

**[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / Moment 104 - Neil deGrasse Tyson's Unusual Explanation For Life On Earth**

Happiness and meaning, where does that come from in your perspective?

What I have found is, is an urge people have to search for meaning.

Is it under this rock, metaphorically, right?

Is it under a rock?

I'm going to search.

What is their meaning?

Is it behind a tree?

If I join this group, will I find meaning with them?

If I, and I think to myself, okay, go ahead, but what you're doing is relegating meaning in your life to a search.

Suppose you don't find meaning, that'd be a force of disappointment in your life.

You're setting yourself up to be disappointed if you don't find meaning.

So I have, I have another idea, I use this for myself, I may or may not work for others.

I recognize long ago that in a free society where I'm not enslaved and I'm not, you know, an indentured servant and I have some freedom of choice, that I have the power to manufacture meaning in my life.

I can make decisions about my own life that create the meaning.

For me, a meaningful life is learning something new tomorrow that I didn't know yesterday, otherwise it's a wasted day.

You know the prisoner who puts X's in the boxes on the wall for the day they get out?

I have that in my head and the day that I get out is the day I die, all right?

And what these boxes remind you of is every day you're alive, you're one day closer to death.

So there's one fewer days in there to accomplish something that you might have wanted to accomplish.

So I want to keep learning about our world, about each other, about things I don't otherwise know about.

And there are people who only read things that they agree with or that they already know about or that they're feeding some urge to be, what's the word, to be validated.

I have books on my shelf at my bedside.

Every book is a subject that I either know nothing about or I completely disagree with going into the book.

So maybe it'll change my mind, learn new ideas, okay?

I once presented that list to the New York Times when they said, because my book was doing well at one point and they tried to get authors to talk about other books, to keep the book wheel turning because fewer people are reading today, so what books are you reading?

But on your shelves, I've listed the books.

One of them was a book in its 30th printing or something, originally written back in the early 60s, I think, maybe even the 50s, a book by Barry Goldwater, it's called The Conscience of a Conservative.

And so I'm reading this and people wrote to me after they saw this, they said, I didn't know you're a closet conservative, I didn't know you're really a Republican, did you

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vote for Trump?

And all of a sudden, people were presuming that if I'm reading a book on something, that book must be what my whole life is about, rather than it's a portal to another place of how people think and what people do.

So that shocked me, actually, because that tells me that most people must have just books that continue to feed their own interests.

And that is the best way to not grow in this world.

So one of my measures of meaning is how much more do I know about the world tomorrow than I did yesterday?

Because almost any path you take will make you wiser as a person.

So I value wisdom that gives meaning to my life.

A new perspective is not just knowledge, no.

What is the arc?

It's there's data, data can become information.

And when further study becomes knowledge, and after enough time, when you see how the knowledge plugs in and applies, it can become wisdom.

Wisdom is the distilled essence of all the details.

The wisest statements ever spoken to you generally have no detail in them at all, do they?

Yes, as I've heard it said this way, wisdom is what's left over after you've forgotten all the details.

It's the distilled essence of it all.

So I want to be wiser on the porch of my rocking chair.

I don't want to be the old curmudgeon, and my day, we did it best.

No, I don't want to be that guy, no.

So that's one source of meaning.

Another, and it's directly traceable to my parents, but I'd like to also think it's traceable to common sense, is spend a little bit of your life lessening the suffering of others.

I don't mean redirect your life.

Some people do.

They work in soup kitchens and start not-for-profits to serve, yes.

I'm not that person, no, because the universe is what calls me.

But in my day, in a week, do something that lessens the suffering of someone else, however trifling that gesture is.

And that's an infusion of good, yeah, I'm value-judging it.

I'm saying, yes, there's a good thing to lessen the suffering of others.

Yeah, I'm declaring that.

I try not to ever put opinions out there, but it's my opinion that if you lessen the suffering of others, you make a better world.

And don't we all want to live in a better world?

If your happiness were a recipe, right, consisting of various ingredients that needed to be present in certain quantities for you to be a happy person, and under the assumption that no one is perfectly happy under any kind of vague sense of the word, what is missing from your

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list of ingredients at the moment, or what could you have more of that would make you happy?

I don't think of life that way.

Okay.

How do you think of life?

Why is that wrong, that question?

I didn't say it was wrong.

I don't value-judge.

Okay?

It's not what's right or wrong here.

I don't live life that way because it means you carry with you the emotions.

I could be happier if I were doing this, and how come I'm not?

And all of a sudden, well, that must be miserable if I'm not as happy as I could be.

No, I don't measure day to day.

Am I happy or not?

It's not the measure.

Yes, it's in there, but that's not the metric.

The metric is, am I successful at what I'm doing?

Am I- no, no.

It's not even that.

It's, am I as good at this as I can be?

If you're not going to try to improve, go home.

Find something else.