Modern Burnout and Comparison

We started comparing ourselves to suddenly the richest, the highest status, and the most beautiful people around the world. The core propensity is to feel dissatisfied and want more.

You ask someone who's got $10 million in the bank, they'll feel even more insecure than someone with a million dollars in their bank. People are living on the edge of burnout.

We're not giving time for the system to recover. And that's where Brain Week training comes in. A lot of people today… They feel tired, wired, anxious or stuck in their own head, even when they're eating well and doing, you know, all the right things.

So why do you think so many people feel like their body just won't calm down anymore? Well, James, it's the modern epidemic, isn't it? Like, everyone you meet, what do they say?

I'm feeling just tired. I am feeling overwhelmed. And feeling a little burnt out. So I don't feel quite myself. When we meet people exactly as described, many people, they may not have a chronic illness, but they certainly don' t feel they are thriving in the world.

In our kind of model of what's going on here, is because we aren't living according to our genetic inheritance. So, this brain, body, nervous system, immune system has evolved over millions of years.

to get us to where we are. And I say millions because it doesn't just contain the DNA of human beings or gorillas and apes, it actually contains the dna of all the plant life, all of the animal life.

All the different animals that have come before us. Those adaptations are within us, so for most of Human Evolution, we were living in small tribes, outdoors, eating non-toxic food, non toxic air, no toxic water, and thriving, although we didn't have healthcare.

Fast forward to the last 50 years, what are we doing? Putting people inside boxes so they're not outdoors, taking them away from nature, making them sit in front of a screen, sedentary lifestyle, staring at a small screen.

working on various things, but also comparing themselves to everybody else on social media, hunched forward, eating toxic food, breathing toxic air, and not necessarily having clean drinking water, stressed out, comparing ourselves to everyone, in terms of beauty, status, power, money.

That is a recipe for causing anxiety, depression and some of the precursors of that fatigue, exhaustion, tiredness, lack of sleep. What I do love about what you're saying is because a lot of people do think that when they're not working well with their day to day or this modern society, that they feel like it's a weakness or that their broken.

And in a sense, you are saying it is not that at all. It's our survival system almost doing its job too well. Yes, exactly right. And we aren't a victim of it.

It simply means we have to put certain things into place. Let's take a simple analogy. If you drive your car in a suburban area in the US or wherever, the car's not going to get that dirty.

But if you suddenly take your off-road for that weekend and it's something that you don't normally do, and the card gets dirty, full of dirt all over it, you just have clean it more regularly.

So in a similar way, although we may not be living according to our genetic inheritance, there are things that we can do to offset the effects of modern life, which is essentially indulging in more of the self-care for mind, body and spirit.

And in that way we could benefit from all the great things the modern world offers us, but offset downsides of that. It seems like we're finally starting to talk about recovery within the last few years.

Before that, it was just go, go go. Multi-tasking, things like that. And I think we've come to realize that that stuff actually doesn't help. It hinders.

When we were talking about supporting people's health, are we talking in about their minds? Are we talkin' about our body? Or are talking bout both? this is where the classic Cartesian separation comes in where modern medicine has made us think of the body and the mind and even let's say the spirit as separate aspects of human experience or human existence and in fact all of these things are one thing and our brains and bodies don't differentiate between these.

So therefore what we're really saying is self-care is different tools and techniques, different ways of living that support our overall nervous system and immune system.

Because if we're wired for survival, so we can pass on our genes to the next generation, the two core systems that facilitate that are the nervous and the immune systems.

The nervous systems being the brain, the spinal cord, and the electrical system that sends the signals around the body telling it what to do and then the immune system the chemicals that make sure we defend against viruses, toxins and bacteria and those two systems are very delicate and if they aren't finely tuned they will get out of whack They will cause dysbiosis in the gut.

They'll cause all the symptoms that we experience of fatigue, tiredness, feeling drained, etc. So the key thing is the tools and techniques that actually work on the mind and body together at the same time.

For instance, sleep. Sleep is incredibly important for the mind, for regeneration, or neuronal health, but also very important to the body as well. So they're working on both aspects.

And you've mentioned in the past we thought that actually push, push push productivity, multitask, What happened was we have the kind of inverted U-shape curve of efficiency.

So we were pushing ourselves, pushing our selves, which meant that we became more efficient. We were working harder, working hard. But we've got to the top of that efficiency curve now, where because of social media and screens, when we do have off time away from work, we aren't relaxing the mind.

Instead we're staring at more screens, more engagement of the nervous system, and then we've gone down the efficiency curve.

Mind-Body Recovery and the MEND Framework

And therefore we want to bring ourselves back up the Efficiency Curve so we are operating at our peak performance without draining our system which is where people are living on the edge of burnout.

That's what we see time and time again. So it's those mind-body techniques and we categorise them in four levels The four key aspects of hell, which we put under the acronym MEND.

M is for mind. So something every day, what are we doing specifically for the mind? For us, that would be some kind of nervous system regulation, whether it's breathing, meditation, yoga, something Tai Chi, Something that deliberately and directly calms our nervous systems.

E is for exercise. We all know exercise is good for us. N is the nutrition. Of course, that's often the priority that people give that if I'm feeling overwhelmed, I am feeling under efficient, then therefore my diet needs to change.

But the fourth one is deep sleep. So mind, exercise, nutrition, deep asleep. Those four categories We need to tend to far more than previous generations have had to because of the way that we're living in the modern world.

That's interesting way to put it so it's like. Really is is we advance into next generations what has to increase is not necessary productivity but is recovery.

Exactly right. It's the fact that we're burning out a system too much. We're not giving time for rest. So as an example, in the 90s, if you were at work and then you went out for lunch, you know, for your lunch hour, probably in those days you probably had a lunch.

People don't take their lunch hours these days, but when you You didn't have necessarily a phone or a screen. You went out, you reflected on your day, your emotions, how you're feeling.

you went and got a sandwich, maybe sat somewhere, chatted to people. So there was a calming of the nervous system. There was co-regulation with your fellow workers.

there were probably getting out of office in some shape or form. I mean, not for everybody, but for most people And those were ways in which your nervous system actually got opportunity to recover.

Whereas now we're not doing that. That's the key issue. And therefore the system is far more prone to be burnt out and our productivity is going down.

Because as you say, we are not giving time for the System to Recover. What's interesting to me, though, is in a sense, I feel like you're talking about the space in between.

So it's the things that we're doing while we are eating. It's things we were doing right before sleep or even in sleep because it is too light in the room or something like that.

There's a quality that happens within the recovery that if that's not being met, then your system probably feels like it still on or being attacked, right?

Yes, and I would split this into two things. behavioral changes and internal state changes. So we can be very clear as to what these two things are that can improve our health.

Behavioral changes, very simple. We want to make sure that we're going into the deep relaxation state every day. That, generally for most people, will be 10 to 20 minutes of an active activity like breath work, like meditation, or yoga.

Something that is taking them into a relaxation stage. Behaviourally with nutrition, making sure we're cutting out sugar, the alcohol, all the kind of things that we know are going to stimulate our nervous system.

We spend ages talking about that. Sleep, having deeper sleep. And of course, exercise, engaging in more physical exercise. But as you say, someone might be doing a lot of those things really great, but they still find that they're fatigued, exhausted, overwhelmed.

That comes down to a second thing that was seeing in society, which is our internal emotional state. And let me share some ideas as to why that's getting worse.

I believe in the last 10 to 15 years. When we got social media onto our screens, something shifted in collective consciousness of humanity. which was one of the key aspects, and they see this animal studies, one key aspect of our stress levels is how much we compare to other people in the tribe.

So they've seen this in monkey studies for instance, that the stress level of people of in tribe relate to their status in a pecking order. Because if you're at low status of society, in those animal societies, you are more prone to threats, or you more to be abandoned by the tribes.

So in a similar way, what changed in the early 2010s was that suddenly social media became available on our phones and there was a siege mentality where suddenly we weren't off.

We weren' t in off position anymore because 24 hours a day, our profiles on Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, whatever, were now under the gaze and the spotlight of judgment from others.

How many likes am I going to get? Do people like the content that I've produced? What do people think of that last photo that i posted? Oh gosh, Mary had an amazing weekend away with her husband.

My life doesn't look as good as that. So suddenly we went from comparing ourselves to people that we knew around us in our tribe to suddenly the richest, the highest status, and the most beautiful people around the world.

And we started comparing our internal reel, our worst hits reel of how we feel inside, compared to everyone else's best hits. That gap determines the level of stress of our nervous system.

It's the gap between the standards that we create for ourselves or the comparison to others versus the ability to meet those standards. And the gap between those two things increases our levels of stress.

So what change in the human psyche was in, it happened about 2012, 2013, 2014, we suddenly went to a stage of constantly being on, constantly comparing ourselves to others unconsciously without realizing it and never being off.

And when we look at the charts, we notice that anxiety and depression from about 2012 onwards, 2013, suddenly started going up on average across the whole population and especially amongst younger people at that time who were spending longer on screens.

So the internal state shift that needs to change here is We are all wired for aspiration, for the glass being half empty, For us feeling like there's more that we could be doing in life.

That's kind of hardwired into us. And that is where technology meets psychology. that's where the issue is happening and they're butting up against each other.

And the way to offset that is, how can we internally as human beings begin to let go of that comparison? How can begin feel more contented with who we are?

that people are wired towards aspiration. What supports that thought? Because that's the first time I've ever heard that, that as humans we are hardwired towards aspirations.

So it's what made those first cavemen get out of the cave and explore new territories? What made them build boats and move to different shores, to move different countries.

Ultimately, hardwired within the human experience is this idea that the glass is half empty and that comes from the way the brain is wired, but also the amygdala, this kind of fear center of the Brain.

What the Brains says is, in order to ensure survival, we always need to look at the downsides of experience, right? So I'll give you an example. If someone gives you 99 compliments, James, But one person criticizes you, what does your brain go to immediately?

Oh, the criticism, yeah. The criticism. Now why is that? Because the brain is hardwired to say, if we're going to survive, we need to not be so concerned about how great things are.

We need keep aspiring to things that ensure survival. So we have to make sure there's more food. that's available to us. We need to make sure there's more territory available.

And that is why, it doesn't matter how rich someone gets, they can still feel discontented. Where is the point at which we become disccontented? Is it a million dollars?

Five million? Ten million. You ask someone who's got ten million in the bank, and they'll feel even more insecure than someone with a billion dollars in their bank.

Because now they're worried, am I optimizing my investments? What happens if I lose my money? So the brain is hardwired for survival, which means looking at the downside of situations and making sure they can be offset, offset the dangers, increase the chance of survival.

And therefore, when That psychology meets technology. Technology now helps us look at the downsides every moment. And what is that downside? We aren't performing as well as the other people in the tribe.

Social Media, Stress, and Aspiration

So before, when we lived in these small tribal communities, maybe a few hundred people, a hundred Our pecking order was based upon how well we were doing against someone else in the tribe.

How many animals do we have? And that would determine how likely we are to survive because we brought to the Tribe our abilities and our wealth. suddenly magnify that to the entirety of human existence, 8 billion people on this planet, that we now compare ourselves to.

It's a recipe for anxiety, depression, dissatisfaction, discontent, and therefore feeling constantly overwhelmed. Because we're never feeling good enough.

What about the kind of mindset we put on top of the hardwired? So the story we tell, right? That we're not good enough or imposter syndrome. Is even the mindset hard-wires or is that more societal?

Kind of like you learn through the society or generation you're a part of. So when I say hard wired, that can sound nihilistic, like, oh, there's nothing we can do.

What I really mean is, the core propensity is to feel dissatisfied and want more, but that doesn't mean we can't offset that propensity, that hardwired propensity.

Just like we may have, you know, the ancient caveman times when someone had an argument, we would probably felt like hitting them or killing them, or whatever.

Whereas now we're in a developed society, a civilized society. We wouldn't go out and just act on those core impulses. So what we're saying the core impulse is, I'm dissatisfied, there's more I should be doing, but that doesn't mean that we act on it.

We can offset it through the prefrontal cortex, the rational thinking mind. we can calm down. And that's where brain retraining comes in. This idea that when we have an unconscious pattern, which is repetitive and keeps coming up, keep bombarding the preferential cortex and the conscious rational mind, we are able to observe it not get carried away with it and send an opposite signal down to the emotional systems, down the limbic part of the brain.

And those types of signals, and we work with this with our clients as well in many different settings, the most powerful is reminding ourselves of what we do have.

The glass half full rather than half empty, which is the idea of gratitude. We always say to every client, every day with your partner or with children or your friend, three things that you're grateful for.

Genuinely feeling that sense of gratitude and then breakfast, lunch and dinner are three opportunities for us to practice gratitude. So normally when we think of a food prayer we thank you for the food that we have But in addition to that, just feeling a sense of gratitude for your life and what you do have.

And when we practice that three times a day, that already is pre-training the brain to get out of discontent and more towards a sensitive gratitude. So that's one key principle is regularly practicing daily gratitude and studies have shown that that is probably the quickest and easiest way to feel happier and calm your nervous system, is that internal state shift.

then the second state shift is to recognise those unconscious patterns of, I'm not good enough. I need to achieve more. People don't think I am that amazing or brilliant.

And need do more, recognising those patterns, taking a deep breath in, and then saying what positive self-talk can help me feel better? And some examples of that would be, There's nothing I need to prove to myself or anybody else.

I am contented with who I'm. And your brain won't believe it the first time, the second time the third time or the fourth time because it's as we say wired for that propensity to be dissatisfied.

But through regular practice this becomes our new state of being. A cheerful gratitude for what we have in life and that is a buffer against stress because when we live from that space than the ups and downs of life, you didn't get what you wanted, someone else is doing better, they fall off you because they are no longer pressing your buttons because you've decided to let go of those buttons within you.

And I'm not saying that's an overnight process, but that is regular practice of gratitude, contentment, and feeling good about who you are. I have also come independently to that conclusion of how crucial those three points are.

I'd love you to share though, because you didn't just come to this through academics. You have had a personal journey with your own health that led you on this path towards really dedicating your life to supporting people through chronic illness and achieving their potential.

Do you mind sharing your personal story with health? Yes, so my journey started in the mid to late 90s. So I was studying as an undergrad at Cambridge, burning the candle at both ends, partying, but also working academically.

And once again, the principles we've talked about, comparison. I had a lot of insecurity back then, and so I'm comparing myself against my peers in terms of academics, also social skills, believe it or not.

Not feeling good enough. Once again feeling overwhelmed with life. didn't think much of the virus, but I got worse and worse, and was health wise to the point to which I couldn't read the words on a page.

I felt exhausted and tired all the time. Sometimes couldn even get out of bed. Yep. And I describe it like your worst day of flu times five. literally zero zero energy.

I made a contract with the universe. If I can just get myself 30% well, 50% I will dedicate the rest of my life to helping others with these conditions, these chronic health conditions because in those days they were a mystery.

Finally I got diagnosed with chronic fatigue syndrome, sometimes known as ME, and the doctors told me we don't know what you have, we have no explanation for it and you might have it for the rest of your life goodbye.

And you can imagine for a young man that's like a death sentence almost. In my worst moments I was almost suicidal thinking what's the point of living when I literally can't do anything.

And there's one poignant moment, James, when I was in a bookstore in Cambridge. In those days, we had to use books to research things. And, there was the neurology section and there is one book jutting off the shelf and it was called The Emotional Life of the Brain by Professor Joseph Ledoux.

And I just happened, it just called to me. I can't explain it. And i read that book and I was like, wow, this actually could explain why I'm feeling the way that I am feeling.

In an ad hoc way, I retrained my brain using the principles of neuroplasticity, just guessing what I needed to do. I got 100% well within six months. I then opened a clinic to treat others and then we became the Gupta program, the first kind of neuroplasticity program in this area.

And since then, we've now got an app and we published seven clinical trials on our treatment for various chronic conditions. So it's been a 30 year journey to get to this moment right now.

Where does faith and where does kind of believing in something bigger than yourself play into this, particularly someone who's coming out from, you know, as much of a scientific basis as they can?

It's an important though not absolute necessary part of healing. Now, when they've done studies in the US and various countries, there may be people who are atheist, agnostics, but 90% of people believe in something beyond the scientific realm, in a higher being, a high power, whatever they want to refer to it.

So this is something which is inherent in our human nature. And if you go back centuries, every tribe, civilization has always had this belief in Something bigger and higher.

Now we believe that it is an important part of healing. And the reason it's important is because if we feel like we are this lonely soul, this only human being on this rock, traveling in the infinite emptiness of space, existentially that can feel quite threatening.

That can be feel very lonely or isolating or not a sense of purpose or expansion in life. And what we talk about is this idea of actually a representation of love.

Because as human beings, the one collective thing we can agree on is there is something very magical and powerful about the principle of Love. When people have had backgrounds of trauma, which we could say trauma with a small T, trauma was a big T.

Everyone has had something that's happened, whether it's abuse or trauma or it has been bullying or its been other things. That trauma can then stay in our nervous system and make us feel anxious, depressed, vulnerable and weak.

And having a belief in something beyond ourselves means that there's a sense of there is something that connects us all as human beings. There is this idea of love.

I'm part of that field of existence, that Field of Love, and I can surrender to that. The example being, how does a child feel when his or her mother is around, or father is, around.

Even though something bad may happen, they have that feeling, ah, I can surrender and let go because my mother or farther is here to take care of me and make sure that I'm okay.

when we're adults, that same feeling is incredibly useful to help us cope with the ups and downs of life, the anxiety and depression, which is why we know people who have a spiritual or religious faith seem to do better emotionally than people don't.

But that doesn't mean we create something artificial.

Gratitude, Self-Talk, and Brain Retraining

It means that we simply experience this idea of this collective consciousness, the idea that love moves the world, as many poets and singers have all told us, that actually there is something very powerful about this aspect of humanity.

And when we surrender to that, when let go and say, I'm being taken care of by love. I am loved. It's like saying The sun is always shining. Do I choose to open the curtains and experience it, or do I just choose shut myself off?

And that's why we can have two people in exactly the situation. And they see this in twin studies. You have to twins who have the same exact genetic makeup.

So you can't even say there's any nurture, you know, nature that is different, but they may go off in different lives and they can very different experiences.

One can go often to depression and anxiety and whatever and the other person doesn't. There it's all about the frame. The frame of reference, the way that we are approaching life.

And it is of course the challenges that face, but it also how we respond to those challenges. Having this resilience in our nervous system, part of that comes from the surrender to a higher power, however we want to define that.

When life gets busy, you're moving through your day, it's not always easy finding real food. That's why I've been keeping these with me. Our sponsor, Prima, makes protein bars using simple traditional ingredients like grass-fed collagen and whey, organic raw honey, beef tallow, cacao, coconut, sea salt, and they're offering 25% off for listeners of this show.

Look, I have a simple test when it comes to protein bar, First, I have to recognize all the ingredients. Second, it's gotta not wreck my gut. Well, Prima passes that test.

Each bar has 21 grams of animal-based protein and all nine essential amino acids. Look, go give them a try. Go to eatprima.com, use code ANCESTRAL25 and get 25% off.

Do you think that love for oneself has to come before one can feel loved? Or is it just get love wherever you can, whether it's from someone else or just from yourself?

I would go a step further. I'd say all love is self-love. Now that's a controversial thing to potentially say, but let's say you are in a relationship and you don't feel a sense of love for yourself.

What do we then do? We have a need as a core human need to feel loved. So therefore we look for it outside of ourselves and initially The savior comes and a new partner comes, and they say, wow, I love you.

You're amazing. Your brilliance, right? And suddenly we're on cloud nine. We're feeling loved. But did that person inject you with love? Did they inject with oxytocin?

did they suddenly change your chemical makeup externally? No. They said that they loved you, which gave you permission to love yourself. They gave you permission to love yourself.

That's what actually happened. They made you, they gave your permission, to feel that you are a good person, let going of your shame and your guilt and feeling you're a bad person.

they give you the permission. To say, I'm a Good person I am worthy of love and attention because this person is showing it to me. and therefore we're filled full of self-love in that moment.

But it becomes temporary because the moment that we then question the other person's love, I think, do they really love me? I don't know, the way they acted last week, that didn't make me feel loved.

Suddenly our love is dependent on the person and when it is withdrawn, The pain is all the harder because we hadn't done the work of actually becoming self reliant on love.

love for ourselves, appreciation for yourselves, so that we don't expect it. And I love this quote from Anthony Robbins, I have all the love from myself inside, anything else is a bonus.

So now we let go of the reliance on the outside world to make us feel approved of through our achievements or love through relationships, which is the main two ways we try to get love.

We have it all inside. and because we choose to love ourselves. And that is brain retraining in action because if we don't feel loved, that's the work.

That is the self-coaching, the reminders to tell us that we are loved and continue to remind ourselves of that. We often work with in a child work or parts work where the adult you that has all these resources to give love heals the childlike parts within us.

James, don't we find it amazing? When someone comes into our life who's got challenges, we can be such an incredible coach to them, such and incredible force towards them.

And we think, wow, where does amazing wisdom come from? And we have it all within us because we are biologically wired to give that love and care to our children.

But the moment it comes to ourselves, we're the harshest critic. We put ourselves down. we don't think we were worthy because these are just patterns from our childhood and our teenage years in our past.

They're just old remnant patterns that are no longer relevant and no long a service. and therefore the practice of getting into what we call the wise loving self and then healing these little parts of us.

The overachiever who wants love through achievement, the approval seeker that's looking for love from outside. We say, there, you are loved just the way you.

And that practice over time is one of the most powerful practices that we can have to keep tuning into these unresolved parts within us and telling them that they are love and cared for.

is the deepest healing. How does someone know what to work on? You know, because a lot of times we are hindered by our own awareness. This to me is, the core and key principle of all personal development.

All personal developments starts at this point, which is your ability to step out of your patterns and go into the witness position. So the analogy we use is imagine a bucket of water.

Now in that bucket of water is a stick which is the the you the eye. And that pocket of waters swirling swirlings swirls swirl. Now if you're the stick in a bucket water.

You can't. have a reference point of what is normal or what you need to work on because you're already swirling in that bucket of water. The only way is the stick needs to come out of the bucket water and observe the swirl in water from the observer witness position.

And all spiritual traditions, religious traditions personal development comes down to that core principle. Don't be involved in your patterns. Take a step back and observed those patterns and say, ah, I observe my mind is doing this.

Ah, There is anger. Not, I am angry. I'm a bad person. There's anger, there is insecurity. And the ability to step out, not repress or disassociate, but disidentify.

This key word, disidentified from these core patterns. Of course, the next question is, how do we do that? What's the practical way of doing that. We intuitively know the healing that we need.

The problem is the mind is too busy to realize what it is. That's where breath work and meditation allow the mind and the nervous system to calm down enough that we can see the wood from the trees.

So as an example, in meditation, and people haven't meditated before, this is only something you can experience,

We, first of all, start our meditation and we're involved in all the craziness, we can hear all our thoughts and it's busy, busy busy.

But step by step, We are becoming the witness position in meditation, regularly stepping out and just observing what is going on in our minds without getting carried away with it.

We just observe, observe and observe. And maybe it takes one or two days of regular meditation or it take a week or takes a month or take in a day. become more the witness and as we calm down the nervous system guess what we open ourselves up to intuition intuition you know people say oh i want to follow my feelings what feelings you're bombarded with fear and anxiety and shame those aren't feelings to navigate your life from what they're really saying is I feel that there's something intuitive within me that gives me the intuitive hit and helps me navigate my life.

That intuition is accessed through stillness, not through busyness. So when we breathe and when meditate, gradually as the mind calms down, at the end of our meditation or whatever relaxation works for you.

If sitting in a jacuzzi or a sauna is what helps you calm your nervous system, let that be your meditation. So I'm not saying everyone has to meditate.

Otherwise it's not going to work. You find the thing that works. For you, for some people it is a run, you know, or physical exercise. They do cardio and they suddenly notice the parasympathetic nervous systems kicking in and then they feel that stillness.

In that moment, just close your eyes and observe and ask yourself a very simple question. What's really bothering me right now? very powerful question.

What's really bothering me? Because the stuff that's up here that is swilling around often isn't actually what's REALLY bothering. So as an example, we can be at work and we're feeling that the boss isn t appreciating the work that we've been doing or we feel that were not achieving the things that thought we could achieve in our workplace.

And that s what bothering is. We're just not feeling like we re performing. But you take a step back and underneath you say what s really What's really bothering me might be I've never felt that I have achieved enough.

Personal Illness Journey and Healing

So regardless of how much I achieve in this role, I'm never going to feel enough, so what I need to work on is my sense of I am not good enough versus this job.

Or it could be this isn't the authentic job that i want. Iam dissatisfied not because I not performing but because this is not me, this not my authentic life, i need look at another career option.

And so the intuition within us helps has got all the answers. We're just not tuning into it because we don't know how to still the mind. Yeah, it is fascinating because you really have to break patterns to still the mind or to just be kind of in more empty space or that kind white noise that we talk about.

Like I will have my lunchtime and it's usually my one moment to kind not be working, right? Or fathering or husbanding, like where I'm just in my own space for a moment.

And what I'll then do is I will put on like a TV show. And so I'm still filling myself, because I've learned, oh, well, that's how I decompress. That's the excuse I used to give.

But what i've tried to do for the last six months is actually not do anything. Just eat, just be in silence. I extend this to even when I go to the gym, instead of listening to music in my ears, I don't use any device.

I'm just with my thoughts. You've hit on a really crucial point which adds to why anxiety and depression is going up since 2012-2013. Which is that when we have emotions, emotions when they come up, which are our emotional reaction to people in situations, fear, anxiety, anger.

When they came up they're supposed to be processed and resolved. But what are we normally doing now? I have an uncomfortable emotion, reach for a screen, for Netflix, our phones, Instagram because that can give me my short dopamine hit which can help me relieve and offset the difficult emotion.

But what you're describing there James is actually I recognise that there is this noise that these are these emotions. So let me build in white space into my day for me to observe what's going on internally in terms of my thoughts and my emotions And in previous generations, that would be normal and natural.

We would talk to people about it. we would express these things. But now we are repressing these emotions. That's the first step is building white space to reflect on them.

And I would encourage us to go a second step. One of the most underutilized therapeutic interventions that we can all do for free every day is journaling.

Journaling is so important because as you described there, James, the first perspective is, let me build white space to observe and at least become aware of what's going on, what patterns are there.

But the next step, which is to retrain the brain, is the process those emotions. When we're the stick in the busy bucket of water, it's difficult to process.

But when we write them down and we might use a paper journal or now in a modern world, we can use notes. So in our phones, We have notes, right? So you can create a new notepad in your phone.

You can lock it so that nobody else accesses it. and let it out. What's bothering you? Express it. And there's something so powerful about the expression.

Expression is half the processing. You want to express it in there. I'm feeling really rubbish today because, you know, an argument with my partner and she made me feel like this but I understand why that happened and what I need to do to overcome that and just write it down, get it out, and that process will enable you to once again become the witness because in your mind it's all swimming around but writing it you can see it and go ah that's what's bothering me and as you do this idea of expression without editing it, without any caveats.

It's like a cathartic process of letting out what you have experienced today and you'll be amazed at how then your intuition magically gives you the answers.

We can't have our internally generated solutions if we haven't identified what the problem is. The problems are all running around, they're running round.

And there's several steps to this process, because if we do it too fast, we'll also repress our emotions. The first is awareness, right? So we have to have awareness of what is the emotion.

What am I experiencing right now? I'm experiencing fear right. Now, where am i experiencing it? Physically, I am experiencing in my chest. OK, We've identified what the emotions is.

Then number two, it's validation. If we say to ourselves, gosh, i'm so weak for experiencing Fear. what's wrong with me? You know, i've been meditating for 10 years and I still have fear.

that is in a criticism so we want to validate ourselves to say it's okay to have an emotion so awareness of it where is it physically in our body observe it and validate it okay.

To have that emotion I'm still a good person despite me thinking something wrong with these emotions emotions

are very normal very good third step. What is the pattern.

Faith, Love, and Self-Compassion

I'm upset because XYZ happened. There is anger because of such and such, right? So we are identifying what the challenge is or what we've experienced and now that is a process of processing the emotion.

Why am I experiencing this? What is the message that this emotion has? Every emotion is message to us about the world around us and it's telling us our thoughts, our beliefs, The next step is, then how do I shift perspective on this?

What's my new perspective or how can I process this. As an example, we've had a horrible argument with someone and someone's been very insulting to us.

Step one, awareness of the emotion. I'm feeling real anger at this person, but also fear, feeling like I am not good enough. Validate, it's okay to experience this, you're human.

It's OK, I love you for having these emotions, It is OK. then we are looking at the reasons why did that happen well actually they really push one of my buttons there because i can be sensitive to criticism and they Really made me feel low about myself and the anger is coming out because I'm angry at them for making me Feel like that and making Me feel lower about Myself okay fourth step new perspective was my new Perspective on the situation okay my new perspective here and we can have different perspectives it might be look they're just having a bad day yeah they've got their own stresses and strains and they let it out on on you or it could be that's their personality and I just simply need to accept that that is the way they are.

Or it could be, actually, this situation is making me more aware of my inner sensitivity to criticism. I think the evolutionary inheritance, so going back to where you started with, we have inherited all this knowledge, all these ancestral knowledge.

And then in many ways, what we've been discussing is clearing the noise so that you can access it. Where I'm going in my head is, okay, If you start to feel and experience a stimulus over and over, so let's say you're following what your suggestions, you are doing the work to identify, to release, but you keep putting yourself in a situation where it continually gets triggered.

Is that potentially really a sign? And let's just even focus on something simple like social media. If you notice you continually have to do this work every time you access social Media, is that a signed to just say, no more social At one point, we just have to be honest with ourselves and acknowledge, hey, this isn't working, let's cut it out.

So every good habit that we need involves two key steps is the internal state and the behavior, like as we talked about earlier. To make good habits, as you know from the work of James Clear and Atomic Habits and all these great people, It's not only about your internal state shift, because then you're relying on the internal motivation.

It is the practical steps that you put in place to make it easier to engage in good habits. The person who wants to lose weight or stop snacking, they want to be sure that when they go shopping they're not buying those snacks so they are not in the home, so that they've got a weak moment they aren't going for the snack drawer and eating unhealthily.

So in a similar way, we focus on these internal state shifts, but nobody is saying that we need to suffer endlessly and put ourselves in situations which are damaging or lowering our self-esteem.

Nobody is seeing that. We need do that right. So therefore, there are situations where we just need to cut back on it or cut it out. So you've given the example of a phone.

Phones are the most addictive substance right now on the planet. It's the biggest addiction on a planet, so yes, they will be times where you just say, right, you know what I'm gonna do?

I'll switch off my phone for the next few hours, or I am gonna spend some time with the family. I just gonna switch it off so I can't be interrupted at all.

Or I gonna put it in a different room. it is about the internal state shifts combined with good habits. If we are in the presence of someone that regularly makes us feel low and bad about ourselves, no one is saying that we need to suffer that every day.

We then remove ourselves from those energy systems that are impacting us. Of course, absolutely. And James, I want to pick up on something you mentioned earlier about this idea of ancestral knowledge that is being passed on.

Traditionally, we thought of DNA as passing on these adaptations at a physiological level. But as you say, there is this ancestral knowledge that is being passed on.

We know monkeys who use tools in a particular area, that knowledge then gets passed onto other tribes without us even knowing it. So what is saying is that actually there is this field of knowledge that is a hypothesis that there's a field knowledge.

And we can even see this from a quantum mechanics perspective that everything that has ever happened is ever gonna happen all the knowledge only creation already exists.

We are simply tuning in and tapping into that field.

Witnessing Emotions and Journaling

And actually, Einstein talked about this when he came up with these incredible theories that someone sitting at home, you know, there were no computers in those days, comes up, with this incredible powerful knowledge.

He said, I don't know why I know what I, know but I knew it. he was tapping in to this field of intuition, this Field of Knowledge. And that field is accessed when we calm the mind and we still the minds.

And great people who've been creative in writing and music, they've always said, if I've got anxiety about something I need to achieve, I get writer's block or I can't sing or can perform.

In a similar way, it's when you are calm and centered. we can access that field of knowledge for creativity and expansion it's so important i mean the amount of people i'm talking to these days who speak about fatigue and just.

Overwhelm and feeling flattened whether it is people who. have shared they have long COVID or people that have just been going, going going so hard that either way it's the toll that this modern life is taking on our very precious human bodies that people are responding to.

So I think this has been a really great reminder of not only our own strengths and powers within, you know, You mentioned this early on that we have the power to change.

We aren't just a leaf flying in the wind that we can remove ourselves from the swirling water and observe our current state and then make choices accordingly, I think is very empowering.

I have a final question. that I always ask people, if you could wave a magic wand, bring back one ancestral practice, what would it be and why? This is such a beautiful question.

And it's going to be all encompassing. So I'm cheating a little in terms of this one thing. But what did all tribes do before the modern era? When the sun went down, they would eat together and then they'd light a campfire and they sing, dance and tell stories around the camp fire.

it was a core part of ourselves as human beings, a human existence. And what is the modern campfire of our civilization? It is now the television. So now what we do as humans beings in the evenings, the lights go down, we

have dinner, sometimes watching television, and then we gather around looking at all these violence and negativity that's now fed to us to try and stimulate our nervous system more and more, more.

and that has become the camp fire. We wonder why everyone's overwhelmed and anxious because even those things, that consumption of media, It's not just what we put in our mouth, it's what put on our brain is re-stimulating our nervous system.

So there's one practice I would love to bring back. It is this idea and I wonder how we can do it. But when the evening comes, if we as human beings can just spend one hour singing, dancing, telling stories, sharing, even if it's playing games together, those things help us relax our nervous system, create a sense of community with the people in our household and take us away from the negativity and the violence that is fed to us on a continual basis.

So the campfire, the Campfire experience is I think one ancestral habit that I'd love to bring back. I love the comparison to the television of how that's become in a sense a modern campfire, but it's not at all giving the same stimulus or decompression that the true camp fire or the True Hearth used to provide.

Ashok, you have a free program to offer everyone who's been listening. Could you share that? So we have two main projects that we love to share with everyone.

The first is the Gupta program and that's an app and a program for people with chronic illnesses, so chronic fatigue syndrome, long COVID, fibromyalgia, mold illness, these mysterious inflammatory illnesses that doctors find it hard to treat.

So that is one program. And people can join our free trial there and experience lots of videos and audios. That website is guptaprogram.com. and we'd encourage people if they've got a chronic condition, you know, burnout, severe anxiety, that's the place to go.

And we have a second program which is, maybe you don't have chronic conditions, but you're experiencing exactly what you've described, James, which some fatigue, continue feeling overwhelmed, not feeling satisfied in life, some levels of burnout certain days.

Then we had another project which was called Just Tent. And this is the birth of the micro wellness industry, which is that we're so busy these days. You know, if someone says, right, go to the gym for an hour, or go for a yoga class for half an our, we often don't have the time, the energy.

We come back from work, We're exhausted. we barely managed to make a meal. And the idea of wellness just isn't on the radar.

Cutting Triggers and Accessing Intuition

But imagine if there's a place that you could come. where everything is split into 10 minute micro wellness experiences live on zoom 24 hours a day so in just 10 you come on and on the hour every hour is 10 minutes of exercise that you do on Zoom with others and it's different every day one day will be yoga one they'll be cardio one there'll And then 10 past the hour is 10 minutes of breath work.

So if you feel like you need some breathing just to calm down the mind, breathing is the quickest and easiest way to regulate your nervous system. you can meditate for longer if you want and then we also do 10 minutes of journaling and what we encourage people to do is pick one thing just do one day for that self-care that's self love on the app and it's completely free all those live events are free as you do 1 event and as You experience it then there might be other things that you Want to experience but for me daily exercise or a few times a week exercise, breath work, meditation, journaling.

These are quick, easy, simple ways for 10 minutes that we can regulate our nervous system and we're going to feel happier. We're gonna feel healthier.

And these are such crucial things in the modern world to experience. Many people say, well, I don't have the time for that. You know, they did a study In 2015, this was done by Harvard, which should have been front page news across the world.

It was the best study I've ever seen in the 21st century. They took three and a half thousand people and monitored their healthcare usage over the space of year.

So how often do they see a doctor? How often did they visit a hospital? They then taught them some basic resilience skills, but the core thing they did was encourage them to do 20 minutes of what they call the relaxation response every day, which is essentially deep breath work and meditation, really getting into that relaxation and response.

And they then monitored them for another year in terms of how often they saw a doctor or a hospital. James, believe it or not, in that study, and they had a control group of 20,000 people, so it was a massive study.

there was a 43% reduction in usage of healthcare facilities. 43%. And now imagine if that was a drug, that would be the miracle drug of the 21st century.

There would billions being chucked at it. Every single person on the planet would take that drug. And yet in that study, they saw a 43% drop in healthcare utilization.

Ancestral Campfires and Free Wellness Tools

It's a study that everyone can read online, it's absolutely one of best studies out there, and yet it hardly made the news. So this shows us that daily breath work, daily meditation, deep relaxation of nervous system, can not only help us in productivity and focus, it can reduce stress and anxiety, but it could actually make us healthier.

So that 20 minutes of investment in time every day is going to pay itself back fivefold, tenfold in terms of efficiency savings and just feeling better.

That is the magic pill that we all need living our ancestral selves need in this modern world is just that 20 minutes. I love that you shared that and that it's available to everyone.

There's there's no cost to it. And that's why we made it free. because we want to give back. We know that as soon as you put a paywall you lose 97% of people.

So we wanted something that everyone on this planet can access 24 hours a day and they don't feel like they're on their own. They're doing it in community because it's ancestrally and this is where it ties in with the great work you're Ancestrally, we never sat by ourselves in our bedroom meditating.

This was all a group activity. We meditated in group because there's a collective field of intention. And people find when they meditate in a groups, the depth of their meditation is much more powerful.

So in Just 10, and people can download the app or Just Ten on App Store or Play Store, You've got a community of people who are going to meditate with you every hour, who were there.

There's people on there right now. It's a living breathing community, 24 hours a day. So what I'd encourage people to do is just download the app, find something that you want to go to and just experience it and know that this tool is with, you 24 Hours a Day.

Thank you so much for your time today and thank you for all your gifts. And thank you all for participating as well. If you're enjoying this podcast, there are a few easy ways to support us.

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