Introduction and Guest Background

Welcome to the Doctor's Making a Difference podcast, where we help physicians to be empowered with the tools they need to be successful in medicine, in finance, and in life.

Join us as we highlight doctors and other professionals around the world who are making a difference. We have the privilege today of having Doctor Jordan grommets here.

I'm so glad that Jordan's been able to join us today. Are the doctors making a difference podcast? Jordan, would you mind introducing yourself to our audience?

Sure, Peter, and thank you for having me. Basically, I am a primary care doctor who burnt out, discovered the personal finance of financial independence world and eventually used that to start a blog, a podcast, and now write books that try to tie finances to purpose in living a good life.

That's it in a nutshell. I know you've done a whole bunch of work in this realm, and probably a lot of our listeners have come across some of your work because you've been doing it for several years to try to get this message out to doctors, but I so I appreciate you taking the time to do the podcast, though.

Tell me if you think back. I'm a primary care doctor. Your primary care doctor. You went into this world of patient care and these high aspirations and hopes.

But I want to hear your story. What made you decide on primary care and then. I know that's a lot to ask, but what led to your eventual kind of burnout with it?

So when I was seven years old, my father, who was a physician, he was an oncologist, died suddenly of a brain aneurysm. He was actually rounding at the hospital, got a severe headache, collapsed and died a day or two later.

And at that age, at seven, I saw the world through a very selfish lens, like the world was because of me, because I was seven. And so if my father died, it must've been that I wasn't good enough.

Holy enough. There was something wrong with me. And that's why he died. And I eventually came to conclusion. The way the make up for that was to become a doctor like him, to walk in his footsteps, to save the world, to help people.

And that was going to cosmically fix everything. And that was actually very purposeful for me. It's very excited about that. I didn't care about things like money.

I was very sad and becoming a doctor, and I did just that. But something happened. I finished residency and by the way, before I get to that part, you said, how did you decide to go into primary care?

I actually was going to go into pulmonary critical care at one point, and I had an atrocious night in the ICU where a patient died and all sorts of bad things happened.

And I at that moment was like, I'm not going into pulmonary critical care. Eventually wanted to become a hospital. So that led to primary care. And I spent most of my time doing primary care.

But the problem was a few things. One is I went into medicine on some level to fix the cosmic tragedy of my father dying. And guess what? I got there and it didn't fix that problem. My father was still close.

The other thing is, I was hoping I could save the world. And as you know, in medicine, we rarely can save the

world. In fact, there's some people you can help. There's some people we can't.

And we try to make as much of a difference as we can.

From Childhood Loss to Medicine

And then the stress of the paperwork and electronic medical records and everything came together to help me realize that this thing that I had felt was purpose was burning me out.

I was getting stressed. I was not as happy, I was not as funny as I used to be. Like all these things about my personality had shrunk. I was whiling myself off and trying to protect myself from the onslaught of all the difficult stuff.

And at some point the dam broke, maybe after my son was born. So I have two children, and when my son was born, I looked at him and held him in my hands right after he was born.

And I'm like, I can't keep living like this. Like I'm going to have this child to take care of. I can't keep on walling off my feelings. And the dam kind of broke, and I realized that this thing that I thought was really purposeful probably wasn't filling me up.

And now that didn't mean I was going to make an immediate change. I didn't even have any idea what that change was going to be. One of the reasons I got into personal finance is the answer was just make enough money so you can stop working.

I never thought I could work at something else. I never even considered this idea that maybe there are parts of medicine I could really love. If I was thinking more about what felt purposeful to me, the answer immediately was just make a lot of money so you can stop working.

And that's how I discovered personal finance. The white coat investor, Jim Daly, and this whole idea of, if you can build a strong financial framework, maybe you don't have to work at this thing that's burning you out.

Yeah, I can reflect. I think everybody gets to time episodes of burnout where you say, I'm overwhelmed, I've lost the joy. This isn't fun. And I know my brain immediately goes to the same stuff.

That's honestly what turned me on to the same thing. You and I met at a White Coat investor conference earlier this year, and we're both engaged in that same work of trying to achieve financial independence and try to be careful with your finances, but I know that's where that came from is a number of years ago, probably about 12 years ago, when I first came across that in my first 3 or 4 years as an attending physician, just realizing I can't do this forever.

Maybe the way out is to make a whole bunch of money save, live really frugally, and get out. I think that was a little bit maybe immature. My first blush at it, but I was so thankful to discover the world of personal finance.

And as time goes on, you realize you still get to live this full length, purpose filled life. And you have to find where that where medicine fits into that.

So anyway, I can reflect on that. Interesting that you found that. So what was your next step? How did you proceed after that? Yeah, I just wanted to comment on what you were saying before I go there.

It's interesting because what we're really talking about is no one goes into medicine and thinks, I want to make millions of dollars, or at least most people don't.

Yet a lot of us get to that point where we see our life raft. Our lifeboat is trying to figure out of finances, but what we're really talking about is agency.

And this is one of the things that's very difficult medicine. And people get debt ridden and they end up in this job and they don't see a way out and they don't feel they have other skills.

And so what we're really looking for in fact, a lot of us I think are looking for is not necessarily to, quote unquote, leave medicine. I think we're looking for more agency in our life and the ability to find what parts of medicine or life feel purposeful and pursue those more fully.

And so I convince myself the way out was money. And so the answer was, I need to become financially independent. And at the same time, I happen to be lucky enough to read Jim Daly's book, The Way Coach Investor.

It defined what financial independence was. I looked at my own finances. I was lucky my parents had really modeled great financial behavior, so they had saved over 50% of their income.

So I naturally did that. They don't real estate. So I bought real estate was a landlord. They invest in the stock market. So I invest in the stock market.

So I was actually doing all these smart financial things. I just had no idea how to put it all into a framework that made sense, so that I could use it as a tool to live a better life.

When I read Jim Daly's book, I started to understand that more, and I said, wait, I kind of have enough money. I don't have to do this thing anymore. That's burning me out. Now, the interesting part is, that should have made me incredibly happy and excited.

But actually, I had a major panic attack when I realized that the only thing that ever felt like purpose in my life, I was considering walking away. And I strongly wanted to walk away, but I had no idea who I would be.

Then. What was my sense of identity once I left this thing that I'd spent my whole childhood and young adulthood becoming, so I was unable to throw the baby out with the bathwater.

I couldn't just step away from medicine. It actually started a prolonged process of years where I slowly got rid of the things I didn't like in medicine, so I had a really busy practice. I got rid of that.

I was doing nursing home work, I got rid of that. I was working nights and weekends. I got rid of all of that. What I ended up with was doing hospice work.

So I had been consulting with a hospice company, running some of their teams, and I found that I would do that even if someone wasn't paying me for it.

So it was like I found the jackpot. The thing in medicine that actually did fill me up. It came a little bit later in my career when I was already incredibly burnt out.

I always reflect what if I had found this much earlier? I probably never would have burned out. I probably never would have left medicine. But in this case, when I subtracted everything I didn't get to my career, I was left with hospice and palliative care.

And because I was in a good economic situation, I could do it 10 or 15 hours a week as a consultant for a hospice company.

Burnout and Discovering Financial Independence

And then I had all the space and time to start pursuing other things that lit me up. But in this case, instead of making the mistake I made when I was a kid, by choosing what I call big purpose, this big goal oriented purpose of becoming a doctor and undoing my father's death, I started concentrating on what I call a little B purpose.

So I stopped worrying about goals. I stopped worrying about impact, actually, and I started thinking about what lights me up. What do I enjoy the process of doing?

That led to a personal finance blog, which led to a podcast which really became what my life is very much today, which is doing all these things that deeply fulfill me.

Now, the interesting part, and I always laugh about this as a doctor, being a doctor is a kind of impactful employment. It's an impactful job. And when I was a doctor doing a full bore primary care practice, I was probably helping a thousand or 2000 people a year being generous, a thousand, 2000 people a year.

When I started doing something I loved just because it lit me up and I loved the process of doing it, I started writing a blog and then a podcast and writing books.

I've reached millions of people compared to the thousand or 2000 I reached being a doctor. So my impact and legacy multiplied. It became exponential, not because that was my goal.

It was a happy side effect of starting to do the things that really engaged and excited me. And here's the important part. I never would have got there if I didn't have my finances in order.

And so I think money is important. It's not everything like living a purposeful life, being intentional. That's the kind of everything. But money is a great tool.

So if you happen to build a good financial framework, it frees you up to start really spending your time doing those things you want to do. It gives you agency, it gives you control.

And that's why I don't think we should live for money. But you better believe. I think we should be savvy about it because it's one of many tools, but it's a great tool in building a purposeful life.

And that's what I try to teach people now that's so wise. I think a lot of people, me included, when you're feeling stressed, burned out, frustrated, we use money or income as a surrogate for our happiness, saying if they would pay me more, then I would be happier.

And really, I've discovered that's not the case. Usually people are dissatisfied with their job because of lack of respect, lack of agency, lack of mobility, all these things that we really value in our lives.

And what you're describing is that because your parents taught you just good financial habits, you were in a better financial spot than you realize, and so then you're able to pivot and say, my life still is very full of those lowercase little p purpose, purposeful moments, purposeful interactions.

And you were able to pivot. You would have never been able to do that if you were still $400,000 in debt and had a $2 million house and a boat payment, like, you never could have done that.

So what a blessing your parents left to you to have that. And then I'm glad you were able to take that and actually apply it in your life and then go forward with it.

Yeah. Look, medicine is the perfect setup for burnout. If you listen to Daniel Pink, he talks about autonomy, mastery, purpose. This is what kind of drives us in being internally motivated and what's happened in medicine.

A lot of us have lost our autonomy because we work for either medical systems or private equity or venture capital, like we no longer run our own businesses.

Mastery. We're constantly being questioned by medical malpractice, the fear of being sued. And just the truth of the matter is, we don't have as much time and excitement about learning because we're so busy and our electronic medical records, etc.

so mastery, this ability to learn and grow feels limited. And so we're left with purpose. And a lot of us do feel a sense of purpose in helping other people, but we also feel this limitation that often we know the right thing to do for our patients.

But we can't. We're being thwarted by the system, so we're trying to live out our purpose. But there's this moral injury. There's all these systems that tell us, your insurance says you can't order that test, and your medical system says you can't step out of these guidelines and so we have everything pushing against our autonomy, mastery, purpose.

And so it's no wonder that people burnout medicine. Now the answer can be leaving medicine. But it doesn't have to be. It's actually building more autonomy, mastery and purpose into your life.

And that's where again, things like money are helpful because it gives you options. Yeah. One other reflection on that, Jordan, A lot of times if you went and started a business, your liabilities for your business, and I think maybe people don't, I know I didn't realize this before becoming a medical student and a doctor, that when you talk about some of those pressures that come from external pressures, the liability in medicine is personal.

If they sue you, there is suing you by name, it's against you. Your medical malpractice might be paid by your employer, but the lawsuits against you. And so I do think we do.

You're less likely to get sued if you're doing things that you're really passionate about and can give enough time and attention and devotion toward. And so what a blessing it is to be able to spend that kind of time and you were able to unplug from the busy, crazy weekends, nights, holidays and do something that gave you that day by day purpose.

And it sounds like even some of your larger purpose, the big purpose, where you're able to continue to be a doctor and continue to make an impact on patients.

And now millions of people who listen to your media around the world. Yeah. The only thing I'd comment on that is truly in my form of definitions, big purpose is always negative.

There's no good version of big purpose. And the reason why is big purpose is goal oriented, and reaching the goal becomes the most important thing, not the process of getting there.

Finding Purpose in Hospice and Little-b Purpose

So I do say that you can have what's called little b purpose things that light you up and you love the process of doing. And you can still have some big audacious goals involved in little p purpose.

But the difference is your enjoyment. Your sense of purpose doesn't relate to whether you meet the goal or not, so you can be a little bit more goal agnostic.

A perfect example I always tell people, as for me, podcasting, being a podcast or for me has little purpose. The reason is I love interviewing people.

I love making the podcast and even if after my hour of interviewing someone, I accidentally lose the recording, it was still worth that out. On the other hand, if I decided I not only love podcasting and I want to do it, but I also want to get a million downloads a month, it could turn into big purpose quickly when either I don't get there and I get frustrated and I start hating podcasting day to day, or I start doing things I don't like to do to get those million downloads.

So I hate TikTok. I don't really like Instagram. If I really want a million downloads a month, I better get on TikTok and Instagram and start making content.

I would be doing things I don't like in service of this big audacious purpose. So that turns podcasting from little B

purpose to big B purpose. Now, I could also say I love podcasting and I have this big audacious goal of getting a million downloads a month, but I only do things I enjoy the process of doing to try to improve.

So I like interviewing people so I can start listening to Terry Gross and Fresh Air and studying how she interviews people, because she's a great interviewer and I can learn that way.

I hate Instagram and TikTok, but I don't mind Facebook, so maybe I'll go on Facebook and create some content there because I enjoy that process. I enjoy interacting with people.

I might hit that goal of a million downloads, I might not, but if I'm enjoying the process and I'm goal agnostic, if I get there, great. If I don't get there, no big deal.

It's still little purpose. It's just little B purpose with some big audacious goals. So that's the difference I make between big people and little people.

As big be purpose is always negative, but goals don't have to be negative. The question is, does your whole sense of purpose hinge on that goal? And are you not enjoying the process in order to reach that goal?

No, those are wise words and I've read through. I haven't finished it, but this wonderful book that you wrote is called The Purpose Code. Trying to get it for those who are seeing this on video, but the Purpose Code is one of your books.

I think you've written the three books if I got that right. So I originally self-published a number of books that were blog posts from my medical blog, so I did two of those.

I don't actually even count them, and I took them out of circulation. And so right now, my first book was called Taking Stock. It's what the Dying Can Teach Us About Money in Life.

That actually led me to writing the Purpose code, because a big part of that first book was about how we should put purpose before our financial framework.

And a lot of people said, yeah, you keep on saying find purpose, but I have no idea what that is. So I wrote the purpose code to basically answer that question of how do we better define purpose in our life?

I am coming out with a medical book, completely a hobby project about our health care system and what's going wrong with it and how we fix it. That's going to come out in November of this year, and I just signed a contract for my third, traditionally or fourth traditionally published book.

That's going to be about meaning. It's the next step. So taking stock was the first step. Put purpose first. The purpose code was second. How do we put purpose first?

And the third book is once you get purpose, maybe you don't have a purpose problem, you have a meaning problem. And it's all about meaningfulness and enough.

And so that's going to be actually my fourth traditionally published book. But that's not going to come out until spring of 2027. Good for you. Now you've I wouldn't say that you've changed to a life from medicine to being easy and doing nothing.

It sounds like you're very anxiously engaged, active in podcasting, blogging, writing. But from what I gather from your tone of voice, the way you're talk about it, these are things that light you up.

You have a lot of passion. You speak with a lot of excitement about those things. I don't think just because you are not in the quote unquote rat race doesn't mean that you're not going to be busy.

In fact, I'm busier than ever. The whole idea is not to create a life of leisure. It was to create a life that fills me up.

And let me tell you, for most of us, especially if you're achievement oriented enough to become a physician, a life that fills you up is going to include doing hard things like you want to be in the arena fighting the valiant fight, being knocked down, struggling.

All of that actually is part of what I think is our good work. Our good work is not work we necessarily get paid the most for. Our good work is full of that little purpose.

Doing things that light us up. I think we work our whole lives. Right from the day you're born to the day you die. You're going to be engaged in some kind of work at points.

You're going to be doing that work to make money. Are you going to be employed by someone? And so that you're going to say, I'm employed or I'm in the midst of my career, but even after you quote unquote, retire, you're going to build the boat or develop a hobby and play pickleball or write books or whatever you going to do in your retirement. That's also a form of work.

It's just a work that fills you up, maybe a work that energizes you instead of exhaust you. I actually would love people to start doing that work way before they quote unquote, retire.

I like them to start doing that in their 20s, 30s, 40s and 50s. And if you do it right, you can build your finances around doing more and more of that stuff.

And you can have both. You can have both work that lights you up, as well as work that makes you money. I'm not Pollyanna in the sense that I think everyone should go for the most passionate job, but as you go further in your career, you should be continuously getting rid of things you don't like about your job and adding in things you like.

And so that's our goal for life, right? When you're young and you don't have many resources and you don't really know who you are, you may do lots of things.

You don't like to make money or to be employed, or to try to figure it out. And you do a little bit less of what you love. But as you get older and older, winning the game looks like doing more and more things you love and doing less and less things you loathe.

And it behooves us to constantly build and change that over time. So by the time you're my age, 52, I hope you're doing mostly what you love and very little of what you love.

But at 22, we all take our hard knocks. At 22, you might be doing a little bit more of what you loathe and a little bit less of what you love, but that's something we can change.

But the only way to change that is a understand what purpose feels like in your life. It took me years to figure out that just acting wasn't purpose, but hospice work was.

Writing was being an author was exercising, was reading for pleasure. All of those feel like a deep sense of purpose to me, but it took me time to figure that out.

But once I did start figuring that out, if I had also built a reasonable financial framework, I could start bringing those things into my life sooner and sooner and using more of my time to do those things as opposed to other things I didn't like as much.

I'm just I'm dancing around this question in my mind. What would you tell a younger Jordan Graham it the month before your son was born? Or what would you tell someone who's on a similar path?

Money, Autonomy, and Building a Better Life

But they say they're in their early 30s and they finally are grunting through a whole bunch of training, or you're in your first few years and you feel so overwhelmed.

You've already danced and talked a lot about purpose and finding meaning in your work and incorporating that in. But sometimes I think we find ourselves at odds with that in our reality.

Like you said, you can't do it because of insurance. You have so much debt out at the end of medical school. You can't see your way, pastor, or you work for an employer that gives you so many restrictions and you don't feel like there's a way out of it.

And I think a lot of our peers find themselves in those situations. And then the answer that we all come up with is, I need to just get out. I need to earn enough money to get out of this career.

So I'm curious, what would you say to someone in that who is struggling in that stage, who says, I can't be a million download a week person like Jordan Graham, but what can I do to find that purpose in my life?

Yeah. So first and foremost, there's lots of different ways to answer this. So first and foremost, let me give some tough love. It's B. S. if you're telling yourself you don't have the energy or the time or enough money, that's B. S..

The Bureau of Labor Statistics does the American Time Survey every year and finds that your average American has five hours of free time or leisure time a day, so you can say you don't have time, but if you're your average American, you have about five hours to pursue whatever you want.

So to say you don't have enough time, does it make sense to say you don't have enough money? Also doesn't make sense. Money is a tool, and it's a very great tool for pursuing a life purpose.

If I have a lot of money, I can leave my job and then fulfill my time with other things. But I have enough money. I can hire a housecleaner so I don't have to clean my house and use that time to do other things.

But money is only one tool and we have lots of other tools. So if you are a 22 year old and you just got out of college and you had to take a job you didn't like because it was the only way you're going to make money, and you were struggling just to put food on the table and you're like, boy, it's easy for you.

You are a high earning doctor who realize you're financially independent. Of course you can pursue purpose. But me, I don't have the ability to do that.

I'd say that's B. S. because you're 22 and I'm 52, so you probably don't have a mortgage. You probably have a lot more energy than me. You probably don't have kids yet.

You probably have some free time on the weekends. Even if you're working 50 60 hours a week. You've got more energy than me because you're 22 and I'm 52.

You have your youth. You could spend a few hours doing something purposeful on a Sunday, and you're immediately improving your life and building purpose in your life.

Even if you don't get rid of that job you don't like, even if you're still struggling to put money on the table, you've already used the joy of addition, adding in something purposeful into your life for a few hours.

Boom! You're already on your way. And I see this over and over again. When people start doing that, their life expands and it expands in funny ways. Let's say you used to race bikes when you're in high school, right?

Your family didn't have a lot of money. You had to fix the bike. You had to take care of it. You were totally into bike racing. You were all over the circuit in high school, maybe even a little in college.

And then that faded away. And now you're working at 22, in a job you hate, that's just making enough money. And you say, how do I Jordan Doctor Grommet, how do I build purpose in my life?

I say, we used to love bike racing. When you're a kid, can you volunteer at the local circuit on the weekend? Right

there. Bike races every weekend, especially during the summer.

So maybe you do that for a few hours and maybe there's some younger kids there. And like you, they didn't have a lot of money. Maybe they could use your help fixing up their bike right when they get into an accident when their bike stops working.

This is something you're pretty good at because you did it all those years on your own. Maybe you charge them a little for that. Maybe you become a coach.

Find people who need a little help learning how to get better, how to improve in the circuit. Before you know it, that little thing you love. Maybe it's generating some money.

Maybe that allows you to work four days instead of five. Maybe it doesn't do any of that. And yet you've now had three more purposeful hours a week. Maybe you're working for that 9 to 5 and you hate it, but you've been coaching kids on how to improve the race times for a while, and you realize that you're a good mentor and you start mentoring some people at your job because you're a good mentor and you seen that you can do that on the race course.

You can also do it in this job, and maybe one of your bosses recognizes this. And they say, you know what? You don't seem to love your job, but you're a great mentor.

Let's put you at 50% doing your current job. And let's use that other 50% for you to mentor all the new employees. And what have you done? You've taken something you didn't like, which was your job.

You've pursued more purpose outside of your job. That's giving you a skill set that you now brought in to your job and subtracted out 50% of the time you didn't like about your job, and replaced it with 50% of things you do.

Here's the thing this is abundant. So if you start thinking about purpose first, you put your financials aside. That doesn't mean you give up on your finances.

You just stop worrying about them for a moment. Start thinking about what purpose looks like in your life. Then you can build a life around that. At minimum, you can do purposeful things outside of work at maximum.

Over time, you can start bringing those joys, those versions of purpose into the workplace. You can switch jobs. Maybe you build a new skill and start a new profession.

Who knows? The possibilities are endless. Now, you can argue to me that you don't know what purpose looks like in your life, and you're struggling on how to find purpose.

That's a great argument. But to say you don't have enough time to say you don't have enough money doesn't hold up. It's usually a courage thing, like you're sitting on your couch on Sunday afternoon watching TV.

You have to have the courage to get off your couch and go do something.

Purpose in Daily Life and Career Changes

Now, I agree, originally this idea of what feels like purpose in my life, how do I build a life of purpose around those things? That does feel daunting.

But like I talk about in the Purpose Code, it's actually much more obvious and simple. You just need a little help on the right steps to take. I think it I totally agree with what you're saying it, but it is counter-intuitive in some ways because in some ways you're saying, hey young person who feels stressed and frustrated and doesn't like your job, add more to it, add more things to it.

But I think really just I found this true in my own life too. Jordan. When I add things that fill me up, I come out of a

happier. Even if I'd invested a whole bunch of time and I could have said, oh, I don't have enough time to do this.

When I do something that fills me up, or I'd go volunteer with something, or I go work in some organization that really fills me up. I come out of that recharged, ready to go, full of purpose.

And I totally find that the other side. Let's look at the other side. If you just sit at home on Sunday because you're so exhausted and you just sit there and watch TV or scroll through social media, you think that's going to energize you?

No, it's going to drain you, especially when you're going through TikTok and Instagram and you're seeing all these influencers who have their six pack abs and are traveling the world and running their seven figure businesses.

You're going to actually walk out of that more drain than if you had gotten up off your butt and done something. Yeah, even in medicine, I've found the parts that fill me up that I enjoy the most.

I certainly don't enjoy billing and coding and prior authorization and documenting it. Nobody likes that stuff. But the thing that really fills me up is when I'm able to spend a little bit extra time, or you make a connection for someone that they couldn't make on their own, and it's that human interaction.

I'm a primary care doctor, so I have the same patients for the most part over and over again. I work in the emergency room also, but a lot of them end up being the same patients that come through my doors.

And it's all about the relationship. And I think I told you before we hit record, I had this horrible tumor a couple of years ago, and I did not know if I would ever get to go back to medicine.

I had no idea of what my health would allow me to do, and feel so blessed to be able to go back to it. But the thing that drew me back to it wasn't the ability to earn an income.

I was thankful for that. But the biggest thing that really made me say I'm excited about medicine is I felt I wanted to reconnect with those patients, the ones who I've worked with for years and develop those connections and friendships, and I'm truly invested in their outcome.

And that has a lot to do with medicine, but it has everything to do with relationship and connection. And I would help those people, even if I didn't get paid a dime, because they learn to love the people when you serve them like that.

Yeah, and people make the mistake. They feel like purpose is supposed to be easy or seamless. And I do make the argument that figuring out what feels like purpose in your life is easy, but the act of living a purposeful life, it actually isn't easy.

Like you have to be in the arena fighting the fight. You've got to get up off your butt and do things. That part is not easy, but I promise you it's very rewarding and fulfilling.

And so you willing. Sometimes purpose is exceedingly hard. Like for me, I love writing and being an author. Writing a book is vulnerable and hard and painful, and you question yourself and you doubt and all of those things.

On the other hand, I can't imagine a life where I didn't encounter all that that feels full and difficult and exciting. And don't we want to do hard things like it's yeah, this idea of we're going to find what we connect with and everything's going to be hunky dory, and we're going to be smiling every minute, and it's always going to be sunshine.

Yeah, that's not it. Purpose is hard and can be painful, but I think it's enduring and exciting. And I think if you really want impact and legacy, stop worrying about having impact and legacy and start doing things that fill you up and it will just lead you there.

Another question I wanted to ask you is, so I know I'm pretty good at technical writing, I can do all sorts of stuff with

writing about medicine and writing a good, detailed report in medical lingo, but I don't have formal training other than my undergraduate degree.

I don't have formal training in being a writer. And I'm curious, how have you done that? You've had the skill set of communicating and discovering purpose, but becoming a writer, becoming an accomplished writer, a published, like you said in the Classical Method multiple times over with your training as a doctor, do that.

So what I always tell people is you don't become the thing you want to become by reaching a goal. So you don't become a writer or an author by writing a book or being a New York Times bestseller, you become a writer by writing.

And so I've spent most of my life writing. I started blogging about medicine like 2003, even before that, in high school. In elementary school, I was writing poetry.

If you want to be a writer, you have to write. If you want to become something you have to do the thing. Now, over time, if you feel like you're in the arena fighting the valiant fight and you're doing things you love the process of doing, you will draw to you other people who are interested in the same things, and that will lead to opportunities.

It'll lead to collaborations. It'll lead to someone saying, hey, you love writing the local college does these community workshops on how to become a better writer, or how to write fiction, or how to write nonfiction.

And because this thing lights you up, you say, hey, yeah, let's go to do that thing together. And then you go do it. And then maybe you read other people and they have a writer's group, and you get part of a writer's group.

For me, I knew I had an engaging story, and eventually I got an agent, and the agent looked at my book proposal and said, you need some work on some of this, and we want to really make this great.

So I'm going to get you a coach, a writing coach, and you're going to work with her on the proposal.

Becoming a Writer Through Practice

And I worked with her for about three days, and my writing just jumped forward quite a bit because there were certain techniques, certain ideas, certain ways of saying things that I had just never encountered before.

And so when you do things that let you up, whether it's writing or whatever, you're going to draw other people to you when you're fighting the valiant fight, you're going to have fellow warriors and they're going to teach you, and you're going to teach them, and you're going to collaborate, and you're going to grow it, and you're going to build.

And then you decide, do I need formal training? Do I need to go get a master's? Do I need to apprentice to someone? Do I need to just get into a group with people who are joyful about this thing?

All of that can be decided later. You first have to start with doing the thing. And that's what I did with writing. I wrote and I wrote a thousand blog posts, and I put together some of those blog posts in two horrible books.

They're not horrible. They're actually decent books. But they weren't done well because they didn't know what I was doing. And then I started a podcast, and I met a bunch of authors, and I became friends with them, and I asked them all sorts of questions about how they traditionally published.

And in fact, one of those people pushed me and said, you know what? You really have these great messages. You need to put them out in the world. And he connected me to his agent and that didn't work.

But I found another agent and he helped me do my first book proposal, and that was crap. But then we made it better. And it's an iterative process. But if you joyfully jump into things that you're interested in, you will improve and get better.

And when you let go of these big audacious goals like, I'm going to be a New York Times bestseller and instead say, I am a writer because I'm doing the thing I'm writing, and I'm going to joyfully connect with other people and learn how to be better at this.

You'll improve. Who knows what the end point is, but you can't know. You start off life. You don't know what opportunities or challenges you're going to face.

I've had people tell me that same thing. I'm not a runner. Like, do you run runners or people who run? Okay, yeah, a lot of people will say writers are people who write.

And you certainly, no matter what skill set is, you can improve it with time. And then of course, connecting with other people makes a big difference.

Oh that's awesome. I love that's a simple answer in some way. You started writing, you write, and then you just get better and better at it and get coaching.

But at the same time, you had some natural aptitude and desire to write. Like you said, you've been writing things for over two decades now, and you were able to hone that skill, an ongoing process of publishing.

So I think it's pretty cool. You know, people talk about it, but it's a big thing to go from not ever having written a book to actually going through a classically published book process.

And you've done it now multiple times, which is pretty admirable. Yeah, it's been very joyful, but it started with this idea that I wake up in the middle of the night.

I want to say something. I dream the words to paint the picture like people say. A picture speaks in words. And I always said, I want to use as few words as possible to create a thousand pictures in my readers mind, and.

But that drives me. That's my whispering. Those are parts of my calling. I believe we all have those beginnings and those whisperings. It's just so few people are actually pursuing them.

Like, why aren't we listening to those things? It took me years to start listening to them, to really listen to them. And so the question is, most people know what they think about what they dream about right before they fall asleep at night.

And yet we tell ourselves we don't have the energy or time or skills. And I think actually it's more we don't have the courage to build a life of purpose around those things.

It's hard, I admit it. It sucks. I've had more down moments as an author than you can imagine, but that's that's the good fight. You're going to have good moments or bad moments.

Thank you. I want to hit one more topic. One of the things we talk about in this podcast quite a bit is trying to leave medicine better than we found it, and there's lots of challenges.

We hit on those with financial challenges that doctors face, and moral injury and burnout and difficulties that people have encountered. Well, what do you think we can do?

I guess that's a big answer. But what do you think we can do now with your work? What are you doing to make medicine better than you found it for the upcoming generations?

I think actually this is incredibly easy to do. What lights you up? Pursue your little purpose and you can't help but change the world. I'm a perfect example of this.

Hospice is my little purpose, but it took me a long time to find it. In fact, I almost left medicine completely. Thank God I did find this piece, but if I thought more about purpose and was more intentional, I would have found the

hospice piece much earlier.

My career probably never would have burnt out. I probably would have spent more time in hospice. I would have touched more patients.

Leaving Medicine Better and Closing Remarks

Do what lights you up? I loved writing, so I writing, but what did I write about? The one thing I knew about medicine I was pursuing my little b purpose.

But in the meantime, as creating all this content about what it felt like to be a doctor, and that went out into the world and helped people and connected with people and helped other doctors who are struggling.

And it helped patients understand how doctors felt. And so find what lights you up and pursue it both inside and outside of medicine. And I promise you, if you continue being a doctor, whatever is your little purpose is going to bleed into medicine if you continue doing it.

I loved writing, I eventually started writing for websites. I got paid for it even take what you love, build a life around it and it will pervade every part of your life, including doctoring.

And you will leave it a better place. Do it lights you up and happy. Fact is, you'll actually have a bigger impact and legacy. Because when you're doing what lights you up, you shine.

And when you shine, you spread that light on people who need it the most. You attract the people who can collaborate with you. You teach the people who need to learn, and you learn from the people who can teach you.

It all stems from doing what lights you up. Stop worrying about impact, legacy. Stop. I hate to say it, but stop worrying about making the world a better place than you left it.

Start doing things that you love and you're going to do that by accident. No wise words. I appreciate you sharing that. And I think everybody listening can take some little piece of that.

And it is it's easier to focus in some ways it's hard, but it's easier to have control over those day by day goals. Like you discussed. Rather than saying, I'm going to leave this massive legacy or the big purpose like you described, but you can, in your moment by moment, find lots of ways to influence other people and leave an impact.

And for sure, when you show up with that level of passion and interest and care, the people you are talking with or the projects you're involved in are going to be filled with that kind of passion and love because you're doing it because you love it.

Some great words. Thank you so much for sharing with us. I really appreciate it. Any other final thoughts for the audience? Jordan I just say that 100% proof of what we just talked about is the fact that you and I are having this conversation because you saw me doing what lights me up, which is getting on stage and talking about purpose.

And because of that, you wanted to collaborate with me. You're like, I have this podcast. I want you to be on. That wasn't because I was out looking to make more connections.

I wasn't out looking to promote my book. I wasn't looking to have a bigger platform. I was just doing something that lit me up. And because you saw me as my best self, you were like, oh, we have a connection here.

Let's collaborate. I think all life should do that, be like that, do what you love and you're just going to find yourself building, creating, connecting.

Awesome. Thank you doctor Jordan Graham. It look him up and keep keep buying the books and doing all the things because I appreciate all the things you're doing.

And I think this work is influencing, like you said, millions of people. And I do hope that those who listen can gain something from this. I've really enjoyed this conversation.

I appreciate you taking time to do it. Thank you for having me on the show. Thanks for tuning into the Doctors Making a Difference podcast, and thank you for what you do to help your patients and your community.

Your work truly helped so many people. We produced this content to help you have the tools you need to stay in medicine, and to highlight the amazing work being done by physicians around the world.

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See you next time.