Introduction to Mattering

The environments we're living and working in are repeatedly teaching people that they're replaceable, that their voice doesn't matter, or their value is conditional.

Our worth is contingent on what we produce instead of who we are. our good life is very much dependent on the social relationships that we have. Your sense of worth over time starts to evaporate until the vanish eventually happens.

35% of children today feel like they do not matter. It's happening. to hundreds of millions of people around the world. My usefulness was undeniable. my humanity was optional.

All they wanted to see was results and they didn't care what the expense was. I could either choose to accept my circumstances or I can do something about it.

It's time we moved away from that and begin retracing our steps and recognizing the value of individuals. I was trying to answer a fundamental question.

I kind of arrived here that something foundational underneath all of this was causing these other things to happen. Well, hey everybody, Dr. David Perlmutter here.

Welcome to The Empowered Neurologist. We often talk about the importance of finding meaning and purpose in our lives. And my guest today is John R. Miles.

He asked us to consider an even more fundamental human need, and that is to know that we actually matter. John is the host of a very popular podcast called Passion Struck.

I recently recorded that podcast with him. He's the author of a new book that's called The Mattering Effect, Creating a Life of Meaning and Worth, a very, very interesting book in which he explores this subject that is really deeply personal.

Why so? Well, he talks about his experience at age five years when he had a severe brain injury, lost the ability to speak, to learn, and to basically interact with the world around him, Well, what happened after that?

He went on to attend the United States Naval Academy, serve in the military, and then built a very impressive corporate career. Yet, here's the point, despite all this visible success, he ultimately learned that he was slowly basically disappearing from his own life.

Many of us have had this experience. So we're going to explore the difference between being useful and being valued, how feeling invisible affects the brain and affects body and why actually the concept of mattering may be essential to our physical and mental health, essential our relationships and really ultimately our ability to flourish.

So I'm delighted to welcome John Miles to The Empowered Neurologist and very excited to get started on our program today. Well, John, Miles, welcome to the podcast.

I am so delighted that you're here today David, it's so great to see you again and congratulations on your awesome new book as well. I loved having you on my show.

Thank you. Well, as I said off before we hit the record button, I really want to start off with the event at age five years of age, because I think it was a defining moment for you.

It really sets you up for, I thing, understanding your position in the world, the head trauma event, let's talk about it, how you felt thereafter, what the recovery was like, and then how that kind of motivated your sense of need for

achievement and recognition.

And then ultimately how this book is an outgrowth of your recognition about, you know, So take us back to the head trauma, and as you mentioned, you've had several events, but let's talk about that event at age five years.

This was definitely a defining moment for me. Lived in Bay Village, Ohio at the time. I was a youngster and I just was playing a simple game of tag and as you probably know, they tend to get rougher and ruffer as they progress.

And I running away from one of my neighbors when he tagged me from behind as I in a full sprint and it launched me in the air, unfortunately through our bottom basement window.

And that's where a lot of my memory stops because I woke up at some point later after blacking out with the tube in my head. And even as a youngster kind of realizing that my life was never quite going to be the same, I didn't realize.

at the time how much it was going to change, but as traumatic brain injuries often do, especially when they're mid-level to severe, it caused a number of acute and then lasting injuries.

So the lasting were a sensory processing disorder which significantly impacted the way I learned. I developed a couple really bad speech impediments.

Childhood Brain Injury and Recovery

One was a lisp, but the other was tied to my sensory processing disorder, the rate at which I thought occurred at a different speed to the way I would speak, so oftentimes I'd misspeak or say the wrong words, which caused a lot of ridicule and bullying, I can tell you.

But on top of that, I developed pretty severe migraines. And overall, it really impacted my sense of self and self-esteem. I had a really pinnacle event that helped me process this.

While my peers would go to English class, I had to do what I'd call the walk of shame. I walk right in front of the school window where they'd all stare at me as I would get to see the speech therapist.

And at first I hated it, but she ended up becoming a person who really taught me that in life we have choices that we can make and I could either choose to accept my circumstances or I can do something about it.

So at that point, even as a youngster, I decided I wanted to do some about. But I think that's where I started to learn that, in order to feel like I mattered, it was me having to prove to the world that I should feel accepted and that my worth was beyond the injuries that I sustained in the way that the world saw me.

What an insight from such a young kid. I mean, when you think about it, right? Many adults don't have that insight into the importance of mattering. How old were you when that finally set in?

I was somewhere between six and seven years old. We had so young. If we look back at the neurological event, and obviously you recovered substantially if not fully from that event.

But what has endured in a positive way? What have you been left with that's positive relative to that initial experience? Some of my core beliefs and values definitely came from that injury.

I would think one of them definitely has to do with how I handle adversity. And what this taught me was really the value of what we now call neuroplasticity, but that our mind, even if it's damaged, doesn't have to remain damaged.

We have the capacity to rebuild so much of who we are. Now, it's hard for me to know at this point would my personality and other things still be the same because I definitely think that this has had an impact on how I regulate emotional intelligence, for sure.

But it taught me that I could persevere, that could get through rough times, and that had the wherewithal to change my circumstances if I was ever put in a situation where it caused me some harm, whether physical, mental, or something other.

Walk us through then what it means to matter versus having self-esteem or popularity. What does it actually mean? What is mattering mean. Well, since we're talking about being a youngster, let's use a Youngster concept for it.

I think we've all been in a situation where we been that either recess or maybe in school PT class where were asked to pick teams and we all know what it's like when your peers are picking who they want on the team.

That's a feeling that you belong, but there's, a big difference between belonging and mattering. Belonging is you were picked to be on the team. Mattering, is that felt sense that your contributing one to the, team, But that, you are receiving value back from the Team because of what you're contributing.

And I think that's the core definition of how I Think of Mattering. It's not only feeling seen, feeling valued, but it's also giving it to others. So you talk about this for us now, grownups, that we have this progressive kind of decline in our sense of mattering as we get older.

You call it a slow fade. So ultimately where we matter less and less in own lives. What does that mean, a flow fade? Well, the way, David, I would describe it is from my own personal experience.

We talked about that incident when I was young. Another incident that happened to me that really put me on this path was I had spent so many years proving myself and reproving myself after that initial injury to a point that I excelled in sports.

I excelled at school. Um, I have rebuilt the ability to have social connection. And I remember after I'd been selected to number of universities, um, was having a conversation with a beloved English teacher at my high school.

And I will never forget what she told me. She told that I would never amount to anything. Oh my gosh. So after persevering through so much struggle, to hear that from someone I respected so really was another defining moment because at that point in time, I was trying to choose between the University of Michigan and Duke, where I had athletic scholarships or I'd gotten an appointment to the Naval Academy.

And it kind of pushed me over the edge on top of my willingness to serve and other things to actually go to the Academy because I felt, again, I needed to prove that I could handle whatever the military was going to throw at me and to proof to her and others that I mattered because she absolutely made me feel the opposite.

And I think that desire to prove myself became a constant in my life for the next two decades. I was constantly striving for next promotion, the magazine article that would come out about me, and the award I could get.

It was all this illusion that I had manufactured, but what it caused was 20 years of me wearing a mask, pretending to be someone else performing a life that wasn't truly mine.

And when I talk about this slow fade, I think so many of us become conditioned, whether it's conditioned from the family that we're born into, the school that, uh, we arrive in, or it could be the workforce that uh…

we feel we have to perform our way into. Um, what would happen to me, and I thing is happening to many people, is I became more and more invisible in my own life.

And the way that the slow fade happened is..

From Achievement to Invisibility

. I didn't know what exactly was changing. I only knew that for whatever reason, my life was getting a little dimmer every single day. And the brightness and the feeling of being alive was slowly being diminished.

and I think many people are feeling this. Yeah, I hope that our viewers are in close attention to this part of our conversation. Because what you're talking about is people who outwardly have great achievements, they're at the top of their game.

They're the best surgeon at top the corporate world. We're making a lot of money. All of the outward metrics, as if they really are, of success. And yet, personally, they feel basically invisible.

And it even gets worse with time. That's what the slow fade is all about. So how does it happen? How does that happen that a person can have all of these accomplishments and accolades on various metrics and yet progressively feel more and more distant from his or her own life?

David, I know you love research and you do a ton of study yourself. It is always amazing to hear you talk and how much you bring forth that. And for me, this journey has been much of the same.

I have done about a decade worth of research on this now because I was trying to answer a fundamental question. I kept thinking that the mental health crisis, the loneliness epidemic, The rise of anxiety, that rise in youth mental, health, people feeling hopeless, rise and people being disengaged at work, People being burned out.

They all can't be separate things. I thought that there had to be something connecting them. And when I started this journey, mattering was not what I ever expected was going to be the word that was the one word answer to it.

But my research, whether it be in self-determination theory or studying ancient, you know, text, including the Bible, I kind of arrived here that that something fundamental, foundational underneath all of this was causing these other things to happen.

Gordon Flett, if people don't know who he is, he's not a household name. He should be because he has been studying mattering longer than anyone I know.

he came up with this term called anti-mattering. Antimattering is what we feel inside when our significance has been eroded from us over time throughout our lives.

It's the end result of that slow fade. I came up with a different term that creates it, and I call that systemic unmattering. And this is the environments and the systems that surround us that cause antimattering to happen.

of erasure. And it basically is the existence of us living in what I call a mattering market where we are constantly shown again and again that our worth is contingent on what we produce instead of who we Wow, that's a whole podcast right there that are worth its contingent upon what we produce instead of who we are, instead our nature.

And I think that engenders the term that you bring up in the book called the mattering gap. How do we know that we're living within this gap and maybe just first define that matter and gap?

Well, the the Mattering Gap is really as I was kind of alluding to, it's the distance between your inherent worth and the amount of value that the world allows you to experience.

And I think for many, many people, that gap is a chasm. I know it was for me. So the chasm then between what the world is basically allowing you to experience by virtue of how you feel valued based on the various metrics versus your intrinsic sense of self-worth and mattering.

Yes, well, part of my thinking on this book is derived from the teachings of William James. And I started to really look at this idea of being a source versus being resource.

I think so many of us today are living our lives as a resource, we constantly feel like we have to give of ourselves and yet it's not being returned to us.

So when that happens constantly, your sense of worth over time starts to evaporate slowly, which is why I call it

slow fade, until the vanish eventually happens.

So what or is there, I mean, your book describes clinical evidence that relates higher levels of this feeling of lack of mattering with things like depression, feeling, of loneliness, and even physical ailment.

Talk to us about some of that evidence. Yeah, well, in order to understand this, I needed a case study. I wanted to look at something before and after to kind of analyze the effects of this.

So I'm a huge fan of Malcolm Gladwell, so I don't want to say I am the first person to looks at this case-study, because he used it in the tipping point.

But I used the study of Roseto, Pennsylvania. And if people aren't familiar with this This was a town in Pennsylvania that defied modern medical wonder for decades and decades.

The people there didn't experience the same levels of cardiovascular disease. They didn t experience same level of neurological decline, a physical ailment.

they were much happier Their tables during the week and weekends were overcrowded with neighbors and friends. And then over time, what Stuart Wolf, who was the person who researched this, discovered was that Rosetto started to go towards the national norms that the rest of America happened.

And what he found correlated was that, the more people were exposed to American culture, they more that they started to see common levels of cardiovascular disease, neurological disease and other things start emerging.

in Rosetto. And when they started to look for a common denominator, what they found was that it really amounted to what the work of Robert Waldinger has shown that our good life is very much dependent on the social relationships that we have and connection.

So Rosetto became an excellent case study for this book of what happens when mattering and that felt sense that you matter was present through the communities that were in existence and what happened to us both physically and mentally when maddering is gone.

And then there's a correlation between this sense of invisibility and even things like stress hormones, inflammation, neural circuitry. All of these things can downstream be really consequences of worsening sense, of not mattering, or being basically invisible.

I mean, I think what you're talking about really is supported by Blue Zone's kind of research. Oh, absolutely. that people have to feel as if they matter.

And I think that, I mean, your book makes it very clear that there are correlates then with an increased sense of mattering and belonging and having a role and not being invisible to lower levels of stress hormones and lower level of inflammation and improved brain circuitry.

Yeah, and I don't think people realize how early this begins. I think two people who I've spoken to about this, one being Dana Susskind, who, I love her work, the other being Gordon Flett, often talk about how, early, this mattering instinct becomes apparent in our lives.

The Science of Mattering

By the time kids are three to eight years old, they're in their wet cement years. And Gordon Flett's research has shown that there is a huge parent-child perception gap.

One of the most striking findings I found looking at Flet's work was that nearly 35% of children today feel like they do not matter. But what was interesting and cited in his study is that only 8% percent of parents believe that their child might feel that they don't matter, so I could see that.

One, we've got an issue going on where kids dont feel they matter but then we have a perception issue with parents who can't believe it could be true.

Hey guys, we're going to get right back to the podcast, but I do have a very important message for you. I think many of you will recall a conversation I had here on the Podcast with Dr.

Michael Leone. He is a University of California Irvine neuroscientist and what he studied and we talked about on The Podcast is what is called olfaction, our sense of smell, and how things that stimulate our senses smell are directly wired into the brain's hippocampus and amygdala, and these are the same circuits that govern things like memory and emotion.

You know, most of our sensory inputs get routed through a bunch of relay stations, but our sense of smell actually doesn't. It has a direct line in through the centers that I just described.

And Dr. Leon's work takes full advantage of that pathway and enriches this olfactory pathway with a variety of scents presented to you during your sleep.

That's when your brain is already doing its nightly work, of clearing out the metabolic debris, things like beta amyloid and other accumulated misfolded proteins.

Dr. Leon has done some wonderful clinical research on the idea of stimulating the brain with a variety of different scents during the course of the night.

And he has demonstrated that using this approach in some of his research has shown as much as a 226 percentage increase in memory function and 22 minutes in addition of sleep with his results published across healthy adults, older adults and yes, even people who are suffering from what is called mild cognitive impairment, MCI, what we consider to be the harbinger for further brain decline.

So he and his research team have built a device around this research and that device is call Memory Air. It isn't a pill. It's not a supplement. You put it on your nightstand and it does its work while basically you're sleeping at night.

Their website is memoryair.com. I've been working now with memory air and have developed a relationship such that you can get a 15% reduction in cost of your memory error device should you choose to buy one.

Use the code pearlmutter and this is also going to get you free shipping and a 60 day money back guarantee. These statements have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration and this product is not intended to diagnose, treat or cure or prevent any disease.

Let's get right back to our podcast. So is the teenager seeking the sense of mattering and not being invisible by posting TikTok videos, Instagram live and all of the things, becoming that person.

How does that interface with the of sense matter in society? So, man, this is a big philosophical debate right now, and you kind of have a number of people who are looking at this.

On the one side, you have Jonathan Haidt, who's been studying this and in his book, The Anxious Generation, he has clearly believes that this rise in mental health came about somewhere around 2010 with the advent of the iPhone and then social media behind it.

In the other camp, you have Peter Gray and a number of researchers who believe It has to do with the evolution of our school systems and with No Kid Left Behind and other things that we're treating our schools environment almost like a boardroom, where instead of shareholder value being what they're evaluated against, it's test scores, et cetera, that demonstrate their worth.

I don't think either of them is wrong, but I look at both of those things as an accelerant to a fire that's already been raging. To me, this goes back all the way to when the first factory whistled blue.

I believe this is because that is when our value system started to radically change. We started get valued more and more by what we produce rather than our humanity.

And I when mattering erodes, what I allude to in chapter three of my book is that it's a social immunity issue. And so from generation to generation, that social community is not getting passed down the same way it was before the Industrial Revolution started.

What does that mean, social immunities? As I was going through this book, I had a fantastic mentor who was helping me try to think about when you're trying to solve something as large as what is causing the loneliness epidemic.

I wanted to make sure that my thinking was clear. So I sought out who I think is one of the biggest experts at how do you frame a book right? And that is Dan Heath.

What I learned from Dan is you have to continue asking the hard questions. I started to ask, what is causing this? What is the root cause? And then who is person who's affected the most?

So when I start to get into who gets affected most, I initially thought it was going to be adults. What the research showed is it's our children. And that's where social immunity comes in, because just as what is the rampant conversation today about giving our kids shots to boost their immunity, the same thing goes with their social immunities.

I think where this accelerant has come into play, if a parent is on their phone, disengaged by things that are happening at work and not giving their children their full attention, How many times do you think it's going to take for an excited child to come in and say, mom or dad, you will never imagine what happened today at school.

I drew this incredible drawing, which could be just a bunch of squiggly lines, but when the child gets reinforced time and time, and again, that they're not important and the parent is staring at their phone or their head is somewhere other than with that child.

How many times do you think it takes a child to realize that? They no longer can come to them because that mattering instinct isn't getting reinforced within them.

And I think that this has slowly been occurring for the past 200 years. Yeah. And then oftentimes, I, think, that that is a motivator for this individual, the child in this case, to do whatever he or she can do to hopefully gain a sense of mattering often from that parent or both parents who did not recognize the need early in life.

I mean, I'm speaking now about myself and sometimes it takes an awful long time and digging pretty deep to understand why we are motivated to do some of the things that we do, achieve the thing that And I think a candidate back to early life, invisibility, that was what we experienced.

For people to understand that a lot of this is John's opinion, but a of it isn't. So one of the core researchers I used in this chapter was Albert Bandura.

And, I really looked at his concepts of social learning. And what I was alluding to right there goes into a lot of Bandura's work. Children learn what human worth looks like by observing what the adults in their life model.

So mattering isn't simply taught verbally, it's caught behaviorally. And I think that is one of the most important things that parents who are listening- Well, I could see that as a powerful evolutionary tool for transmitting information for survival to the next generation.

Children, Social Media, and Social Immunity

And it's one way of looking at it that these things matter in life, pay attention to it. These days, what seems to matter to many adults, certainly not all, is the things you mentioned earlier that are going on in their phone

conversations, et cetera, because of the hyper connectedness.

But you have this matter, MATTER framework. Can we unpack that a little bit and then apply that to what can be valuable information for our viewers? Yeah, David, before I get into that, I think there's one other concept that's important for people to understand.

I have in one of my initial chapters, something that I call the mattering pyramid and the Mattering Needs Pyramid. And it's as important as we go into the M. A. T. E. R.

Framework for People to Understand this, is I started to look at this. in ourselves. And so the way I look at it is the foundation of the mattering needs pyramid is internal belief.

I matter to myself. It really gets down to do I possess an internal sense of worth myself that doesn't rise and fall with many of things we've been discussing, like approval, achievement, productivity, or fear of other people's opinions.

The next layer is the relational reflection. Am I seen? Does my existence register to someone else? And this is more than being surrounded by people. It's the felt sense of being seen.

And that's where the third layer comes in, which is emotional resonance. You know, am I known by the people I surround myself with? Then lastly, do I make an impact?

So as I was impacting those four layers, I started throughout these interviews I Was conducting to try to understand, you know, what are the key ingredients that make those layers either stay intact or disappear.

And so I just so happened to come across. six conditions that actually spelled out matter. So M is meaning, A is autonomy, T is trust, t is time, E is energy, and R is reciprocity.

As this applies to our sense of mattering, When I look at meaning here, meaning is really about, am I connected to something in my life that makes me feel significant?

Autonomy is, really this felt sense that I have authorship over my own life, which I think with the rise of AI is becoming more and more difficult for a lot of people to believe.

Trust is really based on a lot of the work of Amy Edmondson in psychological safety. Do I feel safe enough to be fully myself? And I think this is one of conditions where many people start feeling invisible because they don't feel save.

Time here is a little bit different than the Oliver Berkman type of definition. What I'm really getting at here with time is do I have enough shared presence to actually experience my life and my relationships.

Energy is really the return on energy that I'm getting, and this really goes back to that source versus resource. Is my live replenishing me, am I a source, or is it simply extracting from me more of the resource?

And then the last word R is reciprocity. And a lot of this work really came from my study of Sonia Lybramerski and Harry Reese and their idea of a shared seesaw.

This really gets to the concept about is care contribution and significance in my life moving both directions? Am I not only giving it, but am I getting it back?

So those are the six components of matter. And Brain Defenders is my new book, clearly the book that I have spent my entire career building. It's officially launched and it's available for order right now.

And I truly believe that this is the most important work that i've ever done. Inside what you will find are the hidden threats that are working against your brain right now and also the exact science-backed actions that you can take

to protect your memory, to your cognitive function, your clarity, you're independence, and your ability to interact with other people starting today, not someday, but actually starting For those of you who want to be all in, I'm excited to announce that we now have the Brain Defenders Immersion Course, which is a guided path to put the very work that was described in the book Brain defenders into action, step by step, so that protecting your brain isn't something that you just read about, it's something you actually participate in.

It's actually something Your brain's future is actually being decided right now by the choices that you are making today. So order Brain Defenders and join the Immersion Course today and you can get all this information by visiting my website which is drperlmutter.com.

To learn more about both the immersion course and the book. I wrote this book for you and for everyone you love. Let's defend your brain together and defend the brains of everyone.

You love as well. Remember the time to defend. Your brain is right now. So what what do parents do to help their children realize that There's more to life than winning, than grade, then achievement, and really allow them to focus on their self-worth, why they matter.

How do we help parents distance their interaction with children away from the perpetrated metrics, I think, that society indicates are the benchmarks that children must achieve?

My research kept bringing me to two conditions which represent too many households throughout the world. In one household, a child is taught that by being silent, that is how they're seen in the household.

So this is the child who's taught very early on that being invisible in that family ecosystem is what makes them feel loved. I think the more prevalent one that many people, especially in Western culture, probably see play out are the households where you have to earn your sense of being loved, and that could be through the braids that you achieve, through what you do on a sports field, what do you on the dance floor, you know, in a gymnastics class that feel like you constantly have to perform in order to get that feeling that you're valued seen and heard by your family.

So I think what parents can do, and it's a lot simpler than we ever think it is going to be, the first thing is, you can take two moments. throughout your day.

The first would be the first moment that the child sees you when they come down for breakfast in the morning. Instead of being on a device. Did you do your homework?

Yeah. Saying things like that. It's being fully present for about 90 seconds with them and just showing them, like, let your face light up. Let them see that they're the most important thing in your world.

Tell them how much they matter to you.

Mattering at Home and at Work

The next thing which it gets to the homework is instead of asking them about their homework and things like that, you can change the whole conversation to make it be more observable.

Like who made you feel like you mattered today at school? Who did you make feel they were important in school or even in exercises we see a child doing instead Like praising them for completing a homework assignment or completing, a puzzle.

You can simply say, I saw how much effort you put into that, John. And I am so proud of. how much you've given to that and how it shows that you're trying to complete this project or this homework assignment rather than giving them ultimatum.

It's interesting that chose your own name for that. I'm just saying. What about in the workplace? I mean, you know,

workers are really valued for their productivity, not for humanity.

So does it not extend to the workplace? Man, David, this is one of my favorite things to talk about. When I got to Lowe's, I was hired by Lows Home Improvement to fix the worst hacking incident in retail history.

So you would think that in itself would have been a big enough job. Within the first week, I'm called into the Chief Human Resources Officer's office.

And she says, John, for the time in Lowe's history, we decided to conduct an employee engagement survey. So not only do I have to fix this broken cybersecurity issue, i'm told by her that out of 350,000 employees, 1,800 stores, tons of supply chain nodes, that my group is the least engaged in the entire company out of 350,000 people.

And so for the next two to three weeks, I'm trying to figure out why. So I would talk to peers in IT group, and I'd talk with our business customers. I kept hearing the same thing.

You've got to replace everyone who's in your entire group. They don't care, they're worthless, unskilled. And then I started to actually talk to my employees.

And what I realized was that none of them had a clue how the job that they were doing mattered in the big scheme of things. They didn't understand how a computer incident in data center mattered to a customer who was shopping in a store or to low shareholder value or profits or expenses in company.

So the first thing I realized I needed to do was they had to have a line of sight between why they were valued and the company strategy. And so one, you needed it to show that linkage.

But the other thing, I found was that people weren't talking to them. about them. I mean, no one was asking them, what are your aspirations? What's going on in your life?

Are you trying to create a family? are you going back to school? what do you want to do longer in career? Is this where you wanna stay in you career. And then the other thing I found is that they were all order takers and no-one had given them the ability to become order makers.

who felt that they didn't have the ability to come up with ideas on their own on how to solve problems. So, of course, if your managers and your directors are tuned out, what do you think is going to happen to your employees?

And this is what is happening in so many environments is we treat everyone the same. We're not situational at all about what's going on and we don't concentrate on making the employees themselves feel that they're seen valued and understood and are important no matter what level they are in the company.

You have a quote in your book, my usefulness was undeniable. My humanity was optional. It seems like if you want productivity, you need to change your emphasis and recognize the humanity of individuals.

I learned that in running my medical practice. People often throw the term around, well, we treat each other like family. It's often way overused in business.

boy, it becomes a place where you want to go and you wanna do your best because you're a part of a team and your recognized as having value on that team.

You had an event earlier that was pivotal in your life where your nine-year-old son asked you why you never laugh. What happened to you at that point?

Yeah. I want to talk about two different things. So, um, here I, I wanna go back to what you just said about my humanity because that moment and my son's question came around, uh, around the same time in my life.

At this point in time, was a, a C-level executive working in, in one of the largest computer manufacturers on the planet, at a household name that anyone would be aware of with a billionaire founder who is now in the top five high net worth people on the Forbes list.

And at this time, I had been put in charge of a failed acquisition. Um, and I was spending countless weeks having to go to India, trying to turn around these 30,000 employees that we're trying absorb in a $5 billion entity.

Man, it was tough and I was working my butt off. I had just gotten back. It's like a Monday and I get into this meeting where we're talking about it and the way I was just treated by some of the presidents for why wasn't this thing turning around as quickly as they expected it to.

They could care less about the physical toll that was having on me, my family, and my relationships, physical health, emotional. All they wanted to see was results and they didn't care what the expense was.

And this was at a point in time. where I didn't realize how invisible I was feeling. I Was in the middle of this slow fade on kind of on the cusp of hitting the full hockey stick to feeling full numbness in my life.

And what my son was experiencing was every sense of aliveness of me feeling joy in was being extracted from me because I was giving so much to the constant churn of this job that everything else that mattered in my life, even the most important things, became secondary or tertiary elements in my life because there was so much pressure on me to turn this thing around that even when I was in his presence or their presence, my mind was a million miles away.

And this is why I'm not just a person here who's pontificating. I felt this and I think we're best position to serve I think we all feel it. I mean, I thing that's the value of your book for those who have been pushing all these years.

We're all feeling it and when you were at that time, were you in India or the company that you're having to work with was in No, we acquired a company that was based in Dallas.

It was a consulting services business, so the vast majority of their employees, including the company I was working for, had 130,000 employees. But I would say 90% of them were outside of the US.

Okay, so is this paradigm that's set up about lack of value of workers, there's cultural nuance to that, isn't there? Well, I mean, There's definite cultural and nuance.

You know, and I've been lucky enough to travel to 50 plus countries. So you see it with the different regions that you work in. Hey everyone, we're going to get right back to the podcast, but I have an important message for you.

If you're caring for somebody with Alzheimer's, any other form of dementia or even what we call mild cognitive impairment, or maybe you've received one of these diagnoses yourself, Or if you are focused on preventing cognitive decline, I want to speak directly to you for just a moment about some serious research that's going on looking at what we call 40 Hz light and sound simulation.

We've been actually talking about that on the program. Here's the challenge. Not all 40Hz light devices are the same. Most use what's called stroboscopic light, and that is the type of light that flashes, then you can see the flashing.

And that can cause nausea, it can cost headaches. And if you can't tolerate that, you won't use it. So there is a company called Optosudix. They've solved this problem with a patented technology that still gives you the 40 Hertz light flashing, but through light that looks and feels quite normal.

It's the device I actually have on my desk when I'm working. And that's why this company sees a 94% adherence rate and significant improvements across various metrics, including mood, energy, focus, sleep, and memory.

And the light is called the EV light, EVY. You can use it as I do when you're working on your computer, when your

reading, watching TV, eating breakfast, whatever.

It becomes really part of your day, not just another burden, it's kind of passive in the background. So I recommend giving it a try for 90 days. And if you and your family don't see value in it, then you can return the device for a full refund.

They cover the shipping both ways.

Worth, Purpose, and Closing Reflections

This is a device that really is risk free in terms of getting involved with 40 Hertz stimulation. Important information. Let's get right back to our podcast.

So at the end of your book, you have a great quote. It says, your worth is already a completed fact. Okay, then why do so many of us really feel like this is unfinished business that we really probably should stop trying to earn it?

Well, part of the inspiration for that quote came from Richie Davidson, who's a who actually exist in your space, David, and also Yonge Mingor Rinpoche, who I think is one of the greatest teachers, to me an equivalent of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, on innate basic goodness.

And what Mhingwar Rinpoche was telling me is that our innate, basic, goodness is always there. But so many of us have forgotten that, because we're forgetting who we are.

And so my point was our worth starts coming back to us when we stop pretending we're someone else than who we were intended to be and the superpowers that we put on earth to use in service of humanity.

And I'm starting to see it is that more people are starting to realize the need to end the polarization and other things that we're feeling right now in society and getting back to the innate basic goodness that all of us have in our core.

Wow. That's a great conclusion. So, you know, the message here is to realize that we've already done the work, and you don't need to keep proving things to yourself with external validation, that you are internally validated for however much time you have left.

Do good things and recognize the worth of others and why others matter. Yeah, I'm going to give people two great examples of this. Like we see the entrepreneurs who we aspire to be.

One of these for me was Blake Mycoskie, who was the founder of Tom Shoes. And I recently interviewed Blake and he started a new movement about being enough because After doing everything that he did to create Toms, give away 100 million pairs of shoes, sell his company for hundreds of millions of dollars, he still felt like he wasn't enough.

Another great example is I just interviewed the actor Josh Duhamel. And Josh told me that after everything that he's accomplished, Transformers, the movies, he still feels like there's more to prove.

And he has recently, over the past decade or so, bought a cabin because he is trying to reset his life, because he's realized that at the end of the day, does he want his kids to remember him as this famous actor, or does want them to remeber him for being the dad who was around, who spent time with them fully in presence?

So my point in raising these two gentlemen is this can happen to anyone. It doesn't matter what your occupation is, how great you are, and how low you're.

to hundreds of millions of people around the world. And that's why, to me, this book is so important. Well, it brings up a question in my mind. What is the difference between having something to prove and having to accomplish?

You know, playing upon what you just said. We don't want to not accomplish great things, but, I mean, there's sort

of a bit of nuance to the term prove, that we have to proof something versus accomplish a goal.

Well, to me, it's, and I wish I would have learned this when I was much younger. It's refusing to wake up one day and to realize that you become the manager of a life you've never consciously chosen.

You wake and you are the manger of the life that didn't choose. And then what happens? We start experiencing the slow fade that we started the whole conversation with because we start losing more and more of ourselves.

through the interactions that we have through, the environments and systems that exist in, which is the whole systemic unmattering and where that comes into play of us living in a mattering market.

Well, John, let me tell you, I can absolutely relate. I could relate 100% to so much of what you've written about, and it's just really great information.

It's so helpful, especially not only as a person who ran a business, but also as and recognizing the lack or the degree of invisibility that one may have experienced in childhood, how that may had been perpetrated as a parent on one's children and as an employer.

So there's great information here for, I think, various stages of our lives. I the most important thing that you offer up is that, okay, That's the paradigm under which we grew up or which became bosses or whatever it may be in our relationships.

And most importantly with your book, okay, once you recognize that's half the battle, here's what to do to really regain visibility, really, you know, regain the sense of mattering in this world.

And importantly, I think, not to be thrown under or given second order status, the recognition of the role of others in terms of their worth and their ability to matter and ultimately their visibility.

I physician colleagues, we all can kind of easily fall into that trap of this is the cancer patient, this the hypertensive, whatever it may be, or here's the patient with a glucose of 285. I think it was Hippocrates who may have said that it's much more important to know the person who has the disease than the diseases the And I think that for me as a physician summarizes my take home message from your book.

So thank you. Thank you for sharing this with us and writing this book Thank you, David. And I would just want to conclude with this. Angela Duckworth recently released a book called Situated.

Her book is about the environments that we exist in. I think it has a close tie-in to this whole concept of systemic unmattering. What I want end with is we've gotten very good at individualizing human problems.

If you're burned out, fix yourself. If you're lonely, fix yourself. If your anxious, optimize yourself But my question throughout all of this is, what if some of these things are also signals?

What if the environments we're living and working in are repeatedly asking and teaching people that they're replaceable, that their voice doesn't matter, or their value is conditional?

And I think that's the beginning point of the recognition. And it's also what we need to repair in each person who's feeling those things. Yeah, I hear you loud and clear.

There's no question that when you look at society, and I'm not pointing fingers, but especially in younger generations, it is just a quest for recognition, identity, And I think, to be fair, technology is significantly responsible for that to a big, significant degree.

And you're right. I mean, it's time we moved away from that and begin retracing our steps and recognizing the value of individuals. So, John, thank you for spending time with us today.

This is great, great and very helpful information. Thank you, David. It was an honor to be on your show. Thank You so much for having me. You bet. John Miles, author of the book, The Mattering Effect, I want to thank you for joining us today on The Empowered Neurologist and reminding us of really something that is so easily lost in a culture that has dominated, that values so highly the notion of performance and productivity.

And that, is that our worth is not something we have to earn. We have worth. regardless of those extrinsic metrics. What is especially resonating with me is that mattering is not something simply acting as an abstract psychological concept.

Feeling seen, feeling valued and connected to others influences how we all experience things like stress, how We ultimately inhabit our very lives. So the book is exciting.

It challenges each of us to ask two important questions. First, do I truly believe that I matter and do the people around me know that they matter to me?

John's new book, is The Mattering Effect, Creating a Life of Meaning and Worth. And I encourage you to read it. and share this conversation with really anyone who needs to hear its message because it's really an important message.

John Miles, thank you for joining us here on The Empower Neurologist. I'm Dr. David Prumler and thank to all who have joined us today. We will be back soon.

Bye for now.