Introduction and Doctor Doughertyu2019s Background

Doctor James Dougherty, what an honor to speak to you again so soon. We had the most amazing discussion and interview quite recently on my podcast, and it was so well received, and I'm very excited to talk to you again.

And for those that don't know you, I mean, you are an amazing neurosurgeon, Stanford neurosurgeon for over 20 years. You as a neurosurgeon artist, you started to always make sure I get this.

Stay at the university. Stanford University Center for Compassion and Altruism Research. You work with the Dalai Lama, you book Deepak Chopra. You also have so many wonderful things based doctor, America's best doctors, America's top surgeons.

You just absolutely phenomenal. That was you know, what struck me the most about you, about just following your career, talking to you was you truly represent what you believe in.

And that's compassion and kindness and love, which is the core of who we are as humans. So welcome back, and thank you so much for agreeing to spend some more time with me.

Carolyn, who wouldn't want to spend more time with you? Thank you so much. That's so lovely. Well, we want to help people with a well-being. And, you know, both you and I had that objective in mind.

And you have such a wonderful backstory. Do you mind giving us just a brief little overview of what got you into being, doing what you do? Sure. As you know, and perhaps some of your listeners do as well.

I grew up in poverty, actually. My father was an alcoholic. My mother had had a stroke when I was a child, was partially paralyzed, had a seizure disorder, unfortunately chronically depressed, attempted suicide.

We were on public assistance essentially my entire childhood. So of course, a child growing up in that type of an environment, it's obviously very traumatic and for many people leads to them carrying a lot of baggage, which impairs their ability to be a quote unquote, success in our modern society.

And unfortunately, many of these children end up becoming drug or alcohol abusers or have mental illness. What saved me was walking into a magic shop.

Actually, I had gotten on my bicycle and had ridden this far and as fast as I could away from some things that were happening in my house, and I ended up in a magic shop.

But the important thing about it was I did have an interest in magic. But when I walked in, the person who greeted me was as if you will, a radiant being who turned out to be the owner's mother.

And she knew nothing about magic, but she knew about people, and we ended up in a conversation, and she created what I tell people as an environment of psychological safety.

She made me feel okay, and this allowed me to be open and honest with her. And at the end of about 15 or 20 minutes, she said to me, she said, I really like you.

I'm here for another six weeks. If you show up every day, I think I can teach you something that could really help you. Now, this was in the late 60s, and of course, the concept of mindfulness or neuroplasticity.

We're really not known generally. And but this led her to teach me what would now be described as a mindfulness practice to address my own fear, my anxiety, the the fact that my muscles were always tense, I couldn't focus.

So once she taught me this practice, she also made me understand the nature of negative self-talk, which so many of us have in modern society, and how to combat that and decrease its effect by positive affirmation, but also understanding that that also results in one having limited beliefs and possibilities for themselves.

Childhood Trauma and the Magic Shop Turning Point

So from that, she made me also understand that not only was I suffering, but really everyone is suffering. There may not seem to be the case. Oftentimes, because we oftentimes interpret people's position or situation as one that may not have the same type of trauma that we have, but oftentimes many of our problems overlap.

Regardless of your socio economic class. Regardless, though, from that, she made me realize that every one is suffering and to look to the lens of kindness and compassion because I had previously been filled with despair, hopelessness, anger, hostility.

And once I changed how I saw the world, I tell people the world changed how it saw me, and it allowed me to look to a lens of openness and caring and kindness.

And that changed everything. And from that she taught me, actually a technique, a visualization. Or if you want to use the term manifestation of how to realize my own dreams and aspirations.

And it was through her and her name was Ruth that really has allowed me to be a successful, productive and present. And so for that, I am forever grateful.

What a beautiful story. And you've written two incredible books, New York Times best sellers, and I recently interviewed you about your second one, Mind Magic the neuroscience of Manifestation and how it changes everything and your other one into the magic shop, and your research and quest to discover the mysteries of the brain and secrets of the heart.

These are magnificent books, and they really do touch on, you know, did you? Very. They moved me so much. So you said developed a six part plan. And I'd love you to talk about that, to harness your minds power and the neuroplasticity of the brain.

And this is so close to my heart, because I think I mentioned to you before that I did some of the first work in your plasticity back in the late 80s, and so that's been my life's work as well, the stability that we have with our mind to change our brain and all these in our body and our life and this power and and the way you expand, it's wonderful.

Would you talk about your six part plan and, you know, walk us through it. And I know that's a big ask, but are you so good at doing this in a really effective and simple, practical way?

So the floor is yours. Well thank you. Well, first of all, all of us are manifesting all the time. The reality is, like any activity to become proficient or if you want to put in the context of an athlete, an elite athlete, one has to realize that not only do you have to understand, if you will, where you are at today, but also that this takes work.

It doesn't just happen because you said one day I want to do this. So I think one of the first things all of us have to do when we're thinking about, how do I want to change my life or my future, you have to understand what you've already been manifesting, and people don't appreciate that.

Oftentimes. And the baggage that we now carry with us from our childhoods has a profound, profound effect on many of the decisions we make in our lives on an ongoing basis.

And whether that's for the job we decide to take or the partner we choose. It has an effect, but oftentimes we don't approach it on a conscious level because it's not at the surface at all.

These things are just happening. And so one has to first say, what have I already? Or am I manifesting. And sometimes this may require therapy. It may require you to sit down and really spend the time to understand your

past, maybe even journaling about it and putting down your thoughts and reflecting on it.

Because if you've grown up in an environment that let's say is abusive or doesn't affect you in a positive way, or creates confusion during, as an example, certain critical times when you're bonding with your caregivers.

As an example, if you have an abusive parent and then afterwards tells you they love you, then this creates confusion about what love is, what caring is, what nurturing is.

And then this leads to many people making decisions about the, partners they choose. So I think that's a very, very important aspect. What am I already manifesting?

I think the other dilemma that so many people have as well is that living in a Western capitalist society, the narrative of what is success gets confused because over and over again, we are inundated with information that tells us that success relates to wealth, position, power.

And this somehow relates then to happiness. And of course, in a consumer society, the nature of capitalism is one in which we promote consumerism and things and wanting thing.

And this confusion about me having things and in fact displaying the things that I have, has been translated, that somehow the more things that I have, the more I'm able to show this, and this will result in me getting external affirmation about what I am.

And there are several problems with this. When people do this, it's out of what I would say as a fear narrative. They're insecure, they carry shame, and they want people to accept them and to look at them and say, I'm okay.

And I have to be honest with you. As a child, I made a list of things that I wanted, and I use the techniques that were taught me. But I was very naive.

I was insecure, and I was 12 and I was poor. So what I asked for, which I ultimately was able to achieve here I am now, I'm a neurosurgeon. I'm a professor.

I'm a successful entrepreneur. I have a penthouse in San Francisco. I have a villa in Florence. I have a mansion in Newport Beach. I have Ferraris, Porsches.

I'm flying around in private chats, dating, very attractive women. And all my friends are telling me how great my life is. And, gosh, you're the man. And I had never been more miserable in my entire life.

The reason was because here I'm doing all of these things. I'm climbing each of these mountains journal information, but there's still a sense of emptiness and unhappiness.

Manifestation, Success, and the Limits of Materialism

And this is oftentimes the nature of hedonic happiness versus demonic happiness, you know, seeking pleasure, avoiding pain, doing actions that get you external affirmation.

These are out of fear, typically, and as a result, it can never fill the void each of us has. And the only thing that can fill that I ultimately found was actually not saying it's about me, but actually realizing that our purpose in life is to be of service to others, to care for others, to be kind to others, to be open, to be generous, to be kind.

But I only found this out and deeply reflected on it after I lost almost $80 million in the com crash and was $1 trillion in debt and and had a loan that I had to pay back a $15 million.

Now, I certainly would tell you that that's tension. That creates a lot of tension. Yeah. But actually that was the best thing that could ever happen to me.

And the reason is, was because it made me realize what I was chasing was the wrong thing. Was out of fear. It was out of my own security. And don't get me wrong, there's nothing wrong with having things.

The problem is, when those things are what define you or you bleed, define you, and it's what you're using to present yourself to the world. And I'm okay.

I have this stuff. Look. I've succeeded. And what I realized in this period of reflection after losing all of that money was that it shouldn't be about me.

And even though, sure, I was a doctor and a very good one, it was really also about I'm a doctor. Recognize how important I am. Yeah. And so when I changed that narrative, went over all the lessons that Ruth had, tried to teach me, I realized that was really the ultimate message.

And when you go look through the lens of kindness and compassion, this is where we evolved to be as a species. This is when we activate not out of a fear mode, but out of a love mode.

Our parasympathetic nervous system, this rest and digest system where not only our brain physiology, but our peripheral physiology functions at its best.

And when you do that, several things happen because when you care for others or you connect with others, this results in actually the release of oxytocin and other neurotransmitters that stimulate our reward and pleasure centers and also activate our physiology to function at its best.

This is where we were meant to live. We were never live in a chronic fear state, which unfortunately is a result of the evolution of our society from one of being in small villages where you're born, you die, you live in intergenerational families, you have a village that supports who cares about you, desires you to flourish.

They know everything about you. So you have this sense of comfort and calmness there. It's not like when we evolved on the savanna in Africa, the grass moving would indicate a predator.

This would activate your sympathetic nervous system, your flight, fight or freeze response. You would run away. Hopefully you survived and it would immediately go down to you back.

Being in this calm state of activation of your parasympathetic nervous system, that is where we're meant to live. So modern society distracts us with all the interruptions and all the challenges and all the demands.

And as a result, many people have this chronic activation of their sympathetic nervous system and as a result, live in a fear mode. And many people are terrified of being judged by others.

It's not like you're in the village and everybody tells you how great you are, but they're also. And as a result, people are not authentic and they try to put up projections of how they want people to see them, not as they are.

So an interesting thing happened when I was in the situation where I lost all this money. I created a charitable trust and they could not be revoked. And I put a lot of stock and a company into that.

And the primary motivator, though, like unfortunately many people, is that you're doing it for tax advantage. And that's what I had done. Well, it turned out that the lawyers had actually never filed the paperwork, so I didn't have to give that stock away.

But after this period of reflection, I told them to go ahead and do that. And ultimately that stock ended up being worth $29 million. Wow. That's terrifying.

Raising $3 billion of the whole I give away almost $30 billion, having lost almost $80 million. Gosh, what? But what I tell people is that was an incredible gift.

And why was it a gift? Well, and, you know, I went literally from rags to riches and then I went back to rags again, metaphorically, in the sense that even though I lost all that money, I'm still a neurosurgeon who makes more than 99.9% of people.

But metaphorically, though I was poor, I had been focusing on myself. I hadn't been looking through the lens of kindness and compassion. And once I shifted my perspective of actually I was rich again, but not necessarily monetary riches, as an example, I was able to start the center at Stanford, where we study the neuroscience of compassion, how compassion affects us in a positive way not only the giver, but the receiver.

And also this allowed me to meet the Dalai Lama, who became the founding benefactor of my work. And then this relationship led to me being the chairman of the Dalai Lama Foundation, and this led to me and becoming friends, with a number of the major spiritual and religious leaders in the world.

The Pope Francis, Archbishop, to to take that on forward. And that has really changed, enrich my life. Because if you spend time with these spiritual religious leaders, you understand they live above the dogma.

They look at the world through the lens, our interdependence, our connectedness that we're all one. I when you see that lens that they look through, you understand that what makes us human and gives us, if you will, special abilities is our ability to love.

And when you can connect with that, that changes everything. Because when you're around people who give you unconditional love, you calm yourself down.

You're happy, you feel good about yourself. You are happy about the infinite possibilities that are available. And when you're in that mode, that's the mode where you live a life of meaning and purpose.

But it's not out of fear and love for others. And if you can walk that walk, not only is your life dramatically change, your health is improved. And this is the work of, Dan Buettner in the Blue Zone, says Robert Baldinger at Harvard with the Longevity and Happiness Study.

This is truth. We are meant to connect with others. That is our superpower, and we don't appreciate how powerful our minds are to change our reality. And that is awesome.

So that's also what, results in our limited beliefs and our possibilities. So when you learn to master your brain through manifestation and visualization, that changes everything.

But getting back to your earlier question, which I ramble on here. No, this is beautiful. Thank you. I don't mean to judge. I'm so glad you gave that.

And and I'm so glad that you made that statement that when you learn to master your brain through managing, basically managing your mind and visualization, mindfulness and all those things, that's when the changes really happen.

So go ahead. It was beautiful. Thank you. Yeah. So when I said earlier what if you already been manifesting. But what you have to also have clarity of your intention.

And this gets back to what I was just talking about, to want to live through the lens of fear or love. The differences, that there's nothing wrong, as I said, with material possessions.

But if you use those to define you as a person, that is your mistake. For me. If I lose all of these things, my belief in myself, my belief in each of our possibilities or who I am doesn't change whatsoever.

They were great to have. But if I don't have them, that's perfectly fine. I will be fine. I think that's a very, very important aspect. The other aspect is attachment.

There's nothing wrong with having a goal or a dream or an aspiration or an intention. You want to have manifest, but you have to understand that sometimes it doesn't always happen the way you want and the time why you want, or at all.

And there are many factors that can interfere with that. And if it doesn't happen, it's not necessarily your fault at all.

Compassion, Service, and the Neuroscience of Well-Being

And this is unfortunately what has happened sometimes with the woowoo of manifestation. And this concept of the law of attraction. Well, it was your fault. It didn't happen.

No. There men it's that can interfere with things. So if you have too much of an attachment and things don't work out the way you want, this isn't, something about you that you should destroy yourself about.

Now, conversely, though, if you create a goal or an intention or an aspiration, and you somehow get lost in how important that is to at the cost of everything else, that's also actually quite negative.

In the sense that what does it mean if you succeed at a goal yet along the way you've destroyed every relationship, every partnership that you've had.

You're standing on a mountain again by yourself, alone, waiting for an affirmation. And that is not a healthy aspect either. The other one I want to mention is we talked about this perception of a amateur versus an elite athlete.

No one becomes dull athlete overnight, so it takes practice. And these practices have to be done with intention repetitively. And what I mean by that is and actually some of the practices that have been promoted and sort of our society that relate to sort of the more woowoo side of things, but they are actually helpful.

And this is losing your sensory organs actually to strengthen your intention. And there's a term that says, what wires together? Excuse me? What fires together? Wires together.

And what that means is the more you repeat something, the more the pathways are strengthened or created to allow that that intention to manifest. So by utilizing your sensory organs and what I mean by that is as an example, you write it down, you're physically doing something.

Your intention. You read it silently, you read it aloud, you visualize it happening. And you do this over and over and over again. That is how you increase the likelihood for your intention to manifest.

But again, it must also be done to maximize that ability to manifest in a calm, quiet environment. When you're in the right mental state. And that's one of the practices or the six steps of manifesting.

But the other aspect also is that in addition to this habit, which is over and over again, to strengthen or create these neural path, you also have to sort of keep in the right mind frame and the right mindset as you go forward and really focus on that goal and intention.

And that's done by a process called value tagging. What I mean by that is that while we're inundated with about 10 million bits of information, a second, we really only on a conscious level are able to have access to maybe 50 to 100 bits.

And then we can use that knowledge, though, or that ability to embed something into our subconscious. And again, it's through this repetition and intention and once it gets embedded, actually this is where the magic happens, because this is when you activate these cognitive brain networks, which I will tell you function at their best when you're in the right mental state, when you've actively aided your parasympathetic nervous system.

And as a result, once this, intention is tag, it's as if you're placing a that intention in a filing cabinet in your subconscious. And there's something called our default mode network that is a part of our brain.

And many anatomic areas overlap here. But as a result this gets activated. And this is associated with mind wandering or daydreaming. But it's very self-referential.

But this is where we create pictures of ourselves, who we are or what we want to be. And once you identify that that intention is important to you and you work on this and the default mode network in terms of defining it, then this activates an area of our brain that includes three parts.

And this is the task positive network. And this includes, as you know, the salience network, the attention network and the executive control network. So what I tell people is once that is then activated, the task positive network, the salience network is now activated in the sense that that intention has become salient, has become important to you.

Once that happens, then your attention network is activated to focus and put cognitive energy into that intention. And I tell people, it's as if you now have a bloodhound that smells what you had filed away in the cabinet says, I have to find it.

And then this activates our executive control network, which is where we have memories, prior experiences, and where we develop discernment about decisions.

And this activates that to actually, if you will make it happen, to go from the subconscious to the conscious level. And as an example, I'm sure you've been at a party and you may even above the dinner, the noise of the party, somebody says your name, you turn to it.

As your identity is very important to you, and this is the same thing, once you embed an intention like that in your subconscious is always on the lookout for situations, opportunities in which that intention sits, perhaps that you may not realize at a conscious level.

And I think I gave you the example the last time we spoke, where there's a project that I've been working on, and I was at a coffee shop and in the den, all of this noise, I heard reference to that topic, and ultimately I ended up talking to these two individuals, and we ended up deciding to work together on this project.

But that's how it works. Once you have your subconscious conscious is always turned on. And this is why we use terms like synchronicity or or incidents.

So that is fundamentally the basic principles of how to manifest your greatest intentions. And also by controlling the negative self-talk we have, we're able to unbound us from our limited beliefs that have been created through perhaps our childhoods, and realized that through our mind, we have unlimited possibilities to change the lives we lead and also the lives of others around us.

Incredible. Two things I want to ask you to do quickly for me is summarize the six steps and summarize what you've just said, which is beautiful. So you've given you've explained to us what manifestation in intention that the bloodhound concept of tagging, how we can use it to build habits.

If you could just maybe summarize practically what that would look like. And then the other thing I wanted to just comment on more was the I'm so happy that you making that distinction between the mind and the brain, that is the interaction, because you've repeatedly said that, yes, we can have a goal and an intention and correct me if I've misunderstood you, but the way that we come into that and the mindset and the compassion, the kindness, the the whole purpose of that is really so important to terms of whether that's going to work for you or not.

And so you can have the goal. But what is your mindset all about? I just want that for me and I just want the money or whatever.

The Six-Step Manifestation Framework

You know, the typical nonsense around manifestation, sort of we use stuff and then it's your fault if you didn't get it

right, that sort of thing. You talking you.

If I'm hearing you correctly, it's the way that you set yourself up. Your mind is doing the work, and you've got to get your mind right and then get that intention right, and then do that work and then situations will occur.

It's not that you attract them to yourself. Is that you keeping your mind in a state where you connecting compassion and getting that. The act of so excited.

When you talked about the default mode network in the task positive network, the mind wandering. These are always mind exercises that we can do. Digital mindset correct.

So that we can make the brain do what we needed to do that nobody knew do what we needed to do. So I just wanted to underscore that if I had, I explained, if I understood you correctly, if I said something wrong, you want to correct anything.

They don't. No, no, I think you're exactly right. I can go through the six steps if you'd like. Lovely. Yes. Let's do that. You know, on some of this, we sort of, you know, quickly ran through and in some ways combined some of the steps.

But I think the first thing was which we talked about is what are you already manifesting? And this is about which we talked about the physiology of it, if you will, and the different brain areas that are activated when we manifest in some ways.

We talked also about clarifying your intention. What is it that you really want versus what you need in life? That's the other part. And this is combined also with our ability to focus.

And this is in many ways the meditation practices. And in many ways these overlap with some of the mindfulness practices. Because fundamentally we're talking about brain training there, right?

Yeah. Yeah. And then how do you remove the obstacles. And this is also associated with clarifying your intention. And then we talked about embedding your intention into your subconscious.

And then at the end of the day, it's fundamentally once you obtain this focus, once you've been able to unleash you the possibilities within yourself, realizing that it is you who have created your limited beliefs, then this empowers you actually to take control of your future.

And I think that's really, at the end of the day, the most important part to realize, well, yes, there are there can be external forces and that may interfere.

But at the end of the day, many, many people discount the own power, the power that they have within themselves to change their situation. And sadly, as you probably know, there are people who may express a desire or a goal, an intention, something that's very important to them.

But it's so sad sometimes because then sometimes even family members will look at you, go, oh, that's not possible. Come on, let's do that. And this is why it's so important to understand that you do have this power.

It doesn't matter. Anyone tells you within yourself is the power to overcome many, many hardships, many, many obstacles. But the hardest obstacle to overcome is when somebody tells you something is impossible and you believe it.

You know him or it has his quote. He says, if somebody tells you it's possible, it is. If they tell you it's possible, it's not possible and you believe it, they're right as well.

More than you to change not only how you see the world, how the world interacts with you because of your own beliefs. And I think I may have shared with you as an example, the story about my getting into medical school.

You know, I story. Yeah, I had a very challenging background, as you know, and and when I got to college and I barely got into college grade point average when I went to applied for medical school was 2.53 and the average was 3.79, and I had to get a letter of recommendation from a premed committee.

And I went to the secretary and she said to me, I'm not going to give you an appointment. And after she looked at my file and I said, why? And she said, because it's a waste of everyone's time.

Well, imagine somebody. That's terrible. It's absolutely horrible to destroy. Someone's hopes and dreams like that. Wow. Yeah. Now, fortunately and in some ways, this is what you have to do.

You have to believe in yourself. You have to do that. Other people's assessments of you oftentimes are not true whatsoever, and only you can decide what is possible for you.

So to this woman, I said, I appreciate your opinion, but I'm not leaving here until I get to some point. And she ultimately did make that a point. And I was then met when I walked into a room by sitting down at a table where there were three people and the center individual stood up and took my file and threw it on the table.

And he said, say what you have to say so we can get this over with. Oh my gosh. A horrible, horrible situation. That's like saying, I need to go to your center for compassion.

Well, and this is what is so sad, people don't understand the power of their words. Well, with children, you know, these things will get in somebody's head.

Make a single critical remark, agree with somebody. But I looked at this fellow and I said, gave you the right to destroy people's dreams. You know nothing about me.

As if you you were making an assessment. You were objectifying me as a grade point average. And I refuse to let you do that. And I lectured and for about 15 or 20 minutes.

Good for you. But at the end of it, they were all crying. Wow. Well, why were they crying? Because they could not discount me, right? It's easy to just kind of grade point average, but a human being sitting in front of you, it's much harder.

Ultimately, they ended up. And. They ended up giving me the highest letter of recommendation from across school.

Medical School Rejection and Full-Circle Success

And that secretary, who was in the room at the time when I was leaving, she handed me a brochure, and it was for a summer enrichment program at Tulane University in New Orleans.

And she looked at me and she said, listen, you know, I heard what you had to say, and I want to give you this brochure. The deadline has passed, but I don't think that'll matter for you. Just now. I love this.

So what happens is I end up calling the lady who ran the program. She let me in the program. I applied to one medical school, which was Tulane, and I was accepted with that grade point average.

And I did not get a degree. So of course, this is quite extraordinary. Yeah. But just to tell you, though, how we cannot judge the ability of anyone, ultimately, I obviously did well in medical school.

I became a doctor, a neurosurgeon, a successful entrepreneur. So after Hurricane Katrina, when the medical school severely damaged, they closed for two years.

The library was severely damaged. They were looking for a new dean. They had a fellow from Harvard, but he wanted an endowed chair and they didn't have the money to endow the chair.

So I endowed the chair. So the present day dean is actually the Doty professor. That's the thing. I rebuilt the library. I set up other professorship and research projects, and I funded a project for our socio economically disadvantaged students.

And so again, none of us have the ability to judge what another can do. We can only do what we can do. Well, I mean, you can't top that story and you can't update and have to I have to end the interview here with that, because that is profound and beautiful and so helpful.

And thank you for what you do. And thank you for, you know, the kindness and compassion just oozes out of you. And I always love talking to you so much, and you have so many great points and it's real.

You've done it and you've helped so many thousands of people around the world. And I just I'm so glad you ended with that story. And it came full circle back to you and dying, and I'm going to check it out.

What did you say then, darling? How do you say that? Oh, gosh. And down and. Down. I know it sounded so wrong that the way I was saying it, it sounded back to front.

But I'm not saying I know it's correct. I can see the spelling, but it sounds weird when I say it. But that's so beautiful, James. Thank you so much for sharing your wisdom.

And I know this is helping so many people continue to help people, and I hope we can get going to be able to connect again in the future. Well, thank you, Carolyn, for having me.

And again, thank you for all the work you do in the world and its important work. And the more we can spread the message of kindness, compassion, being of service that benefits not only us but everyone around us.

So thank you so much. Thank you so much, you two. Thank you so much.