

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / The Body Language Expert: Build Confidence, Attractiveness & Happiness In Seconds Using These Body Language Secrets! Amy Cuddy

Is body language really that important?

Yes. For example, when you change the posture of people who are depressed, it reduces their symptoms.

Tiny tweaks lead to big changes.

Dr. Amy Cutty, expert on the behavioral science of power.

Harvard professor coined the term power pose.

The second most watched TED talk of all time.

A posture can affect some of the biggest moments of our lives.

Your body language is betraying you.

50% of our first impression is based around body language.

So the way that we carry ourselves really affects your life.

Because if people feel utterly powerless, they see challenges as threats instead of opportunities.

They are less creative, less authentic.

So that's my mission.

To help people feel more powerful and become more socially brave.

And there's all kinds of ways in which we can fix it.

Is there a relationship there as well between our body language and attractiveness?

Yeah, there's research showing that if you...

That body language is more effective both in the workplace and in dating situations.

How we tell our stories to ourselves matters.

As I read through your story, there was bullying in your life.

It's the worst thing that ever happened to me.

I had to leave my job after I'd worked so hard to get there.

I almost decided to die.

Like, I'm so afraid of them still.

Um...

The show gets bigger, which means we can expand the production, bring in all the guests you want to see,

and continue to do this thing we love.

If you could do me that small favour and hit the follow button, wherever you're listening to this, that would mean the world to me.

That is the only favour I will ever ask you.

Thank you so much for your time. Back to this episode.

80% of our communication is non-verbal or 90%.

I can't remember the numbers, but you hear all of this stuff.

Is body language really that important?

Yes, it is important, absolutely.

And it probably affects about half of our impression of others.

Our first impression is based around body language.

Maybe it's higher than that, but I would say it's at least 50%.

Body language isn't just us speaking to others.

We're also speaking to ourselves.

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The way that we carry ourselves is sending messages back to our brain about whether we're safe or unsafe.

Are we threatened or not threatened?

Are we, you know, confident or not confident?

And so...

How do we know that?

Well, the sort of earliest studies looking at this idea about body-mind feedback were focused on facial expressions.

And so we know that there are some mostly universal expressions of emotion that are facial.

And when I say mostly, there is some debate about, you know, whether they're entirely universal to every single culture and exactly which emotions they are.

But you have things like happiness and smiling, sadness and crying, you know, widened eyes and surprise.

Those things are universal regardless of where you grew up and what you were exposed to.

So if they're universal, that indicates that they are hardwired, that we're born with some association in our brains.

So if they're hardwired, can you reverse the direction of that wiring?

Can you tell people to smile and will it make them happier?

And so the facial feedback studies showed that, yes, indeed you can.

And the first ones were smiling and mood.

So, you know, they had people, some people hold a pencil between their teeth in a way that made them smile,

and others hold a pencil between their teeth in a way that didn't make them smile.

The people who were in this forced smile, which did cause the contraction of the muscles around the eyes, which is a real smile,

even though it was a fake smile, it's not just your mouth, it's your mouth and your eyes.

They were in a better mood. Their mood lifted.

They liked the experimenter better. They liked anything put in front of them better.

They felt happier than the people who were not in this forced smile.

It was then expanded to look at some of these other universal facial expressions like crying and sadness.

And then people started to look at things like movement, posture.

I would say the earliest work really was on breathing.

When we get anxious, we breathe quickly and shallowly.

And if you think about, and I'm not sure that you ever had this experience,

but if you were called on in class, say in high school and you weren't prepared,

or the first time you had to give a speech in front of class, a lot of students speak very quickly and you can tell that their breathing is shallow and they're breathing quickly.

That's a fight-or-flight response.

And so can you turn that around?

And so the people who started studying this called this the relaxation response, where they got people to change their breathing, and I'm oversimplifying this,

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but in essence, you're breathing more slowly and deeply.

And that triggers a nervous system response that makes people feel much more relaxed and more confident and safe.

Which impacts performance of their speech, whatever they're doing.

Yes, or the context in which it was first studied was medicine and trying to get patients to feel calmer before stressful procedures.

Her Benson at Harvard Medical School did some of that early work, I think going back to the 60s and 70s.

But it wasn't sort of linked quite to psychology because it was coming from medicine.

When you have a person who is suffering from major depressive disorder,

open up, open their posture just for a couple of minutes,

and then have them fill out a depression scale afterwards, they are less depressed.

When you treat people with PTSD by teaching them yoga poses that open them up, it reduces their PTSD symptoms.

So this is coming from all different fields of study, not just from social psychology.

So there's a clear two-way relationship between my posture and how I'm feeling,

and then also how I'm feeling in my posture,

which communicates outwardly to the world about who I am and all those things.

I don't know if you know the answer to this question, but it made me wonder as you were talking, do you know how old language is?

I actually don't know the answer to that.

I don't know.

Jack, how old is language?

And how old are humans?

200,000 years.

Okay, so we have about 50,000 years of people not having sophisticated language and having to read each other's body language, which a lot of non-human animals are doing all the time.

Yeah, exactly.

I mean, you know, it's funny, we have these squirrels in our front yard,

and they're really active, and they're all kinds of body language signals,

but also these different kinds of chirps that they make.

And of course, I was curious, I looked this up, you know,

are they, do these different chirps mean different things?

Like certain bird calls really clearly mean certain things.

And the ethologists, the animal behavior specialists say that with squirrels,

they don't mean specific things, but it's still, it's a body language signal.

So it's not formal language, but they still get the sense that there's something threatening happening or not.

Or, you know, sometimes it's mating related, but they're not as specific as bird calls,

which are closer to our language than, say, these squirrel chirps.

When you did that TED Talk some 10 years ago, I think from what I read,

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it became the most viewed TED Talk of all time in its moment.
It became second most viewed, and it has remained there for a long time.
So it was never the most viewed, but it certainly went viral quickly.
Why? Why do you think people care so much about this subject matter?
It's funny because, you know, it still gets five or 10,000 views a day,
and that's 10 years old, and I still get 10 emails a day from strangers
who've just seen it for the first time thanking me, saying they felt that I was speaking to them.
And so there must be something timeless about it that I didn't know I was tapping into.
But I think there was some universal truth that resonated across people, across cultures,
and a lot of it was about feeling like an imposter.
I mean, I talked about imposter syndrome and the feeling like you don't belong there,
and it turns out almost everyone has this imposter experience.
And in fact, the woman who originally studied imposter syndrome
says she wishes she had called it the imposter experience
because syndrome indicates that it's pathological and it's not.
It's so common.
So what I found, you know, I was getting emails from first-generation, you know, black college
students.
I was getting emails from white males, literally Swiss bankers,
all of these different people, retired people, 12-year-old kids who felt that they didn't belong there.
What I think resonated was, first, it's okay.
You're not the only one who feels that way. It's normal.
But also, there are some things that you can do to get out of feeling that way.
And so it very much is about, to me, people feeling understood.
I feel like it's when you, you know, you love a song, it speaks to you.
It evokes a certain emotional response because something about that song makes you feel
connected.
And I think something about the talk did the same thing.
It made people feel understood and not alone in their feelings of powerlessness and not belonging.
And it gave them a blueprint as such to be more, to feel more powerful.
Yes. And something that didn't require technology, that didn't really require much of anything to
change the way they felt.
Yes.
What is that blueprint?
I feel like we know so much more now than we knew then.
Then we were having people adopt these expansive, you know, what we call power poses for a
couple of minutes
and looking at how it changed the way they felt.
You know, standing with their hands on their hips, for example, or in the victory pose with their
arms up
as if they had just crossed the finish line and won, you know, Usain Bolt, for example.
And it changed the way they felt.

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So that was the blueprint, was before you go into this stressful situation, you know, find a private space.

It's funny, I said a bathroom stall.

I had not scripted that.

That's just what came out.

So many people say, I stood in a bathroom stall and power pose before the job interviewer, before pitching an idea or something like that.

And it changed the way I felt.

And so that was the blueprint.

But I feel like the idea of being expansive is so much more expansive than that.

It's the way we walk.

It's taking longer strides, swinging our arms more.

It's talking more slowly.

Which is taking up temporal space.

It's that breathing, breathing more deeply and more slowly.

It's all, there are all kinds of ways in which we can expand that will change our feeling of agency, of power.

Not power over others, but power over ourselves or power to.

And when that happens, it activates what psychologists call the behavioral approach system.

And the approach system causes us to see challenges not as threats, but as opportunities.

It causes us to see other people, not as potential predators or competitors, but as possible allies and friends.

It makes us more creative because we're not feeling cognitively limited.

We have more of an abundance mindset than a scarcity mindset.

We don't feel as defensive.

We're more able to trust.

And I think maybe most important, we're more likely to act.

So when we feel powerful, we're more likely to take action, not just on behalf of ourselves, but also on behalf of others.

So when you look at research on, say, bystander intervention, you know, when do people step in and help in emergencies?

One of the best predictors is personal feeling personally powerful.

When people feel personally powerful, they step in and help.

They go, hey, something's wrong.

They don't second guess themselves and think, well, maybe I'm not the right person to help.

They just do it.

They step in and help.

So, you know, it has, it has so that that feeling of power is linked to so many other feelings and, and sort of aspects of our mindset that change how we approach life.

So as we expand and step forward, the world expands.

So many people listening to this now will be unaware that they've been going through their lives signaling to themselves and to others a sense of their own powerlessness.

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Yes.

Which is one of the first things that I was thinking about when I was reading through your work and watching the videos was that most people don't even know.

These are all unknown unknowns.

So they're feeling a certain way.

They're showing up in a certain way.

They're on stage hiding behind the lectern in a certain way.

And they have no idea the, the profundity of that signal that they're sending to themselves and others.

Right.

What is, how do I know that I'm signaling that to myself and to others?

What are the signs?

I think I ask people to do a kind of audit of their body of how they're holding themselves.

And it's funny when I, when I'm giving a talk and speaking to a big group of people and I say, you know, now check your posture.

I can hear everyone immediately moving in their chairs, even if the lights are low.

But I say, no, don't move yet.

Check your posture.

Because what you think, you think that when you're not the one performing it, your body language doesn't matter.

Because you, again, we're thinking, we think a body language is just one direction, what we're saying to others, but our body language is always speaking to us as well.

So I ask them to think, to pay attention to what is their default, even just seated position?

Are they holding their shoulders up and forward, collapsing their chests?

Are they wrapping their hands or arms around their torso?

What are the hallmarks of powerlessness?

So like, what's the...

It really is, you know, your limbs are pulled in, your shoulders are pulled forward, your chest is collapsed.

Legs might be crossed and ankles wrapped.

I think the wrapping of the ankles matters more than the crossing of the legs.

If you watch sports and watch what's happening, what is the winning team doing versus the losing team, you really see it.

I mean, you see, you know, these big basketball players who are holding their heads in their hands and, you know, leaning forward and they look absolutely defeated.

Even though they're just as physically strong as they were five minutes earlier when things were going well.

So watching the body language of athletes, for example, and then paying attention to what you're doing yourself,

I think helps us to become much more aware of how we're carrying ourselves.

But you can do little things.

Like just when you get up in the morning, you know, if you wake up all curled up in the fetal

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position,

which is the most common sleeping position, 40% of people sleep in the fetal position.

And we know that when people wake up in the fetal position, they are more anxious than people who don't.

That is obviously correlational.

We don't know the causal direction because it might be that you're anxious and that's why you're sleeping in the fetal position.

Nonetheless, say you wake up in the fetal position, stretch out, you know, into a starfish pose, you know, be Usain Bolt in bed before you put your feet on the ground.

One of my research assistants said that he would hold one of his hands on his hip while he brushed his teeth.

Like little things like that that sort of forced him to spend a little bit of time expanding really helped.

And I hear so many stories like this.

People rearrange their desks so that they have to stretch out a bit more when they're working instead of, you know, working like this over their phone.

You know, how are you sitting in your car?

Are you, you know, really close to the steering wheel and kind of collapsed or more open?

Little things like that can really change the way you feel.

So I think it starts with just noticing how we carry ourselves, how we carry ourselves physically, how we speak, how we breathe.

It's so interesting because I've got a guy friend of mine who is would be the first to say that he's very low self-esteem.

He's very disparaging of himself.

So when he walks into a room, he'll insult himself.

So he'll say, sorry, I smell or sorry, he'll apologize for himself.

Take a very little room, sit on the floor all the time and all of these things, which we've always kind of noticed it.

But when you say all of these things about people contracting when they feel powerless and taking up less space and being sort of self-disparaging,

I've always looked at that behavior in him and thought, I don't know, it's something deeper.

I don't know what we can do to, or he can do to help himself.

What would you say to someone like that who feels like, you know.

I mean, like I was saying, if you look at the clinical studies, the research is pretty clear that, you know, sort of body-mind feedback has significant benefits to people who are feeling, because that sounds like sort of unusually low self-esteem, right?

I would say that's several standard deviations below the mean if that's how he carries himself and speaks about himself.

Perhaps the legs.

Everything you described was, I just saw him.

I would say, you know, I'm not a clinical psychologist, but if you look at the clinical psychology literature, it very clearly shows that if you get people to change the way they carry themselves, they feel better.

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They feel different.

I think, to me, some of the most compelling work is the work on combat veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder, who feel utterly broken and often feel that their bodies betrayed them.

And, you know, our living at home are unable to keep a job or, you know, keep a relationship going.

And the research, there are researchers who have worked with them and taught them these, you know, expansive yoga poses, and the effects are dramatic.

It just makes, it restores their sense of personal power, their sense of agency.

And, you know, these are self-reports.

When I talk about the behaviors, they're self-reports, but the researcher who did a lot of these studies, Emma Cepula, who's at Yale, says that she would hear from these people a year later saying, I no longer live at home.

I have a job.

I'm so much happier.

I'm dating.

And it's because of this.

Because just of the expansive yoga poses.

Yeah, breathing, the expansive breathing, expansive yoga poses, but getting into the practice of doing that changes their lives.

You know, I feel strongly that encouraging people to open up, even if it's when they're alone, you know, because sometimes people close up in social situations because they have, you know, complex PTSD.

They have experienced trauma or they've been assaulted, they've been harassed, and they feel that they're protecting themselves.

So I think you start at home alone.

You start in the privacy of your own home where you don't feel threatened.

And then maybe you build it into these more social situations.

So instead of worrying about the impression you're making on others, you think about the impression you're making on yourself first.

That's what matters.

How we tell our stories to ourselves matters.

100% agree.

I've been really compelled by this idea of what I've been calling the self story, which is kind of what you're describing there, which is we all have this kind of story about who we are and how valuable we are and what we're good at and what we're capable of that governs our lives.

And it's written in every small thing we do.

I sat here with a bit of a different example, but I sat here with a championship boxer and he was telling me that when he's on the treadmill at home, it's very different example.

When he's on the treadmill at home, if he's told himself he's going to do seven miles and he gets to six and a half miles and gets cramp in his leg, he will limp the remaining half a mile because he doesn't want to let in his own words, the demons in.

And what he's really saying there is this idea that even though I'm alone and no one's going to know or see, I'm going to know and I'm going to write into myself story just a new paragraph about who I

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am when things get tough.

And I thought so much about this because lying kind of links to this in many ways because lying is this kind of decay of trust, but also lying to yourself.

So like making a commitment to yourself that I'm going to do something and continually breaking the commitment to yourself, even if nobody knows, I think is just so detrimental to our perception of ourselves.

Like it's a downward spiral of the perception of ourselves.

Absolutely.

I, you know, we, we, we own our narratives.

And, you know, there's research even on looking at older people and physical health outcomes.

I mean, mortality and, and the researchers found that older people who had more positive personal narratives about how they got to where they are in life live significantly longer than people who had these negative narratives.

Even if they had the same job, the same kind of sort of on the surface, they look the same.

They controlled for all those differences and still found that these the older people with these more positive personal narratives live longer.

And that's correlational, but it's, you know, it's powerful.

And one of the things that happens when people feel powerless is that they are less able to be authentic.

Right.

So when they, when they present themselves, say they are in a job interview, they don't come across as authentic as somebody who feels more powerful.

And what's interesting is that the body language associated with sort of lower authenticity is sort of on the same spectrum with the body language that's associated with outright deception.

Right.

So when people are lying to somebody else, I mean, knowingly lying, the body language that matters the most is not eye contact.

That's what people focus that they think eye contact is the most important signal.

It's not because people learn very different things in different households and cultures.

Personality differences that change how people choose to make eye contact in different situations.

What matters is the a synchrony between the emotions conveyed with the words and the emotions conveyed with the body language.

So if you're telling a happy story, but you do not look happy, your body language doesn't look happy, you know, you don't come across as authentic.

If you think about, you know, being a kid and maybe you lied to get out of going to school and you told your parents that you were sick and you really weren't.

You're telling a story that's not true.

That's, you know, supposed to be sad.

So you're trying to get the emotions right with your words, but your body language is probably betraying you.

You know, because you're actually excited that you're going to sit at home on the couch and eat chips and watch reruns.

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Rerun is probably a word that nobody uses anymore, but TV, YouTube, TikTok, whatever. So that those asynchronies are the same as the asynchronies that you see when people aren't able to be authentic. And of course, in those cases, that's not that the intention is not bad. They're not in any way trying to lie to the other person in a way they're kind of lying to themselves. And then that spills over into not being able to show an honest expression of themselves to the other. And people and the funny thing is that people don't can't quite articulate. So if you're an interviewer, say in that situation, it's very hard to articulate what was off, but they know something was off and they'll say the person didn't seem authentic. But they're not going to say, Oh, well, their words didn't match their body language. Yeah, they wouldn't know. No, because we, you know, when people are lying, they can choreograph, they can script the words, but that's very hard to choreograph all of the body language to go along with it. It takes up too much cognitive bandwidth. So but it does come across to other people. I think one of the fun places to watch for this is on Shark Tank is to watch the sort of the body language of these people pitching. And sometimes you'll have people who come across at first as like super confident, but the something about the way they tell their story does not match their body language. And, and the sharks feel that you see them, you see them almost cringe. There's something off and they don't get the money. And then you might have somebody who is, you know, let's say doesn't have a business school education, doesn't have as much experience, but really believes in what they're doing and, and knows what they're doing. You know, I'm not saying that you can be incompetent. You have to be at a certain level of competence, but they're able to convey their authentic conviction and passion about this project, about what they're doing. And the sharks warm toward them. You see them lean in toward those people. And those people are more likely to be, to find investors. And the thing is those, those signals aren't just short term signals. Those people are also more likely to stick with it, to inspire other people to, to be promoted, to be successful in the long run. It's a real signal that you're picking up on that you just can't fake. And it really starts with how you tell your story to yourself. Is there a relationship there as well between our body language and our attractiveness? Does my, is there a certain body language that's associated with me being attractive if I'm single? And I'm like, you know, I want to, I want to increase my chances of finding a mate. Yeah, it's, well, it's interesting because, you know, people, I think there was skepticism about whether women would be punished for using more dominant body language. And which I thought was kind of sad because it just reinforces the stereotype. But, but there's recent research showing that, first of all, they're not, they're not, and I'm not talking

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about super alpha body language.

I'm talking about body language that's confident and warm, right?

That shows I feel good about myself and I want to be here and I'm interested in you.

That body language is, is more, more effective both in the workplace and in dating situations.

So people, there was a study that looked at dating profile pictures on dating apps and both men and women with more open body language,

more confident body language were seen as more attractive.

So I thought that was, that that was very reassuring and also suggested to me that we're making some progress if that was true for, for, for, you know, across genders.

That's so interesting.

So yeah, people want to be with somebody who is confident but not arrogant, who is comfortable in their skin and your body language conveys that even in a still picture.

It conveys that.

Wow.

If I am the type of person that is feels powerless inside of myself, I'm suffering with a variety of, for a variety of different reasons.

I know, I know that there's, as you've described, there's, there's things that I can do to tell a different story to myself, publicly and privately.

Is this, is this a form of practice that one has to do?

Is this like a, is there a cyst, like a, like I go to the gym and I do.

Some of my favorite work in social psychology is on what's called self affirmation theory.

When people think of self affirmation, they think of someone looking in a mirror saying, I'm awesome.

I'm, you know, I'm the best.

I'm going to win.

I'm a winner.

We kind of know that when we feel bad about ourselves saying, I'm great, doesn't help because now we just feel like relying to ourselves.

So we feel bad already and now we're like, well, I feel bad animal liar.

Self-deception.

Exactly.

So, so self affirmation is not that.

Self affirmation is this.

What, what these experiments, there are hundreds of experiments on self affirmation.

They have people list the top two or three values or qualities that make them who they are.

Like if I took that value or quality away from you, you would say, I'm just no longer myself.

Like you are just taking a piece of me away.

They then have them kind of rank them and then take the top one and write a couple of paragraphs.

One paragraph about, you know, a time when they expressed it and another maybe about how it felt to express it.

That is it.

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That's the exercise.

They then have them do, do difficult things like take a difficult math test, for example, or do a debate, you know, be in a debate competition or, or, you know, whatever, something challenging.

That's unrelated.

Right.

So if, say I said, I value music, you know, if, if, if you took the experience of, of music away from me, I just would not feel like myself.

And then I did a math test.

I would do better on the math test.

After doing that self affirmation exercise, I likely, I would be likely to on average people perform better.

They also even show decreases in levels of stress hormones like epinephrine.

So the idea is that you're anchoring yourself in who you are and what you're doing is reminding yourself that no matter what happens on that math test, you're still going to be that person when you walk out.

And so it, that math test becomes less important, which ironically or paradoxically makes you do better on it.

And so I think that's a really good start.

Is to just spend time, you know, kind of journaling about who are you?

What do you value?

But really what are those qualities that make you who you are to you, not to others, not how would others describe you?

What removes you?

Like what really moves you?

Is that so interesting?

I've never heard that before because a lot of the time you kind of have, have the two camps where one campus says, look in the mirror and tell yourself a bunch of lies.

And there's a whole industry about lying to yourself in the mirror.

Don't like it.

Yeah. And then there's the other camp, which is maybe, I don't know if this is the other camp necessarily, but it's probably the school of thought I've always lived in, which is you need to go and build evidence somehow, new evidence about yourself.

Like counteracting the evidence, the limiting evidence or the limiting beliefs that are standing in your way.

Yeah. It's like self perception theory.

Is that what it's called?

If you see yourself doing it, you become it.

Yeah.

And that's just a reflection on the areas in my life where I was like very low confidence and how I got from that place to being higher confidence came from throwing outside of my comfort zone and going and doing the thing more and building evidence that I wasn't going to die.

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I feel that works too.

I'm not saying that self affirmation is the only way to do it.

I'm much more, by the way, in your, I'm in your camp.

I, I get really frustrated with it.

It's all your mindset.

And you just got to tell yourself that you, you, you can create your life.

You know, like how, you know, I just, there's so much of that.

And I feel like it's so confusing and discouraging for people because they watch people who they think are doing that in short clips.

And they're like, well, they're, they did it.

Why can't I do it?

But, but a lot of those people didn't get to where they are by doing that.

Lots of people helped them get to where they are.

Yeah.

Or, you know, they, they did other work, but it's, it's, it's just, or, or maybe they're not where they aren't even where you believe they are.

They're actually really unhappy and just putting on this brave face.

Because simple cells, right?

Simple cells and, you know, simple inspiration cells.

So just, just, just to close off that point about, because I feel like there's going to be people listening right now that identify with feeling powerless in their everyday lives and their working lives and relationships.

They, they can spot all the symptoms you described of that sort of like contracted posture.

The self-affirmation piece.

Loved it.

Never heard that before.

What else to get me out of that situation?

And I'm thinking in terms of things that I can like either practice or how do I get from there to there?

Well, it's funny because I talk a lot about how tiny tweaks lead to big changes.

And I called, you know, there was a whole sort of nudge movement, like how do you change people's behavior through these little nudges?

And I, I talk about self-nudging.

I'm not a, I'm not a big believer in New Year's resolutions because they're too, they're grandiose.

They require a million steps.

You're going to fail somewhere along the way and then quit.

I believe in just doing a little bit better the next time.

Okay.

So the next time you go in to give a talk, for example, to anyone.

If somebody's afraid of public speaking, but has to do, to lead team meetings, for example.

I want you to focus on changing one thing.

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Maybe it's your breathing.

You breathe more slowly and deeply.

Maybe you make sure that you're not wrapping your hands around your body by holding a bottle of water or a slide advance or something, something that forces you to keep your hands away from your body.

Each time you get a little bit better and eventually you find that you're there.

And my advisor, my grad school advisor, Susan Fisk, who I just adore, taught me that because I almost quit grad school the night before my first year talk, which is where you present the first year of research you've done.

Just to the people in your department, I was so scared that I called her and I said, I'm, I can't do this. I'm going to quit.

And she said, you're not quitting.

She said, you're going to do it.

And even if it doesn't go perfectly, which it won't, you will have done it and learned something and gotten a little better.

And each time it's going to get better.

She said, and I want you to give every talk you're asked to give, take every opportunity that you're, that that's given to you to improve.

And eventually you won't notice the moment when, you know, suddenly you've gotten there, you'll just look back and go, oh my gosh, I'm here.

How did I get here through these tiny nudges?

So go easy on yourself.

Focus on only one change in that next challenge.

Focus on these situations that you approach with dread, that you execute with anxiety and distraction, and that you tend to leave with a sense of regret.

Each, those challenges vary for different across people, you know, for some people, it's public speaking for some people, it's giving negative feedback for some people.

It's having a difficult discussion with a family member, whatever that challenge is for you.

I want you to do change one little thing each time you go into it so that you can in the end approach it with confidence, execute with this calm confidence and leave it with a sense of satisfaction that you showed up.

You did what you could do.

There are things that you can't control, but it's much easier to accept a negative outcome if you control the things you could, right?

If you know, how often do people walk away from those situations and go, oh, I feel like they didn't see who I am.

You want to walk away and say, they saw who I am, and now they get to make the decision, and I can't control whether they, you know, how they evaluate me beyond this, I did my best.

I always think of confidence and self-esteem and now powerlessness or powerfulness, the feeling of it as an upward or a downward spiral that we're all kind of on, like a self-reinforcing upward or downward spiral, if that kind of makes sense.

I think it is.

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I think that say something I'm confident at, public speaking on stage, for example, I will show up better, which means I'm likely to get a better reaction, I'm likely to feel better after, which means next time I show up better, which means, and the spiral goes up.

Exactly.

Or conversely, it can go the opposite way downwards, and the people that are on that downwards, so there's many areas of my life that I think come on an upward spiral.

I'm like, I'm building positive evidence that's going well and everyone's glad.

And then there's some areas of my life that I might be on a downward spiral.

I know I've got some good friends that I think are so far down that downward spiral that even telling them what your lovely professor was, she was a...

My advisor.

Yeah, she was a professor, my graduate school advisor.

They're so far down the bottom of that spiral that they would have quit.

Yeah.

A lot of people are living in a state of survival, which I actually think of like self-preservation or defense.

Yes.

They're like, just remove all chance of threat from my life.

And in that situation, you never do get to go upwards on that spiral.

No.

Oh, God, so many people are at the bottom of that spiral in their lives.

I know.

And I don't know what to do about it.

It's, you know...

That is my responsibility, but I just think I have responsibility.

No, it's not.

But also, I do think that more people are in that state now than compared to three and a half years ago.

How come?

I do, I think the pandemic really took a toll on people's mental sort of stability, their sense of self.

And I think we're going to be grappling with that for quite a while.

I mean, people who we...

Why did it, why did it have that impact?

Because we are wired to deal with a crisis that lasts like a couple months, not one that lasts three years.

And not one that is yanking us around back and forth, like, oh, we're emerging.

Oh, Delta, we're emerging.

Omicron, you know, like it was just this constant back and forth.

And we...

So we were living in this liminal state where we had one foot on the safe side and one foot on the threatened side.

We get through crises using what's called surge capacity, which is, you know,

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it's a network of physical and psychological resources that help us survive.
But that runs out pretty quickly.
And a lot of people say for the first two months of the pandemic, they felt very productive.
That was surge capacity.
And it's studied in the context often of combat soldiers.
So like the first battle, it's the emergency phase and they are focused.
The goal is clear.
It's shared.
Teams operate at their best.
Good leaders operate at their best.
Then they go into this regression in between where they don't know what's going to happen next.
They lose a sense of purpose.
They become disconnected from each other.
They withdraw.
Then they're back in battle.
And that's how this has gone.
It's going to take a little while to put the pieces back together again.
But I think that we have to have some grace and, I mean, toward each other, with each other, with ourselves.
I don't think it's going to be fixed by if we're too hard on ourselves.
I think we do have to let ourselves off the hook a bit and go, oh, we've never lived through something like this.
Earlier when we were talking about the things that make you feel powerless in your body language and the way you conduct yourselves and all these things.
The things that make someone look and feel powerful, I imagine, is the opposite in many respects.
But specifically, if I want to, because I really want to leave people with actionable things that they can do in their lives.
If I want to become a better speaker, present myself better, show up better for my employees, or be a better podcast host.
And I think about this.
I've never said this before.
I spend so long thinking about how I'm sitting when I'm speaking to someone.
Really?
Yeah, because when I'm not thinking, I might fall into a certain posture.
I've even been thinking about these bloody arms on this chair.
But sometimes I'm like this, and this is my favorite situation to be in.
So my body's open.
Right.
And then sometimes I go like this, and sometimes I crunch over into a ball and stuff.
And when I'm having these kind of conversations with people, I think that the best approach to take is to be open with my body language.
Yes.

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And hopefully they'll open up with me.

Yes.

That's exactly right.

So I think to really simplify it.

And again, as I said, I don't love like choreographing.

Sure.

But the body language that is, I think, the most effective is to be open, to be kind of leaning forward, you know, palms up, not wrapping yourself up, not the whole time.

Yeah.

But what you want to be showing is I'm comfortable, I'm relaxed with you, I'm interested in you.

Yeah.

And so I think that's the posture that you want to take on.

And people will mirror that.

One thing that people, in general, people mirror each other's body language, right?

That's a way that we sync up.

But there's one exception, and that's when there's a power differential.

So if a powerful person is interacting with somebody that's clearly less powerful, the powerful person tends to become more dominant in their body language.

And the powerless person becomes more powerless.

And we call that complementarity.

So I think it's very important for people in leadership positions to be aware that when one of their, you know, employees comes to talk to them, they're probably a little nervous.

And to be very mindful of their body language, because you don't want them to shut down.

You want them to feel comfortable and tell you what's going on, share their interests or their problem or their challenge.

Penguin arms.

I never heard that expression until chapter nine of your book.

What's penguin arms?

It's when people don't know what to do with their hands when they're speaking.

And so they kind of like pin, they pin their wrists to their, like around their hips and their hands kind of stick out.

Oh, okay.

You sort of look like a penguin.

Yeah, it's really common for people who are afraid of public speaking.

They're like kind of moving their hands, but they're afraid to move their arms away from their body.

So that's penguin arms.

Let me just get this correctly.

Is this penguin arms?

You mean this?

Yeah.

I'm a bit of a public talk and I'm like...

Yeah, exactly.

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That's penguin arms.

Okay.

And it's again because I'm, I mean, one of the, there's correlation between how much space you take up and how powerful you feel, right?

Again, that's me trying to take up less, as little as space as possible.

Right.

And I'm signaling, so I'm speaking to you by doing that, even though, regardless of what my mouth is saying.

And if I'm like this, I'm saying, sending a completely different message.

Exactly.

And people are, remember the audience, like even a whole audience is responding to you.

So if there's this whole self-reinforced, there's reinforcement between you and the audience and within the self.

So if you're acting that way, they might be mirroring you or feeling kind of uncomfortable because you're feeling anxious.

But you can make the audience feel uncomfortable because you're so uncomfortable.

For sure.

And then, and then you read that and you feel more uncomfortable.

So it becomes, you know, kind of reinforced through the interaction.

There's this interesting thing that happens to me once in a while where I'll be speaking to someone and it's usually someone, I've got to be honest, right?

So it's usually someone where there's a lot I think about them, but I haven't told them.

And I find it hard to hold eye contact with them.

And I notice this about myself, there's certain people in my life where there's like unaddressed things that I haven't fully spoken about.

And when I speak to them, I tend to not look at them and I tend to just like be looking away or looking down.

And I will occasionally glance over and look at them.

But this broader point about eye contact and you mentioned it briefly earlier on.

What significance does it have in our communications?

And because I find it the hardest thing, I can kind of think I can feign the body language.

I wish I could make that.

I can't give you a simple answer because there are so many cultural differences in when you make eye contact.

So kids learn such different rules about making eye contact.

A lot of kids are taught you don't make eye contact with an authority figure, right?

And then they're seen as lying because they're not making eye contact.

But seeing it as rude to make eye contact.

I mean, in a lot of East Asian cultures, eye contact, you don't hold eye contact for as long.

It's seen as very aggressive.

In the U.S., you can hold eye contact for quite a while before people feel uncomfortable.

So yeah, I think it's one of the more culturally constrained expressions.

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What about in primates?

I mean, if I watch all these primate documentaries and it's often the case that when primates kind of look at each other for too long, it's often aggressive.

Yeah, I would have to defer to something like Bob Sapolsky on that one.

I think that in non-human primates, great apes, it is a sign of aggression.

It is like bring it on.

Yeah, and in certain contexts.

Yeah, again, it's so contextual and cultural.

Because as we were saying before we start recording, in the U.S., if someone stares at me in a lift, I would imagine that they're about to say hello.

Whereas in, I don't know, a rough part of the UK, if someone stares at me, I would check where my wallet and my keys are and assume that there's going to be a problem.

Yeah, and there are cultural differences within the U.S. too.

Is it possible to learn how to read people better in terms of their body language?

Is that also something you can practice?

Yeah, for sure.

I just think there's some really great books.

I love Joe Navarro's work.

He's a former FBI agent.

He has a lot of images.

He's not a researcher, but grounds it in the research and has a lot of personal experience.

The book that I love is what everybody is saying by Joe Navarro.

So I would recommend that as a great way to start.

I think there are some that are sort of more like how to pick up women.

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

And I don't like those.

This is just really understanding people and what's happening in an interaction.

I'm going to confess that when I was 18, I read one such book about pick-up artistry.

And it actually was very useful.

I've had this conversation with my husband.

It's so funny.

And it's like the one thing he's like, I did read that.

Yeah, I mean, yeah.

So it was useful because I love psychology.

I studied psychology in school as well.

And I chose that for one of my A-levels.

And it was useful from that perspective.

I mean, it's probably why I do this now.

I was so compelled to understand why humans do what they do.

Then I read this book, which I didn't intend to buy.

I'm going to be honest.

I've told the truth the whole time.

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So believe me when I say I didn't intend to buy this book about pick-up artistry.

My older brother ordered it for home in the southwest of the UK when he put the wrong address in when he was at university.

So it came home and he goes, I'll just keep it.

So I opened it and I opened up my bedroom floor and I did not move until I'd finished the entire book.

The first book where from the first page till the last, I didn't move.

And it fascinated me because it was just, it was like someone turned the lights on to this whole other language that I'd been communicating my whole life without knowing.

Some of one of the really things I always talk about with some of my friends is this idea of pecking, which is this kind of invasion of personal space that happens when you meet someone you're attracted to.

The music's loud.

You lean into their personal space and how that signals like low value.

And then they lean out.

All those things I found.

Oh, jeez.

I am the worst.

If I'm in a restaurant and I see it a first date, it can be so, I want to slip a napkin to the woman sometimes.

And like the guy will get up to go to the bathroom and she is like, I feel like slipping a napkin and saying run.

You know, like, it's just, you can, it's so clear so quickly how it's going.

What are the signs?

They are talking too much and not asking questions.

Oh my God.

I mean, that's, I would say the most common and believing that they're very, very interesting.

They are.

Yeah.

The person talking thinks they're interesting.

And, and it is leaning in and taking into too much, taking up too much space and you can see the, and I'm sorry, I'm talking about straight couples.

Yeah.

And so I, because I don't know enough about other dyads, but I mean, in this, in the context of body language, but you see the woman clearly tensing up.

She's making herself smaller to get away.

She may not be literally leaning away.

She's closing herself up and she, women, people in that situation when they want to get away, they often do these lip presses like this.

And so you start to see the lip presses and they're making themselves smaller and, you know, and, and leaning way.

In fact, we were watching a TV show last night that might be called the Bachelorette.

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This happened.

And the guy was holding her, the Bachelorette, like hugging her.

And I, she wasn't forcefully leaning away, but I was like, Oh, it's too close.

She really does not like that, but she was being very polite.

It was like painful to watch.

So in real life, well, I've had to bite my tongue at times.

What's the opposite of that?

Then when you look over in a restaurant, because me and my girlfriend do this, I think everybody does this.

Well, not everybody clearly, but just weirdos like us that are into psychology who look over another couple and go, they're getting on really, really great.

They're into each other.

This is not because me and my girlfriend, we get to restaurants.

We always think like, is this a first date?

How long have they been together?

Are they married?

Are they into each other?

Obviously that the really bad examples is when they're both leaning out on their phones.

Yeah.

I'm like, Oh my God.

Yeah.

So not picking up their phones, leaning in toward each other.

Yeah.

Yeah.

Good eye contact about balance and in conversation, expressions of genuine curiosity, where you can kind of see their face light up when they hear the person, the other person say something.

Like they're really intrigued.

The other one, it always one of them gets up to go to the bathroom.

Yeah.

To me, the, the, the, the tell is what does the other person do when that person, this makes me look like I'm not watching you all on your dates.

I swear.

Oh, you are.

And so am I.

We both are.

And that's fine.

Just sometimes.

But when the other person goes to the bathroom, if the one set of table is like, you can tell their smile, like they can't stop smiling and maybe they're texting somebody and there's like, but their cheeks like almost, you can tell their cheeks almost hurt from smiling.

It's like they're letting the, they're so excited.

They don't want to act over the top with the person, but when the person steps away, they

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allow themselves to feel that joy.

That to me is the tell.

That's exciting.

You're like, oh, that's so nice.

Something beautiful is happening.

And the little grooming signals as well.

Like when, you know, they, you know, they might check that they smile well in.

Things like that.

Right.

So the last piece is about being able to fake body language.

Can people do that?

Can we fake it?

I mean, you can try.

Is it effective?

I usually not because you get those asynchronous.

It's too much.

Think, think about all of the nonverbal channels.

You've got vocal, they call them paralinguistic cues, like tone of voice, range of voice, how quickly or slowly you speak.

You've got your, your fingers, your hands, your arms.

There's too much to do to fake it for, you know, and, and to make it consistent with what you're saying.

Probably, you know, the greatest actors can pretty well.

But I mean, to me, it's, it's, it's so likely to fail that it's not even worth trying.

And I, I don't think it's honest.

I, it's super interesting for me because between the age of, I'm going to say 14 and let's go for 21, I was, in my view, I think I was kind of rejected by every woman that I pursued.

And I think I was inherently low value and didn't realize it.

So when I read these books about Pick Up Artistry and all this stuff, I read all this work.

I tried to do what the book said and it was unsuccessful, like fundamentally unsuccessful.

My life changed when I actually changed, like when my actual opinion of myself changed.

And I was saying this to my friend the other day who's, who's going through a bit of a process where they're struggling with that same thing.

I said, you know what?

I wasn't able to lie to myself.

I tried waiting longer to text back.

I tried this.

I tried all of these things.

And I, and my conclusion from that chapter of my life is there's a thousand little things that ways we communicate.

It's exactly what you just said.

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I said to my friend the other day, there's a thousand ways we can communicate and you might think you can control three or four of them.

But as humans that have evolved over those 200,000 years were so good at knowing what someone really thinks and feels.

And so I guess my question here is like, I came to the conclusion and then this was one of my giving my friends some advice through the day is you can't fake it.

You have to actually go and change yourself story.

Like you can know the tips and tricks, but that wasn't enough for me to actually get the, you know, and it was honestly the thing that changed in my life was when my opinion of myself changed.

Right.

And it's, and I, it sounds so weird to say, but I'm sure nobody's listening.

The profound, the profundity of the change, I just can't, I can't describe it.

Not, not even in the relationship being able to attract people, but just in every context, like, I don't know what changed.

I don't know what I did.

All I know is that something deep within me, my story of who I am changed.

And that means that when I show up in places, I stand differently.

Yeah.

You know, nonverbal sort of experts talk about inside out change.

Yeah.

Right.

As opposed to outside in.

Yeah.

Because people have clicked this video right now.

Click this podcast because they want outside in change.

I know they do.

I know.

And it's like, I always feel like, look, I'm a body language person, but that doesn't mean I'm going to give you a hat full of tricks.

It just doesn't, because it's not going to work.

That wouldn't be right.

And it's funny too, because the quote that I'm best known for is fake it till you become it.

And what I mean by that is fake it till you make it to me has always meant pretend that you know things you don't know for pretend that you are a person that you're not until you get the job.

But what do you do then?

Do you keep faking it?

So fake it till you make it is fooling other people.

Fake it till you become it is expand, allow yourself to feel powerful enough to really understand who you are, to know what your story is, to be more focused on the impression you're making on yourself than on others, to grow, to be less afraid of these challenges.

And eventually, you know, maybe, you know, standing in those big positions alone feels

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a little awkward at first, and you're faking it, but eventually you become that person. And, you know, that's what happened with my student, who I talk about in the TED talk, who had not participated at all the whole semester. And I was going to have to fail her, and I said, you have to participate. And she finally raised her hand in the last class. I said, I'll call on you. And first of all, her comment was amazing and people's heads spun like they hadn't noticed her. But she continued to use these ideas, and she came back to me later, like six months or a year later, and she said, she said to me, I want you to know I'm so happy now. Because she had come into my office and said, I feel like an imposter. I don't belong here. I'm from this small town. I was like, so am I. If I belong here, you do. She came back to me after graduating and finding and actually getting into education and not business. And she said those things that we talked about, I did. And I realized I wasn't faking it till I made it. I was faking it till I became it. And now I'm the person that I wanted to be. That makes so much sense. So expand yourself so that you can get the evidence you need to become the thing that you want to become. Exactly. My parents and grandparents told us to sit up straight as a show of respect to others. And kids hate that. Teach kids to sit up straight as a show of respect to themselves. And that allows you to be more open, to be less defensive, to allow the truth of who you are in. It's hard to confront ourselves. It takes courage. So by adopting those powerful postures, by feeling personally powerful, you are generating the courage to confront yourself, to know yourself, to introduce yourself to yourself. Ladies and gentlemen, today is a very big day for me because The Diary of a CEO book is finally out. It's been published today. The 33 Laws of Business and Life. I've spent many years writing this book, but I've spent even longer, about a decade and a half, compiling the information that exists in this book. If you are somebody that has any intent at some point in your life of building something, whether it's building a great team at work, whether it's a football team, a netball team, a business, an organization, a charity, anything at all that you want to build that's going to require you to understand people, understand how to tell great stories, and maybe most importantly of all, understand yourself, then I

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believe this book is a must read.

And you know, I've written a book before. This is my second book, but this is the one. This is the book that will give you the most value.

There's a link right now in the description below and for 30 people that order the book and post it on their social media and tag me, you'll be getting a very special gold version of the book.

Please read it. Then please message me on every social media platform and let me know what you think. Thank you.

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.

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.

As I read through your story, I came across this moment where there was some academic bullying in your life.

And this appeared to me to be the real pivotal, hurtful chapter of your life.

It's now the basis for some of the work that you're doing and some of the things you're writing about.

What do I need to know about what happened there to understand the lessons that you've taken from that chapter?

I would rather endure any physical pain than go through that.

And I have interviewed. I mean, it went on for years. I became just fair game.

It was because the bullies had been so successfully diminished, demeaned, stigmatized me that anyone else who felt the need to act out could act out against me.

It was okay. So the mountain of social media evidence of this bullying is overwhelming.

And I can't even look through it. I have to have someone else sort through that.

I am not talking about anonymous trolls. This was other academics. This was about me. It was personal.

They were not hiding behind anonymity.

Every person I've interviewed for this book who's been bullied, every adult, has said it's the worst thing that ever happened to me.

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And I felt like I was dying or I wanted to die for a long time because it is social death. It is social death and without community, we are in a bad place. I mean, we do need each other. The facts of my life were stolen from me. My story was rewritten so much so that I could not do an interview without having to correct all kinds of disinformation about me. The way you tell your story to yourself matters, peace. Wow, that was hard. I had to keep doing that to survive it because other people were telling a story that was a lie and that was deeply hurting me. Emotionally, professionally, hurting my family. It was terrible. I almost died. I almost decided to die and that's very common for people who are bullied. I'm not through it. I'm through the worst of it but it still comes up. And there are disinformation news articles that these bullies sort of got out there that will always circulate. I can't get rid of all of that. It will pop up every once in a while. And people go, but yeah, but I heard you did this and you're like, no, that's incorrect. And so every time that pops up, it's just like a dagger again. It is an absolute theft of your life. It is absolutely devastating. And in the workplace, it's remarkably common and the estimates by people who study workplace bullying are that more than 90% of people who become targets of workplace bullying disappear from that job. And when I say disappear, I mean they're either fired because the bully flips it around and they're seen as the difficult person or they're moved to a different department or they quit because they can't endure it or they die of a stress related illness or they take their own lives. Suicide rates are very high for children and adult bullying targets. If I was in your household around that time, what would I have seen? And I asked that question because people never get to see that, right? They get to see either silence or they might get to see a statement. And what I'm thinking right now is that my police are going to hear this and they're going to be laughing and they're going to be saying that I'm exaggerating. But who cares what if they say that, but it's still like I'm so afraid of them still. I was raising a son who is just a lovely, remarkable person. I can't believe that he grew up to be such a wonderful person because for so much of his teenage life, I was going through this and it was so hard to be present. There was this constant conflict that I had. How much do I tell him about? How much do I shield him from it? Can I shield him from it? My husband, who was just wanted so desperately to fix it for me, and he's a scientist and he understood very well the statistical arguments as better than most people in my field do. And he would engage with these bullies and that would escalate. He was for sure traumatized by it. I was just curled up in a ball and then amazingly I was still able to go out and speak and for that hour I was safe. And then I would hide again and I was just so afraid. I just felt like I was dying. I think almost every day I feel like I'm dying.

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Just the darkest of dark.

I'm grieving still the loss of, again, the facts of my life and a future that I thought I was going to have even though, and this is that whole silver lining thing, I'm actually happier now in the life that I'm in. I had to leave my job. I wasn't forced out at all. And in fact, I want to be clear because the bullies love to say that I was denied tenure. I was not denied tenure. I chose to leave.

My dean was incredibly supportive of me. I could not live in that toxic house anymore. It was filled with fumes. I would have died if I had stayed.

In academia, period.

You left your job at Harvard though.

Yes, my full-time tenure track position and that's after I had been promoted twice. I had worked so hard to get there. I had an excellent record of research.

I wanted to stay there. I wanted to continue to do work around sexism and racism. I thought maybe I would eventually get into the administration.

That was the life that I thought I had and they made it impossible for me to stay.

Yes, it was my choice and no, it wasn't my choice.

It was my future. Now, I have a different one and maybe that's better but it doesn't take away the pain of that loss.

It's sort of like losing a spouse dying young and then you get remarried a few years later and you're happy and you're new marriage and maybe you're even happier but you'll never stop grieving the loss of that first person.

That's how this feels and that's why it's taken me like four years to write this book because it's a lot to tell my own story. I'm scared and it's a lot to hold other people's stories because I know how they feel.

I know how hard it is. I mean, I've interviewed people whose adult children have taken their own lives because they were so badly bullied in the workplace.

It was just torture.

My collaborators were tortured and lost so much fighting this disinformation and just this meanness. My son in the last six months has had two friends who were taking psychology courses learn this disinformation about me in their psychology courses because again, it just sort of lives on and so now he's coming going.

I don't understand.

Can I ask you a very honest question here because I did lots of research on you. Didn't really come across any of that.

I didn't. So I don't know the details of it. What I have inferred from what you're saying is that people try to discredit you and your intentions.

Yes.

Is that accurate?

Yes.

Okay, so they try to discredit your...

Me, my intentions, my actions and to prevent me from doing more work.

Okay, makes sense.

Yes.

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What do you think their motivations were?

I can tell you that a small percentage of people, I believe, are what I call primary bullies.

They are the ones who get the ball rolling.

If they're alone, and we chatted about this earlier, but if they're alone, they're just assholes, but when they recruit people, then they become bullies.

And they tend to be repeat offenders.

What they want is status and recognition.

They feel that they have not gotten as much as they deserve, and they resent people who they perceive as getting more than they deserved.

And so when they perceive that, they'll start to go after that person in little ways.

And I call that the bully test.

The bully's testing to see if people will allow that to happen.

And if people don't push back, and this is where bystanders could get involved right away and say, that's not okay.

I so wish more people had done that in my case.

And they escalate very quickly, and they are basically, they are gaining status by taking away your status.

I don't think it's about power as much as it is about status.

There are people who are very powerful, but still feel like they're not getting the recognition and status that they deserve, and they're bullies.

It is motivated, I believe, in general, again, I don't know what motivated my bullies, by a need for status.

And one of the commonalities across bullies is that they tend to have a scarcity mindset.

They see the world as everything is zero sum, everything's a fixed buy.

And that means if somebody else is getting status or success, it's somehow taking away from them.

You know, Einstein once said the most important question that you'll answer for yourself is sort of, is the universe fundamentally hostile or friendly?

Because the way you answer that will affect the way you do your work and how you interact with people and what you aspire to.

These are people who would say the world is fundamentally hostile.

The bullies are?

Yes.

And that's the commonality across bullies.

I think there are some myths about bullies, like the idea that bullied people become bullies.

Some do, and most don't.

In fact, a lot of the people who I call brave hearts who stand up against bullies were bullied.

So it's not that bullied people become bullies, it's not that, you know, it's not that they have such low self-esteem and they can't sleep at night.

They actually, they can sleep at night.

They're okay with what they're doing.

They think they're right.

Yeah.

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But there are so many ways, and this is maybe another conversation for next year.
There are so many opportunities for bystanders to get involved early so that it doesn't escalate to this full-blown bullying campaign because once you're there, the person is socially killed.
Do you think this is an inevitable byproduct of being successful?
Because those primary bullies, they see status as the game.
So you become really successful in your industry.
You get a TED talk, which becomes one of the most watched ever.
You know, your podcast becomes big.
Those primary people are going to say, he or she is getting too much credit.
What can I do to tear them down?
Give me a little bit of credit.
Take back some of that zero sum status.
So, you know, is it inevitable?
What do they call it?
Occupational hazard of success.
Yeah.
So I don't think, I think it's common for you, for successful people to have haters.
That doesn't always turn into bullying.
Also, the people who tend to be targets tend to be people who have.
Okay.
So if you think about the kind of the workplace or the profession and then the rest of the world, they have lower status in their profession than they do with the rest of the world.
And so I was a junior researcher.
I wasn't, you know, supposed to get this much attention.
And I just gave a TED talk like that.
You know, I wasn't going out looking for status.
That's what happened.
It happened to go viral.
But targets tend to be people who are below the average on status with the in group and then cross what some researchers have called the line of resentment.
And then they become targets or they're viable targets.
They don't necessarily become targets, but they're viable targets.
So people who have very high status inside and get high status outside, they're much less likely to be bullied.
Interesting.
So to clarify that in words that I just make sure I understand, if I am in a school and I am maybe in the lower quartile of popularity, I'm not so popular, but then something happens, which means outside of school, I become super famous.
You know, I blurb in the news outside of school and everyone's talking about me and they love me.
The people in school, there's going to be a group of people in school that go, we need to reign this guy back in.
There's going to be a couple of people and you hear those stories and you've interviewed

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a lot of celebrities.

And you know, when you talk to celebrities, like people who've got famous as kids, a lot of them were bullied and people are shocked.

They're like, but you, but everyone else loved you.

Yeah.

That's exactly why they got bullied in their schools.

Yeah.

Because they weren't supposed to succeed.

I've heard this story many times on this podcast, Amy.

You know, like as in this, someone doing well, a group of people thinking that they've punched too far above their weight and then trying to tear them back down with disinformation, misinformation, whatever.

It's so common.

Are you optimistic that it can change?

Yes.

Honestly, really?

Yes.

I think it's human.

Well, I would like to see it change, but part of me goes, this is just humans.

Yeah, but this is, you know, what we, if, so if we said that about racism and misogyny and ageism, it's just human nature, people would go, that's not okay.

Like a lot of people would object to that statement and say, yes, we can do better.

But no, I absolutely believe that if people can understand the anatomy of bullying, how it works, and what it looks like in the beginning, what are the early signs?

What are the little things they can do to be socially brave and collectively turn things around?

I think that, that, that we will see change in workplaces first.

The psychological research shows that we can turn this around.

I think you're right, actually.

Thank you.

I do think you're right.

Just because, because when you make the similarity between things like racism and sexism, it's, it's really about cultural acceptance, isn't it?

Whether we, whether we, someone performs that behavior, whether we go, that's fine.

Whether we clap, whether we go, you know, we're going to reject you if you do that again.

Exactly.

And we're all governed by incentives in this society, aren't we?

So it's just about an incentive, disincentive.

Yes.

Interesting.

What's the most important thing that we haven't talked about that maybe we should have?

Yeah.

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I mean, we've talked a lot about trust, but I guess, so, so I guess I just want to summarize sort of all of that talk about trust.

It just that, you know, a lot of people in the business world make the mistake of thinking that they got to go in and be the smartest person in the room.

So they've got to show competence.

And they do that at the expense of demonstrating their trust, trustworthiness.

And if you do not establish, earn trust, build trust, you have no medium through which your ideas can travel.

So trust is the conduit of influence.

It's not a soft idea.

It's a true idea.

This is just the way people are.

If you come in and you start talking at them and you haven't listened to them, you don't know what they're about, they don't feel like you care.

It doesn't matter if you have the best idea in the world, you're throwing it against a brick wall.

You know, you have got to earn and establish trust in order to influence people.

And how do you establish trust?

Not thinking that you have to take the floor first.

So a lot of people feel that, especially in business settings, they like a negotiation.

They feel like they've got to drop the anchor.

They have to talk first.

And in reality, it's often much more effective to ask questions and learn about the other person.

You're showing first that you're interested, that you understand them, and you're actually gaining information.

So that when you respond, you're not giving up power at all.

You're building trust and learning.

And then when you respond, they trust that your response is based on you actually knowing them.

Right?

So they feel seen.

They've been seen.

So that's, I think, there are so many things, but that's one that I think is really effective.

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

And the question left for you is, if we discovered a cure for sadness, such that we would never need experience it again, would you support the development of that cure?

I'm on the, oh jeez, I feel like I'm going to get myself in trouble.

But I referred to Susan Kane earlier, her book Quiet.

Her new book is called Bitter Sweet.

And it is about allowing ourselves to feel sadness, to grieve, that it is in many ways

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healing.

I mean, why do we listen to sad songs?

We get some pleasure from it.

We heal from it.

So I'm going to have to say, I'm going for the bitter sweet and not the no sadness.

I couldn't imagine a world without sadness.

I don't think that would be a nice world.

I think sadness is like hot and cold and sad and happy.

I don't think you have one without the other, unfortunately.

I don't think so either.

And it's a signal, right?

It's a human signal that our bodies send us to tell us something.

For sure.

It's information.

Yeah, it allows us to process loss and things like that, yes.

I completely agree with you.

And to feel empathy and compassion, I want to help others so.

Thank you so much.

Thank you.

Thank you so much.

This was delightful.

Really, really delightful.

In the process of reading your work and watching your videos, I learned an incredible amount.

And you've really helped me.

I've had so many little personal epiphanies as we've been speaking.

So many of them.

And I'm actually really, really excited about your upcoming book about bullying and bystanders, because there's not really a big conversation happening.

But if there was ever a time for this conversation in the world we live in and these like cancel culture mobs and the Twitter sphere and all of this stuff, it's a big conversation in the UK at this exact moment for a variety of reasons.

There's been a big couple of big moments in the UK.

Now is the time to have a really like professional nuanced conversation about it and to see if there is a way.

Yes, to have a language so we can actually talk about it.

Yeah.

I would love to speak to you again when that book comes out.

I'd love to do that.

It'd be wonderful to do.

Thank you.

Thank you so much for all of your time today.

It's been really, really fascinating, really eye-opening conversation.

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Thank you.

I think you're a wonderful human being.

I think you're a womb competent, which is what I aspire to be one day.

Thank you.

I think you're wonderful too.

Thank you so much, Amy.

It means a lot to me.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Bye.

Bye.