

## [Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / Moment 111- The Unexpected Health Benefits Of Travel Everyone Should Know: Max Lugavere

One of the things that really did catch me off guard was it was in your book, The Genius Life, where you talk about this study with the mice and you make the case that travel has positive relationships with health, like it has health benefits. Not something I've ever heard anybody say before that travel is good for our health. Yeah. Wow. I'm glad you brought that up because that also kind of parlays into another concept that I've been lately thinking about a lot for the first time. Well, first of all, so the study that I talk about in the second book, The Genius Life, is the fact that they, you know, just how important novel experiences are for the brain. They will take mice and keep them confined to, you know, like a very limited area and they see that they suffer. They suffer in terms of their bodies and their brains and then they let that mouse or they let, you know, intervention mice go and explore what they call enriched environments and they see something like fourfold, you know, like they see like an up regulation in various indicators of neurogenesis, which is really important. It's like the creation of new brain cells. So all that is to say, like, you know, it's important to do novel things. And as I say this, you know, this is something that I struggle with in my own life because I am a creature of habit. And I would routinely get the sense, this gnawing sense that I'm living Groundhog Day over and over and over again, where I wake up and I do a few things like work related, I work out, but ultimately like I've got like this routine that I love and I tend to do that on script every day. But I started to get this feeling like I'm just like waking up, doing a few things, going back to bed, waking up, doing a few things, going back to bed. Like before I know it, like my head is just like on my pillow again. And it started to get like really frustrating to me until I discovered that Groundhog Day syndrome is actually a thing. And essentially what it is, is, you know, our brains are, and this ties back to the mouse study, our brains are efficiency machines, right? It's conservation of energy. Our brains and bodies don't want to do any more work than they absolutely have to, right? Because, I mean, now we know that food is like ever-present, always at arm's reach, but for the longest time that wasn't the case. And our brains are massive energy consumers. Our brains speak for 25% of our basal metabolic rate, despite accounting for only 2% to 3% of our body's mass. So anything that the brain can do to make its functioning more efficient, it'll do. So when you do the same things every single day, what does your brain do? It prunes away excitement, joy, happiness. Like the dopamine response is just completely blunted. And that's why, as you get older, people universally, right? It's like a human universal. People report that time just accelerates, right? Like where did the last decade of my life go? It's not that time accelerated, right? It's just that your life has become so routine. It's interesting you say that because there's also the other stereotype that you get grumpy. Yeah. The word, yeah. It's quite typical in the stereotype that people will get older and a little bit more grumpy. Yeah, well, they get grumpy, they get stuck in their ways. They get, I mean, yeah, that's definitely the case,

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but they probably are getting grumpy because their lives lack the joy and excitement that they once felt, right? Time is just like accelerating that moving walkway that we are all on towards the inevitable decrepitude of old age, right? It seems to go faster and faster and faster the older we get, but it's not because time actually is moving any faster. It's because we get so stuck in our ways. Our routines become so cemented. And what we fail to realize, and hopefully this, me saying this, shakes people out of their comfort zones and inspires people to shake things up a little bit, this Groundhog Day Syndrome, it causes our brains to just shear away for the sake of efficiency. I mean, it's got good intentions, right? But it shears away like all the joy. So you just become like this rote automaton and the joy, the excitement, it's just, you know, it's something that like you cease to experience, you know, you cease to experience it. Whereas when you look back at like your youth, for example, it's not that like time actually moved slower, it's that every day was different. And so that I think is really important. And yeah, we should challenge ourselves, whether it's to travel. I mean, travel is like to me the epitome of exposing oneself to an enriched environment because everything is new. But if you can't travel, you know, like go to a different gym every once in a while, look, you know, try shopping in news in different supermarkets or change up your wardrobe or take on a new creative project, like start a new hobby. There are all kinds of things that you can do to shake yourself out of this like perpetual routine that I think has a real cognitive and health cost.

So I was looking at a study they did on rats and habits. You probably know the study with the rats, the chocolate and the maize. I think so. Where they get the rats to run through a maze to a piece of chocolate. But the first time the rat runs through the maze to the chocolate, they monitor the rat's brain and there's a ton of cognitive activity, right? You see the rat observationally scratching around, sniffing around. Eventually it finds the chocolate against the reward. When they put the rat back into the maze for the second time, cognitive activity is gone because a habit has been formed. So as I looked at the brain scans of those rats, it was just completely flat because they were on autopilot. Again, the brain is conserving its need to function so that it can focus on other things, other threats, it can conserve energy, as you say. And that's what our lives become. When we get out of bed in the morning, our route from the bed to the kitchen is not one that requires me to have any sort of cognitive activation. Therefore, also, I don't remember the journey. I just fly down there. Yeah, you're on autopilot. Yeah. And our lives become autopilot. And it's interesting. I'm trying to figure out as you were talking there, you said shearing away the happiness. Why does being on autopilot cost me happiness? Did you say it made my brain smaller? Not smaller. Okay, thank you. Well, if that mouse study holds true in humans, it probably doesn't support neuroplasticity. Yeah, there's no need for my brain to... Yeah. I mean, it's an efficiency machine after all.

The happiness point. Now, why is living a life on autopilot have an impact on my happiness? Well, there are definitely benefits to routine. Some of the benefits to routine can be that you have your, for example, your diet dialed in, or you have great connections in your community. So I'm not telling everybody to throw their lives into upheaval. But it's when we start to do the same things every day, the scientific term is habituation. Yeah, failure.

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We habituate. It becomes habit. And we feel this way. We see this with that car that we've pined for, and suddenly it's sitting in our driveway. And yeah, it's exciting for the first month or two months or three months. But after a certain point, that level of excitement that we once felt towards that car, or maybe sometimes it's the person that we're sharing our beds with. This is just an unfortunate inevitability of the human condition.

And so I think there are ways to hack it. I think there are ways to travel with your significant other or break the routine with your significant other, or invest in things that have emotional value for you, for example. So I mean, the car might have not been the best example because some people do have emotional connections with cars. I bought a guitar recently that I love, and I have an emotional connection to it because it was played by one of my favorite artists. So you're talking about that really, it's the decline of meaning that is associated with habituation. And that makes us unhappy because creatures of meaning, we do need things to remain meaningful in our lives. Yeah, it's these rote routine behaviors that are not all that productive or meaningful. It's like driving the same route to work every day, shopping in the same supermarket every day, eating the same foods every day. Challenge your preferences. There are foods today that I enjoy that I didn't like 15 years ago. And I'm always willing to challenge my own preferences about things. But it's like when you do the same things every day, you tend to start to overlook them. It's difficult, if not impossible, to maintain an appreciative relationship with something that's always there.

It's funny, it reminded me of a study I was reading about regarding music and how there's almost an optimal point with a song that we love where it can be repeated over and over again. So say if we're listening to a hit on the radio, it's repeated, say we listen to it 50 times. There's a point where we've heard it so many times and it's become habituated that we love it at an optimal level. And then it declines when we've heard it too much because it loses that sense of meaning. And I just remember reflecting on that, how the record industry want to put things in our lives that have a certain level of familiarity, but not too much familiarity, because then we'll dislike it. This is why they do remixes, because there's a level of familiarity there. So we like it, but it has that novel nature, which we also really value to make us interested, which habituation obviously kills. Habituation and novelty are inversely correct. Yeah. No, it's true. There's this quote that I love. I'm a huge James Bond fan. We're talking a little bit about before we started rolling, but in the latest film, there's this wonderful Jack London quote at the end of the film that they use to kind of commemorate Bond. And the quote is something like, I shall not waste my days trying to prolong them. I shall use my time. And I love that line so much. And I think it's such a good, it's so emblematic for I think the life that we all deserve, that we all ought to be living. I think occasionally in this conversation about how do we live longer? That's a nuance that gets lost. It's not just about living longer. It's about living more fully. And so yeah, I think that that's part of it. It's like breaking the routine and getting back some of that joy and excitement that we have about life, you know? I have some breaking news. And no, this is an emergency. I've spent the last two years writing a book. And I've written 33 laws for business, marketing and life that I derive from all of these conversations I've had here. I traveled the world to write this book. I interviewed some of the most incredible people. I did six months of extensive research on scientific studies and principles to corroborate everything that I

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wrote into these 33 laws. And ladies and gentlemen, that book called The Diary of a CEO, The 33 Laws for Business, Marketing and Life is now available for pre-order. And there are 5,000, only 5,000 signed copies. And it's first come first serve. The link is in the bio right now. So if you want that book, honestly, it's the best book I've ever written. It's the book I always should have written. It's the book I also wish someone had written for me when I was starting out on my career. I'm really proud of it. I'm really, really proud of it. Really, really proud of it. And I can't wait for all of you to get to read it. It's out in August. I couldn't be more excited about this as you can probably tell. I don't know what to say other than the words I've said to emphasise my excitement because I think it's important and I think it's really valuable. Link in the description.