## Introduction to Dr. Dravon James

Now, speaking of inspirational work, I was so inspired when I ran into Dr. Dravon James and I spent some time on our website today. I was just so appreciative.

Not just of her her insights, but also of her energy. And I think you'll get her energy. You'll catch her, you'll get her as you share with her today as she shares with you.

And she is an inspirational speaker. She's a radio host. She's a life coach, and she's the author of a book called Freedom is Your Birthright. She is the founder of the Next Step Leadership Academy and Everyday Peace, a platform for her to help and inspire others to build the life of their dreams.

She also hosts her own weekly radio show, “Dr. Dravon James Every Day Peace” on mind, body, spirit FM. And you can find her at our website. drdravonjames.com Please visit her there.

You will be as inspired as I was and I know you will be inspired when you connect with her in the next hour. It is such a pleasure to have you on the show.

I am super excited to be here with you. I'm looking forward to sharing with your amazing audience. And I love what you said at the intro. Think of this as self-care.

I love that. I absolutely love that. Absolutely. It's so important that we fill our minds with positive media, and this is a great place to start. So one of the things I was so struck by when I was reading about your work was your approach to gratitude, and you're talking about finding the gratitude in everything.

You know, I was teaching a meditation retreat this last week, and, one of the participants said, well, Dawson, you know, inner peace, equanimity, indirect Willoughby.

And that's all very well for you to talk about. You, you know, have a nonprofit and a great business. And and then there will these other other people who are teaching these things, and they have great lives.

But, you know, I have suffering. I have problems in my life. I can't get there. I can't do this. And so I'm the exception to the rule, like an icon with gratitude.

And I call it states of inner peace. And what do you tell people who just feel as though their circumstances, Dravon, are just conspiring against them?

That they just can't get out of that trap and enter those kinds of wonderful states of of well-being, equilibrium. Yeah. So and that's that's a great question.

And, and I want to just go slow here for a minute because I want our listening audience to know one thing that, first of all, we're all human.

## Finding Gratitude in Hardship

But secondly, whatever you're going through, whatever you're feeling, it's real because you're feeling it. And I as a, as a, as a woman, as a life coach, as a human being, extend my heart to you because I know that if you could choose a circumstance to be in or you wouldn't choose that.

And if you could, if you knew the magic answer to make it better, you'd do that. But, here you are in the middle of what you're going through, and I'm going to talk for a moment as though I was coaching Salem, because this is so

very important.

This is such a great question to open up with, is that, first of all, congratulate patience because you're here telling us or you're in this moment telling yourself or telling your story, which makes you not a victim, makes you a victor, or only the victor can tell the story, right?

The victim is not around to tell the story anymore. You're telling the story, which is good. You're you're in that place, to take that healing to the next level.

You want to move on to what I call gratitude, Nanette. Grateful for what you've gone through. I know that's we say that a lot, don't we? We say, oh, I'm so grateful for this challenge.

But honestly, we really wish we could get to where we need to be without that. and, let's just be real here, right? I can remember I can remember a real story.

I can remember being in what I call the drive factor of pain in my life and telling on my knees, telling God, I really think I can learn this lesson, whatever it is, without all of this pain, I really do.

I really do. I think I learn it better without the pain. well, whether I thought it or not, I still had to go through the pain. So here's how I want to tell you to go through that situation.

As you go through it and you hitch your wagon to anything that you can be great for, for, right? That's how you ride a roller coaster. I'm a person who's afraid of roller coasters. That.

But I've ridden them and, with my kids and with friends and I would say, okay, I gotta find something to be excited about because I'm about to go on the ride of a lifetime.

Right. And what I would find, you know, I teach my clients in life is that when you feel like you're in what we call the dark night of the soul, and things are happening that you wish were not happening, you're going to look for something to be grateful for, but you're not going to just look for something to be grateful for.

You're going to use that something, whatever it is. And if you're struggling for something, if you are blinking right now. This was one of the things that I wrote in my Act of Gratitude card that said, I wrote one day when I was in the middle of what I call the trifecta of pain, and I couldn't think of anything to write down.

And it occurred to me that I was blinking my eyes without assistance, and I got super duper happy about it, because I know there's somebody out there suffering from chronic dry eyes, or this who would love to be blinking their eyes without assistance.

And it sounds really small, but you go to wherever you have to go. You pick whatever you can hit your wagon to, and you get excited about it. You get so excited by that.

You don't want that thing to be taken away from you. You're so excited that you have it, and that energy of gratitude has so much power. Once you find something to be grateful for.

And you, I call it active gratitude because you're going to get actively jazzed and excited about whatever it is from the soles of your feet to the top of your head.

Once you get actively grateful for it, that energy attracts more things into your life that you can be grateful for. That is how you do this in the middle of the storm.

And I hope that I've made it simple enough, because I know that there are lots of people, lots of people, and I've been in that place that I understand that last.

People who feel that right now, if you only knew what I was going through, you'd understand why I have nothing to

be grateful for. And while I empathize with you as a person who loves humanity and wants you to do better, I can tell you that that energy will only draw more things for you to feel really, really bad about.

And we're going to we're going to use this our ability to switch energies, to harness the power of gratitude. It's very important. That is such a powerful, concrete example to that.

All you could find in your trifecta pain was that you could blink your eyes and it's you know, I sometimes think about this when I'm writing for my community, I usually write a Thanksgiving letter or Christmas letter.

Think about the holidays. I think about, what I want to share with people. And in meditation, which I teach, we often start with the breath. The breath is the fundamental part of each every, every meditation, school.

And it's so simple just to think about your breath as writing a blog about breath recently and Dravon. So I suddenly thought I had the same thought about you blinking your eyes.

I thought, you know how many people in the world have trouble breathing? And so I went on the World Health Organization website, and I was absolutely shocked at the number of people in the world who had respiratory difficulties, who had things like COPD, who have problems with, their passages, who have infections, who have various other things that they can't even do, that basic thing of taking a breath.

And so we can be grateful for something as simple as the fact that I can breathe in, I can breathe out. So you're right, there's always something. Yeah. And you and you got to get really.

And I love the fact that you said you went on there and you read how many people don't have this simple gift of being able to breathe on their own, being able to take a deep breath.

Right. And then when you really contemplate that from the from the from the stance, the viewpoint that look at me, look at me breathing in and out as often as I want, controlling it, stopping it, making it go fast, making it go slow.

You, you you would be amazed. It sounds like a game. It sounds too simplistic and perhaps is that way by design. But this is really, really simple stuff.

And sometimes we overcomplicate stuff. But really, the best, the most profound solutions are in simplicity.

## From Pharmacy to Purpose

One thing I'm curious about with you personally, and, when I was reading your bio, reading your website, I, I saw that you had a career in pharmacy as a pharmacist originally, and that's just a whole such a different career from being a life post and, a life coach and being an actress and all the other things you've done to inspire people.

And I'm just curious, what was the the pivot point for you between those two radically different careers? Yeah. So funny, I got to tell you the story.

And so I still am actively practicing pharmacy. I have my doctorate degrees in pharmacy and I run hospital pharmacies and so people often ask me, how does a pharmacist or become an actress or a life coach?

And in my mind, although I lived many years compartmentalizing them for the world, for the external world, but internally they were all ways for me to help, and I felt like that was my biggest mission in life is that I wanted to help people.

And I felt like, well, if I had this problem, perhaps somebody else had this problem. If I figured out how to be as successful with my happiness, given these so-called traumas and tragedies, then I can help somebody else.

And so when I was 17 years old, or maybe I was 16, I don't remember, but I happened to go on an interview with some recruiters from a pharmacy school, and I thought, well, I want to go to medical school.

Pharmacy school is a great way to get there. And, before I got there, the summer that I was leaving for medical for pharmacy school, my brother gave me the book entitled The Power of Positive Thinking by Norman Vincent Peale.

And I read that book and I knew after reading that book, and I read it several times, well over 20 times that summer before I left, I knew that I was committed to go to pharmacy school.

It was an external way to help people, but whatever had just happened and clicked inside of me after meeting that tiny little book. That's really the way that I wanted to help people to have an impact on them from the inside out.

Because I knew then, and I know now, that if you can heal your perspective on life. The whole journey looks and feels different, right? But you may not be able to control every external thing that happens.

We can't write, and I've been telling people that my job all day life is like a box of chocolates. You remember that from, Forrest Gump, right? We never know what we're going to get.

But here's what we do know. We do know that we have control over the story that we give ourself about the thing that's happening. So I see these worlds, pharmacy, acting, life coaching to be so intertwined now.

And I always did, but now I can verbally express it because for years I didn't. I was like, okay, I kept this compartmentalize and that compartmentalized.

But it's all a part of me wanting to give to other people, the gift that they already have inside of them. So I'm not really giving it to them. I'm showing them where it is. It's.

Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. It's the inside of them and bringing it out. And you're right. I'm so glad you began with saying that you empathize with whatever pain people are in, because you have to start there.

I know, that's, a mistake I was making. I wrote a course on coaching psychology that's widely used now, and, one of the my early, really big mistakes I was making when I was working with people was not moving to where they really are.

And then they do sometimes need those external, interventions as well as the internal ones. And they definitely need the empathy. They need to have somebody who's really there for them where they are.

And so, yeah, it's, it's it's, it's, it's, it's the starting point of how you really are able to then, help people suggest to people the possibility, of movement.

I know a lot of, my work, too, has been with people with PTSD veterans especially. And often they're just so stuffed they just can't see any way out of their their issues usually have to have them connect with another veteran that will help them, get the idea that, hey, it's possible to escape this, but, you know, I'm sure you see people too, in among your social circle, your friends and family.

And I know I people in my family, too, that they're just stuck and, Oh, I wish I could help them more and I, I can't, you know, I, I don't know where you are in this whole sort of meditation about this, but, I know that, I just, you know, those those people who feel that that again, this is the box.

I'm in it. And, I, I can't get out. Yeah. That's such a great point to me. And I love the fact that we're really delving into some real hard issues because people really need this.

And so I do have, many clients. And in my friend and family circle, I would say myself at different points in my life where you get fixated on something that's caused you pain and it becomes almost like a friend, right?

Because if you turn around, it's there's like a best friend to you. You get a moment of silence and your mind goes right to that thing, and you keep me telling yourself that story over and over again until you realize how exhausting it is and how heavy you feel.

And so the image in meditation a few times, and I and I encourage meditation wherever people want to call it, going into the silence, you know, whatever words, feels comfortable to you.

But I encourage that because it's a way to just lay that burden down for a second and be able to, like, wow. And so, I don't know if you get this a lot and you probably do, but people will tell me, I can't, I can't, steady my mind long enough to meditation, meditate because this is right there.

And I have this little trick and I'll share this here that I give, my clients and stuff, but I work with them, I say, so the mind is a is a tool. Just like a hammer. Right?

And a hammer can be used to build a house. And that same hammer can be used to break a window. It's just a tool. You can use it to build a you can use it to destroy.

And right now your tool is destroying you. It's destroying your peace, right? It's destroying your creativity. Right? Your rest. And so why don't we restructure that?

Well, why don't we take that and call it the hammer gone rogue, right. So it's just beating you up. And so I tell the message, so we're going to just sit in silence.

Are we going to give the mind a little break? And how we do that is we send it on a mission and we go into the silence. We close our eyes and I say, now what?

You tell your mind to go look for light. And you'd be amazed at how the mind just wants you to direct it. Right. And doing that helps you to get that.

## Turning Stumbling Blocks into Stepping Stones

It's maybe just two seconds that you get this hand it just off of your shoulders and you realize, okay, I only had it for two seconds, but boy felt good.

I want to feel it again. Right. And it just that exercise. You just close your eyes. You just sit there. You give your mind an activity because it wants you to command it, but it's got it all.

It's like a two year old right into you need direction, but without direction. They throw tantrums right? You got to sort of sit down with the two year old and get the toys in place and rub their back.

The mind is the same way. So you sit there with it and you close your eyes. You say, okay, here's what we got to do. I know there's light in here somewhere.

I want you to go find it and it goes off. It leads you along for a few minutes. Why? Goes and looks for the light. And in the beginning it'll come back in 1 or 2 seconds.

No light. But we get these problems and then bring the problem back to you. But you start to. The more you do that in a search of it a little bit longer, a little bit longer and give you some break.

So I do tell my clients that you've got a you've got to want to first. You've got to want to you've, you've got to realize first that it's heavy, this burden is heavy.

And that here's a, here's the big thing. Awesome is that you've been thinking about it for two, three days and it hasn't changed. So you're thinking is not the solution.

You've been thinking about it for two, three months. It hasn't changed. You're thinking is not the solution. And here we go. I have people been thinking about it 2 or 3 years.

You're thinking about it hasn't changed it. You're thinking is not the solution. So would you follow into a solution

because there is a solution. There is a solution.

You already know what it is is inside of you. You just haven't tapped into it. One of the things you have on your website is about turning your stumbling blocks into stepping stones.

And I'm so intrigued by how you came up, that concept and what you recommend people do, because often their stumbling blocks are all they can see. You know, the great big, huge boulder in front of me here that I can't move.

I turn that into a stepping stone. So how do we shift our perspective? How do we change our our way of seeing those things that seem to be just insurmountable obstacles on our path?

Yeah, I love that question to you, because there's stumbling blocks and our focus is we're focused on the right. We're so focused on them. And over the years, what I learned in coaching others and just paying attention to myself, too, is that it really doesn't work for you to tell somebody, oh, well, don't focus on it.

Try to think about something else. And it's like, okay, you've pointed out the, you know, pink bunny in the room and it's all I can focus on is the pink bunny in the rooms are sometimes our stumbling blocks are like that.

If you have a problem, you get for some of us we get really fixated on the problem. Okay, so what does that mean? We have strong ability to to focus. And I and I say, okay, you have right now you are hyper focusing.

That's excellent. Let's use that. Let's not. So I'm a big proponent of using the tools that show up in the moment. And if you are hyper focusing on the problem, great, we're going to use it.

I'm not going to try to move you off of that. We're going to use it. We're going to turn that problem into a stepping stone, because that problem has ignited your super power, if you will, to focus.

So now let's use that focus in gently. So we we just sort of work right there. And I talk about the trifecta of pains. I use this triangle. Like I said, everything in life, all of my goals are attached to my health, my wealth and my relationships.

And so and I have found that to be true with just about everybody that I focus, that I've worked with your your your happiness, your pain points are generally connected to one of those three categories your health, your wealth, or your relationship.

So just to give you an example, if you're a stumbling block happens to be a, a relationship issue. You're hyperfocus on that relationship and that relationship issue that I have.

You dig dig deeper because we're I'm focused and I have you start writing down. So let's focus this drill in and I want you to start focusing on the relationship that you have with.

So, you know, give me three words that describe you. And then we'll just drill in why that word into. And after a while you find yourself, you're lifted.

You start lifting. You start lifting. You're still hyper focused. We're still in the relationship category. We just maneuvered a little bit and now I'm that stumbling block which was being hyper focused.

Our relationship has become a stepping stone into deeper self-awareness. And in that area of deeper self-awareness, well, a whole world of possibilities and creativity open up for us.

And perhaps we discover more parts of ourselves where we're either able to find a creative way out of this. That's the situation that we're in, or free ourselves to move.

And so that's what I call the process of turning a stumbling block into a stepping stone, looking at whatever that stumbling block would treat that draws that with you, in you, and turn those traits into tools that can enhance our

journey.

That is such a powerful way to flip it from being that making the very obstacle that is obstructing you into the fuel to actually drive your transformational journey.

It's a brilliant idea. I love that that that way of of handling it. I'm just curious as the minute, one big time in your life when you do that to shift some thing that you were working on personally.

Oh my goodness. And I talked about my trifecta of pain, and it was a season of my life where, my health, my wealth and my relationships were all negatively impacted.

At least that's how I felt in that moment. I was, in 20 years of marriage. And I realized that, my gosh, what I thought was going to be a lifetime of marriage was not going to be a lifetime of marriage.

And so my relationship was fractured. And then I got diagnosed with an autoimmune disease, and I lost my job. And here I was in this trifecta of pain.

And in that moment, three huge stumbling blocks. And I said, where am I now? It drove me inward to just analyze. And I became hyper focus on how I moved on the earth and what was the message in the footprint that I was saying, setting forth, you know, how had this happened?

You know, my job lost the funding for my position. And I'm, you know, I'm out of a job, my health.

## Smile Journals and Daily Superpowers

And I thought, wow, this is a great experiment if I can use these tools that I had been studying in teaching, you talked about journaling. I had I have journals from 1986, you know, all the way.

So in journaling and if I can use these tools, I'm really to utilize what I call the trifecta of pain to turn that into a stepping stone. I'm really going to be able to teach this from a different level.

And that's what I did. I, those three things were happening in my life all at the same time. Imagine that. And it was no wiggle room. I it was nowhere for me to run and, and and, I had to face it.

And I faced it using these principles. Here's where I am. This this is what I'm doing. I was hyper focused on, the things, me how could I have ended in this situation?

And I just start taking these deep dives and said, okay, this is what you see. This relates to this philosophy to this. And I started walking it out. In fact, that's when I wrote my book, Freedom Is Your Birthright.

In that period. One of the wonderful concepts I saw on your website was a smile Journal driven, a smile journal. I was so tickled to read about that. Please tell us more.

Oh, yes. Dawson. Well, I but like you coach a lot of people, and sometimes people get into a rut, and, I'm a life coach, not a therapist. So I don't profess any clinical, you know, treatment of depression.

But I get people who've been down for a little while, and and they just want to feel better. And what I am mindful of is that in all of my years of coaching, what I know is that we are not as self-aware as we think we are.

Right? We probably could tell you more about the presidential election or being a celebrity or athlete, but what we can tell you about ourselves, yeah, but we don't spend a lot of time just observing ourselves, just being with self and being aware of so.

So I have this smile journal and it came about when working with clients and I've been doing it. I do it for myself. I, you know, I encourage clients to do it is to spend time with a little journal or a little index card.

I keep index cards with me and I catch myself smiling. And I love a journal. I have mine in my hand and so right. Write this journal all time and when I catch myself smiling, I say, oh, I just snapped and I'll write down what caused me to smile.

It could be I walked past this fascinating little girl today who had these gorgeous little shoes, and they were just so beautiful. And I smiled. It was made me.

I looked at her, she smiled, and I had my little journal and stuff and I wrote that down. I was out for a walk and I wrote it down. Little girl. Beautiful white shoes made me smile and it reminds me at the end of the day, we'll talk about a process, that I use of ending the day as a superhero, and it helps to have a good night's sleep.

When you can go through your smile, journal and pick and just read quickly. Maybe you've written down, 3 or 5 things that made you smile. You realize no matter how difficult the day was and we have some difficult days, we do.

No matter how difficult the day was. You found 2 or 3 things to smile about. You're not as miserable as your mind would want you to believe. You're not.

But you know your mind is having you focus on something that's causing you to be retraumatized over and over again. Your mind is being used to as a hammer to break the window, instead of as a hammer to build the house.

And the smile journal helps you reorganize your mind and that that tool of your mind start to do what it's supposed to do encourage you to build to your next level of greatness.

So Smile Journal is a tool to help just perspective. Switch the perspective mindset to help reorganize and re reactive. Redirect the mind to it to what it should be doing.

to help you, not to destroy you. Dravon, you mentioned earlier your superpower. What do you mean by your superpower? Oh my goodness. And we all have them.

I mentioned earlier about we talked about turning, stumbling blocks into stepping stones and one of the things we talked about, which was it seems negative in the moment is hyper focus, right?

We can hyper focus. But I want you to think about something. One of my favorite movies, at least for the, the I guess the action was The matrix, right?

And, how they could do things in slow motion out. I equate a quick bit with, hyper focus and like, oh, they can really see the details. Right. And so when we get really, annoyed or really stressed, we have certain things that happen and some things in our character.

And I encourage you to pay attention to that. Right. Because that thing that's happening can be used as a stepping stone, whatever it is. Right. you become super sensitive, right?

Well, you become then you become super in tune with yourself. Then you start moving towards things, gravitating towards things that attract you to your next level of greatness.

But when I talk about the super power, I specifically mean you're super you being a super hero and ending your day as a super hero. So that's, you know, you have the super power to do that.

And how that looks is this when I like to begin my day with gratitude, I set out. That's my intention. I'm going to find something, hitch my wagon to that star of gratitude, and I'm going to lean on it all day long.

I write it down an index card. I take it with me right at the end of the day, when I get in the bed and I'm getting quiet, there's a tendency for the mind again to start wanting to use it.

Hammers up breaking windows, right? Oh, you didn't do this. Oh, you, you know, look at you. You ate too much

pizza. Too much cake, too much candy. You're such a loser.

The mind does that because it thinks it can correct me and help me by criticizing me. It doesn't work. So here's what I do. I sit there as a superhero and I write down everything.

I retell the story of my day, and I make myself the hero. Well, I may have eaten three pieces of pizza. I may have done that. But did I walk to the, you know, do I do any walking today?

Did I, did I say a kind word to somebody? I write all these things down because I am painting the image of myself as the woman I like to be. We talked to the beginning before the show came on.

Act as if this is me. Is a superhero.

## Active Gratitude and Closing Advice

So I look for those things. I flip through my smile journal because I notice something, see how attuned I am with the beauty, with love of other people.

I in my day would compliments towards me and I don't make these things up. There are things that I actually did or didn't do was I in a meeting that was highly charged with negativity, but I kept my cool and calm.

I write that down right and I in my days, sometimes I don't even write it down. I'm in the bed and I just start visualizing me with a cape on a superhero who did these wonderful things.

And they may be small things, because that's really what super people do, is they do small things. We all do small things, and they end up creating a huge life of happiness.

The life that we want to have. It's different for me, as it is for Dawson, as it is for every listener that we have on here. But we all have creative power over the life that we are building.

And ending your day on those high notes. Seeing yourself as a superhero is your superpower, and I encourage people to do that because you sleep better and you wake up in the morning and you're not so down on yourself.

You feel like, yeah, I'm pretty important. I'm important because I'm kind. I'm important because I listen. Whatever the traits are that you're looking for in yourself.

Yeah. And it's also where being mindful and then reviewing your day mindfully at the end of the day, and then then shifting the balance to all the positive.

And every time we fire those positive neurons in our brains, we strengthen those neural pathways. They become more and more active. And then that gradually becomes a part of our personalities.

So practicing that over and over and over again can really start to shift. People that are stuck in, in the ways we've talked about here. And I so appreciate that emphasis you have on using that power.

And again, that's a power you only get if you use it. So you have that power to reshape the way you see the day, to reframe the way you see your day, to consciously reframe the way you see your day.

And do that tonight. So here you are, Dr. Dravon James is giving you this, this remarkable insight to shape your day that way. At the end of each day, revise your reality to remember those things that were positive, that were uplifting even though everything wasn't perfect in the day.

So do it tonight. Write that down now. Make sure you do it tonight. Listen. Be inspired. Take action. So I'm so grateful that we have this information and now it's time to put it into practice.

Just give us 2 or 3 other tips in closing Dravon, that we can apply in that way in our lives right now. Oh my goodness. I want to give you this one. I sort of alluded to it.

I said that I start my day with gratitude, and I have a practice called an Active Gratitude card. And again, I'm focusing on your mindset because it's so important.

So here's tip number one. Your mind wants to deal in the past to criticize you. So you have to control that. You know what's going to happen. So first thing in the morning you take a little card.

You write down three things that happened in the past. By the past I mean yesterday, three things that happened yesterday that you're grateful for. They already happened.

They're in the past so that when your mind wants to go to the past, you directed to that those three things, it can only think on those three things. And then you flip that card over you a little index card and you write down three things that have not yet happened, but that you are grateful for, and that is your intention.

You're setting your intention of gratitude for today. So you write that and they're really simple. I sit down on one of mine today was that I am grateful that I feel safe and provided for all day long, and things happen as they always do, because what I felt safe and provided for.

So that's a tip that I want you to take with you is called the Active Gratitude Card. If you don't do anything else, start your day with gratitude. In your day as a superhero.

Yeah, powerful. And that is that simple affirmation statement provided for is able to remind you of your well-being. Well, remind you of your blessings, remind you of your resources and those sorts of reminders.

Practice throughout the day are going to shape your life. Dravon. You are an incredibly inspiring human being, and I'm just so grateful for the work you're doing.

And I just, I just expect to see it continue to bless people and inspire them. And I just see your message reaching huge numbers of people and the time to come and thank you so much for sharing your journey, sharing your struggles, and also how you've learned all of these things that can make a difference in the lives of other people.

So thank you, thank you, thank you.