
The trajectory just seemed like it was never gonna end and then it dropped very quickly. I
Was so hyper fixated on my skating. I didn't really work on my humanity
I was a machine and I'd go and do the event and when the trophy go home
It didn't allow me to be myself very much. Did you lose people?
Yeah
Made them feel like they weren't the priority and a lot of it was just being afraid of intimacy and I regret that
I started getting burned down on competition
The term burnout is used a lot these days. What did that experience teach you about what causes burnout?
taught me that
Before we get into this episode just wanted to say thank you first and foremost for being part of this community
The team here at the diverse CEO is now almost 30 people and that's literally because you watch and you subscribe and you
Leave comments and you like the videos that this is shows been able to grow
and it's the greatest honor of my life to sit here with these incredible people and just
Selfishly ask them questions that I'm pondering over or worrying about in my life
But this is just the beginning for the diverse year
We've got big big plans to scale this show and to every corner of the world and to
Diversify our guest selection and that's enabled by you by a simple thing that you guys do which is to watch
So if you enjoy this show, I have one simple favor to ask you
Which is could you hit the follow button on Spotify or Apple or wherever you listen to this podcast?
Not sure if you've ever listened to this podcast before but I'm quite predictable with how I start these conversations
And I'll I'll be transparent in terms of my rationale
When I read about a story like yours and I read about how much of an anomaly you were in many respects of your life
I always asked the question why and how?

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E233: Tony Hawk: My Name Made \$1.4 Billion! Burnout, Obsession & Regrets

Where did that begin? Where did that start and having you know read right back into your your parents history and your history?
I saw signs of that, but
Seeing as you're here
Best place to ask you can you give me the context that you believe was pivotal in shaping you to become the person that you are today I
Think early on I was I was obsessed when I first started skating. I
found something that
Spoke to me. I found a community of people that were we were just a bunch of misfits an outcast that sort of
fit together somehow and I
I loved what skateboarding brought to me in terms of my sense of identity my sense of self-confidence and
The creative aspects around it. I just loved it and all I wanted to do was
Was it as much as possible?
and there was no
There was no end goal there were no there was no fame or fortune in the cards because no one had ever
Had that from skating even the top skaters
so
What was it? It was just an obsession and
I wanted to
Do it as best I could
always
Even even when I reached the top of the ranks of competition. I still wanted to get better
When you say obsessed and the way you describe it almost sounds like it was medicine
Yeah, and in a lot of ways it was I mean I was a
Smaller kid. I got we used to call it picked on I got I got picked on a lot
bullied and
I didn't excel that much in team sports. I just kind of was middle ground if that and
Then when I found skating every time I'd go skate I got better at it
And it was incremental sometimes almost immeasurable, but I knew that I was
Getting I was each time I was improving and I couldn't say that about any of the other sports
I was doing I could I mean baseball basketball like yeah, sure. Sometimes I'd score mostly I wouldn't
but I never felt like oh, I'm really
I'm really getting to a different level of this
It was more like I did it because it was expected of me and every time I skated I got better every
time
I would go to the park. I would learn some little new technique that would lead me to something else
What was that progression doing for you on a psychological level?
It gave me a sense of purpose
it gave me an outlet for my energy and my frustrations and it gave my my parents some
much-needed reprieve from my

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E233: Tony Hawk: My Name Made \$1.4 Billion! Burnout, Obsession & Regrets

from
My
determination
That's my that's my what my mom put it in her best ways that I
Was I was difficult. I was always very
Thickheaded I wanted to do my things my way I wanted to do on my terms
and she said when I found skateboarding I really found a
directive for that and
When her friends would say he's such a nightmare. She'd say he's just very determined
Nancy that is right. Yeah Frank announce your parents. What was what was your home life like with
them?
It was pretty
Quiet I don't know I
My parents were older when I was born so it kind of felt like I was raised by grandparents
Because my dad was 45 my mom was 43 by the time I was
At an age where I was being very active and doing things. They were they were kind of in retirement
mode
So and and they I can't say they were I
Don't know they weren't
They weren't close
It was almost like they were just roommates and so that
Definitely rubbed off on me in a lot of ways, but but it just felt like oh, this is just a functional
household. It's not full of
Love necessarily
I'm the youngest of four
I
Sometimes ponder whether sometimes the youngest child of the bunch because you were the
youngest of three, right?
the parents almost
Think that they've finished with parenting. Oh for sure in my case my my older siblings were all my
my brother was closest
He's 13 years older than me
So absolutely they thought they were done raising children. I was I was not planned and
And I think that my parents were kind of reaching a winter of their of their marriage
Even before that or just after I was born so it was a little icy and
And I think that because they were from that generation. They you know those generations you just
stay together no matter what and
so they did and and
It's not like it was it was terrible. Like I said, it just it just wasn't that warm. I
Can also relate to not being necessarily planned was there ever a were you ever cognizant of that as
in like were you ever aware that?
It has did that ever have an effect on your psyche that you weren't planned at all. No, I never
thought about that

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E233: Tony Hawk: My Name Made \$1.4 Billion! Burnout, Obsession & Regrets

I guess I never I was never that
Deep in my introspection
To worry or concern myself with that fact. I just knew that I wanted to go skate
You were really really intelligent kid. I read that your IQ was like 144 or something. Yeah, maybe at one time
Which is which is surprising typically I think of a child that has that void of independence and which it sounds like you had of
Not necessarily being the best academically or in terms of smarts, especially if they're distracted or preoccupied with something like sports
Like skateboarding one would think that
Academia or intelligence might fall by the wayside. Um, no, I always relied on that. I was in the
In the gifted classes
Growing up and so I was with other kids that that were of that same ilk and
So I always thought that that my path would be more
Academia-based, you know, I thought that I would be I
I actually thought I was gonna be a math teacher because I excelled at math and and I liked helping my friends with it
So I thought oh that that is the maybe that's my
my trajectory and then when I found skating it wasn't that my
Academics fell by the wayside, but it was more that oh, maybe I have something else here and
It really wasn't until I was in high school that I realized more of the potential of that
I feel like skating these days is still is really cool now, but having read back through your story
It seems like it wasn't as it was not
In fact in my early high school days, I had to hide my I had to I chose to hide my skateboard in the bushes behind the school
Because I use this transportation and because I would get hassled carrying it around school
You know, they would they would say not so nice things as I would walk stroll by with my skateboard
Even though I was starting to find some sense of success with it. I was actually at that point
Sponsored I had a company that was giving me boards that was sending me to events and
Even when I turned pro which meant that I was had my own skateboard model. It was just not cool
So it was cool in certain sex like I would I would leave high school. I would go to
For instance, Houston for a big skate event and
There's all kinds of skaters there. I'm signing autographs taking photos and then I would come back from that weekend
And maybe even have won some some money
To go to high school and be a ghost in the hallways again. That's the kind of dichotomy I was living
You talked about how the progress was like a motivating a driving factor that you know getting incrementally better every time you did it outside of the
Technical aspect of skateboarding. What was the the value for you?
Outside of like doing the tricks and stuff. What what what was like filling you up the the culture the community of it
I loved everything about it. I love the attitude the DIY aspect the the renegade
Attitude that you would you have to hop fences, you know to go skate an empty swimming pool or to

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E233: Tony Hawk: My Name Made \$1.4 Billion! Burnout, Obsession & Regrets

go skate a
School yard and and it was just so there was so much
Art and creativity involved. It was like any skater
It's more most likely they're gonna play also play music or they're also gonna be artists or do other
interesting things and so
There was a soundtrack to it. It was it was embedded in in punk music because that was the same
sort of
Vibe and attitude that we had
And it was just more like oh, this is this is my scene
This is this is I have the sense of belonging here and I don't care if I don't fit in with my classmates
or my peers
And it's so you you started you got your first hand me down board at eight years old
Yeah, like nine or ten. Yeah from your brother from my brother. Yeah
And by 12 your
You're sponsored by
Sponsored. Yeah, which basically meant that I got free skateboards once in a while. It wasn't some
there was no contract
I wasn't like a million. Okay. No, and then at 14
I turned pro but all that really meant was that I
Moved up a category in competition
so there was there was sponsored amateur and then there was professional and
To be professional and just meant that you were competing for a
\$100 first place prize money. What at what point did you realize that you were good?
Comparatively
I think it was
It would have been later on in my pro career when I started to figure out how to do these
What they called
They used to call them circus tricks, but I like to think they were more avant-garde
and I would do these these sort of
Unique moves that I created but I started to learn how to do them more in the air like an impressive
height
and I think it was around
probably more around
16 age 16 when I started to realize like oh, I can do these things
At heights that is reserved for very few
And I I can do them on other terrain besides just my familiar home park
And I guess that's probably the point where I felt like I have something that is more valid than just a
niche style of skating that only happens in at my hometown park
You know when you you think about why you were able to do that like why you were
Incrementally better or you know significantly better than your peer group. Have you ever figured
out in terms of what they call talent?
Why that is is it?
It's smart. Is it physical attributes? Is it um, I think it was that I

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E233: Tony Hawk: My Name Made \$1.4 Billion! Burnout, Obsession & Regrets

I
Wasn't afraid to step out of my comfort zone and I also wasn't afraid to get hurt along the way and
I accepted that as part of the process and I can't say that very many people did that
I mean definitely definitely my peer group the ones that were skating at the time
They knew what it took to get that far and they were willing to take the hits for it
But also I like to explore other techniques that weren't
Comfortable or or maybe that I even thought were cool because I wanted to learn everything and
So I would I would start I would go off on these tangents of trying certain tricks or a board
manipulation and then lean into that and do every single variation of that and then move on to
something else and then all of that
Started to combine into this trick repertoire that I that I had that was that was pretty deep
You know, they say when you if you want to master something you've got to do 10,000 hours
Yeah, sounds like you did a lot of hours at that
I mean at some point I was probably doing just one trick 10,000 times
We say all of this, you know, you said later in my pro career and then you said you were 16
Yeah, well, I've had a pretty lengthy pro career
but I would say that around age 16 is when I started to come into my own and and was able to
Shut down any of the of the pushback or the haters so to speak because
They were all saying oh, he's only good at his home park
or he's only you know, he only does these these goofy little tricks and at some point
it was like you can't really deny that I'm doing these tricks in the most difficult circumstances and
And consistently and so I
Had this this run of success in my late teens that was I thought
Unparalleled I mean in terms of suddenly I was I was making income
I owned a house when I was still in my last year of high school from my earnings and
Everything's the trajectory just seemed like it was
It was never gonna end and then it it dropped very quickly in the early 90s
And then I had a good three or four years were very slow
and and touch and go in terms of
Trying to make a living provide for a family
And then things kind of came back around in the late 90s
So when I say early in my or you know late in my career, there's a few stages of that
And that first stage is from 16 to
2023 23. Yeah, and at that point I read that by 16 years old you were the best in the world
You were widely right. I I had why I was ranked number one for a while. Yeah
and
It's tricky though. I mean, I don't like I don't like saying that just because
skating is is subjective and it's apples to oranges. So
Who is the best that's all in the eyes of the beholder? I did well in competition. I I got good scorers
and I had a good run
I mean, I think you're slightly under playing that because I you know
I was reading through some stats and I read that 16 you were widely regarded as best skateboard in
the world and by 25

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E233: Tony Hawk: My Name Made \$1.4 Billion! Burnout, Obsession & Regrets

You'd won 73 of the 103 professional contact contests. You'd entered finishing in second place a further 19 times
Which is for me pretty freakish. I yeah, I mean, I like I said, I had a good run
But also it's a specific style. So I was skating pools and half pipes
and then in the early 90s street skating
Came into its own and what you see today with people jumping downstairs on handrails ledges and things like that
that was just starting to blossom and
I realized pretty early on that that was not my strength and that my
Ratio of success to injury was much higher doing that. So I I kind of I kind of gave it up
I was in it for a while
I was skating some of the competitions and I was doing a lot of tours and things and then at one point
I was driving home from a tour
I had
sprained one ankle almost to the point of breaking it but somehow didn't and then
In the process of nursing that one. I was still skating because we were on tour
I I rolled the other ankle trying to save this ankle and then I'm driving home with these with these
with ice on both ankles
With a car full of skaters and in that moment. I thought I can't
Keep doing it this way. Like this. This is not sustainable. I'm not gonna be able to be a pro skater
much longer
if I'm if I think I'm gonna
Do this type of skating and so I'm gonna stick with more of the half pipe
Which is what I know even though that wasn't the popular way of skating. I just knew that if I
wanted to keep skating
Into my adult life. I was gonna have to stick with with my expertise
And I'm right in thinking from what you've said there that your skating career started to really take
off, you know
1516 kind of peaks at one point around that 23 around I would say around
2122 is when it started to peak. Yeah, and at what point in that journey? Did you think I'm gonna
skate professionally?
Form the rest of my life. Was there a point where you did this job now? You never know in fact when
I was
24 is when I started my company Birdhouse and I
I honestly thought starting a company was my way of of sort of bowing out of the spotlight and
Not being a so-called professional skater because there was there were very there was very little
opportunity for me as
a half pipe or vert skater to be doing anything and I was trying to nurture a group of skaters that
were mostly street and
trying to give them
new opportunities and trying to
Have them promote our company as well

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E233: Tony Hawk: My Name Made \$1.4 Billion! Burnout, Obsession & Regrets

So I thought that I was curating a team and that I was going to be sort of the ringleader of it
But not be considered a pro myself. I never quit skating though. That was that was just my blood and
so at some point a
few years later
Things started to pick up again. The X games happened
They had a they had a half pipe contest and I was still on top of my game
so
after that I started to compete a lot more because
The interest grew and then I was I was winning a lot of events
It's we don't often think it's possible for a sport to kind of experience a downturn
Right commercial downturn like thinking about the big sports of today the NBA basketball
Whatever it be the thought that it could kind of have an economic downturn and put the athletes out
of business for a while
It's kind of inconceivable for me. So I mean I most of most of my peers quit in the 1990s
Yeah, I or quit or not. I can't say quit most of them found jobs
Because so what what happened in the skating industry the commercial side of the business?
There was a few things. I think that skating had gone through cycles in the past in the late 70s
Skating was the new fad. It was like the if for especially in the US was like the yo-yo
Mm-hmm, and it's the new toy and it's a transportation and you can do all these things and then and
then that fad that fad kind of
Faded out and then in the 80s it became this thing because we were skating the empty pools
and there was this attitude and the music and the hairdos and the graphics and then it and back to
the future and
so that was another spike in popularity and a lot of skate parks were opening in those days and I
think in the late 80s
The liability became too much for these skate facilities and they just started closing very quickly
I mean there was just a toppling of of skate parks through I would say 89 to 91 and
Then there was no place to do it because there were no public parks. They all these facilities are
private
There were few but they were not good
And so all these private parks were closing shop and then we had skaters had nowhere to go
so
That's when skating took to the underground and became more street centric
Your dad was working in the industry as well around this time. He was in the in the 80s
Yeah, he helped to form the National Skateboard Association which sanctioned most of the events
through those years
How did how did he get to skateboarding?
just he saw he saw me and and
He saw how much I loved it and he saw a very a
serious lack of organization
And he was always very supportive of his kids. I mean my brother was a surfer
He would drive him to the beach at dawn to to get the good ways my my sister was in a band
He would he would be the roadie for the band and drive all their gear to the gig

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E233: Tony Hawk: My Name Made \$1.4 Billion! Burnout, Obsession & Regrets

So when I started skating he was all in on supporting it, but he saw that it was just sort of chaos
There were there was very little organization. There were very few events and he saw a group of
kids like me that
Loved it and had very little support. It's been quite entrepreneurial about that about your dad
founding. Yeah
I don't I don't he never did it. He never really got paid. So
You know to think that it was entrepreneurial. It was it was more altruistic than anything
Did that create a conflict of interest if all like it was hard? Yeah
It was absolutely difficult for me in those years because I was doing well and
then there was
there were
Claims of nepotism
There was a lot of animosity and it was uncomfortable for me because my dad was always there and
I was doing well
So it would be one thing if I wasn't skating that well if I was just sort of yeah mid-range
Um, but I think that all of that
Just drove me to get better and prove everyone wrong. I mean, I'd like to say that I
Didn't I didn't enjoy it, but it definitely lit a fire
It's interesting when when people attack you in such a way or they try and discredit you especially
when you're of course
Only when you're doing well it can evoke a series of responses in you. Yeah, I
I I was under a lot of pressure and a lot of accusations like that and I
Just kind of put my head down and just focused on my skating until
Until I shut him up
But even then it was
It was always tricky, you know, it was like that then my dad he got out of it
and not long after that he got sick and passed away and lung cancer, but
Then the X games came around and like I said, I was still on top of my game
And then I was the I was sort of the one they were focusing on because my name
Had resonated from the previous generation and then I was I was doing well in competition
So then the other skaters were accusing me of hogging the spotlight
I'm not choosing the programming here
And so that was tricky too, but I I think I learned so much from my early days of of sort of being the
outcast and the outcast
Activity that that you weren't really gonna I had sort of built up a resilience to all that
But it's still difficult, right? Like the outcast and the outcast activity. Oh, yeah, I felt very isolated.
Yeah
In that
That's the word isolated but in real terms
What does that look like for a young man who's doing something that he loved has got really fucking
good at it
So now there's that's pointing the camera at him. There's all this commercial pressure
What impact does that have on on the love for it?

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E233: Tony Hawk: My Name Made \$1.4 Billion! Burnout, Obsession & Regrets

Well, luckily I had been doing it for so long at that point and had seen it come and go that I was excited in the sense that skateboarding was going to get a new a renewed interest and If I was the conduit to that then I'll accept it. I wasn't trying to get all the glory I just wanted to see skateboarding be more accessible and get more popular and so at some point I Don't want to say that anyone appointed me, but but it was definitely I was this chosen ambassador to skateboarding Because I could I could do interviews and I could speak on behalf of skating at its core but also to a mainstream audience to make them understand why skating could be valid or why it would be a positive influence on their kids But the one of the reasons you gave for why you love skateboarding and why it filled you up and originally was because of that camaraderie though and Isolation seems to be kind of the opposite of I was isolated in the sense that the the hardcore skaters the older generation Didn't support me didn't want anything to do with me, but I did have my crew. I mean, it wasn't completely isolated It was I had a few friends that we all had the same sense of values and the same sort of directives for skating so I would bounce ideas off of them and we would come up with with tricks together sometimes sometimes It was just something that they were asking me to do but but that Sense of camaraderie is what I'm talking about but it was very it was a very limited crew and Yeah, I mean I was I chose to do this outcast activity as a kid Already separating me from my classmates and my peers kids my age. You're like The skateboarding is so lame. Why are you doing that? Then I choose a skateboard. My style of skateboarding is not cool It's considered a circus like I'm just a circus freak doing these little baton twirls with my skateboard So then I'm cast aside from the skateboarding community And that that's what became that became isolating but That all that stuff just would fuel me to to get better and I didn't it's not like I'm thankful for it, but I accepted it and I went out to prove myself I Am I sat with a motivation psychologist called Daniel Pink and he was telling me one of it They did these studies on people in terms of trying to figure out how their motivation fluctuates and he found that when people get paid for Something that was once a hobby their love and motivation for it declines, which I thought was really paradoxical I wouldn't expect

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E233: Tony Hawk: My Name Made \$1.4 Billion! Burnout, Obsession & Regrets

When you get paid to do a hobby you'd expect motivation to increase. I agree with that except that
When I got into skateboarding no one was getting paid
No, no one was getting accolades. No one was getting attention
And so I never aspired to that and what I see now is I see
I do see kids that get into skateboarding with the notion that they will get rich or famous or and or
famous and
If they get any sense of fame or fortune, they lose their motivation
So I agree with you in that sense
But if you're getting into us an activity a sport an art form or whatever that has not been established
and
It's not there. There's no clear path to success
I feel like your motivation is always just to get better at it and and
The money and and the fame and everything that's all incidental to just being able to keep doing it
Did you did you love forever fluctuate?
I'm only when I started getting burned down a competition
Sometime around 1988 89. I was doing really well in the events and
It started to become repetitive for me. I
Would go to an event. I'd have to I have to hide new tricks from
my my competitors and from the judges because at some point the judges were
Giving me scores based on what they thought I could do not compared to everyone else in the event
But just what they thought I was capable of so if I came to an event with some new tricks
And they saw me doing those new tricks in practice and I didn't do them in my competition runs
I would get marked down
based on what they thought, you know based on
judging me against myself and
that was fine like I accepted all that but it was more that that
It got repetitive it started to get it started to suck the fun out of it because I was just this machine
like this competitive machine and
My competitors who I thought were my friends. I still do
were very much
Under the impression that oh well Tony's just gonna win so we're hoping for second and they would
tell me that and
They thought that that was a compliment to me to me
It was just it was crushing because it just meant that that somehow they were separating me from
the pack and the
The crew that I loved like the I love the the camaraderie of the team and
The camaraderie of all the skaters and it was like they're just pushing me out from that because they
think that I'm on a different
Level or plane or whatever it was and I as much as you think that's a compliment. It wasn't
The term burnout is used a lot these days and to this people use it in in their jobs and works and
hobbies and such what what?
What did that experience teach you about what causes burnout?
Well it taught me that even if you're doing what you love it's not always going to be enjoyable

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E233: Tony Hawk: My Name Made \$1.4 Billion! Burnout, Obsession & Regrets

because of

Because of the pressure of success because of the self-imposed pressure that you put but

What it did teach me was the value of

letting go and

When I let go of that even as hard as it was because my my sponsors were saying if you quit competing you're out

There was no other path to success in skateboarding. You couldn't make a living on

YouTube on social media

You know your reality show whatever it was. It was just your competition rankings. That was it

That's what your that's what your success was and they they told me

You know, what are you gonna do? How do you expect to make a living and I was like?

I don't know but I can't keep going this direction and what happened was when I was when I was removed from it. I

started to appreciate

The process of learning new tricks more I started to appreciate the idea that I could be more creative and take more chances and

At some point I missed competing but I had to sort of discover that within myself on

My own terms and then when I came back to competing I

Let go of the idea of perfection

I let go of the idea that I had to do the best every single time and I took way more chances and sometimes it didn't work

Sometimes I didn't make the finals

But when I did make the finals I was doing it on a level that I was proud of I wasn't I

Wasn't phoning it in so to speak. I wasn't being conservative with with my my approach and

That became much more fun

It was more risky

But when it would work

It was something that I was much more proud of

Is there is there a

It sound I said sound a lot to me like you're you'd built this identity because you've been so successful and you almost had to kind of

Decouple from that identity which always feels like a big risk to people in their jobs

Yeah, it was but but all it was either that or quit quit altogether

Because it was really weighing on me. It was really it was very difficult

When you say very difficult, what does that mean in in practical terms you mean like sleepless nights or it?

Yeah, and and

Dreading events

Going going to an event and and dreading it. I mean, it's it's it's almost like Pink Floyd the wall it's just I was building a wall around everyone around myself and

and

Performing was just obligatory

Because everyone expected me to do it

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E233: Tony Hawk: My Name Made \$1.4 Billion! Burnout, Obsession & Regrets

I won't expect me to do well to to win the event whatever it was and there was no Celebration and not there was no
There was nothing that that made me feel
Elated it was just it was I was a machine and I'd go and do the event and when the trophy prize money you go home and
Then go skate and go try to learn new tricks
That was the fun part. Hmm, but really what I was doing was just trying to prepare for the next event
Which is probably another in a week or two away
It's
Quite surprising, but it's a story that I've heard over and over again this idea that your success almost disconnected you from
From something disconnected you from others and probably from yourself in many respects
And I think I think about this a lot how when you become successful
You can you need to be careful that you don't get disconnected along the way
There's lots of temptation
With talent to disconnect yourself
Whether you're a lawyer and you've just been good at being a lawyer and you end up 20 15 years down the line
And you get what the fuck am I doing here and who have I become or you're a pro skateboarder and you kind of drift away from
From the essence of what makes us feel connected. Oh
For sure and I saw I saw plenty of my peers
I think what one thing that saved me is that I love the skating so much that I
Saw my peers get distracted with partying
with the excess and
They would start to lose their motivation and their and their skill sets and I recognized that very early on and
Thought I don't want to go down that road because the skating is too important to me this that I wanted to keep performing at a top level
and
For sure. I had my I had my distractions through my through my life and through my adulthood my adult years, but
But skating was always such a high priority that I never lost that
Did you have to you talked about you've seen some of your friends at that time go down the wrong path because because of temptations
Yeah, did you ever notice yourself drifting down that path?
Um, yeah, I think it was more of the when I got caught up in the fame of it all in
More in the late 90s early 2000s when my video game was a big hit and suddenly I was
Not just doing skate events. I was doing talk shows and I was doing big appearances and and
Getting caught up in that level of fame is very disorienting and
I could see myself I
could see myself

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E233: Tony Hawk: My Name Made \$1.4 Billion! Burnout, Obsession & Regrets

falling into that where it's like well, I'm
now I'm a celebrity and
Now I will go to the red carpet events and do the you know and the clubs and all that and
I definitely
Indulged a bit in that but at some point recognized that this is just not what I want to be doing and
this is not
This is not not as fun as skating and
And and these are not the people I really identify with I
Mean a lot of the people that I saw through those years, especially at the big events and stuff
They they all they really wanted was to be famous and at some point I I got famous by accident
And it's not necessarily what I wanted and at some point I took inventory of that and I realized that I
don't really care
You know what I mean like I don't care if I don't get into this VIP thing whatever it is
Take it or leave it
I am when I got a little bit of money
I think I had my insecurities meant that I had to have certain beliefs fail me before I learned them
So I was the kid that went to like got a little bit of money start going to the nightclubs buying all the
champagne
Leaves you feeling fairly hollow after a while if you're paying attention. Absolutely. Yeah, I mean
that's the thing is that I just felt
especially and through those years when I was going through the
The fire of celebrity culture I
Never felt fulfilled and you'd wake up in the morning. It's like what what was that?
What what good and and also it was it was distracting me from my own kids
And I think that that's really what what made me want to make a positive change in my life
Is that I felt like I was not I was not I was there
but I wasn't really available emotionally to my children as much as I could be because I was so
distracted with all this all this other noise and
I pulled it around. I mean I was able to
Get back get be more connected
Just be part of what they were doing even on a more basic level and that to me is way more fulfilling
It is I mean, that's just you know, I could I
I could wax poetic, but I do feel like I feel so much more
Confident and fulfilled and excited about all those things to see my kids
To see my kids thrive
then to care about
Getting invited to the Oscars
Sometimes in my life, and my partner's been the person to point that out before I've noticed it in
myself
so my girlfriend will notice that I may be losing my way a little bit in terms of priorities and
It'll require her feedback to tell me
That I'm losing my way a little bit for me to really notice it in myself. Do you resonate with that at
all?

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E233: Tony Hawk: My Name Made \$1.4 Billion! Burnout, Obsession & Regrets

Um, I I would say yes if you were asking me
Five ten years ago, but now I do see it. I
I see it myself. I'm much more cognizant of it in my own choices and
It is wild
I mean, I never imagined that I'd be a pro skater past 20 honestly because
when you were
When you were my when you were a kid
skating in my era all the
Once you reach an age of responsibility, you had to quit because no one could make it. It wasn't
anyone's job, right?
So to be skating in my 20s and then into my 30s was wild
It was I mean I was in uncharted territory
But I was still getting better at it and then when I reached my 40s
It was like really still you guys still think this is okay for me to do and not that I
Was looking for that in that kind of approval
But it was kind of a surprise and also I kept getting better at it in those years and then to be doing it
in my 50s
It's just like a
Lucid dream. It's crazy that
It's funny. I kind of went through the fire. It was like when I was a kid
It was like, oh, you're pretty good for your age and then when I got into my 30s 40s, like you still
skate
Like how did you grow out of it? And now when I'm in my 50s is like, hey, you're pretty good for your
age
When was your um, when do you if you look back on your years of in terms of technical ability, when
was your professional?
Peak or is it now? Oh
I think it was in my
Probably in my
mid to late 30s and early 40s because that's when I was still doing
all of my high impact high-risk moves, but
Combined with highly technical moves. So I kind of had I had the the
the gamut of of of the skating in terms of being able to
Do the big stuff?
the dangerous stuff and also the very the very technical stuff and so as I've moved into
My twilight years, I don't know what you call this
But I've learned to to focus more on the technical because it's it's more low impact and it keeps me
Keeps me healthy for the most part. I mean, I am I am nursing
I'm still recovering from a broken femur last year, but even that has taught me that I
I still love doing this and I still love it even if I'm not going to be at the top of the game or or if I'm
even going to be
On video or or or doing it in front of people. I still want to do it
and I still love it, but like I said, I've I've sort of

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E233: Tony Hawk: My Name Made \$1.4 Billion! Burnout, Obsession & Regrets

focused my energy more into the technical moves and and I would say that the tricks that I was learning before I got hurt
Were more appreciated by skaters themselves. They weren't going to move the needle on x-games or anything
To get to your
Level in any industry if you were advising a kid
That's maybe an artist to DJ whatever when you look back on what it takes to get there
What are the like core components of that level of mastery and success and like you must have sometimes think like like why me?
because you know
It's living such an anomalous life and becoming number one in anything
I think I've seen it over and over again where people start to ask themselves the question like an existential question like
Sure, yeah, I every day, but I think to answer your question
The focus it takes is is pretty intense to get to do especially what I do for so many years and also, I think that
The ability to
To to listen and to take cues or inspiration
From others around you in terms of inspiring or influencing what you do and I don't mean like I'm not saying like
Borrowing or stealing styles or anything. I'm talking about just being open to oh, that's that's a new way to do it
and and even collaborating with people and what what if we tried this or maybe you did that and and Not just living in your own in your own bubble
Because some people tend to do that they have their way
They have they have they found what how they succeed how they keep moving forward and they stay in that lane
they stay in that bubble and
Sometimes that works, but for the most part you can only go so far with it
And you've got to start to sort of branch out and see what else is there in terms of your chosen Activity sport art, whatever it is
And I I love that idea that I'm getting out on my comfort zone and trying something weird and
It's probably not gonna work right away
And it's probably gonna be super ugly when I finally do it, but I'm gonna get to a point where it's more natural
Do you what's the balance between learning the rules of the trade? I how it's already been done and Learning to do it your way. I always think this into to become great
Do you need to like be the best at how it's done now or do you need to like add a little sprinkle of yourself?
well, I luckily skating is so subjective that
Adding your own flair to it is always encouraged and
and so for instance there there is some tricks the basic tricks that

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E233: Tony Hawk: My Name Made \$1.4 Billion! Burnout, Obsession & Regrets

You know
80% of professional skaters can do this one trick
But if you take a picture one of them and put it on silhouette, I can tell you who it is
Because everyone has their own style of it
And what makes for a good style
subjectively
It's I'd say it's sort of the flow of the move from start to finish
Including when you're before you even leave the ground or
The or the ramp or whatever it is. You know that you make it look like one one fluid motion and that
you can
Twist it torque it a little differently than someone else
But stay in control
That's what it's about. I it's it's really hard to convey and
Some of that has to be like, you know
Talent I'm struggling with the word talent, but some of it nature over nurture. Yeah, sure
Everyone has their own different body types and their own thing, but but you can see influences like
for instance
We haven't we have this
Girl on our team Reese Nelson. She's very young, but she skates for ramps and you can tell
Who she skates with by her trick selection?
Really she's influenced by the certain skaters that she's with and and some of them have
very specific moves that that are associated with them and
Like she just learned kick from those slides
All right, I'm just I'm gonna go down into the weeds for you
Yeah, she's are keeping those slides, which is a signature move of a skater named Colin McKay and I
and I literally said
Have you been skating with Colin? She said yeah, he comes here in the morning sometimes and
skates with me
It's like there it is
When I when you speak to surfers they talk about how surfings like a metaphor for life and
They like wax lyrical about you know what that metaphor is is skating a metaphor for life
it can be sure I think the the value of
not giving up the value of believing in yourself and the value of of
Working through your own challenges. I think that's probably the biggest metaphor and for me
What I learned from it is also the value of taking risks
you know in the greater sense of
becoming a business man, I
Wasn't afraid to take risk skating. I'm not afraid to take risks in business
The value of not giving up and taking risks. I heard you spent 12 years trying to master one
particular trick
Yes called the 900 which I think I did on the on the video game back in the day
Well, I was when I was younger, which is like a two and a half two and a half spin
Yeah, two and a half spin trick and it took you you tried for 12 years

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E233: Tony Hawk: My Name Made \$1.4 Billion! Burnout, Obsession & Regrets

Rough off and on yes from the first time I tried it had anyone done it before you no
Yeah, that was a battle
so I learned
720s in 1985 and
The next stage of progression for that in terms of spinning and for skating would be 900 the the
What makes it so much more difficult is that?
You're blind to your landing zone twice when you do a 900 when you do a 540 or even a 720
you're only blind to your landing zone once and
When you pass it twice, it's very hard to spot where you should be or to even know
Spatially where you are
So it took me the first probably five years of attempts just to figure out where I was in the air
And when I say five years, I'm not talking about like every day. It was more
I would I would get fired up
I'd had a good session or I was skating a really good ramp and then I would try a couple and they
always ended in
Some sort of injury, you know, you were it was very hard to get out of it safely
I brought my rib one time when I really thought I had it
But once I figured out that spinning
then I started to explore okay, how do I get the landing and
And that's when I started actually pursuing it. I would say more in like the years of 94 to 96
I was actively trying it regularly and when I finally thought that I had it. I
Put it down and then I broke my rib because I was leaning too far forward and
In that moment, I kind of gave up on it
That was in 96 because I thought I had all the pieces to it. I
had
every element I had in my head I had
It was the it was the right takeoff. It was the right setup was the right spin
And apparently I can't figure out how to land it properly. So fast forward to 1999
they're having a best trick event at the X games and
Halfway into the event. I did my best trick
Which I had planned that I had only done once before and it was a variation of a 720
It was it was a very old 720
So I did that trick and then I had 10 minutes left of this event. I
Don't know where else to go from there except try what the next trick that I would like to do which
is a 900
and
When I started trying it
I'd say the first few attempts. I just did for the crowd. It was more like this is
This is my next stay or this is what's next. Maybe it's not for me
But you know, this is what I would like to see done
And then somewhere around my fourth or fifth try I realized that
I'm always getting the right amount of speed. My my snap is good
The snap is the takeoff when you actually leave the the top of the ramp and grab your board because

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E233: Tony Hawk: My Name Made \$1.4 Billion! Burnout, Obsession & Regrets

a lot of times that snap is
If that's off, it's tragic
My snap was good. I can see the landing zone and I thought you know what if I'm ever gonna try to land this again
it'll be tonight and
If I break a rib, so what?
Like I'm either gonna make this or get taken away on a stretcher. Those were the only two outcomes
And then when I did finally try to make it somewhere around the I don't know ninth or tenth attempt
I
fell forward again, but I didn't get hurt and
something
There was something clicked in my head that said
Why not shift your weight to your back foot?
during the spin and
Then try to land it and for some reason I never had I never had that clarity because
When I would go to try to make it I get hurt and I'd have to go home
So in this particular instance, I didn't get hurt
so I thought okay
what if I shift my weight towards the back and then I shift my way towards the back and I fell
backwards and
that was the epiphany
because
all I have to do is split the difference and
Then I made the next one
All they have to do is split the difference. I mean to a muggle like me make it sound easy. What was that moment like?
It was just a big relief. I mean it was it was it was definitely a highlight of my skate career of my of my
Competitive career, but for me it was just this weight lifted from me because it had always sort of hung on me that oh
900 it's got to be possible and there were a few of us chasing it. There were other skaters that were getting pretty close to it, too
But no one had figured out how to ride away
Once you'd done it once was it easy to repeat easier to repeat
Yeah, it took a while for me to do a second one and then after I did my second one then I could do it pretty regularly
And at this time you've got this deal with Activision bubbling bubbling away at that time
We've been working on a video game for about a year and a half
so there was definitely a
Crazy synergy perfect storm in that moment because I did that trick that drew a lot of attention to obviously me but
But not just me but skateboarding in general and the X games and then that was in June and then we released

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E233: Tony Hawk: My Name Made \$1.4 Billion! Burnout, Obsession & Regrets

What became Tony ox per skater in September?

Wow, and I was watching the video of you saying that you you called the guy Activision to ask him to include the 900 trick

It never soft. Yeah, I emailed him

Yeah, that's a good story. I emailed

Never soft the next day and I said hey I

Did this thing and I think that people are gonna expect to see it in the game now

And I know we didn't animate a 900

But I feel like if you guys have time to squeeze it in and we were already in beta with the game

Which meant that we were going to submit it to the console manufacturers and once you do that you cannot

Edit it. You can't alter it

and I remember

Joel who was the

Head of never soft he emailed me back right away, and he said way ahead of you you fucking rule

And then they got it in I

Mean and the rest is history, right? I

Guess I hoped I like to think I'm still creating it

You know that your father Frank he'd been such an avid huge supporter of you up until that point

But he didn't he didn't get to live to see

The real all of this stuff after you were sort of 27 28 years old, right?

No, he saw the first X games right and to him that was his biggest things could ever get because

He was a big sports fan. Not just you know, obviously he loved skateboarding, but he also loved team sports and

For him to see skateboarding on the sports network that was for him the coming of age

I mean and to think that it's gone on to be

Such a

Beloved sport internationally and in the Olympics. I mean all that is is just beyond

What he would have imagined you has ever question if you ever wish that he could have seen the

What would happen with your career professionally, but also in business? I

Think I'd rather wish for him to see

the rise of skateboarding in general because he was so integral in

Keeping it alive at a time when it was struggling

Through through sanctioning events, so I mean sure my own success. Yeah, but but I do feel like on a on a bigger

scale

and more lofty terms just the success of skateboarding is something that that

He would have been very proud of

That that video game deal we all get emails and these emails often contain opportunities and sometimes we look at these emails

We're trying to figure out if it's an opportunity or not

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E233: Tony Hawk: My Name Made \$1.4 Billion! Burnout, Obsession & Regrets

Sometimes it looks like an opportunity. Sometimes it's a waste of time. Sometimes it's just someone. Yeah

Wanting a meeting to pick your brain about something as you reflect on your decision now in hindsight to proceed with that video game

Was there any close calls?

There was another group doing a game that had contacted me and

I

I went down the road with them a little bit and

Realized that what they were trying to do was so much more

How to explain it it was more technically difficult to play

Because they were trying to truly emulate skating

And I felt like I understood that approach, but at the same time skating wasn't that big when we released this game or when we were going to release this game and

I wanted something that was be more friendly to the non skater to play to understand to be able to just pick up and start doing tricks

And when I saw what Activision had they had a very

They had a very

They had a very early version of a skater doing tricks

The way it moved and into me it was it was

Intuitive

It was perfect. It was like right away. I started playing it. I started doing tricks

It was almost like it was it was an extension of of my body to start doing this on that screen with that skater and

It's something

Innately felt right about it to me. And so was there a close call? I

Would say if Activision maybe had called me a month or two later. I might have already linked a deal so

But I felt very lucky on the commercial front. I read that you'd been offered a

Kind of a flat check

Well, when they were close to launch of the game

They started to

Sense that there was buzz about it. It was already getting good reviews from from previews of the game publishers

I mean not the the magazine publishers, so

They knew they had a good game overall

And they felt this this surge of interest and so they offered me a buyout of future royalties

Right before the game launched, um, which at the time it was they offered me a half million dollars

And they said, you know, well, I said, what does that mean? They said, well that that's you get that right now

and then no money going forward and

For me having lived through some really lean times

When they say a half million dollars to me, it sounds like a billion gazillion dollars

I mean it wouldn't no one had ever spoken those types of numbers to me before

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E233: Tony Hawk: My Name Made \$1.4 Billion! Burnout, Obsession & Regrets

But I felt like I was in a pretty good place. I was I was doing well in other ways. I was I was still skating a lot
I was doing events. I was I
Had good endorsements. I was I was doing we had birdhouse was starting to actually be profitable my skate company and I had just
bought a new house with it with
I not, you know, I had a loan, but my loan was manageable and I thought I'm gonna take a risk because
I'm doing okay, and I don't need that money right now
And even the timing of that like if it had been just a few months before that when I was looking at houses, maybe I would have
taken that
But I didn't and that was definitely the best financial decision of my life
Because that game was a success
To say that one and the ones after it and the ones after it. Yeah, how does one that might not understand the scale of that success quantify in a dollar amount?
How many how much revenue Tony Hawk Pro Skater generated in its in its legacy?
I mean, I know that they they talk about a billion dollars for Activision
You know my take is not that grandiose, but I am never going to complain it changed my life completely
A billion dollars they they generated in sales that that was that was always there. They're a big buzz.
Yes
So much I mean so much happens obviously that that makes you financially
free
for you know
but also your you become like
The Michael Jordan of skating you are you know, I was playing you on my video game on the other side of the world when I was
How old was I I'm gonna say eight roughly eight
You know you become this global icon of a sport and it's funny because I didn't know skating before I knew the video game
The video game was my way into to even understanding that the sport existed and I would play with my brothers
That's a that's going from zero to a thousand in terms of no for sure and and
That was never lost on me. I mean I I felt very lucky to have my name synonymous with a video game and with skateboarding
Because I had devoted my life to it. Were you prepared for that? No
No, I could you prepare for anything like that?
There's no way I mean it it's
To have that kind of success especially in video games is reserved for someone like Madden
or
Call of Duty or Grand Theft Auto. I mean it's you know to have be your name was wild and and
Nowadays, I mean we've come a long way. We did a remaster a couple years ago

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E233: Tony Hawk: My Name Made \$1.4 Billion! Burnout, Obsession & Regrets

There is a whole generation of kids. I'm not kidding that have asked me if I was named after a video game

Would you tell him?

Sure

You were named after a video game. Wow

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](https://airbnb.co.uk) slash host

What advice would you have given yourself if you could have to prepare yourself?

If you could just whisper it in your ear

I think I would have told my younger self to work on your state of mind and your priorities

With equal effort as you do your skating

I was so hyper-fixated on my skating and getting better at my success in skating

That I didn't really work on my humanity in terms of my relationships and being present

And maybe that's what it took to get that far

But I think I would just tell my younger self to figure out how to function more as a human than just a professional

Did you lose people?

Yeah

And also gained people through my changes and through finding my priorities

And honestly I'm in an incredible place

I'm happier than I've ever been and I have much better relationships with my kids

Even though most of them are adults

And I'm just more reliable

What is skating without the relationships?

Like what is skating for you?

If I was to say you can skate forever and care on doing your skating

But I'm going to take away the family and the meaningful relationships

How does life become then?

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E233: Tony Hawk: My Name Made \$1.4 Billion! Burnout, Obsession & Regrets

That doesn't sound as fun
It's not the end all for me anymore
I love it and I'm going to keep doing as long as I can
And probably still push myself in a lot of ways
But that is compartmentalized
And when I do it I'm all in on it and I'm doing it and then I leave it there
I'm not just obsessing on it the rest of the day
I am, I was speaking to a neuroscientist on this podcast
Who told me that the brain actually changes as we age up until about 30
Where I think for a male it roughly stops changing when we get to 30
I think he said to me
And with that our priorities change
So in our early 20s we're like trying to get laid
And trying to do the things that were whatever
And then as we get into our 30s and beyond
Our priorities and life shift
Did you notice with age your priority shift or was it the children?
I think I just noticed that I was stuck in a cycle of compulsive behaviors
And something that I didn't enjoy
And didn't feel like it was helping me to have good relationships with my family
With my kids
And I think I just took inventory and thought I got to make a positive change
And so it wasn't like my brain was changing
And I figured it was more that I had to go get help
Lean into therapy
Figure out how to process all these things
And how to move forward in a much more congruent way with my values
And I was able to do it, it took a while
But it was more into my 40s that that happened
What did therapy help you to realize about yourself and why you were exhibiting compulsive behaviors?
Did you ever figure out why?
Yeah, I think a lot of it was just being afraid of intimacy
And a lot of that, I'm not blaming my parents
But definitely I didn't have great examples of it growing up
So I had to figure that out
And how to be vulnerable, I think I was always very guarded
You and me both
And also in those days of having this sort of unwanted attention
Made me more guarded because it was like, oh I can't do, I can't say the wrong thing
Or do the wrong thing and it didn't allow me to be myself very much
And I think I'm much more comfortable in my own skin now
And able to hold more interesting conversations

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E233: Tony Hawk: My Name Made \$1.4 Billion! Burnout, Obsession & Regrets

You've got children now
So I often think about generational cycles
I think about the intimacy or the emotional expression that I didn't learn from my parents
And a fear that I have hanging over me is that I might replicate that for my children
Accidentally
Yeah, and I was definitely worried about that
Like my dad never said I love you, never professed that kind of thing
Or was warm in that sense
And so that was more my example to live by in through the years
And I was very much kind of the same
And at some point let go of that
I still struggle with it now
You know, it's funny, again I've spoken to lots of just sort of childhood therapists, Gabor Marté
And they talk about like these different types of traumas that we have
And one of them is called goblins and the other is gremlins
So usually before the age of 10 years old and they're very, very hard to shake
So they always kind of live there somewhere in us
So even sometimes saying being intimate now or being vulnerable or saying I love you
It's like, it's difficult for me
I get that it's uncomfortable, yes
I'm starting to get much more at ease with it though
With practice
With practice, yeah
And running the experiment I guess
And also I see how it makes my kids feel
It makes them feel seen and loved and important
And it's particularly important as I come to learn
If you want to have a good relationship with a woman or man
Yeah, that's it
My girlfriend is very much the opposite in terms of intimacy
So it's kind of an ongoing friction
What role has your wife played in the broader context of your professional success?
Just a feeling of, well, she's just so grounded
And she gives me a sense of home
And she is very supportive but also has her priorities intact
So in deciding what to get involved with, she's my sounding board
And she's the one who I trust the most with her opinion
And she understands that I am challenged in terms of my sense of intimacy
And how to navigate fatherhood
And she has been so great in opening that up for me
And helping to show me the best way to navigate it
And she's not swayed by fanfare at all
She could do away with it altogether

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E233: Tony Hawk: My Name Made \$1.4 Billion! Burnout, Obsession & Regrets

And I love that and I cherish that
I guess that's what makes it feel like home, right?
That all the noise is kept outside
Yeah, absolutely
I mean, if you catch us on a Saturday night, and a couple of our boys are in college
One of them is in college up here in LA
We have many children
So let's just say that sometimes they will come home for the weekend
And as much as we like seeing them, if you catch us on a Saturday night
They're downstairs watching UFC fights with their homies
And we're upstairs hiding from everyone
And we're asleep by 9pm
That's pretty much our big raging weekend
After you become the icon of a sport
What does that do to your sense of identity?
I'm asking that question because now everyone assumes they know you before they've met you
They kind of see you as this character from a game
I think what you see is what you get with me
I'm not trying to present some other persona
And like I said, in the past maybe I was more guarded with who I was
Or how I was trying to be
And now I think I'm just much more natural and much more real
And this is it
I'm super thankful for what I get to do
I do not take this for granted at all
And I know it could all be gone tomorrow
But I'm going to seize opportunities
And do the best I can with it
And in the meanwhile try to promote skateboarding on a bigger level
But I know what you're saying
And sometimes that is weird
But at the same time I'm open to hanging out and having a conversation
Do you know Bear Grylls?
Yes
So Bear Grylls was the one that said to me
That he's almost become synonymous with outdoor activities
Like if your friends are eating some mud you'd go
You'd think you're Bear Grylls
And he said something interesting to me which has always stayed with me
He said the bigger my brand got the more self-doubt I got
Sure
And I couldn't quite
That's kind of the imposter syndrome right

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E233: Tony Hawk: My Name Made \$1.4 Billion! Burnout, Obsession & Regrets

Where you think like why me, why is it all
Are they sure they got the right guy?
And I understand that
But at the same time I think I've been through enough phases of success and failure
To know that whatever is coming my way or whatever it is that I'm putting out there
Is real and is tangible
And so the self-doubt is more of a whisper
Success and failure
You fail every day in terms of skating
Some of the big, big failures in your life post the video game coming out
Because I think we've highlighted your story to appear to be just success, success, success, success
Big break, success, success
What are some of those big failures that have occurred over the last decade that we might not have
been cognizant of?
Well I definitely have had businesses that failed just because they were either not the right time
Or they were a little beyond my expertise
And I thought somehow because I had other success I probably could do well in other stages
But I think that failure
Yeah I've had failed relationships and learned a lot from those
And was able to grow and hopefully amend my mistakes and hurting people
And I think that it's just a path of evolution
And so I mean I've always learned to embrace my mistakes with skateboarding
And in a sense I do that with my regular life too
But they embrace the idea that I grew from them
Yeah yeah business
There's a business behind you
Even still today you have a big team
What is the entrepreneurial side of your life currently?
What are your business ventures?
We have Hawk Apparel
Which is Tony Hawk clothing
We have Birdhouse, Skateboards, Birdhouse Apparel is actually its own subsidiary
With a group with a couple guys in Las Vegas that are doing it
Which is super cool
I have the Skate Park Project which is a foundation for public skate parks in low income areas
I'm part of a lot of different investments and ventures
Things that I'm interested in
And I can't say that it ebbs and flows
Some of them ebbs and flows but for the most part there's been a crazy trajectory lately
I mean honestly it's even surprising to me that people are still interested
In what I do personally and also all the ventures that I'm involved with
We have this new tradition on this podcast Tony where we have these cards
And these cards are based on previous guests questions that they've left in the book for the next

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E233: Tony Hawk: My Name Made \$1.4 Billion! Burnout, Obsession & Regrets

guest

So basically every guest writes the question for the next guest without knowing who it is

And we've turned it into these conversation cards

And I've got to be honest we did this because listeners of this podcast

Listen because they like slightly deeper questions and contacts

So it allows them to play at home

I have I think eight here

I'm going to put them in front of you and all you've got to do is pick one card

Okay

If you're willing to play and then answer that question

Okay

You got QR codes do I have to scan that?

No it's okay

The QR code just tells you who answered it

Oh okay

Which guest answered it?

Let's see what are some words you've never said to anybody

Why haven't you said them and who should you have sent them to?

I think that I would have told my wife even though I thought that I was going to

Kind of turn my life around and change my priorities

I think that I would have told her that I was really frightened of the path

Or of trying to make those changes

And I think she knew it

But it probably would have helped to confirm that with words

And I think maybe it would have given her a better perspective on my vulnerabilities early on

Because when we first started dating I was still kind of chaotic with what I was doing

And my approach to my career and my life and everything

And I made a conscious choice to make a positive change

And she knew I was doing that but I don't think I led on how scary that was for me

Why didn't you tell her?

Because I wanted her to think that I was so capable of it

And so confident with it

But you know what? I mean she's too intuitive she knew

Yeah man and women

It's funny you say that because recently I've ran the experiment of telling my girlfriend when I'm struggling with something

And I literally felt like an experiment because I was always a tough guy

I think that was it I was always guarded and also I managed to get this far with how I was functioning

I can't say it was the smoothest but I had some sense of control

But I think it was more to give up that control

It was probably the more scary thing that I should have conveyed

But I feel like like I said we've come so far especially we have a blended family

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E233: Tony Hawk: My Name Made \$1.4 Billion! Burnout, Obsession & Regrets

And our kids have a blast we have a blast we cherish our time with them we cherish our time alone
And I think we have a really good
I think we just have great communication and intimacy
So she doesn't like me talking about her so as far as I'm gonna go with it
I wrote my diary the other day that I used to think vulnerability was deep down inside me
Like tough guy who didn't really learn vulnerability from my parents or anything
I used to think vulnerability was a repellent
What I came to learn is that it's a magnet
And that's when I say around the experiment
It's deep in me I thought people would like run away oh he's weak he's whatever
And what happens is the total opposite
It's like you draw them into you
I think what I learned one of the things I learned early on is that the bravery actually means sharing
your feelings
Which doesn't seem to make sense because one would think bravery was the opposite
But I'm on that journey now
In The Diary of a CEO we have hundreds of questions that have been left by our guests
And we've put them on these cards
And on these cards you have the question that's been left in The Diary of a CEO
The name of the person who wrote the question
And if you turn it over there's a QR code
If you scan that code you can see which guest answered the question
And watch the video of them answering it
Every time I've done this podcast and every time we've asked the kind of questions we ask here
I feel a tremendous sense of affinity to the guest
And our aim with these cards is that you can create that sense of connection through vulnerability at
home with the people you love the most
And I have some good news for you
As of today you can add your name to the waiting list to be the first in line to get your own set of
conversation cards at theconversationcards.com
That is theconversationcards.com
The question that was actually left for you
What have you done recently for someone else?
My CZ1
I can't say Nintendo World
What's that?
You can't say Nintendo World
Yeah, it took my Nintendo Land, isn't that enough?
Well, and I guess more materialistic about my wife and new car as a surprise
I think that what did I do for someone else?
Probably on a bigger scale
I bought a skateboard at an auction that was a used skateboard that was hand-painted by Kurt
Cobain

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E233: Tony Hawk: My Name Made \$1.4 Billion! Burnout, Obsession & Regrets

For a guy he knew and the guy paid him \$20 and a bag of weed to paint his skateboard
This guy had held on to the skateboard through the years
I think it was more because he was a hoarder
And dug it out of his storage not long ago and said, oh, this is that board that Kurt painted
I should put it up for an auction
So I got one of it, I bought it
And through the help of Francis Kurt Cobain's daughter
I verified the authenticity of it and recreated it
And so I recreated the skateboard exactly, photorealistic, same shape and everything
And made 500 of them
And the proceeds from those skateboard sales go to, half go to the Jed Foundation for suicide prevention
And half go to the skate bar project for public skate parks
So I feel like, what did I do?
I'm hoping that I did something for people to either, for those struggling with mental health
Or for, and also for those who want a place to skate
That's so cool
And last check, we've sold 300 of them
300 out of the 500
I'm going to buy one
I would appreciate that
Yes, I'm going to buy one, I'll buy one today
Where do I buy one?
And then for you to answer, then that would be your answer
But I need to help people, a lot of Kurt Cobain reissue
How do I buy one?
Tonyhawk.com in the store
Don't
Amazing
Tony, listen, thank you so much for coming here today
It's surreal to meet you because you still are an icon in my eyes
Because it's crazy that I'm from a little countryside village on the other side of the world
And I was born in Africa
And I was playing you on a game, your game when I was just a young kid
That's so cool
You're the reason why, as I said earlier, you're the reason why I thought skateboarding was cool
And I had an interest in it
You're the reason why at 12 years old I actually got a skateboard
I was never able to skate
I fell off a couple of times I quit, I'm going to be honest
But I bought the board and I had an interest in the sport
Because of you and your legacy
And it's a legacy you continue to create in many ways through business

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E233: Tony Hawk: My Name Made \$1.4 Billion! Burnout, Obsession & Regrets

And through your philanthropic endeavours
So thank you and thank you for your humility
It's very easy to see how someone like you might be off in the clouds
But from everything I've seen, all the research I've done
It seems like you've been seemingly untouched
And I guess maybe from what you've said, your wonderful partner and your family deserve some credit for that
Because they've clearly been a grounding force
Thank you so much, Tony
Yeah, thank you
Thanks for having me
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 bought 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
And if you haven't checked out WeWork and you want to
You can go to we.co.co
And there you can get 50% off a trial day at WeWork close to you
I've now been a fuel 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 Huul 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 Huul would back it
And I absolutely have a huge amount of gratitude for that support

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E233: Tony Hawk: My Name Made \$1.4 Billion! Burnout, Obsession & Regrets

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 Huul
Which I hope most of you have at least given it a go by now
Try it out
It's an unbelievable way to try and stay nutritionally on course
If you have a hectic busy schedule
And let me know what you think
Send me a tweet and a DM tag me
Let me know what you think