

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / E251: Editor Of Vogue (Edward Enniful OBE): How To Become No.1 In Your Industry Against All The Odds!

It feels like you've lived an impossible life but with it came all the...
I just needed to be able to look up myself and not hate myself.
The first black man to become editor-in-chief of British Vogue.
One of the fashion industry's biggest names.
He's small handedly changing the face of fashion.
In your book you talk about understanding that you were gay from a very young age.
Had your father known, he would have slit your throat.
I grew up petrified of him.
Each day I was being told you're going to be a lawyer or a doctor.
I knew that wasn't going to happen.
At the age of 13 I came from another country.
16 I was modelling, 18 I was an editor.
It was quite fast. Work was everything for me.
There was this notion that women of colour on covers don't sell.
I knew I would need to do something about it.
I didn't just create a magazine that looked good but it's so financially successful.
I was just so consumed with work and work was where I felt like an imposter.
Really?
I mean I never look at anything I've done and think this is amazing.
I wouldn't sleep.
That leads you to drinking and that leads you to drugs.
You always have to fight.
But that fight comes at a cost.
I woke up one day and I saw these black markings in my vision.
I was so scared.
I knew after that that I had to change my life.
You sit here as one of the most successful people in your industry.
What would 51 year old Edward say to 18 year old Edward?
The one regret I do have is...
I wanted to start this episode in a slightly different way.
When I looked at the community stats last week with myself and some of my team members,
we were blown away that millions of you choose to follow us right here on this app.
And that for me is insane.
This is the most insane privilege I've ever had in my life.
A privilege I never dreamed of having to be able to sit here with these great people
and have these conversations in the way that I love having them.
And the way that you can continue to support us is simple.
Just hit that follow button that's on this app right now.
That is the number one way that you can help this show.
Thank you so much for your continued support.
Means a lot to me.
And we'll continue to repay that support in every way that we can.
Let's get on with it.

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Edward.

It feels like you've lived and traveled an impossible life.

You sit here as one of the most successful people in your industry.

But when I read about your earliest context, that's why I use the word impossible.

Can you give me the information I need to know to understand how the man that sits in front of me today got here?

And I'm referring to that early information.

The context that molded you into the man you are today.

Thank you for having me.

So as you read in the book, I grew, I was born in a city called Takaravi in Ghana, West Africa.

My dad was in the army.

He was a major.

My mother was the seamstress.

And we lived on a military base in the town.

So already there was, there was a weird way of growing up where you are in the town, but you're not in the town.

You're on a military base with his own sets of rules and tradition.

So that's where I was.

And my mother was a seamstress.

And I grew up in love with clothes, in love with my mother and in love with clothes.

And I was always with her, you know, when her customers came in.

And my mother was one of those rare women who had their own business.

You know, in the seventies in Africa, she had an atelier with about 40 women.

So I'd spend days just really helping her fit women into clothes and, you know, little African boys standing around the corner, listening to the gossip, being shooed away.

But I always say that's when I developed my love for women or women because, you know, my mother's friends, my aunts were all bodacious women of different sizes.

Big women, if you, you know, if you want to put it that way, but they were just beautiful and vivacious and alive.

So really that was, that was how I grew up in Ghana.

I mean, you know, I was always a sickly child.

So I would always be with my mother a lot.

And I really learned about sort of women and what really makes them tech.

You know, I always say I can tell when a woman is happy in a dress by the flick of a wrist or a little wince of the nose.

And so my mother was a really great influence.

I didn't know anything about fashion, but I had an aunt who had a salon called Dolly Dots.

And she was a hairdresser and that was like paradise for me.

And it was there that I discovered magazines.

There was a magazine called Ebony, which was an American magazine that you'd get every month.

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Another one called Jet and another one called Time.
And I would literally devour those pages and yeah, I was, I was really happy.
It was a really happy childhood.
And then we had to move to London because there was a military coup.
And my dad from one day to the next had to leave.
So that was the next chapter.
You were the fifth of six, six children.
And the, the figure in that equation that wasn't mentioned is your father.
In your book, you talk a lot about the fear you had of your father growing up.
Can you tell me how that shaped you as a young man?
I mean, my father was a military man.
He was in the Peace Corps from Ghana.
So they'll spend ages sort of, you know,
for Korean peace in like places like Liberia and the Middle East.
And he was there, then he wasn't, but we were petrified of him.
When he was around, you wouldn't play outside.
You know, he expected us all to be home studying.
And he was very authoritarian, very African, very strict.
So yes, I was always very scared.
And, you know, I was sort of the creative child always drawing.
Illustrations of drawing women all the time.
And I, and I'll hear, you know, your dad's coming and I'll just rip them up
because I was literally in fear of him.
And my dad had to say, we laugh about it now, but when he got angry,
it wasn't just with, it would start with one.
And then the anger would descend to, to me essentially, number five.
Because my sister wasn't born then.
And yeah, he was very terrifying to me in all aspects.
But then my mother was just the most creative, most, you know,
incredibly warm mother who literally sort of, you know, here's the paper,
here's the pen, you know, come in the room.
There's this lady so, so hurrying to the dress, zip her up.
So it was very weird having my dad who was not artistic in any way,
but so disciplined, you know, and my mother who was just a creative.
And it's really funny because now I am literally both.
I'm so disciplined in my work, so disciplined there on time.
And then also so creative on the other hand.
So I got something from both.
But yes, in those early years, my dad was a source of terror to me.
What impact did that have on you when you look back now in hindsight?
I look, I do this sometimes with my parents.
I look back and go, for better or for worse, this parent shaped me accidentally for,
you know, in this way.

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It might have created, I had a guest on this podcast called Tim Grover who trained Michael Jordan and Kobe Bryant.

And he says, at that young age, we develop both our bright side and our dark side.

And sometimes the same incident can give us both of our, it can give us our brilliance and it can also give us our, you know, things we struggle with the most.

What dark side did you inherit from that early upbringing?

I mean, I think what I inherited from that,

that period was just this, this fear, overriding fear that never leaves you,

a sense that I was never good enough, a sense that I had to hide any form of brilliance because looking at those early drawings that I did, they're not far removed from what I do now.

But it was just like, don't show how brilliant you are.

Don't show how good you are.

Hide it, hide it.

Were you burning the drawings?

I heard you ripping them up, burning, whatever I had to do.

So there'd be no trace of it.

It's, I can't fathom that.

Yeah.

But can you, as a creative child, can you imagine that's your calling,

but you don't even know at that age that this is what you're meant to do.

But you just know, it just felt like something that was wrong.

So I spent a lot of years just really loving what I do,

you know, loving the fashion industry, but at the same time, thinking there's something wrong with that.

Because while all this was going on, I was being sort of, each day I was being told, you're going to be a lawyer or a doctor or an engineer.

So to me, those were the great careers that you needed.

These were the great careers for an African child.

For an African parent, that was it.

A doctor, a lawyer or an engineer.

So I always felt sometimes even in the fashion industry, when I was younger, that I'm not really doing what I'm supposed to be doing.

You know, if I was a doctor, my dad would be so proud.

And you know, I carried that with me for years until, you know, I had to deal with it.

But yeah, the parents, our parents shape us without really realizing, you know, someone said there's no real book to be an apparent.

So, you know, they learn as they're going along and my dad, you know, he was a young man and yeah, in the later years, things got better.

So you end up moving to the UK, sort of around 13 years old, roughly.

When you come here, you experience racism for the first time.

It's an interesting thing to experience that racism at like your teen years,

because you don't even understand the concept of racism and tell me about that.

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I mean, you know, as I said before, I grew up in Ghana, you know, my early years, where everything is possible. The doctors are black, the president's black, the lawyer's black, everybody's black, every profession.

And then one day we're on a plane to England, me and my siblings, because my dad had gone ahead and my mother had to stay behind.

We arrive at Gatwick Airport and we're detained because we didn't really have the right papers. You know, before Magrithacha laid the law down, you could come to England from any Commonwealth country without a visa, but we didn't realize she stopped it sort of a month before. So we came anywhere we were detained and I remember looking around the room and saying to my brothers, oh my God, everyone's white. And it was the strangest thing I'd ever seen, because in Ghana, everyone's black. And I remember, you know, we de-camped to Vauxhall, to my aunt's flat, and this was, you know, the year of, you know, Magrithacha's reign and the Sus Laws and the Brixton riots and, you know, I remember the first time I was stopped on the street by the police with my brothers, because, you know, teenage black kids, they assumed we were up to no good. We had to go to school in Vauxhall, Lillian Bailey School, over the bridge, and it was just scary leaving the house. And my father was so traumatized by this country. You know, there was a military man who, you know, ran a battalion, now couldn't work, you know, had to seek asylum. And we were the lowest of the low at the point. Even at school, I would remember people would use words like, oh my God, they're the booboo's, which means was the word they used for someone from Africa. So not only was it tough, I went to an all-black school. Thank God. I think my dad knew that the country was so different from anything we knew that he put me in an all-black school. And to this day, I'm so grateful for that, because my work, later, everyone talks about how can you portray black people so beautifully. And I'm like, that's all I know, right? But those early years were tough. They were tough, just a new country, a new school, and you felt a sense of not being liked as a black person, you know? So those years were tough. And what impact does that have on you and your work? Because I think about

from a professional standpoint, you were hiding and had some sort of shame and insecurity around your creative expression back in Ghana. You come here now, and the world once again says, you don't belong here. You know, that feels, and then I even think about, in your book, you talk about understanding that you were gay from a very young age. That's a third point of, you know, and listen, you said in your book about had your father known, had you expressed that to your father? I think the words you used, he would have slit your throat. I can relate.

I mean, you know, he would say things like that, like, oh my God, if I knew any gay person, if any gay person entered the house, I'd slit their throat. But my cousin was living there. My cousin, Michael, he was gay. So back to your question. How did it make me feel?

Yeah, like, it feels like there was a lot that you were shielding or being forced to hide from the world, you know, identity, creative expression, sexuality. Is that an inaccurate assessment as a young man? Did you feel like you were, did you know that there was things that you were kind of suppressing? Yeah, I mean, you know, I was, I was very shy. I was painfully shy. You know, I couldn't, I couldn't speak up. I couldn't sometimes I couldn't even walk into a room if there were people in there was this shyness, and I just didn't feel worthy. I didn't feel good enough. I didn't feel, I didn't feel like, you know, I had the right to

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to even be who I was. Does it make sense? You know, I just didn't feel like a wanted, you know, like a wanted child, really. So it wasn't until I was stopped on the train to be a model, then things really changed. Before then, I was just the immigrant kid, you know, the number five, and anybody knows when you're number five, nobody's got any time for you.

I was the fake child. So I always sort of kept a very low profile, didn't really want, you know, didn't really want to stand out because that would mean you'll be punished. So I think I, yeah, I led life a lot like that. So you were stopped on the train?

Yeah. Nobody stopped me on the train and asked me to be a model by the way.

They should have. You're very kind. I'm still waiting, but also you're 16 years old, right?

When they, I'm a guy called Simon. Simon Foxton. Yeah. I mean, so I was like a 16.

I left Vauxhall, Lillian Bailey School. I wanted to go to Kingsway Princeton College.

And I remember saying to my mom, oh my God, I don't want to wear glasses anymore because I have these

huge thick lenses, my whole life. And I read, I was always like reading,

and I discovered there was something called contact lenses. So I said, Mom, can I get a pair?

You know, we didn't have money, but she somehow, I went to the optician and somehow because my, you know, my vision is so bad. It's always been sort of high 10, minus nine, minus 10.

They gave me contact lenses. They're really hard ones. I don't know if anybody remembers.

And I, yeah, a week later, I was on the train, you know,

going from Hammersmith to college. And I was stopped by a gentleman who was turned out to be one of the biggest fashion editors in the country to be a model. And I didn't even know what modeling

was. And I remember going home and telling my mother, and she's like, no way are you going

into that industry with those people. I didn't even know what those people meant. But I think

years later, I think she made gay people. And of course, I found out later, Simon was gay.

And the whole industry was gay by the time I was like, but you know, I wore her down.

I wore her down. I wore her down. And eventually she called Simon and I went on my first photoshoot.

Again, I was stopped by model agents and I got an agent and sort of my love for the industry really begun from there. What about your dad? Did he know you were?

I was hiding it. My mother and I were hiding it. My mother was so good. I remember the first job she'd go with me, you know, to cast things and on my shoots sometimes because I was 16, you know, I was a baby. And then she really trusted Simon Foxton. So then, you know, Simon would look after me and we kept it all for my dad. I had a sister who was again stopped in Canada

by a famous model agent, John Casablanca, to be a model. And my dad was like,

no way you're not doing this. So somehow in the back of my head, he wasn't going to stop me.

Right. So yeah, I was pretending to go to school when I was going to cast things. I was pretending

to go to school when I was going to shoots. So it's very cloak and dagger. But my mother and I,

it was fun. That was your, I guess, your introduction to that world, right? Yes.

Fashion modeling. Yeah. Pivotal. I mean, I remember the first day I walked on to

a photo shoot. I think it was the Pepe jeans. And I looked around the room and I saw photography.

I saw lights. I saw, you know, styling. I saw just a world where everybody seemed so happy,

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so collaborative. And in that moment, I knew that I wanted to be in this world in the second I walked in. And I also knew that it wouldn't be as a model in front of the camera that I would be something else. I didn't, I didn't know anything about the industry. Also, don't forget, when our parents came over from, you know, the Commonwealth, they didn't know what media was. You know, if you say to my dad, I'm going to be a journalist, he'll be like, what? You know, there were the practical jobs that we talked about. So I don't really blame my dad now that I'm older. He just wanted me to have something that was secure. But try telling a 16 or 17 year old who's discovered a world where they, they belong to turn back to be a lawyer. I knew that wasn't going to happen. But off you went anyway to university. I did for him, for my dad. But the brilliant thing about going to university was I was doing all these things. And I was, you know, I was establishing myself as a model. I had pictures in magazines and worked on shows. And I thought, oh, you know, I could do this side by side. It wasn't until I got to go to this university. And I remember I went for three months. And one of my lecturers was like, oh, so what do you do outside of here? I explained what I've been doing. I'd also been working with a magazine called ID as, you know, sort of interning. I mean, I was like, so in love with this world. I was at, I was at college. I was modeling. I was whatever I could do. And I remember the teacher saying to me, you know, what you're doing now is what most of our students would like to do when they leave. So yeah, just follow it. And I never went back. You dropped out. Three months and you dropped out. Dropped out. But then when I dropped out, I was also offered a job as fashion director for ID magazine when I was 18. Did you tell your dad you dropped out? I remember telling my mom I was dropping out of university and I didn't speak to her for two years. So I remember, you know, one day coming home and my dad was like, how's university? And something just said, you know, you can't lie and you can't lie to him anymore. So I said, you know what, dad? I've been working as a model. I've been working at ID magazine. I haven't really been going to university. And he was furious. He threw my things out the window, my clothes out the window. And I remember picking them up and thinking, I am never coming back here. And funny enough, that's one of that's what propels me because sometimes I have dreams where I've gone back home because things didn't work out. So I said, I remember saying to myself, I am never coming back to this house with my tail between my legs. I'm never coming back. And the same day I went into ID magazine and the fashion director, Beth Summers was leaving and she said, you're taking over. He throws all of your stuff. There's so much, so much to unpack there. He kicks you out the family home. Yeah. And in your head, you go, now I have no plan B. It's not a plan A or plan A. Nothing. Sounds great. But that also sounds like terrified. And fear as a driving force can be a little bit unhealthy, right? This sort of fear of going back. I can relate to that as well, because similar situation called my mom dropping out university. She goes, don't talk to me or the family until you go back. So I have two years of no plan B. It's forward. And that's wonderful for achieving great things, but also it can cause, in my case, severe workaholism. Because you're driven by fear. Are you driven or are you dragged? Driven and dragged. Basically, all I know, and I mean, you started, anybody who's started an industry at a young age will tell you that you're just driven. You're driven. I didn't even know what

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I was heading towards. All I knew is that I was a workaholic. I would do anything that was needed to be done. I wouldn't sleep. I wouldn't sleep if I had to return clothes from East London to West London. I would walk. It didn't matter. And you're also shaped by certain people around you at the time. I mean, I had great mentors, you know, Terry and Trisha Jones, who owned ID magazine, were really supportive of me. And you know, I also had Simon Foxton. I always say to people, I couldn't have succeeded if I didn't have great people around me. I was so lucky to have not only the best people in the industry, but also people who were caring. Had I been on my own out there in the world, I don't know what would have happened. I had Judy Blame, who said, you

know, I've just got a new house. Come and stay with me rent free. How old are you? You know, I was 18. Come and stay with me rent free. I had, you know, my editors who just give me money, like, okay, you're working so hard. Here's 10 pounds for your lunch. I was so lucky. That's why it's so important for me to mentor young people. It's so important for young people to have mentors because had I not been looked after, I don't know where I would be. And also I had this work ethic from my dad and my mother, coupled with the fear of going back home. It was just forward, forward motion. Were you running towards something or running away from something? Both. I was running away from a life that had proven too difficult. You know, as you said, you know, black, young, gay, you know, all these intersections, as they call it today. So I really wasn't fitting at home. And I was just, I don't know what I was hurtling towards, but I just knew that work would get me there, that my family wouldn't get me there. You know, but work somehow would get me, and I didn't know where I was going. Was it a distraction? Work? Work was everything for me. Work meant everything.

Work was when I was happiest. Work was when I was saddest. Work was when I felt like myself. Work was where I felt like an imposter. It's almost like every emotion you have in the family, what do you call it? In the family dynamic, I had at work. And it goes back to being in an industry from a very young age, from 16. Don't forget, at the age of 13, I came from another country. 16, I was modeling. 18, I was an editor. So the imposter syndrome, not that. And I looked back up my journey now and, you know, writing the book, it's like, it was quite fast. Quite a fast ascent, maybe. But with it came all the, you know. You didn't speak to your father for another 15 years following that day that he chucked you out the house. Did you also sort of reject the family? Yes. And work became, as you described there, your new family? Yeah. Yeah. I rejected my family. I thought they could have done more to help me. I had a baby sister who's now my agent. And she was, she didn't understand why from one day to the next I left. I was seeing my family less and I embraced a whole new world. I mean, in this world, I was Edward. I was, I was, I was beautiful. I was shiny. Accepted. That's the word that I hate that I was exotic back then. And it felt like this is where I needed to be. But underneath, I was, I was a mess. I was the same insecure little boy hiding from my father. But because I was in a position of power, I had to, I had to cover up the shyness and essentially grow up again, grow up super fast. You described yourself as being lucky. But I, I'm not sure I necessarily agree because most people don't open up their home to someone. They don't give them money when they need it. They don't bring them in just because they are 18 and young. So if you were to tell me how you created that luck, why people were pulling you up, why they were giving you the job as fashion director at 18 years old, why they were letting you in their home? Why was that?

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I mean, I always thought it was luck. I always thought I was in the right place at the right time. I'd met the right people, but I'd learned later on, of course, that I must have had something in the raw. I must have had some raw talent. I must have had some kind of a raw vision, something that people wanted to help hone because had I not had these people, I don't, I would never have known how to research a great shoot or how to write a great, you know, how to write a great story. I had people, I think they must have, I must have been so sort of wide eyed and innocent that everybody wanted to help me. Everybody wanted to help me win. But I also know that you do that with people. For me now, I do that with people I see have a certain talent, a certain raw talent. So I think now it's not down to luck, you know, luck, you know, luck will get you through the door, but something has to sustain you. But in those early days, I was so grateful, you know, for all these people who thought I had something special. But mind you, even working ID when I was so young, I mean, I didn't have an assistant. So I would literally work on the cover shoot, style it, find a photographer, I'd write all the shopping pages, I would work on layouts, I would shoot fashion stories, I would write designer interviews, it was like a one man army. And I didn't realize that I was soaking in. And I was soaking in an industry, I was soaking in really everything I do in my job now comes from those days. But there I was in sort of a magazine for young people, by young people. And I was learning my craft. And it was exciting every day. I didn't want to go to I didn't want to sleep. I didn't want to sleep. But I was definitely a workaholic, you know, work meant everything to me. And if something went wrong in work, I would just collapse and not know how to handle it. It's to make sense. Because it was so closely linked to your right sense of self. Yeah, sense of self. Yeah. That again can be unhealthy, right? Pardon? Oh my God, I talk about imposter syndrome syndrome. And then your mind is saying to you, you're not meant to be here. You're this little African boy. Who do you think you are? And you're trying to work? I mean, I know a lot of young people, you know, speaks a lot of young people today. And when they hear that I suffer from imposter syndrome, they can't believe it. I'm like, that's just part of life. It never goes away. You learn where to put it. Like, I know that I've done this long enough to know that, you know, what I do is okay. On a good day. But yes, it was quite difficult. Those early days. So that leads you to drinking and that leads you to going out just to numb your insecurities and your fears. Do you think you could have gotten here without your imposter syndrome? If you didn't feel like in a quote unquote imposter, would you be sat here now? No way. I always say, had I not had my imposter syndrome, had I not had the need to be better? I mean, I never look at anything I've done and think this is amazing. I'm always, no. I'm like, how can I do better? How can I make this better? How can I make this issue better? How can I make this better? And that's really what's driven me all these years. Even when an issue comes out of British folk, I don't look at it till two months later, because I will literally see all the mistakes and and that's something I learned from from back then. So my insecurities really, that's what drove me. That's what kept driving me. Not the successes. It's the fact that think this wasn't good enough or that wasn't good enough or this could be better. But I got to a point where I went, okay, you can you can let that go for now. And yeah, see things from a different angle. But yeah, my imposter syndrome definitely propelled me. If you if you have that where you're looking at your work and you always are self critical of it. And you're always thinking about how you could have

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done it better. How are you happy in the moment? Because that sounds like you're kind of deferring your enoughness, the feeling that I am enough and it's good enough and everything's fine, off into the future behind the next goal. So how do you become at that stage in your life? How are you happy in the moment? I mean, you know, everyone says, why this sense of insecurity? What you have

to remember is I was in an incredible home, and I lost it. An incredible country lost it. An incredible family lost it. Went into a gay scene that was so was so different to what I expected. So lost that. So for me, it's always a sense of loss that I had to overcome. So it makes sense. It makes perfect sense.

You know, I had to belong somewhere. I never felt I really belonged anywhere. And that really was a factor. Sitting here, 50 years old, you know, I've been able to deal with my demons, you know, through work, through therapy, whatever you want to call it. So I'm a different person now, but I'm still that same. I still have those feelings of, yeah, you just have to make it as best as it can be. But now not detrimental to my health, not detrimental to my mental health. But as a young person, you don't think of that. You just you just have to move forward and you have to be the best you can be, whatever that is. You have to move forward. You start that treadmill at 18 years old, which is much earlier than a lot of people started as fashion director of this magazine. You start moving forward. You work, you don't sleep, you give everything to it. And at some point, it tends to be the case when I speak to these incredible people that there's a moment where you go, fuck, where am I? How did I get here?

And I need to, I need to change something. Was there a moment in your life where you realised that you, you know, all this running was maybe just a little too much running and you had to stop for a second and take a moment? Yeah, I remember sort of around 2002. I mean, I've been in the industry for so long. I was creating fashion shows for the best designers in the world. I was flying every day, or every few days to a different country, you know, living the life as they call it. But I was always, I was also the most miserable I'd ever been. I would be in a room surrounded by lots of people and feel really lonely. There was a sense of loneliness

that was sort of creeping into my life every day. And there's this saying that you can be in a room surrounded by thousands of people and be lonely, but that kept getting stronger and stronger. So I started drinking a lot and I started sort of going out a lot, you know, recreational drugs. And one day I was supposed to go to Italy to work on a show, a big show for designers called Dolce Cabana. And I had a party and I lost my passport. And I was supposed to be there on day one. And by the time I got my passport back, it was day four. I literally went to the American, to the British Embassy to get my passport with a bottle of vodka in my hand. You're joking. Yes, which I put through the security thinking there was nothing wrong. But I remember getting to Milan and literally breaking down and calling a friend and said, I think I'm done. I think I'm done with drinking. I think I'm done. And I became sober the next 14 years or so. I knew my life had to change. I moved from London to New York to be away from everyone. And that's what I did. But

my career was totally unaffected. People who have addictions can be functioning. So my career was

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at the top, you know, at the time. And I could have just carried on, but I just knew that life had to change. I just knew I had to develop some kind of spirituality. I just needed to be able to look at myself and not, you know, hate myself. Hate myself. Yeah, hate myself. You know, work was always great. But like I said, behind the curtains, the insecurities, the loneliness that a lot of people, a lot of high achievers feel, you know, when you don't have a partner, when you don't have a family to go back to, you're literally a lone wolf with a lot of friends. Everything in life has a cost and the cost of being dragged or driven by success is often something has to fall by the wayside. Yes. And for so many successful people, that is social connections. It is all these other things that make life quote unquote balanced. Because, you know, in the moment, those things seem disposable when you're so focused and driven and, you know, running away from where you've come from or getting to where you're going. And it seems like such a recurring theme that I experienced. What were the symptoms? You said the word creeping, creeping feelings of like loneliness or whatever, you know, depression, whatever it was, what were the signals, the signs of that? Like, that's what I really want to get to because there'll be someone listening to this now that it might just be creeping like a frog in a frying pan slowly heating up. What were those signals or signs in your life? The signals were like, you know, not, not really sleeping, not really never engaging with people on a one to one always being better with, with crowds of people around avoidance, you know, avoiding certain situations people who are quote unquote good for you, avoiding people who you really loved before and who were really kind to you all of a sudden avoiding them for a new group of shiny people. I spent watching, you know, endless amounts of TV, but then realizing for the past six hours, you can't, you can't even remember what you've been watching to make sense. Staring at the screen, but the mind and a mind that wouldn't stop, no meditation involved. No, just a mind that was working over time. And what was it feeling like? It's a feeling of emptiness. I can describe that feeling. Now when I meditate, I'm like, oh, that's the feeling, but it's a feeling of emptiness, a feeling of loneliness. It's really how I describe it. Disconnectedness disconnected from everything. And everyone's telling you how brilliant you are. You have the magazine covers. I mean, I remember once at one month, I went to the newsstands, I had the cover of American Vogue, Italian Vogue, American Vanity Fair, ID Magazine and, and feeling empty and people saying, oh, my God, look at what you've achieved and just, just wanting and also wanting to destroy it. Really wanting to destroy whatever talent there was wanting to destroy it, not really caring, not really taking care of it. I mean, now I know that when you're given a talent, I don't know where that comes from. You have to protect it. You have to nurture it. You have to, but when you're young in your twenties and you have money and, and jobs are coming to you, you just don't, you don't see the value. So what changed at that moment in your life? What changed? You gave up the alcohol. You describe yourself at that point. And I, I went into AA where in AA, it's, oh my God, I learned to do service with homeless people in AA. It's a leveler. So I would, you know, you do service with homeless people. You'd go for lunch with people from all walks of life. Don't forget I'd been in this industry since 18 and I hadn't stepped out of it. The only people I knew were actors or musicians. I hadn't stepped out of this, but meeting real everyday, regular people that really helped me. And also

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doing service, you know, one day you make tea. I had sponsors. So, you know, sponsors, you know, someone who wants to, to not drink and change their life. So you're someone's in a way mentor. I had, you know, a sponsor, but I was really in the program and that really gave me a spiritual side to be able to, to deal with the world and even, you know, to have a relationship. You know, I'm married now, like I said, I've been in a relationship now for 21 years, but had I not taken that step? Had I not woken up and thought I need my life to be different? I don't know well be today because the party moves very fast. You know, the train moves very fast. And a lot of people in the fashion industry don't get the chance to step back and, you know, reevaluate. You just go. It's just like, yeah, you could go from party to party and it'll be okay. But I just knew that coming from where I came from, that I needed to change my life. Going from party to party and it'll be okay. That almost seems like a bit of a metaphor for how a lot of people are living their lives, even outside of the fashion industry, going from job to job, lawyer to senior lawyer to partner at the law firm without really having that moment to step back and say, who am I and how did I get here and do I belong here and do I feel okay? I know the external world is telling me I've done well, but that does that match with how I feel inside? Yeah, I mean, it's like, you have to know what you feel inside. And a lot of times too many people, young people are doing what they think other people want them to do. Oh, you're great. You'd be good at this. You should ask for this job. Sometimes you have to ask yourself, do I want that? That's what I did. Everyone says, you need to take this campaign. You need to work with this designer. So I did. But did I really want that? Maybe I didn't. But you just do it because people's expectations of you, you know? And I did that for years and, you know, now I don't do that anymore. But it takes a while to be able to figure that out. If you could have had a chat with Edward, the 18-year-old fashion director at ID Magazine, and you could have just sat down with him and given him a couple of listen. Right, Edward, this is what I need to tell you. What would 51-year-old Edward say to 18-year-old Edward about career advice and equipping him for the next couple of years? I'd say, don't just give everything to work. Don't just give everything to work. You know, find moments for yourself. Find moments to self-reflect. Find moments to, I always say, I always go back to meditation. Find moments of self-help because that will carry you much longer. Do you know a lot of people I started out with are no longer around? So many people along the wayside decided the industry wasn't for them or was bad for their mental health. And I just kept going. And I would have, you know, say to my younger self, you know what, sometimes maybe some jobs aren't worth it. But you know, when you're 18, everything is a must, isn't it? Do you think he would have listened? No. No way. We'll just do the same thing all over again. But that's the beauty of youth, isn't it? Yeah. There's some lessons in life that you have to learn for yourself. I wouldn't have listened to anyone. I didn't listen to anyone. Really? But, um, yeah. Little Edward. But you know what was really great about that time that I think about it? It was like, you know, I go back to saying, you know, I was, I was, I don't know, the chosen one or the token, whichever you want to see it. But I even learned at that age that I needed people like myself around. I needed black people around me, people of color around me. So I, you know, I became really good friends with a young model, Naomi Campbell, a young makeup artist, Pat McGrath, another hairstylist, Ben Scurve and Patty Wilson. And we became our

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little group in the fashion industry through the nineties. And you always need, you always need your people. Why? Because you just do because there's certain things that, you know, I was facing that you wouldn't know as the person who wasn't black, that Pat would understand, that Naomi would understand. We were navigating spaces that, you know, most black people want. And you just need someone to understand when you had a problem, someone to understand and help you navigate really. So for me, those friendships that we had as kids in the early nineties, we're still so closer. We speak every day, all of us. So you need your tribe.

You need your tribe. And I remember even the day I stopped, I stopped drinking. I called Pat and I called Naomi and, you know, they've been so consistent in my life. But I had my tribe in an industry that wasn't really for us.

You stayed at Ideas Fashion Director for a long time.

20-something years. 20-something years. Most young people, especially these days, wouldn't stay in any job. Staying for two years.

After six months, they come in to me to say, what is my prospect? I'm like, I don't even know you. When I read that, I was like, is that correct? Like you stayed in one job, the job you had at 18 for 20-something years. But I mean, not 20 years. I mean, 20 years, but I was also freelance and doing the job. But Ideas is such a special magazine. It became like the coolest magazine in the world. Every model, every actor, everybody wanted to be a part of it. So there was no need for me to learn. I'm also very loyal. Loyalty is so important. So everywhere I go, I never leave.

There's something to be said for that though. It's rare in the modern world that loyalty to a professional or a craft. And if someone is loyal to you, I believe in sort of being loyal back.

If someone nurtures you, then you want to be there. Like I said, it replaces the family dynamic, which I didn't have from that day. Do you think that's part of it? Why you've been so loyal is because you're searching for somewhere to belong. Oh, I know that. Because

even when I was at Ideas, my friends would say, I was never alone at my desk. Each day, every day you come in, there'll be the hottest actor, singer, dancer of the moment, run my table. The next day will be a writer. It was like, yeah, come in, come and hang out.

Let's go hang out for the day with Edward. And that was what Ideas was.

And what was that making you feel when there was people around you from an emotional standpoint?

I mean, I'm great with people. I love being around people. And I always say, I have a husband who is sort of very wants to be on his own. And I grew up with five siblings. So I don't even know what being on my own is like. I mean, now I do. But back then, the more people around, the

more like they gave me energy and creativity. I love creative conversations. I love, I love being in the moment. I love arriving at, you know, a creative decision. So that's, that was really my feel to make sense. Yeah, it makes perfect sense. Vogue, how did that happen?

Vogue. Yeah. So after Ideas, in the late nineties, I started working for Italian Vogue, for the great editor called Franca Sazzani. And Italian Vogue was sort of, of all the Vogue, so you could say the most creative where, you know, she would give you 30 pages to shoot.

There was incredible images. So, you know, I did that for maybe 10 years. I was at Italian Vogue, sort of the main stylist. And then I got a call from Anna Wynter in America to come and work for American Vogue. So from Italian Vogue, I moved to American Vogue,

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and I was there for, working for Anna for seven years. Then I got a call.

Damn, you do long stints. So long.

And then you got a lot. Then I got a call from W Magazine to work with Stefano Tonchi, a really great editor. And I was there for seven years.

But when you're having fun, or when you're enjoying what you do, time is of no essence.

You know, like I'll say, oh, the issue comes out in six months. And someone's like, that's six months away. But for me, it was like tomorrow. So yes. And then one day out of the blue, I got a call from Jonathan Newhouse, a very great, he was, you know, he owns Condé Nast, the company that owns Vogue. And he said, the editor who was there, had been there for 26 years, was, you know, fashion industry, nobody leaves any job, clearly, was leaving and without coming for an interview. So I came in for a couple of interviews. I didn't think I was going to get it, because to be honest, I thought Vogue wasn't meant for people like me. You know, I thought Vogue was

meant for, you know, we're meant from a certain background. And I was, you know, the boy from Labrador Grove, you know, I was gay, I was outspoken, you know, I was good at my job. But yeah, I went for an interview and I literally told them, you know, how to, how I would do Vogue for for 2017. And what was that message? To make it inclusive, to make it diverse. You know, there was this notion in the fashion industry that black women or women of color on covers don't sell. It's been in the industry for as long as I can remember. But I saw all these affluent women, you know, not just black women, you know, gay women, women from, you know, with working class backgrounds, you know, Muslim women, all these British, who are British essentially, not seeing themselves reflected in the magazine. I thought, well, not only is it bad, but you know, it's not good business. But I wanted just to create a place or a safe place where women could just feel welcomed. Because I always remember, my mother always said to me, if you can see it, you can be it. So I wanted to create a magazine where, you know, women of all shapes, sizes, you know, race, age, socioeconomic background could see themselves reflected. And that's all I did. I didn't reinvent the wheel. I just thought, who are the women out there that I wanted to reach? And that's what I did. And thank God the world was, I mean, now diverse, diversity is a buzzword, right? But in 2017, nobody wanted that on a magazine.

And I always said, you know, I knew I'd probably be fired three months in. But I also learned, and this is what I got from my father, I'd rather be fired for something I believed in than to go in half, halving it and get fired anyway, half arcing it. So yeah, that's how Vogue happened and the world was ready. When you got that call, saying that you were going to take that top job at Vogue, how did you feel? I felt scared, I felt scared on one hand, because I knew the type of person I am that I, that I wouldn't, like I said, I wouldn't just go in and try to make do, I would need to change everything. I also knew that Vogue had such a huge, I mean, Vogue's the best magazine in the world and has such a huge sort of history that I wanted to sort of be a part of it, but make it about today. And I didn't know if the readers would be ready. I mean, before I started the job, you know, there were speculations in the newspaper, I mean, I got called all kinds of African, I got called, I got called Black. What was it? I had the, the black, they said it was like going to crafts and the cat one, like a whole other breed. So already I had that on my shoulders. It was really, it was a really tough time.

But I didn't speak. I just thought, let me just bring out the magazine. And when the first issue

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dropped December, 2017 with Adjoa on the cover, an issue that was dedicated to Great Britain, the country that gave me a home, the country that I loved, and featured all the best, you know, Zadie Smith, Naomi Campbell, Sadiq Khan, that's the best of Britain. The world got it straight away. And from that minute, the magazine just went up, up, up, up, up, and we haven't looked back. But even I read a, so I read about that story of the newspaper when you got the job as the top job at Vogue, they said it was like crafts but the cat winning racism. And then I also recall a story you tell about arriving at Vogue one day and a security lady not letting you in because they thought you were the delivery man. And at that point you were the editor. I've been editor for years. And they wouldn't let you in the building. Yeah. I mean, it was, you know, I think the woman was hired from God knows where. I walked in, I walked in and without asking for anything, without asking for my pass, it was like loading bay. I was like, excuse me. What? I said, you have to use the loading bay. And I was like, I'm the editor of this magazine. But what that, you know, I always say what that told me was never to feel that the work is done, never to feel that I'm okay, never to feel that I've made it. Those moments remind me that there's still a lot to do. A younger person walking in there would have been paralyzed with fear, but I knew how to do something about it. And this also happened years ago at a show where they put all fashion directors in the front row and put me in the second row. And I literally was on Twitter the next day. I'm not scared. Fear is not an option for me, you know, from a young age. I've never been scared of fighting for, you know, what I deserve or fighting for what people from different backgrounds deserve. So yes, that happened at Vogue, you know, but it also made me realize that you always have to fight and you can never be complacent. Even today, do you feel like there's people that want to see you fail and that don't want a man of your color and background to be in that role? I mean, I think, you know, I mean, I've proven myself. I mean, at the end of the day, I didn't just create a magazine that looked good, but also a magazine that was so financially successful, you know, diversity sells. I remember taking the job and people saying to me, diversity is down market. Yes, I heard that. Then I had Oprah Winfrey on the cover wearing the most incredible diamond earrings and it sold out. So every day I continue to sort of challenge what the idea of Vogue is and an idea of being an editor is. But now I look around at all the magazines and diversity is now a part of the media, you know, having black models on the covers, that's no longer a big deal, having issues around, you know, having gay issues or trans issues. It's no longer an issue, but in 2017, it was unheard of. So it shows how far we've come, but there's still a long way to go. You fought, Edward, you fought for your entire life. You fought for yourself. You fought for others. You're fighting for your people. You're doing that every day. It's so clear in all your work. I was reading also about the black issue you released and how well that sold out where you put all sort of black models throughout this magazine. And that fight, again, it comes at a cost. And one of the costs it came at was your health. I read about the health scare you had. Can you tell me about that? And the doctors linked that back to your lack of sleep and sounded like some kind of sort of a culmination of fighting

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a bit too hard, if that makes sense. I mean, you know, I was, you know, my way here, I was in the car with my peer, you're always fighting. You're always pushing forward. Yes, basically, all those years of just not sleeping, just working, overworking, traveling. I woke up one day and I saw these black markings in my vision. And it turned out that I was having a detached retina. So the retina did detach eventually, you know, one surgery, then it detached again, and it detached four times in the same eye. And then I asked all that was happening. My other eye started. So they had to operate on that. I've been five operations. And, you know, I work with my eyes. So can you imagine what that did? So that was really harrowing.

And then also I developed tinnitus. So the hearing. I had that. It's hard to explain. You can't explain. You can't explain it. If I said to you, your ears gonna ring, you go, okay. But when your ear rings, you think you're going crazy. Yeah, you go crazy. I had it for about 15 days and I can see. Only 15 days? Yeah. And it went, yeah. Oh, wow. And so I started reading online about it because you're going to have this for life. And then I read about the psychological impact on your mental health of having it for life. Can you imagine having that and then having my eyes? But what it did teach me, you know, when, you know, I didn't work for two years. People didn't realize when my whole sort of eye issues were happening in work for two years. But in the industry, you know, you can, you have so many shoes banked anyway. So it looks like you are. But I knew after that that I had to change my life, that I had to practice self care, that I had to, you know, work hard, but not travel as much, not take every job, not, and British folk came at the right time because it helped, you know, it meant I'll be in one place a lot. I'll be in that office, which was also very new because I hadn't been in an office for a while. And yes, it really helped me turn my life around. I mean, I'm such a health nut.

A purpose driven man like you that's so in love with his work for your work to be taken, because your eyes as you say are central to what you do. So you can't see films, TV, mark me as shoots. Well, what was the, the sort of mental health implications of that? Oh my God, I was, I was, I was a mess. I mean, I was, I was living in New York at the time anyway, and I was seeing, I saw a therapist who said I had PTSD because I was so scared of losing my vision. It spiraled, I mean, to all my, to my relationship, it spiraled into my life. I was so scared. And I remember the idea of going blind wouldn't leave my mind for one second. Like it wasn't like every day I thought of, oh, I might go blind once. It was every second on my mind. I could be happy, and I'll go back. You're going to go blind. And the mind, the brain is so powerful. So imagine you're leading your life, and then there's this thing running behind your brain, you're going to go blind, you're going to go blind, but non-stop. And it took a lot of therapy to, cognitive therapy to help me deal with that. Because I was convinced, not just one eye, but two. But then I found the most incredible doctor in New York, probably the best in his field. And you know, my eyes are, yeah, good now. I mean, not perfect, but at least I can see or partially see. I don't know if it was slightly after that, but you know, we've talked about the incredible impact and inspiration from a very young age that your mother was to you. She was everything you've described,

vivacious. She was an entrepreneur. She was the reason why fashion became such an important part of your life as a young man during fashion designs under her workstation at work and so on. And while she was away visiting Ghana, she had a stroke. And from there, her health deteriorated

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over the coming, over the next couple of years. In 2016 at 44 years old, your mother passed away. What impact did that have on your perspective in your life, the passing of your mother?

Oh, my God. I mean, my mother was somebody who wouldn't stop working. She was somebody who wouldn't sleep. I mean, I get all that from her. She read, I mean, my mother didn't even cook. It's because my sisters would cook. She was obsessed with beautiful clothes, bringing beauty in the world. But I also watched her, you know, she didn't eat so well. She wouldn't exercise. She just wake up and just work. So I mean, you know, my mother was the love of my life. And it really made me stop to think, I mean, you know, strokes are not nothing to be messed with. And it runs in my family. So that was already a sign to really look after myself. But losing my mother really left a void that, you know, will never be filled. But now I don't remember the strange thing happens when you lose a parent. Now I don't remember her being ill. I just remember that, you know, that gorgeous, creative woman who was so full of life. And my mother always taught me not to be scared of anything. And yeah, all the memories I have of her so great. But she also helped me change my life. You know, yeah, she was a love of my life.

In your words, what do you owe to her?

I owe her everything, my God. I owe her the love, the love of fashion and color and people, the delving into your imagination, the creativity, everything that I create that's beautiful, everything, you know, the love I have of women of all shapes and sizes and ages and you know, race, everything, everything good. Everything good in my work, but also in my life. She was the kindest, most nurturing human being. And that's something I try to do with my staff. That's something I try to do in my everyday life sort of, you know, they used to call me teacher when I was young. So I really liked teaching the next generation and really nurturing them. So all that really came from my mother. And also empathy, you know, being able to put yourself in someone's shoes, all that came from her.

When she after her stroke, it was almost 15 years where you describe it as a sort of decline in her health. When she did pass away, was there any, any thoughts of sort of regrets about the, this is something I always wonder about my parents because I've still got my parents, but I play out the scenario of how I'll feel one day when I've spent all this time working. And our relationship, you kind of, I think I've gone through life thinking my parents will live forever, to be honest. Yeah, everyone thinks their parents are going to live forever. I say to my friends, please make sure you see your parents as much as you can, because when they're gone, they're gone. I still pick up the phone to call my mother and she's not there, but spend as much time as you can because they're not here forever. You think they are. And the biggest regret I had is all those years I spent working and traveling and not seeing enough of her and not, you know, going back to, to visit and I was just so consumed with work. You know, the one regret I do have is I wish I would have spent more time with her, but I thought she was going to be around forever. So yeah, spend as much time as you can with your parents, you know, build whatever bridges you can

build. I know some bridges are impossible, but if you can build bridges, you know, do, because when they're gone, you will miss them. Are there any, did she ever hear from you directly the impact that she had had on your life? I mean, you know, before she had the stroke, she saw how well I was doing and, you know, she would see, you know, different articles appear in different magazines. And she knew that, you know, she was African, so she knew that I was financially secure,

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secure enough to give, you know, to look after the family. So for her, even though she didn't see me get to this level, she knew that, you know, I was able to buy a place when I was very young and I'm able to sort of look after them. And so she saw that. And I think she was very proud of that. She must have been very proud of you. I think she was. I hope she was anyway.

Incredible. You went to therapy after she passed away. What has therapy given you? What, what's the sort of the practical therapy really gives you the practical tools to cope with life? I mean, I've always had, I've always been very good with boundaries. Like it teaches you boundaries. I've always been very good, you know, when I was a teenager, I was, I just wanted to do what everybody wanted. But then the older I go, I mean, I was, I mean, I was so frosty at times anyway. So it teaches you boundaries. It teaches you to speak up when, when, you know, things are not right. You know, again, I've always had that. But it teaches me to be human, to be caring, to, you know, certain people in our positions, you know, when you're successful, sometimes you, you discard opinions so fast, or you discard people, people's ideas. So I'm now learning to be a better listener, you know, all those things that I wasn't when I was growing up. And maybe it's turning 50 as well. You know, I'm more patient now, definitely.

If I was your, who's the closest person to you professionally?

Professionally. Oh my God. Who knows you best professionally?

My sister. Okay. So your sister, your younger sister, right?

My sister, who was also my agent for 15 years. If I asked her what, what you're good at, because, you know, you've reached this position where you're the top of your game and what you do from the most incredible start in life to, to here now. So we talked about your talent, but we didn't really figure out in terms of like the specifics of what that talent is in your, in your own words. If I was to ask your sister, I said, what's Edward's talent?

What is the thing that he's good at that the peers just can't quite do as well as he can?

He should ask her. What do you think she'd say?

Um, I think she will probably say that I, I'm in sort of perpetual forward motion that I don't take no for an answer probably. And that I'll, yeah, I'll do whatever I can to make, to make the best magazine or to make the best picture or to make the best, like, I'll go to the ends of the world to make things happen, maybe.

Isn't it difficult for someone who doesn't have that same standard to work with someone like you then? Because if I, you know, if I don't care as much about the detail as you do.

Yeah, but I also think that, you know, it comes with time, doesn't it?

You know, I think you can see diamonds in the roll. So I don't expect everybody to be like me, but I can also see potential. And then hopefully you can nurture that potential to its fullest. So I don't expect everybody to come in, you know, sometimes the best people you work with are the quiet ones in the back, the ones who are not good in interview situations, but the ones who know who work and are workers. And she'll probably say that I, I, I'm definitely a worker. Like I work very hard.

The standards matter to you? Very much so.

Do you sweat the small stuff? Yes.

Why does that matter?

The devil's in the details.

You know, you have to create on a level that we create, you know, you can't just say, okay,

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everything's fine, everything will work out.

Can you work with people that are like that?

That don't sweat the small stuff?

So long as there are people there who can sweat the small stuff.

Maybe other people's talents are something else, but there needs to be a balance. It can't just be everybody that's sweating the small stuff, but there also has to be sort of dreamers and creators. You know, someone said to me once, what do you look for when you employ staff?

And like I said, it's not the best interview. It's when you're walking towards my office, am I happy to see you? Like, what are you bringing to the job? So someone comes to my office, they like sweating the small stuff, and somebody can just walk in and go, I have a big idea. And that's what I love about what we do. Do you think you're successful?

I'm successful at my work, but I'm still a work in progress where life is concerned.

Because every day I learn something new about myself, I feel like I missed a lot of years growing up. You know, for years, I was always,

I was always sort of jealous when I saw people who went to university together, when people were, you know, who went to university together, had all those escapades, and I was working. But now I realize that everybody has their own path, and mine was to have to go and be a worker.

Quick one. Some of you will know that this podcast is now sponsored by the incredible Airbnb.

I'm a huge user, lover, and customer of Airbnb. Every time I go away on a trip, whether that's work related or it's a holiday, Airbnb is always my go-to. But have you ever considered, have you ever thought about making some extra cash to cover some bills or to help pay off a holiday? Let me explain further. Perhaps people are coming to your town or city for a music festival, for an event or a holiday, and you have a spare room. Why not Airbnb it? Or your home office is free right now. You're working away from home during the week, you could Airbnb it. Honestly, the possibilities are endless. I've Airbnb'd one of my apartments before, and it's a great way to make extra cash. I'd highly recommend you all to at least check it out.

That extra space you have, that extra room, it might be worth more than you think. So to find out just how much it's worth, search [Airbnb.co.uk slash host](https://www.airbnb.co.uk/host). That's [Airbnb.co.uk slash host](https://www.airbnb.co.uk/host). Check it out. Sometimes I ask my friends this, because this is the kind of weirdo that I am, but if happiness were an ingredients list, if it was a recipe that needed certain ingredients and certain quantities for the recipe to be complete, is there anything missing currently off your ingredients list that you think if you just had a little bit more of that, then maybe you'd be even more fulfilled, content happy. No, it's for me, it's more, it's more the opposite. I'm now like, if I don't want to be in a place, whether it's dinner, or in a job, or in a situation, I'm out. That's the ingredient that I have now, that I don't want to spend any, life is future, I don't want to spend any time being in a place where I don't want to be. And that came with years and years of failures and successes or whatever you call it. Now I know where I need to be, who I want to be with, and that's the ingredient that's been added. I'm 30 now, right? So I've got- You're a baby. There's about a 20-year gap between me and you. Oh, thank you. That means a lot coming from you. So thank you.

What advice would you give me as a 30-year-old man right now? I've got another 20 years ahead of me, it's a different chapter of life. I love that piece of advice you said about boundaries, and like, if I don't want to be there, let someone down, get out of there. Is there anything else

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you think that as a 30-year-old man would equip me to make the next chapter of my life is brilliant? I mean- Don't take no for an answer. Keep doing what you do. There'll be naysayers along the way, people like, oh, you can do it like this, you can do it like that. This person's most- Don't listen to any of that. You've already set yourself on a great path. Manifest it. Keep moving forward. Yeah, but really don't be distracted by people telling you you can't do this or you can't do that or shouldn't do this. Once someone- Again, one of the things my mother said to me is, when you go into a place, an institution, and they say, you know, we do things like this, you should say why. Always have that on your mind. Why? Why does it have to be like this? Why can't we change? So why? It's a very important word to have.

Amen. How has love changed your life, Edward? 20 years married now?

I mean, love, I never thought I would have love. I always thought I'd be like, one of those people who sort of career-minded people, you know, where you get to the end of your life and you've achieved everything without a partner. And then I met, you know, I let, when we were in our 20s, I was in my late 20s, I was in his early 20s, and part of the reason why I got sober, and he has taught me about just being a person, being human, you know, being grounded. He's so special, really, just the normal things in life. But he's also very creative. So he tells me when a cover is awful, and we find, and I say to him, what do you mean this is awful? Everybody loves this. And he goes, yeah, they're telling you what you want to hear. So he's my, you know, my home, you know, my safe space. And he's just very kind, you know, took me to be kinder. Have you learned to express to him what he means to you?

I think he read the book. No, he knows what he means to me.

What does he mean to you?

Without him, I wouldn't be here. I wouldn't even, I probably wouldn't even want to carry on doing what I do. But he's so excited. He's a director. So he's also so excited by work and our life. And, you know, we have two puppies. So we have a great work-life balance.

You wouldn't want to be here.

No, I wouldn't want to be here doing what I do. You know, I'll be like, oh, I'm gonna, I'm just quitting or they're those, you know, those days when you go home, like, I can't be bothered to deal with that. And he's like, yes, you will. And you'll go back tomorrow. And, you know, just he's really normal and so lovely.

Edward, we have a closing tradition on this podcast where the last guest leaves a question for the next guest without not knowing who they're leaving it for. And I get to see it when I open the book. And the question that's been left for you by our previous guest, who I shan't name, is if you could be part of any brand or company, past or present, which would it be and why?

I mean, obviously, I go back to the first magazine I ever saw was Ebony magazine.

There was a great woman called Eunice W. Johnson, and she was, she was the editor's wife.

She was one of the few black women who would go to fashion weeks, as we call it now.

And do you know that poor woman, they wouldn't lend her the clothes to shoot?

She had to buy the couture with her money, with her own money to do these fashion shows called Ebony Fashion Fair around the deep south of America in the 50s and 60s. This woman was so incredible. Eunice W. Johnson, Ebony magazine. I would have loved to have been her right hand. I would have loved to have gone to the shows with her and fought with her to get, I mean, what I have

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now, you know, access to everything is because of women like her. So Ebony magazine in the 40s and 50s, next to Eunice W. Johnson would have been incredible.

Edward, thank you. Thank you for fighting, because by doing so, you're laying the foundation and opening doors, not just for people in the fashion industry, but for people in every industry that come from where you come from that look like you, including me, because of role models like you in our society. You're opening doors for people like me that are coming through in different industries so that we are accepted, enabled, and our talents are put first and foremost beyond anything else that might be our skin colour, our background, or our creed. Your book is incredible. It's a very important book that I think tells a story, as I call it, an impossible story of a young kid from Ghana that gets to the very top and becomes the first black editor in British folks history, but it's also just such a human story, the struggles that you're very vulnerable and open about, and the ultimate sort of triumph at the end of this story, which is, I call it the end of the story, I mean, you've still got a vision board, but a triumph that is impossible, but important and generational. You're an incredible person. Thank you for fighting. Please do keep fighting, and I recommend everyone to go and check out this incredible book, A Visible Man, because

it needs to be a visible book, because it's certainly had a profound impact on my life.

So thank you, Edward. Oh, thank you for having me, and keep on doing what you do.

I'm going to. I hope you do too. Thank you, Edward.

You know the problem with protein powders is they tend to taste a bit, it feels like hard work to consume them, and then when I got Huell's protein powder, which by the way is 20 grams of protein and just 105 calories, and I tried it for the first time, there was this kind of mental confusion that it tastes as good as a milkshake I might buy in the corner shop, but it's nutritionally complete and has 20 grams of protein in it. And my favorite of all the flavors, I've got the chocolate fudge brownie flavor in front of me is the salted caramel flavor with a little bit of ice in it. It is a dream. And I'm training at the moment, I'm doing cardiovascular training ahead of soccer aides. So having protein in my diet, especially when I'm incredibly busy, is a must have for me. If you're looking for a good protein powder, I highly recommend you try this, recommend

that it's my friend Sam, and she's now obsessed with it. And I think if you try it, you'll find out why.