

## [Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / Moment 103 - Trauma Expert: How To Take Back Control Of Your Life: Gabor Mate

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.

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That is [theconversationcards.com](https://theconversationcards.com).

These people, they're living unaware of the puppet master of trauma that is driving their life.

That's a really good analogy.

The trauma really is like a puppet master behind the scenes and the unconscious pulling your strings and you're not aware of it.

Do you remember Pinocchio?

Yeah.

So you remember what Pinocchio says at the end, the way when he finally becomes a real boy?

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

He says how foolish I was when I was a puppet.

And to the extent that we're being activated by these unconscious strings that our trauma is pulling behind the scenes and we're acting in our lives and we think we're autonomous free beings, but we're actually being controlled by something in the past that we haven't worked out.

We're puppets.

We're actually puppets.

And there's not much freedom in that.

There's no freedom in it at all.

So I mean, I suppose the opposite of trauma, if you want to revisit that question is liberation.

Interesting.

Liberation and by reconnection.

By reconnection, but liberation from the inexorable power of the unconscious.

Which is like cutting the strings in a way.

It kind of brings me to, there's kind of two ways I want to go with that.

The first question I have about trauma and the puppet master analogy is do we ever really cut the strings or do we just kind of learn to pull against them when they try and tell us to do something with more force than they're exerting in the opposite direction?

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That doesn't work very well pushing against it because they're still reactive.

You're still not in charge.

You're just in automatic resistance mode to something.

There's no freedom and not either.

So yeah.

That awareness that you mentioned is huge because once you're aware that there's this, see the thing about these strings may not fray right away, but once you wear that, ah, this reaction of mine, it's not about what's going on right now.

There's something old being activated here.

That awareness alone weakens the, it slackens the strings a bit.

They're no longer, they're no longer is taught, they're no longer is automatically capable of pulling on you.

So it does have to begin with awareness of them.

Ultimately if we realize that this puppet master is just a desperate little person trying to get you to survive, the only way he, she, they knew how when you were small, when they were small, if we make friends with it, but we relieve it of its duties.

So thanks very much, but I can handle it now.

It eventually becomes our friend rather than sort of our master.

On that first step of just acknowledging, just understanding that there is a puppet master, they're controlling us and exactly which strings that puppet master is pulling in our lives.

How does one go about awareness, the process of awareness?

Is that, I mean, is it introspection, keeping a diary therapy?

What is it?

I mean, all or any, but even when you ask how you go about it, what is the it?

Well, for you to say how to go about it, you already must have some degree of awareness.

If you didn't, you wouldn't even be asking the question.

So that's the very first step of realizing that there's something here to work on.

There's something here to work through.

It does not need to be the way it is.

That already is the biggest step.

The Buddha said that to recognize the source of your suffering is the first step towards relieving the suffering.

And so as soon as you ask how you go about it, you've already taken a huge step because a lot of people don't even know that there's an it.

They just think this is reality, that this is life.

So realizing that this it doesn't have to be the way it is, that's already a huge step.

Beyond that, yoga, meditation, nature, therapy of all kinds, body work of all kinds, like somatic experiencing or or craniosacral treatments or even massage therapy.

It's incredible what can be revealed just through body work like that.

And all kinds of forms of therapy, the ones I teach, the ones other people teach, journaling, certain exercises in this book that we recommend, like just ask yourself where you have trouble saying no in life to things you don't really want to do and working not through on a regular

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basis.

So there's lots of ways.

Once you open the door, you know, I've a chapter on psychedelics here, which is again, it's not like a panacea for everyone, but certainly it's a helpful modality for a lot of people.

So some people may actually benefit from taking pharmaceutical medications if their situation is dire enough.

But not as the final answer, but as a way of getting respite that allowed them to go to work on real issues that caused them to be depressed or anxious or tuning out, you know, so any and all of these things.

A lot of people don't even want to open those doors though, because they're so much pain associated with maybe going back or revisiting an early experience that they just think it's better to keep the doors shut and get to tomorrow.

That's true.

To which I have two answers.

One is it's true, it's painful because all the pain you didn't want to feel and you've been running away from through your compensatory behaviors like your addictions are nothing but an attempt to escape from pain.

That's all they are.

They're not a disease, they're not a genetic, whatever it is, addictions are very simply an attempt to escape pain, which create more pain, but that's what they are.

And so we get addicted to work, to sex, to pornography, to gambling, to the internet, to shopping, to eating, to power.

On that point, I find it so fascinating that when you mentioned in your previous book that you classified things like food, social media, shopping, porn and work as types of addiction, that in and of itself was a bit of a revelation for me, because I never saw work as an addiction.

The minute you said it was, and I kind of link it to heroin addiction, which is providing a certain psychological, physiological benefit to me, temporarily, of course it's a fucking addiction.

Of course I have that addiction.

Well, work can be an addiction.

Yeah.

Work can also be sacred.

It can also be fulfilling in the manifestation of your creative urges.

But it's so it's not the, but it's strange to say, not that I recommend it, but it's possible even to use heroin in a non-addictive way.

I don't personally get it and I would never want to.

But the addiction is never in the behavior itself, it's in your relationship to the behavior.

So if the particular activity gives you temporary relief or pleasure and therefore you crave it, but it causes harm in the long term and you can't give it up, you've got an addiction and I don't care what the activity is, could be drugs and all the other things that we mentioned and it employs the same brain circuit, by the way, the workaholic is after the same brain chemical that the cocaine addict is after, dopamine, you know, and people can be even addicted to their own stress hormones like adrenaline, the so-called adrenaline

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junkies.

There's such a thing, you know, so almost anything can be addictive if it serves the purpose of temporarily easing some distress, but causing harm in the long term.

Is escapism the right word to use then for it, if we're, because it doesn't sound as much like we're escaping, but rather than we are seeking something.

We're seeking relief from a certain mental state, like, I just gave you a definition of addiction, so I don't know what addictions you've had or haven't, but what did that do for you temporarily and give you something?

It made me feel like I was valid and I was pursuing a sense of accomplishment and validation and a sense of worth.

Is that something that people need or not?

Yes.

Yeah, that's a good thing, but the real question is, why did you ever get the idea that you didn't have the worth?

Why did I get the idea that I didn't have the worth?

That's where trauma comes in.

Because I was called the N-word when I was eight by a kid in school.

Exactly.

And then I'd know my speech.

And because your mother screamed at your father, you know, and so all that together.

And so, and that's emotionally painful.

What's it feel like to be not to have a sense of worth?

That's painful.

And so, that's where my mantra is, don't ask why the addiction, ask why the pain.

And if you want to understand why the pain, you have to look at that person's life.

And what the benefit of the addiction is.

That's something that you say in previous book that I found, it's a flipping of narrative where you say, we should be asking what the benefit of the addiction is.

Yeah.

Well, like in your case, it gives me a sense of worth.

Okay, I'll say to you, if you come to me because you say like I'm broke all like it's causing some harm in my life, it's keeping me from intimate relationships, it makes me stressed and tired, whatever it is, it's the first thing I would ask you for you, of you is, what is it doing for you?

And you say a sense of worth and I'd say, you know what?

You deserve to have a sense of worth.

I totally understand why you'd want to engage in an activity that gives it to you.

But given that it's causing you harm, let's look at why you don't have a sense of worth and how else you might develop it.

That isn't harmful to you, you know, so, but you start with what's right about it.

What are you looking for?

And what you're looking for is always valid.