

**[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / Rainn Wilson: "I was so unhappy during The Office!" (Dwight Schrute)**

We're going to talk about the office.  
I promise.  
Stick around, folks.  
Rain, Wilco!  
Actor, writer, producer, you know as...  
Dwight Schrute, assistant regional manager.  
One of the most iconic characters.  
In TV history.  
Hold on, Michael! I am coming!  
I experienced a lot of pain in my life.  
Neglect, abuse, abandoned,  
and then with anxiety and depression and addiction,  
I remember getting these anxiety attacks  
that would leave me shaking on the floor and sweating,  
and I thought I was dying.  
Waking up at three in the morning,  
going, why should I keep living?  
But this is the curious thing.  
I'm grateful for it.  
There's a reason why so many comedians  
come from painful backgrounds,  
because comedy shifts your perspective  
away from pain and trauma.  
Here's your choice.  
Do you kill yourself or do comedy?  
And that was my path.  
It was my greatest dream come true.  
You said when I was in the office,  
I spent several years mostly unhappy  
because it wasn't enough.  
I wanted more opportunities.  
I wanted more money.  
As long as we want to promote the ego satisfaction,  
we'll never be happy.  
We all have a shadow, and it's always there.  
It's self-important and righteous and entitled,  
but I'm not going to get rid of those aspects of myself  
by keeping that shadow at arm's length.  
You need to embrace and accept and love one's shadow.  
Sit the shadow on the lap,  
almost like a ventriloquist dummy.  
Hello!  
Huge IRAV, a f\*\*\*ing CEO.

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Get a new t-shirt, idiot.

That's a wrap.

Let's start with your context.

I always think that the earliest years are the most important.

So could you take me back to your earliest context and give me the factors that I need to understand to understand you?

Sure.

A couple of key pieces in my background

that have made me who I am

and led me to lead the life that I live.

And I'm not the only one who can do that.

I'm the only one who can do that.

Led me to lead the life that I live are...

My mom took off when I was a year and a half,

lived with my dad,

and we were members of the Baha'i Faith,

which in a nutshell is the newest of the world's religions.

There's about six million Baha'is around the globe.

It's the second most widespread religion.

So wherever you go in the world,

there's going to be Baha'is.

You go to Mongolia or Thailand or Botswana or whatever,

there's going to be Baha'i communities.

And after my dad had been kind of essentially abandoned

or felt abandoned, they got divorced,

we moved to the jungles of Nicaragua

when I was three years old.

Here was this abandoned kind of toddler kid

living in literally the jungle.

And my dad was an abstract painter

and science fiction writer and Baha'i.

And that's how I grew up.

And then when it was kind of around kindergarten time,

first grade time, we moved back to Washington state.

And those are some key pieces, yeah.

In your 40s, you started to look back at your childhood

and understand...

I heard this in an interview you did,

I think with Chase Jarvis.

Yeah. On his show.

And one of the things you said is,

when I look back at my childhood,

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it was filled with depression and anxiety  
that you probably didn't...

It seems like you didn't realize at the time,  
but hindsight's given you that clarity.

Yeah.

What were the hallmarks of that?

What were the symptoms of that?

And do you have any understanding  
of the causes of that at such a young age?

Yes, 22 years of therapy has given me a lot of insights  
into the causes of that.

So, you know, you've got an abandoned toddler,  
that'll fuck you up.

I don't know if I can swear in your podcast, all right.

Do Brits swear?

Yeah.

Yeah, the funny ones.

And then, you know, it was this weird kind of  
gaslighting mind fuck,

because I just spent five minutes  
describing the Bahá'í Faith, right?

And these beautiful ideas and prayers and meditations  
and about world peace and finding love  
and connection and service.

And then, in my family, my dad remarried,  
my stepmom, who pretty much raised me,  
and they lived in a loveless marriage,  
a hollow, empty marriage.

So, I come back from the jungles of Nicaragua  
at five or six, my dad's remarried,  
we're living in suburban Seattle and Washington state.

And we are going to all these Bahá'í meetings,  
we're singing, we're doing kumbaya,  
we're holding hands, we're praying, we're meditating,  
we're reading holy scripture from all over the world  
and talking about love.

And yet, here's this loveless shell of a house.

So, that's what I grew up in.

So, you know, addiction is something  
that I've struggled with.

I've struggled with depression,

I've struggled with anxiety.

I've struggled on a lot of different levels in my life,

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a lot of alienation,  
and it's born of this Petri dish that I grew up in.  
Maybe I was also wired for it.  
You know, I have alcoholics that run on both sides  
of my family for generations,  
but that'll mess you up.  
What have you learned about the nature of childhood trauma  
and how delicate children are?  
I've learned so much from speaking to people  
on this podcast about it  
and how if I listen to too many of these episodes,  
I might be scared to be a parent  
because it's so interesting how such small interpretations  
can leave really lasting impressions on a child  
about the nature of the world.  
I sat with Gabor Maté  
and he's talked about how children are basically narcissists  
and how they interpret everything as about them.  
So, if there's an argument over there,  
a baby will think it's about the baby.  
But what have you learned about through your years of therapy  
but also your own experiences?  
Well, I experienced a lot of pain in my life  
and a lot of suffering with anxiety and depression  
and addiction and as I kind of dove into recovery  
and to the therapeutic process,  
I can pin that squarely on a lot of gross imbalances  
and trauma that I suffered as a child.  
So, there's that.  
We all have that to some degree  
and it's important to excavate and honor  
the pain that we went through  
and the lies that we were told,  
the gaslighting we might have undergone.  
There's religious trauma that we undergo as well.  
There's all kinds of different traumas that we suffer.  
And this is the curious thing.  
I'm grateful for it because you know what?  
If I had had a happy, well-balanced childhood,  
I don't know what my career would have been  
but it certainly wouldn't have been an actor  
and it certainly wouldn't have been a successful actor.  
So, these confluences of pain and difficulty

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and abuse and neglect,  
they caused me a lot of suffering later on  
but at the same time, they caused me to be driven  
to try and be the best version of myself.  
They set me on a spiritual path  
to really deeply explore the world's spiritual traditions  
and to try and connect with my higher power  
and to go on a journey of self-discovery  
and then to take what I've learned  
and to share that with others.  
And they made me funny.  
So, there's a really interesting thing.  
I heard Dr. Arthur Brooks from Harvard University  
who you should have on the show speak about.  
And he talked about how the opposite of pain and trauma  
is humor.  
He was saying like, for instance,  
if you're feeling depressed, let's say,  
we all know you fill that with gratitude.  
And when you have a gratitude journal  
and you share gratitude, experience gratitude,  
meditate on gratitude, the other stuff evaporates  
when you shift your focus and your perspective  
to what you're grateful for,  
what brings you hope and joy and purpose and meaning,  
even if it's a small thing,  
like this delicious cup of tea right here.  
So, the same mechanism works in comedy.  
And there's a reason why so many comedians  
come from painful backgrounds  
because comedy is what you plug in  
to shift your perspective away from pain and trauma,  
just like gratitude takes you away from depression.  
So, you'll see time and time again,  
these amazing, the great comedians of the age  
and how much suffering they underwent in their lives.  
But comedy became the necessary thing  
to plug in to their perspective  
in order to carry forward.  
It's like, here's your choice.  
Do you kill yourself or do comedy?  
And then they do comedy  
and you think about so many of the great ones,

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Jim Carrey, you think about Robin Williams, they talk about mental health and comedy. We did a, for SoulPancake, we did a documentary called Laughing Matters about the intersection of comedy and mental health. And so, in this sense too, I'm grateful for what I went through because I wouldn't be here today having this incredible conversation with you had I not gone through those difficulties, that neglect, that abuse, and that gaslighting that I underwent as a kid. When you say the word abuse, you mean the gaslighting? Yeah, I don't wanna get into stories. There was lots of different kinds of abuse. Yeah, yeah, so. If I'd met you 15, 16 years old, who would be the man that I met at that point when your mother came back into your life? You said you needed her at that point. At 15 or 16, I was gawky and self-hating and innocent and completely cut off from my emotions and had my dad and stepmom had zero emotional tools. The only kind of expression of emotion that I experienced in my household was rage. And then either rage or like again, these spiritual Baha'i gatherings where we were singing and praying and meditating. So it was, but the idea of sadness, frustration, disappointment, all these quote unquote negative emotions and how to navigate them, I had zero tools. So I'll never forget sitting down was one of the first meetings with my mom and I was at a Denny's restaurant in Yakima, Washington. And she said, Rain, you seem very tightly wound. What's going on? How is your heart? And I just started sobbing. I just started balling. I mean, it was pretty unsightly at the Denny's waiting for the grand slam breakfast.

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And there's a corporate sponsor for you potential.  
And just like the kind of crying of the  
kind of the heaving sobs.  
And that's what I'm talking about.  
That's the kind of connection that I needed.  
Like finally someone was asking me what was in my heart,  
you know, and that began a kind of a process  
of having conversations about human emotions  
that I was so ignorant of, that we're all so ignorant of.  
And it helped me immensely.  
When you said that, that the only emotion you understood  
was like rage and then this real happiness  
at the spiritual gatherings, it made sense, the gaslighting.  
Because it's such a confusing message to send a young person.  
It's juxtaposition between like, and...  
Yeah.  
In fact, I remember times,  
and I don't really blame my stepmom for this  
because my dad was not a good husband to her  
and there was a lot that was out of balance  
and he could be incredibly narcissistic.  
But I remember having, we would have a behind gathering,  
let's say at our house and people were gonna come over  
and we were gonna pray or we were gonna study  
holy writings or whatever people do at behind gatherings.  
And they would have a fight.  
And she would be raging in the kitchen  
and slam dishes down and break the dishes  
and they would be fighting and then ding dong.  
People would come over like,  
hi, I brought flowers and here's some cookies  
and they would come in and my stepmom would then  
march across the living room,  
kong, kong, kong, kong, kong to the bedroom door  
and go, so bam!  
And slam the bedroom door  
and the people would be there in the doorway  
and my dad would go, come on in.  
Thanks so much for coming.  
And there was never any kind of,  
acknowledging what had just happened.  
And that was, and so for an eight year old,  
nine year old, 10 year old being in that milieu,

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you're like, what the hell is going on?  
Is this how people act?  
Is this how we're supposed to act?  
We have all these emotions, but we don't talk about them  
and then we go and we pray together.  
So this led me to a very long period of time  
where I was completely alienated from my faith in my 20s  
and I didn't want anything to do with religion  
or spirituality, certainly not morality  
because I just saw the hypocrisy in it.  
And that's when I really started undergoing  
a spiritual crisis, a mental health crisis.  
Things started breaking down for me  
and that's when I decided to kind of re-examine  
these ideas as a potential way out,  
as a potential path forward for my own transformation  
for my personal healing.  
And I was ultimately able to come back  
to the religion of my youth and find great peace  
and solace and meaning in it after a long journey  
through my 20s and early 30s.  
That trauma and experience from your youth,  
how does that play into you becoming an actor?  
Because you said you wouldn't have been,  
you're grateful because you don't think you would have been  
an actor or the actor that you are without that experience.  
What is the, I'm trying to figure out where acting fit into that.  
You talked about comedians using comedy  
as a kind of like a life raft away from their pain.  
Why was acting the thing that found rain?  
I don't know and there's the genetic component as well  
that my birth mother was also an actor and interested in acting.  
I don't know exactly even before I thought like,  
oh, you could be an actor or you could make a living in an actor  
or you could train as an actor.  
I didn't even know I want to do that,  
but it's like whatever that is is magical and amazing  
and I was drawn to it like a magnet.  
So I don't know.  
And then I took my first acting class.  
We had moved to Chicago from Seattle  
and I went to a high school that had a really good theater program  
and I took my very first acting class and I did a scene



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where you're supposed to pretend that you're in your bedroom and that no one's watching, right?

So I put on this Elvis Costello song, Mystery Dance.

I brought in my record player from home

and I brought in some stuff from my room

and I put on the record of Mystery Dance by Elvis Costello

and I started just thrashing around and just being ridiculous

and lip-syncing and jumping around and flopping on the floor

and stuff like that.

And I was a brand new student.

This was like in the first week at this new school

and it brought the house down.

And the 15 to 16-year-old that I said that was kind of pimply

and gangly and emotionally cut off and self-hating.

All of a sudden, people were patting me on the back

and punching me in the shoulder and saying,

oh my God, that was so great and high-fiving me

and all of these like cute girls from junior year in high school

were like, oh, where are you from?

You're from Seattle.

Amazing.

Will you come sit with us at our lunch table?

And like, and here I was, this kid from suburban Seattle

where I had been on the chess team and played the bassoon

and been on Model United Nations

and I'd barely talked to a girl.

And then I was like, all right, I'm in.

Whatever this is, I'm good.

This is it.

Forget all that other stuff.

Screw the bassoon.

Screw the chess team.

I'm in with the drama geeks and that was my path.

So part of it is not so noble.

Part of it is I went where there was acceptance,

where there was love, where I had some skill.

I could make people laugh.

And where I got attention from the opposite sex.

Hello.

Tends to be the case for most of us.

20 years old, do you graduate with a degree in drama?

23.

23.

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Close.

And then you speak of 1991 when you're 25 years old.

That's really when you had your,  
as you say, your spiritual crisis.

Was there a catalyst for that?

It seems that at that point in your life  
is when you started experiencing anxiety attacks  
in a really debilitating way.

Was there a catalyst for that?

Was there anything in your life that was absent?

Or was it just, do you think it was just things  
catching up on you from your earliest years?

Well, I don't know about a catalyst,  
but I will paint the picture that I'm out of drama school.

I'm getting a few little acting jobs here and there,  
but they're not paying anything.

I'm living with a friend in an abandoned beer brewery in Brooklyn.

Essentially kind of legally squatting,  
but we didn't have heat.

We didn't have a shower.

There were rats scuttling around.

And I was working in this bar where I'd get off work at 4 a.m.  
and I had a roommate and we were living out there  
and I was really directionless.

I started really experimenting with a lot of drugs and alcohol  
and I was pretty rudderless.

And I started getting hit with really crippling anxiety attacks.

So I wasn't in the most healthy living environment, right?

So, but at the same time,

I remember getting these anxiety attacks  
that would leave me literally shaking on the floor and sweating  
and I thought I was dying and I was like about to call 911  
like five different times.

And heart palpitations, sweating,  
and I talked to a doctor at NYU about them  
and they said, oh, these are just anxiety attacks.

So I knew that that's what they were,  
but I didn't really know anything about them  
and I started getting really depressed.

And so there wasn't really like an event,  
but circumstances provided the perfect environment  
for kind of a mental health breakdown of someone who's 25 years old.

And how long did that chapter, that period of your life last,

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where you were having anxiety attacks and you were rudderless?

I would say five or six years.

Yeah, there were some things got better.

I started working a little bit more.

I had a relationship with my girlfriend

who's now my wife.

We've been together for 32 years

and that was great.

But even that, even a better apartment

and a nice relationship couldn't save me from some of what was going on.

And we didn't, in the 90s,

we didn't really have words for a mental health breakdown

or mental health issues or crisis.

You know, it was, and people didn't really go to therapy.

You didn't really, you can really afford it.

It was, that was like for rich people like Woody Allen or something.

So it stayed, things got nominally better,

but I still was pretty depressed and frustrated and overwhelmed

and just generally alienated the kind of waking up at three in the morning

with just wide awake staring at the ceiling going like,

what the fuck does life mean?

Why am I here?

What, you know, why should I keep living?

What's, how do I find meaning?

And just that, just anguish and disconnection at a really core level.

You asked yourself that question, why should I keep living?

Yeah.

And it wasn't, at that point,

I mean, I've had some suicidal ideation over the years.

That wasn't a time when I was actively thinking about ending it,

but it really was kind of, again, one of these life's big questions,

life's deep questions that I've been kind of poking at in my various books

of like, why should we keep living?

What is the purpose?

Is it because one of the odd things, Stephen, was that I was in certain regards living a life beyond my wildest dreams.

Here was that kind of abused and gaslit kid with low self-esteem

from suburban Seattle, who kind of hated himself

and really had trouble fitting in socially in any way, shape or form.

Here I am living in New York City, beautiful girlfriend,

working as an actor in the theater, not making much money and it was only fitfully,

but still that's a big leap to go from where I was and yet I wasn't happy.

So there was this odd disconnect because I think societally we're taught like,

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hey, you find the thing you love to do, go study it, you put in your time, you work at it, you're gonna start working and yeah, you're gonna start slow, but it's gonna build and then you're gonna find incredible joy and purpose and meaning in your work and I was doing that work in the theater and I was getting to be an actor and I was getting paychecks as an actor, which is an incredible experience, but I was still chronically dissatisfied and it didn't make any sense because society had been telling me this thing for a decade or two and I felt like I shouldn't be this chronically dissatisfied, but I am.

When did that reach its peak?

It's hard to say, it came in waves throughout my mid-20s and early 30s and that's what prompted me and this is why pain can be such a valuable teacher and in fact, Arthur Brooks just had a column today out in the Atlantic where he was talking about pain and anxiety and depression does not mean that you have a mental health issue.

Those are normal, standard aspects of being a human being, but my pain prompted me to go on a spiritual quest and I'm really grateful for that, like I said.

To go on a spiritual quest.

Depression and pain and anxiety and those things were signals telling you something. Something's out of balance.

How are you gonna bring yourself into balance?

How are you gonna make sense of all this?

And at the time, there weren't podcasts on positive psychology and there weren't, I mean, I guess there were some self-help books but I didn't really know about them.

Because of my background, because of my childhood, I thought, well, perhaps because I've abandoned anything and everything to do with God and spirituality and religion, maybe that's where I have lost my way and maybe I need to re-explore those avenues and maybe I can find personal meaning and serenity by exploring spiritual ideas.

So it was a long process.

It was a good eight or 10-year process but I'm grateful that my pain took me along that path.

One of the things that I think brings spirituality and some of these big questions into focus is death.

Something you talk about in your new book, Soul Boom, and something you've spoken about previously as well, something that I've often pondered about.

I think it's one of the things that really made me go in search of answers, deep questions at a very young age.

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You talk, I think it's in chapter three of your book,  
I listened on the audiobook so it's chapter six on the audiobook,  
about the passing of your father.  
How did that bring into focus spirituality,  
meaning and some of these big questions of life?  
Well, I think if you're going to look at spirituality,  
one of the top three big questions is what happens when we die.  
And of course, we don't know.  
But just because we don't know or will never know,  
does that mean that we shouldn't explore that question?  
Hint, no.  
So it's something, it's a topic and a theme and a question  
I had thought about a lot.  
I had spoken about, I had researched and pondered deeply,  
but obviously, and I had had some people that I knew  
that had died along the way, of course,  
but when my father died about three years ago,  
that made a profound impact and really prompted me to write the book, Soul Boom,  
because I had one of these key kind of transcendent experiences,  
spiritual experiences, which was in,  
we, my dad died of heart disease.  
He was getting a quadruple bypass surgery and he just couldn't make it.  
He didn't, they didn't have any way to repair the damage in his heart.  
And anyways, it was, we thought he was going to get through the surgery and he died.  
So it was in, we knew it was risky, but it was, it was,  
it was not a predicted death.  
And my, his current wife, his widow and myself were in the hospital with him.  
And we had to essentially unplug him.  
And it was devastating and terrifying.  
And oddly enough, strangely cliché at the same time.  
And I couldn't help, but maybe this is, is that,  
that trauma-based comedic kind of aspect of my, of my, of myself,  
that I just kept witnessing myself in this situation where my father was dying  
and there was a heart machine going beep, beep, beep, beep.  
There was a little oxygen machine going whoosh, whoosh, whoosh.  
And there's doctors and nurses walking around with their squeaky shoes  
and the linoleum floors.  
And I was like, wow, this is just like one of those hospital shows.  
I just kept thinking like, this is just like ER, Gray's Anatomy.  
Like, wow, it's like, it's so cliché.  
But we had to unplug him.  
He was going to be dead within an hour.  
And we're sobbing.

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And I looked at his gray body there on the table and, you know, I saw all these aspects of my dad that I loved, you know, the one eyebrow hair kind of poking out and, you know, the mole on his arm and the way his hands are and his hair kind of messy and was filled with such love and such heartbreak. And at the same time, seeing his lifeless body, I was like, this isn't him.

This isn't my dad.

This is the vessel that carried my dad.

Robert Wilson and his beautiful heart and spirit and his dynamism and his creativity, his light, as it were, is no longer here.

But that's his reality.

This body is just a shell.

It's a vessel.

It's an avatar.

And I also didn't experience it as, oh, he has, it's been snuffed out like a candle.

It just seemed very clear like, oh, it has passed on.

It's somewhere else now and here is his body.

And that was such a profound spiritual experience that I knew intellectually from my study.

But it's one of those learnings that kind of has to hit you in the gut to make you really understand it and go, oh, and I remember that amazing quote that I often pull out from Father Tehart Deschardin, a Jesuit priest, who said famously, we are not human beings having a spiritual experience.

We are spiritual beings having a human experience.

And that quote, which I've always loved, I saw just evidenced with my father.

Oh, he's a spiritual being.

He had a human experience for 79 years in this body.

And now his spiritual reality has passed and moved on.

And this is one of the essential messages of soul boom is that we are spiritual beings.

We're having this incredible human experience.

Look at us having this incredible dialogue right now.

And then I'm going to go get an Uber and then I've got to go do some voiceovers.

And I'm going to go play tennis with a friend and I'm having this, you know,

I'm having a relationship with my wife and with my son.

I'm learning, I'm growing, I'm being challenged and it's magnificent.

And here's my my fleshy, somewhat corpulent 57 year old body that has done.

I've done pretty well by it's ridiculous enough.

So I get to take my shirt off occasionally as Dwight and people can laugh at my absurdly pale and oblong torso and I'm fine with it.

It's all for comedy, right?

And parts of my body are starting to break down.

I've got like half hearing in my in my left ear and I've got mild sleep apnea and I have to wear a mouth appliance that juts my jaw forward

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and I wake up in the morning and I go, I place it on the side of the bed.  
And here I am, this spiritual being having a human experience  
as rain Dietrich Wilson is this is fabulous.  
But this is part of what we need to recognize.  
And this could help people.  
This can help people with their mental health struggles is an understanding  
that we're we're radiant, luminescent, precious shards of the divine  
inhabiting these these fleshy meat suits for hopefully eighty nine  
to a hundred years and struggle and suffering and anxiety.  
It just comes with the game, baby.  
It's just part of the game.  
Talk about a friend called Dave.  
Yeah, David or Dave, who also passed quite suddenly and his handling  
of that in particular surprised you in many ways.  
Oh, Dave, one of my best friends, David Von Anken,  
he was a television director, film director, brilliant guy,  
wonderful human being, and he just got diagnosed out of out of nowhere  
with stage four stomach cancer.  
I mean, just like out of nowhere, mid fifties and essentially a death sentence.  
So I get to spend a lot of time with him in his last year and a half  
after that diagnosis and we did weekly beach walks.  
And he said to me several times and he would just grab my arm and he would say,  
Rain, it's just static.  
It's all just static.  
You've got to get the static out of your life.  
The emails, the meetings, the the career, the the appointments, the the driving,  
the traffic, the phone calls, the zooms.  
It's all just static.  
It's all noise.  
And that really resonated with me.  
And I know a lot of people have mentioned that in the book because we do  
experience our life as this kind of like buzz of like appointments and  
choppings and zooms and appoint and bills to pay and and whatnot.  
And that was profoundly impactful.  
And I would always encourage David to it's a tricky situation.  
You know, when someone's dying, I don't want to like God forbid,  
lecture him on on death or thinking about it.  
But I would always just turn it a little bit toward a more profound discussion  
about, you know, the soul and the journey of the soul and the and the movement  
of of the spirit, you know, beyond our this corporal 3D surround sound  
experience of being a human being to the realms beyond.  
But he like many people, he he he got a little stuck in a way that made me sad  
because he really just focused on fighting the cancer, which is super,

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super important, right?

So he devoted all of his waking time and energy to to research and treatment and diet and everything to fight the cancer, which is super important.

And I don't blame him.

But it was pretty terrifying for him to consider mortality and the implications thereof.

He had a daughter and but I'll never forget him talking about static in that way. And I find that to be also very clarifying, you know, in my daily meditation practice, like, how can I again, the Buddha uses the image a lot of the lotus flower, you know, it's floating on top of the swamp, you know, these beautiful lotuses, and there's the swamp and the mire and the bugs and the dirt and and this beautiful flower rising above.

How can we in our own little way be a lotus flower and the rest of the swamp is is our daily static?

The rest of the swamp, the alternative way of living to everything you've just described, what is the alternative way of living?

So, you know, you've got the the the realization that everything is static and the understanding that we are spiritual beings having a human experience.

Yep.

What is the opposite of that that you see when you walk the streets or you observe people?

What is the opposite way of living to that?

And why is it causing suffering?

Thoreau talked about the unexamined life is not worth living.

Why did he say that?

And what did he mean by that?

Well, it's been a long time since I read Walden Pond and the night Thoreau spent in jail, but I love the transcendentalists because that is really kind of the first authentic American spiritual movement.

And this idea that we're seeking transcendence that were that was kind of the first movement that really acknowledged like we're spiritual beings.

So I think, you know, it's the unexamined life.

I think living in the static living in the swamp is not taking the time to honor the sacred divinity of aspects of our life.

And, you know, I have a, when you study meditation and you participate in meditation, there's this strange thing that happens where you realize that you, the reality of you is the watcher, the observer.

When you meditate, your thoughts are still bouncing around, you know, the Buddhists call it the monkey mind, right?

So your, your thoughts are bouncing around.

You might have some anxiety and worry like, Oh, is that person going to



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accept my offer on this?

Or is this thing going to work out?

Or Oh, is my wife still mad at me or whatever?

So you have this emotional dissonance and you have this kind of intellectual dissonance.

And then in the meditative state, you're just witnessing that.

It's almost like you're floating above it and looking down.

And then you realize like, Oh, my reality is not my thoughts.

My reality is not my feelings.

My reality is not even just my body and the sensations that my body takes in.

There is some kind of aspect of the eye that is the witness or and it's getting in touch with that, that allows us to get above the static.

So meditation is very important to me.

The next step of meditation for me is connecting with the ultimate divine.

You can do it in prayer.

I have a chapter in the book called the Notorious God, getting into God.

So yeah, that's one way to rise above the noise and the static and the swamp is in that practice.

And then I mentioned at the very beginning like recognizing the sacred and the divine and we can do this.

It's certainly easy to do in the beauty of nature.

It's also when you have children and you're raising a kid, you kind of see that the beauty in the kids natural curiosity and wonder and open heartedness.

And then you experience it in human interaction.

You know, I think I view this conversation as sacred.

This is a sacred conversation where seeking to understand each other.

You're being a service to your incredible audience.

They want to learn about how to make themselves better people, how to start a business, how to maximize their health, how to go on a spiritual journey as a human being.

They want to learn all this and you're providing the way in to them.

So we get to have this conversation.

People may not agree with what I'm saying, but it might spark something and, you know, gratitude and witnessing the sacred and that meditative practice of kind of rising above our thoughts and feelings.

Those are tools that we can use to make our lives better and richer.

If someone is on the outsides of this conversation and they don't really understand what spirituality is and they've not really gone on the journey that you've been on, what kind of questions would you pose to them to help them open their mind?

So if someone's listening to this, they find the word spiritual to be kind of hippy stuff and they're not really, you know, they managed to get this far in the conversation, but they don't really understand spirituality, what it means.

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They managed to get this far.  
Don't turn off the podcast yet.  
There's more good stuff coming.  
We're going to talk about the office.  
I promise.  
Stick around folks.  
Way too many cameras here.  
I think there's nine or something.  
What would you say to those people that I just think of a guy driving his like Laurie up the country.  
He's put the podcast on and he doesn't really know what spirituality is.  
He doesn't really understand.  
It doesn't understand why he would therefore need it in his life.  
Yeah.  
That's a great question.  
I don't know that I have an answer for that.  
I mean, I guess, you know, the dictionary definition of spirituality that I use is a focus on the non-material aspects of life.  
So that's our heart.  
That's our soul.  
It's our connection.  
It's the light that we bring.  
It's kind of a connection to what I would call those divine qualities that we all carry to some degree or another spiritual virtues.  
You could call them, you know, love, compassion, honesty, humility.  
These are qualities that don't necessarily serve us as human animals.  
So there's something, they're not about the quest for power.  
They're not about the quest for status and comfort.  
They allow us to kind of rise above our kind of humdrum human experience.  
So that's what I would, that's how I would define spirituality, something in that realm.  
But I would say that, listen, we all want more love in our life, right?  
And love is the most precious and beautiful resource.  
And I would say maybe you don't believe in spirituality, but, or maybe you don't believe in God, but you can focus on love and we can all focus on love.  
That's something we all have an experience of.  
And so we want to increase love in our life.  
That's, that's increasing spirituality.  
It's the same thing.  
Like I had a profound experience of love when my son was born.  
He almost died.  
It was a very traumatic birth, an ER room with blood in the middle of the night and a, you know, really piss poor van knives.  
California, you know, county hospital in a hallway, emergency C section.

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And when I held my son, like, again, I had one of those handful of truly transcendent experiences, one of those cosmic experiences of looking into my son's eyes.

And they were bright, bright blue.

And he just been ripped from the womb of his mother.

And I felt such profound love for him.

And it was just like waves after waves of love.

And just almost I had tears, but it was almost just beyond tears.

It was like this transcendent, like love orgasm that was minutes long.

As I, as I held him just with such gratitude and, and, you know, for a lot of materialists, they could say, well, that's just neurons and biochemicals in your brain that are causing that.

And that's true.

There are neurons firing and there's biochemicals, but it's so much more than that.

You're never going to tell me that that's all it is.

And that is just some biological imperative to, you know, have the species move forward.

And that's why parents love their children.

Like what I experienced, I'm sorry, it's just, it's beyond that.

You can call me deluded.

But that's what spirituality is, is just increasing that love connection.

I think that was a dating show in the nineties love connection.

But we want to increase that love connection.

And that is what a spiritual journey is about.

And we can increase that with ourselves, with nature, with, with time, with beauty.

And with our, with our fellow human beings.

How did the birth of your son change your life?

Well, having kids is a paradigm shift because you have a creature that's in your care and is dependent on you.

And it was actually really profound when my son was a year and a half, the same age that I was when my mom left to have the affair.

That was a really profound time in my life.

It brought up a lot for me emotionally because I saw this toddler kid and he would go out and explore the world and be like, Oh, here's a cup and play with some blocks and tree and he'd had some words going and stuff like that.

And then immediately you'd see this look on his face.

Like, Oh, I'm out too far.

Like, Oh, I'm, I've swum out too far.

And then he'd run back to the shallow end to his mom and cling to his mom and like, Ah, and mom was home base, right?

And I was like, Oh, that home base was stripped from me was taken away from me when I was that same age.

It was pretty profound, but this idea that are, um, we're responsible.

We brought a life into the world and we're responsible for that life.

Not just for five or 10 years, not just for the first 18 years, but for eternity.

It's, um, it's profound.

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I can't really say intellectually what that means, but, um, it shifts the way you are alive in the world.

That example you gave of your, your son at one and a half years old being able to return to home base in that you can also see what, what might have happened to his development and his perspective.

If when he'd gone out too far and turned around, there was no mother there.

Yeah.

Who he might have become.

And if there was no mother there and then if, if I, and then he had the father, which is a close second, right?

But then my dad, who was so traumatized by being abandoned by his wife and was so already emotionally shut down and he couldn't really access emotions are the best of scenarios.

He had been colossally abused as a kid and his mom died and his dad was abusive and beat him and left him and his sister alone in the house for weeks at a time.

It was very Charles Dickens.

Um, so this, you know, my dad's case, he was, he was the worst possible person to, to have to bond to, you know, or to need to bond to.

So, you know, if little Walter, my wife holiday had left or, or died for some reason and Walter had to turn to me, like it would have been.

Okay.

But there's, there's nothing that fulfills that, um, uh, that, that primal human, uh, connection-ness than a child and the mom.

One of the things that really surprised me, um, was when I was reading about your time at the office, which by the way, I have to say is my favorite show of all time.

She probably said that I'm sure it's, that's the case for a lot of people.

Are you saying right now that the U.S.

office is better than the UK office?

Yes.

Wow.

Yes.

I know.

Do you hear that?

It is maybe because there was more of them.

There's a hell of a lot more of them.

So I've watched, I watched, honestly, when I was going through a difficult part in my life and I was trying to, I was building my businesses, I was shoplifting food cause I was just, I was so broke at this chapter in chapter of my life.

It was the, and I had this beat up laptop where I had to like solder the charger cause I couldn't afford the 10 pounds to buy a new one.

It was the only thing I watched and I watched it for about two years.

So obviously I just kept going back and back and back.

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It was, you know, you talk in chapter 10 about the seven pillars of spiritual revolution and one of them being about spreading joy.

It spread a whole lot of joy in my life, a whole lot of joy.

And I don't watch TV to be honest.

I don't watch TV movies.

Don't really watch any of it.

These guys will know, but the office I watched.

I don't think there's anything else that I have watched.

But when I, when I read about your, your experience on the show, there was a real sense of unfulfillment, especially in the early years when you were making the show, um, you talked about that a little bit on Bill's podcast as well.

When I was in the office, I spent several years really mostly unhappy because it wasn't enough.

Hmm.

Yeah.

Well, first of all, I'm so glad that you enjoyed the office and I just need to speak to how deeply gratified I am and all of us are that the office has brought so much, uh, serenity and peace and love and, uh, upliftment and inspiration to people.

I mean, getting on a TV show is one of the hardest things in the world.

And then getting on one that lasts is a really hard one.

And then getting on one that lasts and is good.

And then one that lasts and is good and still has a cultural impact 10 years after it has ended is, I mean, talk about hitting the lottery.

I mean, we had no idea.

We knew we were onto something really special and, and funny and magical.

And of course, Steve Corral is one of the great comedic actors that will ever live.

Um, but, uh, we had no idea I would have this kind of impact and we're so deeply grateful and gratified, um, around that.

And I, going back to the English office, it's always like, it's so funny to me, uh, in the bassoon king, the other book there, I talk a little bit about the, that competition is so absurd, like the, the anger and vitriol that you Brits brought to the fact that the, that Americans were going to make remake the beloved office.

It was so staggering.

I mean, it was so enraged and vitriolic.

And it was like, guys, guys, the English office isn't going anywhere.

You can watch it over and over again.

We're not going to take all the copies and burn them.

You know what I mean?

We're going to take a brilliant idea by, you know, by Ricky and Stephen and the BBC and God bless them.

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Um, you know, it's a astonishingly brilliant.

And we're going to kind of run with it instead of 12 episodes.

We're going to make 200 episodes.

How's that?

If you don't like it, you don't have to watch it, but, uh, that was an interesting, uh, time frame.

But yeah, so it's interesting that you bring this up because I was very frustrated because I was on, uh, Bill Mar and I was on one other podcast and I was talking about how there were times on the office that I really struggled because I really wasn't happy, um, because it wasn't enough.

Here I was on the greatest job that I could ever imagine beyond my wildest dreams of that geeky chess playing bassoon, playing kid from suburban Seattle that, you know, walked around like a pimply serial killer, um, that I would be part of one of the great TV shows of all time.

I mean, give me a break.

And here I was getting paid like millions of dollars and playing one of the most memorable characters and I'm getting nominated for awards and I'm working with the most beautiful family of, of actors and writers imaginable.

And yet I was like, how come I can't get more movies and why did my movie?

I did bomb and why won't they make a deal with me?

And I just, I want to have this and I want an office and Warner Brothers and why can't I get it?

You know, and I spent a lot of time, uh, unnecessary time and angst and anguish, um, in that anxious discontent, um, at a time when I should have just been like this, it doesn't get better than this.

Just enjoy it, drink it in and be a part of this incredible artistic because it was artistic experience.

So, but I think the reason I've been bringing that up and some interviews is I think it's important for people to understand that, you know, here's someone who, you know, 15 years into their acting career or 20 years into their acting career, cause I was, I started playing Dwight when I was 38 years old.

Um, is, uh, has, uh, officially made it and they're still unhappy and that is so human.

It's so quintessentially human.

And to think that, oh, if I hit this end result, then I am going to be happy.

And that's why I brought it back to that unhappiness that I experienced in my 20s.

Like I was an actor.

I was from suburban Seattle.

Here I was.

I had an apartment in New York.

I was doing acting and yet I was really unhappy and miserable and it didn't make any sense because society had always told me like there's this if then proposition, like if you achieve X, Y and Z, if you make a certain amount of money,

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if you get a certain position, if you're in a certain kind of relationship, if you have a house at a certain level, if you're a member of a certain club or whatever, then you will be happy.

Once I achieve this, then I will be happy.

That's bullshit.

It's absolute and total crock of bullshit.

Now, certainly I'm not meaning to, to mean anyone that's struggling to pay bills and they're going like, you know, fuck you, Hollywood elitist.

You got millions of dollars in the bank and you don't have to worry about, you know, paying the bills.

I was there.

You know, I was, I was having to worry about, you know, paying the bills and it was, it was a struggle for the, you know, first 15 years of my career.

So I've been there.

I know what that's like and I honor that.

So you certainly want to make enough money to, it does take an incredible pressure off your shoulders once you have achieved that.

But to think that then you're going to be happy.

I mean, you've interviewed a lot of millionaires and a lot of successful people, like how, how many of them are really fulfilled, deeply fulfilled and happy?

What would I have had to have done to have gotten rain at the height and the peak of that success, even when it was going to be in the moment and to enjoy it for what it was?

Because it's not just you.

It's, it's all the people that are listening now that are in jobs.

They've just got that promotion.

And now they're thinking about becoming a director or a CEO that they too are deferring the happiness off to the future behind some goal.

What can we do in the moment to just like enjoy life today?

Bring our happiness into the, into the now.

If you always think your happiness is somewhere in the future, it always will be.

What would I have had to have said to you to get you to snap out of that?

That, that's a great question.

I don't know that there's anything that you could have said to me in a couple of sentences or a couple of paragraphs.

But I think if you could have encouraged me to go back onto my spiritual journey, back into my spiritual journey, because you're absolutely right.

All we have is now, all we have is this next breath, this breath that we're currently experiencing.

And this is where the joy is.

And if we're waiting for the joy to be 375 breaths from now or 3000

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breaths from now or 300 breaths from now, we're missing out 100%.

And I think gratitude has a great deal.

Cause one of the cures for chronic dissatisfaction, the cure for Dukka is, is gratitude.

And I would have been to rain.

One of the things that would have been really helpful is like rain.

You need to start every day with 10 things you're grateful for.

It's like, I'm grateful for Jenna Fisher and John Krasinski and Steve Correll, and I'm grateful for a nice paycheck and a healthy son and a beautiful

wife, and I'm, I'm grateful for, you know, the fans of the office and the fact that I get to, you know, I've trained as an actor my whole life and I get to use those skills and tell wonderful stories and make people laugh.

Like if I could have been stayed hooked into that, and I did get hooked back into that, this was, this was a, I'm describing a period of like three years, three to four years where I was really struggling with that.

And then, and then I, I came around.

Does it rub you with your ambition though?

This is a question I was used to mull with myself because that, that rain that wanted more versus the rain, I guess I'm grateful for what I have.

Is one more or less ambitious than the other?

Yeah, that's a, that's a great question.

And I don't know the answer to that because there is, um, did my chronic dissatisfaction fueled my spiritual drive and also fueled my career drive and my ambition, um, because I was so chronically dis, dis, dis enchanted and disaffected, uh, that I, I wanted, uh, uh, I wanted more, I wanted more opportunities.

I wanted more money.

I wanted more knowledge.

I wanted more wisdom.

Um, there is, there's a drive there that can be healthy and a drive that there's an unhealthy aspect to it.

So I don't really know the answer to that.

I think for now when I look in my life, like I still have great ambition.

Like I still want sold boom as a brand.

I'm just kind of starting to think about like how to expand that as a brand.

Um, I still want to act in movies.

You know, I want to direct.

I want to maybe create companies.

You know, I created soul pancake, maybe create another company or something like that.

And there's a lot I want to do.

Um, but I'm hoping to bring the best aspects of myself toward that ambition.

And for me, that has to do with service and, um, and God and, um, and utilizing



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myself, my God given talents, uh, and faculties and maximizing those, um, and living in God's will.

I'm sorry to get all hippie, dippy religious now, but to me, that's what's driving me now, but it's, uh, as long as we're in the battle of the ego, and that's the most ancient, right?

Human spiritual struggle is the battle of the ego and psychologists talk about it and profits talk about it and gurus talk about it.

Right.

So as long as we want to promote the self and the self will and ego satisfaction, we'll never be happy.

Are you happy?

I am.

Yeah.

Happy's the wrong word, but whatever it is you mean by happy, I have that thing.

What is that thing?

Um, I don't know what the word is.

And I, I, I ponder this a lot.

Like, what's the perfect word?

You know, social scientists talk about wellbeing.

So I like that one a lot.

That works.

Uh, it's partially contentment, uh, but it's also partially, uh, meaning and purpose and vision.

And when I'm in alignment with meaning and purpose and vision, um, then I feel like I'm vibrating on the right frequency.

I discovered a product which has changed my life called eight sleep.

And I'm so proud to say today that I had a chat with the founder of the brand and they are now a podcast sponsor.

And one of the things I've come to learn on this podcast from speaking with sleep experts like Matthew Walker is how important temperature is when it comes to sleep, the temperature of your room, the temperature of your bed.

And also one of the big insights I had from speaking to some experts was that the temperature of the room should fluctuate throughout the night as you move through different stages of sleep.

So when you first get into bed, it should be quite cool in bed.

It should then get a little bit cooler and then the temperature should increase near the end.

And that is a reflection of what would have happened in nature once upon a time.

You've probably come to learn that I have sponsors on this podcast that I use and products that I love.

My sponsors should be a reflection of the conversations I'm having but also a reflection of what I'm using in my life.

So to celebrate them being a new podcast sponsor, I always want to get a

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discount for you guys and I've got one.

Go to [eightsleep.com](https://eightsleep.com) which is E-I-G-H-T sleep.com slash Stephen.

And if you do that, you'll save \$150 on the pod cover that I have on my bed, the one I'm talking about.

Grab your pod cover, send me a DM and let me know how you get on.

Quick one.

You guys know that for years now, my office has quite literally been everywhere on a plane, in the back of my car, in a terminal, in an airport or on a train.

You name it, I've probably worked there.

Ever since I started my first business at 19 years old, I've been working on the move.

All I need is Wi-Fi, a desk and my headphones and I'm set.

And one of the places that has always had my back when I'm struggling to find an office is WeWork.

I've been using WeWork for years now, whether it's in Manchester, London, Manhattan or LA.

WeWork is easy.

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That's one word, CEO works.

And to redeem this offer, visit [we.co.coceoworks](https://we.co.coceoworks).

What are the things that you still struggle with?

Because sometimes when we read the books and stuff and I've written a book myself, it can sometimes exude the illusion of fixed or figured it all out.

I'm done.

Right.

What do you still struggle with on an ongoing basis?

Yeah, I think that I can be a better husband

and I think I can be a kinder father

and a more compassionate friend.

There's still some really basics of human interaction that I haven't quite gotten figured out.

Well, because I wasn't really,

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I didn't learn these things from my parents, right?  
I didn't learn connection and compassion  
in the household that I grew up in.  
So I've had to parent my adult self in that direction.  
And to really, I struggle with making sure that I'm again  
using the tools that God has given me  
to try and make the world a better place.  
I think there's a lot more that I could be doing  
to try and make the world better  
and to help heal people that are disenfranchised  
and bring more joy to people's lives  
and try and bring spiritual tools to a young generation  
that I think will make their lives better.  
There's more I could be doing to that end.  
And I still have a big ego.  
I'm still narcissistic and I still want ego satisfaction  
and it's always there.  
They always say an addiction that your addict  
is in the basement doing push-ups,  
even when, but I would say the same thing about the ego.  
It's there in the basement doing push-ups,  
just getting ready to come in and take the reins.  
Does it speak to you sometimes,  
that the guy in the basement?  
Yeah, absolutely, yeah.  
Jung talks about the shadow side  
and it's so important and part of the therapeutic process  
is to get to know one's shadow  
because and to know and embrace and accept  
and love one's shadow.  
And I have a dark shadow, it's an addict shadow  
and it's a miserable shadow  
and it's self-important and righteous and entitled.  
And this is part of who Rainn Wilson is.  
And I'm not going to get rid of those aspects of myself  
by keeping that shadow at arm's length  
or locked in a closet or something like that.  
I have to keep your enemies closer,  
keep that shadow.  
There you are, buddy.  
There you are, right on the belly,  
cuckoo, cuckoo, cuckoo.  
Yeah, your little mean little addict,

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your little narcissistic entitled asshole.  
I love you, I love you.  
You're right here with me, you're part of me.  
Let's go on this, we're in this together.  
I got you right where I want you.  
Everyone's got a shadow.  
A lot of people are trying to fight their shadow.  
I mean, a lot of the prevailing narratives  
are that you can therapy your way out of the shadow.  
Yeah, no, it's sitting the,  
you gotta sit the shadow on the lap,  
almost like a ventriloquist dummy, you know?  
It's, that's why I love ventriloquist stories  
and horror films of like the dummies  
that come to life and attack, you know?  
Because that's your shadow is that.  
Hello.  
How are you?  
Fuck you, Stephen DiRiva, fucking CEO.  
Get a new T-shirt, idiot.  
That's gonna be the trailer.  
That's gonna be the trailer.  
The 12 step program, you and Russell  
had both spoken to me about this,  
but Macklemore has talked to me about it as well.  
And what I've, since the conversation with Russell,  
I've spent a lot of time talking to other people about.  
Really like what makes us change.  
So the 12 step program is, has some principles, which I think are applicable for all of our  
lives about how to, how to create change.  
Um, if someone's going through something in their lives now and they're, they're  
struggling to change it, how, how does that 12 step program help us to go to change?  
What, what, what is it about that program that causes that change in people?  
Do you know?  
I love the 12 step program.  
That's such a great question.  
There's going to be people that are way more knowledgeable than I, but I will say there  
are some essential components of the 12 step program that you write are applicable to  
everyone and could make everyone's lives better.  
Uh, I think society as a whole could benefit from a lot of the way that the 12 steps work.  
Um, I think it's the most profound spiritual movement of the last several hundred years.  
Uh, it has transformed millions of people's lives.  
First of all, there's the idea that there's this wonderful dichotomy at the center of

**[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / Rainn Wilson: "I was so unhappy during The Office!" (Dwight Schrute)**

the 12 steps, which is if I surrender, if I admit defeat, if I admit powerlessness, I find great strength.

So there's a, there's a beautiful spiritual co-on at the center of that.

I give up, I throw up the white flag.

I can't do this on my own.

I need the support of a community.

I need to get vulnerable.

I need the support of a higher power.

And then I find great strength.

There's something just so beautiful about that.

And the community of the 12 steps is amazing too.

Like sharing with like-minded alcoholics, um, and getting the support of that community,

the fact that there's servant leaders, that there's elections, that it's, it's run,

it's the inmates running the asylum, you know, uh, there aren't these kind of leaders.

In fact, there, if there's someone who kind of presents as like a leader and 12 steps, you should be immediately wary of them that they have any kind of answer at all.

The surrender point really is the thing that's compelled me.

In fact, when Russell was talking about this idea of, um, I think the kind of what he said was like, he broke it down into three kind of processes, awareness of whatever it is, the belief that you can change the thing.

And in this third step, this principle of kind of surrendering to it.

And in an individualistic society, materialistic society,

where we're becoming more and more isolated and individualistic in our approach to life, we are living in four white walls alone more than ever before.

You know, we think we can do it ourselves, right?

This idea of surrender and admitting that you need the collective and help with something and that you might not have the answers.

I think it's so powerful, so, so important as well.

I think we all need to surrender in many ways.

I think I need to surrender in terms of my ego.

I think I need to surrender in terms of even spirituality.

I told you a second ago about my partner who is very whatever anyone might call spiritual and surrendering to her way of living has brought me so much value in my life.

So this idea of surrender being the solution to,

um, the resistance we're encountering by the ways that we're living,

I think is something that everyone can consider.

Like if you're feeling a deep sense of dissatisfaction in your life, surrendering and saying, I need help.

I don't know the answer.

Can, can you help me?

Yeah.

Brings in everything you're, it's probably the medicine that you're seeking.

But surrender feels like an interesting word.

**[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / Rainn Wilson: "I was so unhappy during The Office!" (Dwight Schrute)**

It feels like powerlessness.

Right.

But again, there's great power in that powerlessness.

And what do you surrender to?

And that's why there's a higher power as well.

And, uh, boy, there's so many things I wanted to say there.

But, uh, there's a humility in the process that is missing in contemporary society.

Right.

I would say we're the least humble that humans have been, uh, in, in our history, all eight billion of us sharing this planet.

So, um, and I think God or a higher power requires a certain humility.

Like there is a power greater than myself.

The ego is the opposite of surrender.

The ego wants to control outcomes.

The ego wants to control other people.

Right.

As long as we're trying to control other people and control outcomes, we're going to be unhappy.

So there's something about surrendering.

Like, you know, your, your partner's, you know, journey.

You surrender to that.

You don't know what she's going to go live on a commune or worship a mushroom or something like that.

Okay.

You're on your journey.

She already does, babe.

You know, so it's, it's again, that central spiritual struggle is, is the, is the, is the ego is the primacy, the primacy, the primal sea of I the self as being separate from everything else. And the essential spiritual teaching at the center of every faith tradition is that we're all connected.

We're all united.

We're all one.

This is an illusion of self.

So surrender eliminates that illusion of self.

But there's so many other nuggets in 12 steps.

Like one of them, just in the middle of the steps is when we are wrong, promptly admit it.

Like that's just a really good piece of advice.

And you know what?

We could all benefit.

Politicians could benefit.

CEOs could benefit.

People in relationships, parents with their children, people in, in partnership could benefit.

Like when we're wrong, promptly admit it, promptly being the word, not, not eventually, you know.

**[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / Rainn Wilson: "I was so unhappy during The Office!" (Dwight Schrute)**

As soon as you know.

Say you're sorry and do it faster, you know, and do it better.

And the world would be a much better place if everyone around said, when I'm wrong, I'm going to promptly admit it.

That's just one little gem.

There's so many dozens more.

Holiday.

Yeah.

She's been with you through a lot.

Yeah, yeah.

When I was looking at the timeline of when you guys got together, I think you met an enacting class, right?

Yeah.

It's been a long time, almost four decades, right?

Hell, a long time.

Yeah, we were an acting class together in 1985.

We weren't together as a couple till 90, 91, really, when she moved to New York.

But yeah, I wasn't even born then.

You've grown a whole Stephen in that time.

Asshole.

I was born in 1992.

So what does she mean to you?

Oh, you're going to make me cry, aren't you?

You're going to try and make me cry.

I don't know.

I don't know.

You might hate her.

She's everything to me.

I mean, I am so blessed to have her in my life.

She's dealt with me when I've been a raging asshole.

And she's dealt with me when I've been depressed, when I've let my anxiety get the best of me.

We've had a lot of ups and downs in our marriage.

And I think that's really important for people to hear, like, we're soulmates.

And I really wouldn't have achieved anything that I've achieved without her help and guidance and love and support.

And, you know, it all sounds like a cliché, but it's just the truth.

And she's really the wisest person that I know.

She has a deep, deep wisdom and she knows me better than anyone.

So I'm just grateful and I tell her every day.

I tell her every day.

What has she taught you about the nature of what love is?

You know, it's interesting.

She also had a very traumatic childhood and a difficult, her parents had a very difficult situation.

**[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / Rainn Wilson: "I was so unhappy during The Office!" (Dwight Schrute)**

And she, she had a lot of issues in her own way and her own journey.

I'll let her tell that story.

But she loves very naturally in a way that it's a lot more work for me.

So she just has a big heart and is just able to love our son and other people and animals.

And, you know, I, I always felt, as an analogy I use in, in my, in my books where because I had such a weirdly fractured childhood,

I would observe how humans interacted and try and emulate that because I didn't understand it.

So if I would like observe people in the lunch room at my school and they'd come in and someone would say like, Hey buddy, how's it going?

You have a good weekend.

Good to see you.

And I would, I would watch it and I would, I'll be like, Oh, that's, that's how normal people interact.

And so I would, I would literally copy it and I would try it out.

And I'd go up to someone like, Hey buddy, how are you doing?

Do you have a good weekend?

You know, so for me, I felt like I was an alien.

Like I was literally like a science fiction film where I was like this alien, like learning about human behavior and interaction and like studying humans and, and seeking to, to fit in.

And I bring this up because holidays does this stuff so naturally, you know, she just has a natural warmth and grace.

So sometimes I emulate her about, Oh, here's what it means to be loving and warm and, and live life with, with grace.

You and me both.

My partner sounds exactly the same.

And I feel like I've learned how to love someone by emulating the things she does

so naturally, the things she says, the things she admits when she says sorry,

how open she is, her ability to tell me her feelings, all of these things I've,

I've learned from just watching that she seems to have no issue or no resistance in doing it.

That makes sense.

I've learned out a parent from her so well and our son, bless him.

Walter, he's 18 and a half, about to go off to college.

Um, but I always want to maybe lecture or react a little too much or say the thing I feel that needs saying and, and my wife is so good and like, she'll see me starting to do it and she'll just be like, just, just this little thing.

And I'll be like, and I think Walter, well, we'll, we'll talk about it later.

I just, I take my cues from her a little like, so she's a conductor.

It's my, she's a conductor of my parenting too.

Rain, thank you so much.

We have a closing tradition on this podcast where the last guest leaves a question for the next guest, not knowing who they're leaving the question for.

They leave it in the diary of a CEO.



**[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / Rainn Wilson: "I was so unhappy during The Office!" (Dwight Schrute)**

That's good.

The question they have left for you.

I don't get to read it until, so give me a second.

The handwriting is not always great.

Can you recall a time when you

observed, he reads it,

observed someone being treated badly and could have intervened, but didn't.

So what might you have done differently if you could go back to that moment?

That's such an exceptional question.

I was reading a, someone was writing about bullying.

And they were talking about how bullying is a three step process.

Like you stop the bully, you say, Hey, that's not okay.

Speak up to the bully.

Maybe don't get in a fight, but speak up to the bully.

Tend to the bullied and then report it to an authority.

And we often just kind of view bullying as like that first step process of like trying to shut down the bully.

And, you know, back in the 70s and 80s, when I was growing up, there was a hell of a lot of bullying going on.

And, and I, I feel bad that I didn't bully myself because I was far too nerdy to partake in bullying, but I thought it was any reason why.

Well, part of it was part of it was because I wish that I could have been a part of that process of, especially people that had been bullied to, I guess, I just didn't have the tools to give them empathy and compassion and support and then to take an active part in, you know, reporting this whole dynamic to the authorities.

Cause I, when I go back and replay my high school years and junior high and elementary school years, it was non-stop bullying.

I mean, it was, it was taunting and teasing and, you know, taking the piss out and, and demeaning and belittling and, and hierarchies.

And we may be going a little too far in contemporary society about what qualifies as bullying because it's not criticism and it's not even necessarily like having some good natured fun, you know, but I wish I had been more actively a participant in kind of a part of the three step process.

Super interesting.

Never heard about that three step process before.

This particular individual, I don't usually give clues, but they're writing a book about adult bullying as well.

Having been on the receiving end of that and they think adult bullying is something we don't really talk about a lot, which is like the workplace stuff and, you know, as we get older.

Rain, thank you so much.

Thank you for so many things.

My, there's two real really incredible things that changed my life in a really important way.

The first was obviously the office, you know, you are by far my favourite character.

**[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / Rainn Wilson: "I was so unhappy during The Office!" (Dwight Schrute)**

And I think that I just can't understand how a human can be, could have been so good at acting. And I really mean that.

Like I don't bullshit people, but you're so good at acting, playing that role of Dwight.

I think there was occasions where I tried to do it, like I tried to.

So it's almost, it comes as a shock to many people that, and you know this because you kind of allude to it in the first chapter of the book that someone that could embody Dwight can also write such a great book like this about something that is so far from what I think Dwight might be interested in.

And it's actually all a testament to your ability to act.

Really, really unbelievable.

I think your role as Dwight is one of the all-time great performances in any show like that.

It's incredible, incredible.

And you talk about, as I said in the 10th chapter of the book about spreading joy.

You gave me so much joy.

And then you came out with this app called Soul Pancake back in the day, which caught me at the perfect moment where I was a young man that was really obsessed with these big questions still am.

And it allowed me to find this community where I just peppered people with really profound questions about whether dogs have, you know, a soul and all these kind of things that I was struggling with at the time.

So thank you for both of those things because you helped me in ways that you'll never know.

And I live tens of thousands of miles that way.

And it changed, just nudged the direction of my life in so many important ways.

And it's led me to this moment now, which you can understand for me is an incredible one.

Absolutely incredible one.

So thank you.

Means a lot.

And everyone should go check out this book.

It's wonderful.

It's super accessible.

It's it kind of, I don't know how to describe this, but it as it relates to books that are confronting this idea of the spiritual revolution, it takes it easy on you and it holds your hand across the bridge, you know, and that I think is important because that person in the lorry or the truck, that's exactly what they need if they are going to access the wisdom in this book.

So thank you, Rain.

Steven, what a profound pleasure.

Thank you for having me on the show.

Congratulations on all the incredible work that you do.

And thank you for acknowledging the fact that you owe everything to me.

So and that's a wrap.

A quick word on Huell.

As you know, they're a sponsor of this podcast and I'm an investor in the company.

One of the things I've never really explained is how I came to have a relationship with Huell.

**[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / Rainn Wilson: "I was so unhappy during The Office!" (Dwight Schrute)**

One day in the office, many years ago, a guy walked past called Michael and he was wearing a Huell t-shirt.

And I was really compelled by the logo.

I just thought for a minute a design aesthetic point of view.

It was really interesting.

And I asked him what that word meant and why he was wearing that t-shirt and he said, it's this brand called Huell and they make food that is nutritionally complete and very, very convenient and has the planet in mind.

And he the next day dropped off a little bottle of Huell on my desk.

And from that day onwards, I completely got it because I'm someone that cares tremendously about having a nutritionally complete diet.

But sometimes because of the way my life is, that falls by the wayside.

So if there was a really convenient, reliable, trustworthy way for me to be nutritionally complete in an affordable way, I was all ears.

Especially if it's a way that is conscious of the planet.

Give it a chance.

Give it a shot.

Let me know what you think.