

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / Moment 108 - This Powerful Tool Can Change Your Life: Africa Brooke

Speaking of controversial topics, one of the things that's become surprisingly controversial over the last couple of years is, and probably for a little while longer since the 17th century, is this idea of accountability, which to me seems like much of the antidote to self-sabotage. It's like taking personal responsibility for your life and your situation. I've heard you talk about this. I actually think this was the first, the first, one of your first videos that caught my attention was you talking about taking responsibility in a really, you know, a fairly direct way. So tell me how taking responsibility, what that means to you, but how that helped you to rise out of that phase you had from 14 to 24? Yeah. Oh, it was huge. It was huge. And it had to be one of the first things that I did. Actually, as I think about this and sort of speak out loud, I think what allowed me to get and stay sober that eighth and final time was taking personal responsibility. I think all of the other times I had wanted to place blame on a lot of things outside of me. So my dad would have been the easiest person because he was an alcoholic and because

of his abuse and because of everything we experienced and because of the instability, because of coming to a new country, moving to a part of the UK where just me, my sister, and Curtis are the only black kids, the adversity I experienced from that. So I think there were so many ways that I could externalize, right? But I think the moment that I was able to say, okay, well, Africa, what part did you have to play in this? So you've experienced all of this adversity. What now? What fucking now? No one else can do it for you. And I think that helped me so much and another thing that I had to do, which is a part of that responsibility and accountability was making amends. So people that have followed the 12 step program, for example, will know that making amends is a huge part of it. I didn't follow the 12 step program. What's the 12 step program? So 12 step is AA, essentially, Alcoholics Anonymous. You go through a process, a 12 step process of accountability, essentially. And one of those steps is making amends, reaching out to the people that you've harmed and making amends. And that's what I had to do. And I really did that. And there was a lot of shame. There was a lot of guilt. There were a lot of people that didn't want to hear it. But there were a lot of people that were very grateful that even after all of these years, I'm coming to them and acknowledging something that I did or played a part in. And only then could I actually move forward with my sobriety, knowing that I am responsible. Yes, I've experienced a lot of adversity, but I am the one that gets to decide what now. So fast forward to finding ourselves in a culture where even just conversations around personal responsibility are, have been politicized, because I've noticed they're labeled as right wing. The moment you, isn't that weird? It's mad. It's mad.

Isn't that crazy? The moment you say, you do realize there is a lot in your life that you can control. You're called a bigot. I'm a puppet and I'm a victor. And there's nothing I can control. And it's that political party that did this. And that is unfollowed.

It's fucking crazy. It's mad. And I think I've, I speak to my family and my friends about all of these things quite a lot, actually. And because I'm still very much in touch with everyone back home in Zimbabwe. And because I have that perspective, when I compared to that part of the world to the Western world, this just seems like a completely different world, like some kind of show, it can't be real, that people can get upset to know that there are things in your life that you can control. Yes, you might have experienced X, Y and Z,

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but you are responsible for how you move forward. Yes, there might be other components, maybe it is the system, maybe it is your familial environment, whatever the details might be, but there are also things within your control. The fact that people can label that as being bigoted, the moment you say, I just... Wouldn't you want that to be the case? Wouldn't you want

to have things that you can control? The thought of being powerless to my circumstances is the most terrifying thing in the world. That's why I refer to it as a puppet, that someone else is pulling these strings. And I'm powerless to my situation. So I find it empowering and liberating to say, there is a lot of things I can control. Yes, I'm broke. Yes, I'm in this situation, but there's something that I can do. And I have to also express the nuance that you did, which is there are a lot of people that are disabled, there are a lot of people that have found themselves in horrifically unfortunate circumstances through no fault of their own. But I find it really important for my sanity of mind and my optimism for the future to know that there is something, often there is something that I can do to change my situation. Absolutely.

That's a controversial idea. Imagine that. Would you have thought that?

I can hear the people typing out at you, but that's just you fucking...

Is it for you to say? Yeah, rich motherfucker with his cars.

What is it, though? Do you think you know what that is?

Yeah, because it holds a mirror up to you. It makes you feel like, for some people, and I think it was for me at some point as well, holding that mirror up and saying, do you know what? I might have had part to play in this, and I'm actually... I can have a part in getting out of this situation, for some people is evidence of their inadequacy, that they just don't have the self-esteem to confront. So it's easier to blame. Blame is a nice shield. It's a nice way to deflect the attack against my already fragile self-esteem. I would do that, of course, when I was younger and someone might point at something, blame was a way for you not to hit me in the self-esteem. It was a way of saying, no, no, no, no, no, that's not because I'm inadequate or because I'm not capable or I'm not smart or because I'm not working hard. It's because of this other thing. And so leave me alone, Africa, blocked. Do you know what I mean? That's my analysis

of it often. For some people, it feels like evidence of their inadequacy. And why would someone not like that? Well, because it makes you feel like shit. Yeah. And I think because we're also being encouraged, especially the younger generation, who I really now more than ever want to make more

of an effort to really speak directly to them, is because I think we're sort of training each other to not prioritize emotional resilience, because along with personal responsibility, resilience is also another controversial word. This idea that you can build a strong foundation within yourself, that even if something happens externally outside of you, you are able to deal with it. You don't have to go into that deep, dark place and think that is it, full stop. So I think because most people are not emotionally resilient and are not nurturing and sort of cultivating that within themselves, it continues that cycle where you just end up in perpetual victimhood. And then we are in

a culture that rewards victims. And I think self-correction there actually, and I want to make this very clear, that there is a very real difference between being a victim, someone who

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has genuinely been victimized and making victimhood an identity. There's a huge difference between the

two. But I think when you start to make victimhood an identity for anything and everything, that's when it might be time to actually hold a mirror up to yourself. On that word resilience, I think the reason why resilience is in part at least why it's a controversial topic is because it kind of starts to merge into the lane of like mental health. And people when they think of resilience, they think of like shut up and deal with it. You know what I mean? And then that acts as in conflict to the narrative of like express yourself, feel your emotions. It's okay to be not okay. So talk to me about the distinction you make between those two things and your relationship with both. You know what? I guess this is where I would bring it back round to holding those multiple

truths. Because why do we think that we have to choose between one or the other? Why can't you be both emotionally resilient as an individual, as a being, and allow yourself to express yourself, and allow yourself to be vulnerable, and allow yourself to have those real low moments that we all do. And I think both can coexist. It's really not one or the other. So what is the opposite of resilience then? The word weakness comes to mind, but I don't know if that's accurate. I don't know if that's accurate to what I'm not sure. But it's interesting because the word weakness comes to mind, and maybe a part of me, or even for someone listening, we we think associating the word weak

to yourself means there's something wrong with you, that it's a bad word. I think there's this idea that it's it's bad to be weak, or it's not acceptable to be weak. But I think we all have moments of weakness. But I don't know if that would be the opposite of resilience. What do you think?

So if we're talking about emotional resilience, maybe the opposite is emotional, maybe fragility, maybe, I don't know. It's something within that realm, right? Yeah. And the reason I basically playing devil's advocate with myself to see if it is two truths. We were describing earlier about being expressive and being in touch with your emotions. Is that being emotionally fragile?

Or is that something else? I wonder if another word that's come into mind, for some reason, soft, I think it's both possible to be soft and whatever you would consider hard. Because just in very simple language, when I hear the word resilience, you have to be hard. There's something sort of, it's not necessarily stoic, but it's sort of that kind of language where you're really fully grounded in yourself, your back is straight, you're internally up, you know, whereas the other side of that is maybe maybe there is an element of fragility, which is fine. I don't I don't think it's a bad thing, allowing yourself to be soft, allowing yourself to be, to not be as strong all of the time. So I think it's interesting because on one hand you're saying be resilient, but then also be the opposite of resilience. Yeah. Yeah. But again, you can be both.

There could also be context, right? Yeah. It can be context specific behavior. So you can be resilient in the sense that when someone pelt abuse at you in your Instagram DMs, you have the resilience to not internalize that, not let it destroy your day or your mood and to move on, but then you can be, I guess emotionally, you know, then your dog might die. I've got a lovely dog running around somewhere here. My dog might die and that is real cause for emotional expression and to be emotionally, to be soft and to be open and to feel. Yes. So maybe it's context specific. Yes, I think so. I think so. But again, I think they can both coexist.