Opening Remarks and Book Promotion

The first story is what happened to me. I was born with a silver spoon, I born was no spoon. Then there is the second story. The second is basically how I got over the first.

And this is, basically, the subtext of the American dream. You can do anything here, you can overcome your past. So the bottom line is am I getting enough?

The 2nd story, am i enough now? Hey everybody, we're going to get right back to the podcast, but I want to share something with you that is very personal.

For decades, I've been a practicing neurologist. I have been asking a single question, and what makes a good brain go bad? More importantly, obviously, what can we do about it?

That question has led me to write my new book, which is called Brain Defenders. It's now available for pre-order. And in this book, I'm going to take a hard look at where we are today and offer up some challenges as to where are we today in terms of what we're being told.

You know, despite all the attention on targeting proteins, misfolded proteins like beta-amyloid for Alzheimer's, We still don't really have any meaningful treatments for diseases like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease per se, and we certainly can treat symptoms.

But as it relates to treating the underlying issue, we're falling short. Many of these approaches manage the symptoms at best, but without really addressing what's driving the underlining process.

And this science is evolving, but what's really exciting is the emerging research on what I've called the microglia. These are the brain's immune cells.

And when they're balanced, they are protecting, their repairing. Well, when there are dysregulated and we can talk about why that happens. They can drive inflammation and lead to brain degeneration, often long before symptoms appear.

And here's the empowering part. These microglial cells are deeply influenced by your day-to-day lifestyle choices, your nutrition, you sleep, and your environment.

In the new book, Brain Defenders, I share both the science and provide a practical roadmap that will help you calm inflammation, support supportive micro glia and really ultimately take control of your brain's destiny.

And if you pre-order your copy today at braindefenders.com, you can receive some special bonuses like a sneak peek at chapter one, the full glossary for the book, and a curated offers from my favorite brain health products, many of which I've discussed here on the podcast.

This is a new way of thinking about brainhealth. And I truly believe that this book hopefully is going to change everything. I can't wait for you to read it.

And I think you're gonna be as excited as I am about the information you are about to receive. That said, let's get right back to our podcast. Hello everyone and welcome again to the Empowering Neurologist podcast.

I'm Dr. David Perlmutter and today's conversation is about something that profoundly shapes brain health like many of our podcasts are, but this also shapes what we call emotional resilience and even has a role to play in terms of overall health and longevity.

Yet, it's rarely discussed with the depth that it deserves. And this is the idea of friendship. My guest is Barnett Bain, a Canadian filmmaker, author, and educator whose work spans psychology, spirituality, And the whole notion of what is considered to be human connection and the value of human connections.

His film credits include the Academy Award-winning, What Dreams May Come, Milton's Secret, Homeless to Harvard, and the Celestine Prophecy. I know those names are going to ring bells for many of you.

He's the author of the new book, How to be a Friend in an Unfriendly World. That's what we're going be talking about today.

Introducing Friendship and the Guest

It's a deeply thoughtful exploration of what it truly means to show up for others and to shows up ourselves in a very fractured and distracted time. This is not a book about social hacks or networking.

It's about safety, presence, listening, boundaries and healing and why friendship may be one of the most powerful tools we have for emotional and yes, even neurological well-being.

I'm thrilled to share this conversation with you. My guest is again, Barnett Bain and the book is How to be a Friend in Unfriendly in an unfriendly world.

Let's get right to our podcast. Barnett, welcome to the podcast! I really appreciate the invitation. It's wonderful to see you online as well as it is in person.

Yeah, you know, I'm going to have to start with a story. My dad used to always say I got a The book is, is how to be a friend and my wife says to me, Oh, we're going to go up to Malibu and I want you to meet some people.

And, you know, I said, hedged in hot. I don't know exactly what that means, but I kind of, uh, meet them people, whatever I went and it was to you and your wife for lunch.

The funniest thing was that two things were actually funny. First, that I heard that you weren't all that excited about going either. and that we had an amazing time together and became friends and, you know, that's central to our time today.

So we're going to jump right in. Wonderful book. very meaningful i have to say that i was visiting our our mutual friend brian the other day and there was your book on the coffee table and uh…

the fact that he had read it cover-to-cover and it meant so much to him as it met me that was uh really you know meaningful to me because bryan is you no very special friend for both of us so let's get started as if we haven't already and You're at Columbia University and you're teaching a course for psychologists.

Ultimately, this book is an outgrowth of that course that you taught. So first tell us about the course and then how that ultimately led to the manifestation of this.

Book. The course was at Teachers College Columbia and it was called Artistry and Personal Spirituality. It was directed towards clinicians. They were pursuing a master's degree in clinical psychology, and the dean of the college approached me and said, well, we have all these wannabe clinicians, they're very unsure of themselves outside a clinical setting.

So they wanna be able to be present with the practice, but they also, they don't wanna have to turn it on and turn off during the week. How can they, you have any ideas about how they can become more grounded in their worldview so that they put on and take off masks during sessions.

And I said, Well, you know, so interesting. What you're saying is that these psychologists clinicians seemed comfortable in the in a session in in The clinical setting where they had a particular role, but may not have been so

comfortable outside of that clinical settings.

Yes, they were. operating in the head all the time, and in a clinical setting, you really want to be embodied so that you can have a felt sense of what is going on.

And they were reasonably adept at that. But outside in world, they treated as people at McKinsey used to refer to themselves. They treated themselves as brains on a carrying device.

And they had no sense of being with themselves. So I said, well, being in relationship with another person is a creative act. And so I do know a thing or two about the mechanisms that are involved and the mechanism that interfere with that.

And so I was asked to put together a curriculum, which I did, and I taught it for a few years. And I fell in love with both the teaching and what emerged from it.

From Columbia Course to Book

Because, you know, they say, the cliche is you teach what you most need to learn. Wow, yes. I very much developed an insight into my failings, my shortcomings, and also my strengths vis-a-vis being with other people, being present with people.

learning to make a distinction between what was going on in my head, the constant assessing and judging on one side, and then narrating the color commentary on the other side.

The degree to which that interferes with any kind of relational connection. So all of this came out of the teaching of his course. Now I have to say, pat myself on the back for a minute, it was one of the more successful courses there and much loved and filled up instantly.

And I just love doing it. So at the end of when it came to time to wind it down, I was just busy with all kinds of other things. It occurred to me that it deserved to have a life as a book, and that I could distill down what was most valuable to me, in the hopes that if it was valuable me that might resonate with others.

So I'm thinking that here you are a wildly successful film director, You're creating imagery that is touching on people's emotion, eliciting emotion. And at the same time, you're teaching these psychologists how to relate to the world around them.

How does this interplay? How do these two seemingly very disparate ideas? It's very much the it's, very, much, the, same bucket. So every story is about connection.

whether it's romantic or spiritual or human. And friendship is the form of love that asks nothing in return. I need to qualify that because most often our ideas about friendship almost always are hand-me-down ideas.

We're never taught, no one ever teaches us how to do it, we just sort of simply take it for granted and fall into it like a pot hole, usually. But in a aware relationship, and we'll get into some of that in this conversation, Nothing is asked in return.

It is one of the more, it is maybe the most rare kind of relationship in that there is an obligation but no indebtedness. And I'm talking about a particular kind very sophisticated relationship where it's very much like this little garden I have outside my office.

I have an obligation to tend to those roses, but there's no indebtedness. The roses don't own me, I don' know the roses. It's just a gift freely given and received.

So it's not transactional? It is not transaction, and we are not taught, we have no models for what these kinds of non-transactional relationships look like.

In cinema, it is much easier for me to investigate that, to see what does that look like, because it's a make-believe world. I don't have to live it. So there I can explore what this friendship looks like as a form of love that asks nothing in the return.

And it occurs to me that we do see it modeled in cinema before passion, before family, Before community, there is a quiet willingness to see and to be seen.

And the other part of it, maybe a more direct response to your question is that every scene on screen or in life, it's always about relationship. no matter how subhuman or how transcendent the relationships are, it's about who's listening, who is not, whose awake, whos asleep.

And so the book grew as much as As much as the Columbia course, they both grew out of decades of exploring how we direct our own stories, usually without realizing that we're in charge and how friendship becomes both a plot and the backdrop for the whole thing.

Well, you begin the book by talking about how the The framework by which then we judge those things around us is really laid down by things happening when we're four to seven something like years of age about our self worth ourself image our value and then.

then we spend a lot of time in later in life, trying to, I don't mean absolve ourselves of those, but to make right those the ways that we have perceived ourselves by.

I mean, you talk about how, people who felt that they weren't going to achieve anything, never going amount to anything.

Stories of Self-Worth and the American Dream

These had become the company presidents and the big boss of this and that. And, and then, ultimately, I'm connecting to this even as I recount your book to you.

What happens is we get even later in life where we realize that we spend a heck of a lot of time trying to contextualize in a way that's functional for us those early life missed guidance signals and then finally realize all that effort, it was not really that necessary.

And is it meaningful? Uh, you know, that's what I took away. I think the take home message book aside from, You know the incredible value of connecting to others.

And let me get back to that. I had to share that with you, because that became the most important part for me of the book. And this isn't about me and my session here with, but it kind of is.

That, again, we achieve a certain level of success, whether it's monetary or through our influence of other people. You get to a point where you realize, that didn't really do it for No, it really matters most is my connection and my friendships.

So good. Let's we're circling back to the potential theme of the book and how valuable that really is. Friendship with others, friendship with myself.

That's what seems to matter most. I think it takes people an awful long time in their development. to really get their arms around that, recognize that's fundamental.

I mean, you see people who do that earlier in life. And I think that we are seeing some people getting that message earlier life, but others seem to be pretty self-absorbed.

So let's just go there then. What is it about friendship that were not getting, that where misunderstanding and why is friendship so undervalued in an unfriendly world?

I don't think we can agree that that is where we right now. Well, that's a can of worms. So let me thread back to the beginning. Out of my experience of being a storyteller and a filmmaker, it basically comes down to, for me, there's essentially three stories.

And you alluded to them. The first story is What happened to me? I was born with a silver spoon, I born was no spoon. I, was, overwhelmed, inundated, abandoned.

Had got too much, too little. This is the first story. The subtext of the whole first is am I getting enough? Enough milk, enough strokes, toys, sleep, food, diapers, am getting, Enough, Then there is the second story.

And every movie, there are only three. The second is basically how I got over the first story The Second story is this kind of phase shift, this paradigm shift.

It's a psychological developmental shift from am I getting enough to am i enough? And it's the strategy to heal these wounds? Am I getting enough? the PhD, the entrepreneur, you know, if I marry well, If I lose the weight, I gain the way.

And, You know the paradox of it is sometimes being, being the biggest winner means being The Biggest Loser. Can I be the Bigest Losers? Can at least have some impact on the world by failing spectacularly.

So it's all about It's all about a compensatory drive to put Humpty Dumpty back together again. Am I getting enough? And this is basically the subtext of the American dream.

The American Dream is if I really work hard and if, you know, if overcome and I crush all the competition, it's very competitive, then I will prevail and be successful and, American dream is you can do anything here.

You can overcome your past. That's the second story. I can be anything. The sky is the limit. It's all that sort of human potential stuff. So just to be clear, that that second story is to deal with the first story, right?

Yeah, it's importantly. Yeah. And I have to tell you, going back to the First Story, there's nobody watching the podcast. that can think about their first story and not feel it.

I mean, we all think our childhood and what could have been and didn't happen. We all have a wound, a trauma that follows us, that haunts us all through life.

And if our listeners take one second and they just bring to mind the body feeling that you have when you're either embarrassed or you fail or your humiliated or ashamed.

And it can be the most subtle thing. It's always the same flavor. I'm not enough or I am not lovable or too much. There's is always this same flavour.

So the second story is really about overcoming that. It's all the strategies we do to become quote unquote successful in life and success really means to obliterate the damage of the first story or the legacy of first the story.

Make it right. And it's about, am I enough now? So the first story, the bottom line is, am I getting enough? The second story is am i enough now? Now am enough.

So now I have to this, I did to that. Am I enough, now. 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, maybe you've received one of these diagnoses yourself, 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 what we call 40 Hertz light and sound simulation.

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

That can cause nausea, headaches, and if you can't tolerate that, you won't use it. There is a company called Optosudix. They've solved this problem with a patented technology that still gives you the 40 Hz 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. You can learn more about Optosudix at optosüdix.com forward slash pearlmutter. you Can use the code to get a $200 savings.

The code is pearl mutter, my last name 26. 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. Well, interestingly, we're talking about the second story. You talk about an experience you had with your daughter where it wasn't just about you, but you were, may I say, perpetrating this, right?

Kind of this mentality or this this notion of it, it insinuated itself into an interaction you have with you daughter. Can you unpack that for us? This is what we this is.

What we do. So I was my daughter had gone away to college first time away from home. She came back and we went out to dinner and she was excitingly unpacking and sharing with her dad her new life.

And I kept coming at her with all these questions. I'd love to say that they were curious. They were informed by curiosity. But that is not that's just not the case.

They were afraid with judgment, did I like who she was hanging out with? Did I approve her course flow? And then more and more until finally she dug in and she said, whoa, what is going on here?

This is not how you showed up for the first 16 years of my life. And this really hurts. I realized in that moment I realized that I wasn't coming at it with curiosity.

Parenting, Bubbles, and Self-Reflection

And I realize I had an agenda around this. When I peeled back all the layers of it, it became plain to me that my interest was not really about her, but how it reflected on my own values.

I hope that when people read your book, they dwell on that section because as parents, you know, but you take a deep breath and you move through, we try to reduce self judgment.

That was very compelling for me to read that. Frankly, I think many of us have been there. Yeah, it was brutal. And I realized I had been there before, but I'd always numbed it out.

I thought this is too much of a third rail for me to admit about myself. You know, there's this feeling that I have and I used to share this with my students and they resisted it mightily.

that when you say, I would hate to think that I am, fill in the blank, you can almost assuredly own that you are that. Oh, there you go. That's an important point.

I have to go back to the metaphor for third rail because I didn't get it. What do you mean? The third on the train is the electrical rail, right? Yeah.

Yeah, that's the one that'll fry you. Got it, but you used it and I don't, I, didn' get the context. Sorry to break, break the flow here. You know what?

It's our time together. So tell me what the, how you use it in the content. Cause I'll use moving forward. I understood suddenly that my hostility in the way that I was asking these questions, these were judgments.

And I would say, you're not enough. You're doing it right. I wasn't seeing her. She had finally gone off to begin to live an independent life. And I realized that, well, I don't really want her to live an independent life.

As long as she reflects my own values and my my conditioning, then then I'm fine. And i can pretend that you know, there's this very childish trope that we all see.

I certainly I certainly used to say, you know, I love you unconditionally. Well, the moment she started living her own life, conditions showed up. Clearly, there were many, many conditions.

Oh, my gosh. The reason that there are conditions is, this is the Narcissus story, The Greek myth of the young man who saw his reflection in a pond and fell in love with himself, not realizing that it was his own reflection.

We all live in these bubbles. And I alluded in the book to a situation that happened to me not long after the incident with my daughter. I was walking in a park near my home, and I came across a street performer, And he had these two sticks with a length of yarn in between and a bucket of soapy water.

He would write these incredible, incredible soap bubbles, and make all these shapes, and it was wondrous. And I stood and watched him. It was just delightful until his pièce de résistance, his big finish, he created this enormous bubble and he wrapped it around himself, stepped fully into it, And he was encased in this shimmering soap bubble.

I had this sudden gestalt, I realized, oh, this is, what I do. This is possible. But this is probably what we all do, I'm not going to speak for other people, but certainly what.

Oh, yes, you are. That's okay. I write a book, if you're speaking for others, or at least speaking to them, created this bubble built of my beliefs and my thoughts and choices, my fears, and now even algorithms that keep me comfortable.

And as long as I'm with my daughter and she is a reflection of my bubble, we're cool. But whether it's my daughters or anybody else that I meet, if they are more or less aligned, If there's a Venn overlay of My Bubble, We are to a degree cool If they're too different from MyBubble, and all of this is unconscious, I have judgments, I resistance, and if they're very different, perhaps worst of all, make them invisible.

Well, could this not be part of our hardwiring in terms of early life friend versus foe kind of programming? I don't know that it's hard wiring. It is first story stuff.

Okay, so it emanates from those first. It's all baked in from the first story. And then, you know, we double down on it as we're trying to prove that we are enough.

We make a unilateral contract with ourselves. If I can't be omnipotent, godlike, if I just can make it happen this way or this this, then I'll be omniscient and I will pretend that I'm all-knowing.

And anybody that comports with my all knowing worldview, we're cool. But if there's too much variance, the

problems come up. Now, all this is it starts in the first story, it gets baked into the second story and we begin to live our life we begin to live our life doubling down on this cocktail of thought and belief and choice and decision.

Now, the beauty of a friend is that, and now I'm not talking about the 5,000 plus friends I have on my social media, I am talking the garden friend. I can't have 10 acres of garden because I cant tend that. I can have this little patch that I contend.

Likewise, a friendship, I could have a number of friends that i'm able to tend, that im able too garden. And in the context of that relationship, i am able I'm able to witness what I am carrying.

I may be able in there to be to rehearse the small acts of self-discovery, of catching my belief system, catching conditioning, slowing it down, feeling uncomfortable, being willing to feel uncomfortable as well as all the beautiful and good stuff.

It's an opportunity for me to grow. And you know, I suspect that most of our listeners are mature because friendship is developmental and you how I showed up as a friend in high school.

is not really what I'm talking about. It's not about the camaraderie. All of this is developmentally appropriate, but you know, it's about driving fast and risky living.

I am really talking a more mature kind of friendship that isn't about usefulness. Its foundation is a shared integrity. And particularly in midlife and beyond, There's an intimacy that other relationships might not have.

It offers us a kind of love that, as I said before, without duty. But in midlife, when roles shift and kids grow, parents age, friendship can be the one place where we're not required to be anything other than who we are.

And in that relationship, uh, we can be reminded of the parts of ourselves that existed before, before the, when I call it cleanup, those messy parts, I don't have to deploy my hostility against my 17 year old daughter.

I can allow it to, um, I can allow it to show up in the context of a relationship knowing that the relationship is committed enough that it can emerge and I could put it in neutral and witness it and it could be witnessed.

The bottom line of this kind of relationship is that it is a crucible for becoming self-aware and for growing. Crucible. It's a Crucible. I get it. For our viewers right now, I want to just kind of go back to what's going on here.

So you and I only met one time before. And I think it's fair to say we became friends.

Friendship, Safety, and Boundaries

Interesting, as we're talking about things like we are talking getting to know each other, I thought it was so fascinating that here you are, you know, a Canadian.

I grew up in South Florida, and yet you and I were born in the very same hospital. Do you remember that moment? I mean, it, was interesting. So I think what you're saying is that friendship isn't really something we do, but it's more of a way of being.

And having said that, if we can just extend that because I think, you know, the subtitle of the book is in an unfriendly world. And it seems to me that at least nationally or, as nations can be, that we're missing that part of importance of this connectivity these days, of these relationships and how they can be certainly mutually beneficial beyond the economics of it all.

And that we do seem to be a bit locked into this phase two of achievement of me, not you. So how do we extend this from the person, from N of one to a larger context?

Well, first of all, the first story and the second story, they're developmentally appropriate. So it's not that they are

bad or wrong. They're developmental appropriate, you know, I like to think my greatest teacher or one of my great teachers is this garden out here.

The bulb of the rose plant, thorns of rose plants are no more or less rose than the bloom. Bloom is simply a developmental expression. of that being. So the first story, the second story.

They're developmental expressions of what it is to be a person. It's a little harder, I think. I'm speculating here, but it seems to me it's harder to these days.

For one big reason. We are all operating inside our bubbles of conditioning. Every human being on the planet is inside of our bubble of condition. The value of a friendship is that it allows us, it's a moral teacher, allows to witness our conditioning and to dismantle it and integrate it, a beat at a time.

Nowadays, On top of all of our history, we have algorithms to further sort us. So the bubbles are, if anything, they're more rigid. And the other great thing is we move through life at a pace that You know, it's heretofore unimaginable.

So the modern challenge isn't that we don't care about connection, because we do, I'm convinced. That's the part that's hardwired into us, connection that is in our limbic mechanics.

but it's that our nervous system is so overstimulated that we forget to slow down, and often we don't know how to flow down enough to actually feel connected.

So the bubbles don' help. Busyness is now a badge of honor, and that's also baked into the second story. We normalize objectifying ourselves, you know, overworking, no sleep, go without food.

we normalise this in the Second Story. And if we treat ourselves as an object, we will treat others as objects. So the biggest threat, it seems to me, to meaningful connection today is the loss of unhurried attention.

Well, what about safety? I mean, you describe why safety is so foundational for connection. What does that mean? Well I think that I cannot be a better friend to you than I am to myself.

And if I don't know myself, nobody can drop anchor in a storm. So I can't offer safety to you or to others until I befriended my own inner weather. Again, the speed of life today mitigates against me having insight into myself.

When we become steady with ourselves, others feel it. The inverse is also true. More fragmented we've become, but more strange we come from ourselves.

Others feel that too. And I think it speaks to the frantic nature of what community looks like these days. Safety is not a promise, it's a presence. It's being state.

If I'm with you and you don't feel safe with me, then forget the rest. Safety doesn't mean bubble wrap. It means that I am aware enough and principled enough not to weaponize your vulnerability.

Um, as we become more and more intimate. I mean, we became friends very quickly for a number of reasons, mostly because our, our bubbles of conditioning, uh, are fairly consistent overlays.

So I already, I come into the relationship and you don't even know me. But I know the feeling of you. I know the feeling of you and I think vice versa.

I mean, there's enough that is consistent there that we feel safe with each other. We have the benefit of having, I'm really overusing this metaphor, but I can't think of a better one.

We, we have, um, complimentary, uh, bubbles. Our life experience is sufficient. I hear you. From birth, from birth on, literally from the delivery room.

Hey, we're gonna get right back to the podcast, but I do have an important message. You know, for decades we've been told that our genes are basically our destiny as it relates to health and that everything's locked in place, predicting even our future brain health.

But let's be clear, your DNA isn't a verdict, it's a roadmap. And I'm talking to you today about 3×4 genetics. I actually described them in the new book, Brain Defenders.

And this is a company that helps you understand your genetics, what you've inherited, and I think more importantly, how your daily choices can influence how those genes are actually expressed.

In other words, you can control your own genetic expression. That matters for your health and it really matters to your brain health, including things like memory and mood and cognitive resilience.

You may carry genetic markers associated with cognitive decline, like as we've talked about APOE4, but possession doesn't equal expression. Your lifestyle, your nutrition and metabolic health, all the things that we talked here on the podcast can powerfully influence which genes are turned on and which stay quiet.

The 3×4 genetics test looks at how your genes impact brain function at a cellular level and, which then through the 3X4 health journey, in which they provide you, guides you through a clear and a science-backed program focused on inflammation, methylation, oxidation, oxidative stress, things that we routinely discuss here on the podcast that are the key drivers of basically what makes a good brain go bad.

and we have spoken with the team at 3X4 Genetics and they were able to get a special offer for our podcast community. So head on over to 3x4genetics.com forward slash drpearlmutter and get that special and start really your personalized brain health journey today.

Let's get your genes working for you and let's go back to the podcast. I'm perseverating on one thing you mentioned a moment ago, and that is this sort of badge of honor that you're really busy and you are engaged and on the treadmill.

And I have to say it's so interesting to me the number of emails that I get where the preamble is, I know you must be incredibly busy, but, and then there's the pitch, as if that's, the entree of making me feel good, because yes, i'm really busy.

And, you know, kind of pride myself on trying not to be that busy because I get that, busy I can't really dedicate to things that I think are really important.

One thing that you make clear is actually valuing and the importance of boundaries, setting boundaries of heart in relationship. That's actually a good thing.

We shouldn't recoil from the notion of acceptable and meaningful boundaries to cultivate better relationships. Can you explain that a little bit? Well, it's part of this becoming close and tender with one's self.

If I have no idea what I stand for, let me back it up one step further. if I had no ideas where my values are and where they came from, then I can't have borders.

I cant have any boundaries. What occurred to me as I began to investigate this is I had this uncomfortable insight. I asked myself the question, what original thoughts have I have vis-a-vis my values?

And I realized, awkwardly, that I couldn't come up with an original thought, with any thoughts that would not hand me down. And then I realized that the question, that realization is perhaps the first original that thought I ever had.

Wow. Well done, young Jedi. Exactly. So to create a boundary It begins with understanding, what do I really stand for and why, and where did I get this?

So it ties in very closely with this idea of honoring. And for me, honoring, you know, it goes, the Ten Commandments, they There's an injunction about honor thy father and thy mother.

And I used to believe, much like these correspondents that come to you and think they're honoring you by presuming that you're too busy. They're buying into, where did that came from?

They are buying in to a second story. We normalize people that are busy and self abandoning themselves and have no, no boundaries. We think this is fabulous.

So that is a kind of a flattery. There is no flatter in honoring.

Presence, Gender, and Emotional Resilience

Honoring is not about flattering. To honor another person means I'm willing to be changed by you. Again, to honor another person is to indicate that you're willing to be changed.

I have the humility to change by you. So I honor my mother and my father. because I have the humility to be changed by them. That doesn't mean that I slavishly replicate their lives and take on all of their values.

But what it does mean is that, I am considerate. I consider who they are. What is it about them that works? And I'm willing to lean into that. What about them maybe is messy, some loose ends, or maybe I could let go?

I honor them by being willing to be changed by them. That doesn't work for me. And I let it go. So it has to do with Again this crucible we talked about, I honor you by seeing inside the relationship I discover more of who I am and I allow myself to make changes on that basis.

a true friend or parents that you honor, they call you upward. They may not consciously be calling you up, or they may be subhuman. But the experience when I honor them, I allow myself to create a boundary about what is valuable.

And ideally, it calls me towards courage, towards generosity, toward wisdom. In a mature friendship, often not the case with parents, but in a mature friendship, certainly a midlife friendship not through criticism but through their example.

Well, let me respond to that if I may. And that is that you set a wonderful example in your book. by your transparency, by being along for the ride with the reader, with me, in terms of the things that you struggled with, and continue to work through.

And the friendship part of this story, it should not be lost that a lot of that is friendship with love thy neighbor as thyself, right? That it's fundamental.

should be fundamental that we reach out to thy neighbor without qualification I might add that it's not contextual in terms of who thy neighbour is but that ultimately as thyself you know those are two words I think that are really very important because you there's a lot of forgiveness that needs to happen in the third story I that again, you know, by way of example, we bind to you and are bound to in the storytelling of your book that makes it, that gives it a lot of gravitas in terms of what we're all trying to do with our lives to find meaning and to be better humans.

And I thought the subtitle, In an Unfriendly World, was so important because, you know, I think it's a end of one, again, that ultimately these multiple ends of ones that change this unfriendly world.

It seems like it is going to take a lot of work, so I just wanted to share with you. That sounds like concluding remarks, but, um, not because I'm loving this.

Yeah, no. I know. But I wanted share that with because that's the part that really amplified my honoring of you. And I think my friendship with you is reading this work on our second date.

Anyway, I think you did a great job in distilling down what goes on in our lives from early childhood experiences, both positive and negative, through working through those experiences by creating these bubbles, and then ultimately realizing the bubbles don't mean anything.

that the sooner we can dismantle those bubbles and be confident with how we respond to the challenges of our world and, most importantly, our interactions with others by not having the bubble but allowing them to interact with our souls, that's the true meaning of life.

And I can't say I came up with that. I'm going to have to say you did. So add that to number two in terms of things that you've come up You know, something you just said that I had not thought about in this way until this is in real time.

You're talking about you treat others as you want to treat yourself, this golden rule thing. Yes, of course, there's the two meanings that you're treating others.

There's a conventional understanding of that. And then there's the kind of Eastern understanding of that, that the other is literally yourself. We don't have to go into that right here and right now.

Well, we could, but we're not going to. Not right there. That the Other is yourself, you know, and it's all dream stuff. And we pretend that at night when we are dreaming, We pretend we're in a subject-object universe and we are walking through dreamscapes and then we wake up in the morning and realize the whole thing was of our creation and I just set the camera up at a particular point perspective so it looked like subject object.

There is a whole tradition that holds that that is what what life's about, that it's the same thing. So when we approach it from that, you're arguing with yourself.

The degree to which we can be lucidly living, it sort of mitigates some of, takes some over the edge off of things. But then, when you spoke about as yourself, The other meaning that is clear to me, although it wasn't obvious when I wrote the book.

The revised version is coming up. Exactly. I have to do an appendix. You can't treat somebody better than you can treat yourself. And so if you don't know, if can't discover who you are and what your boundaries are, I'm not talking about your chosen boundaries.

I am talking the conditioned boundaries that you're totally unaware of. that they arise when, for example, a friend says something to you that is messy, and can you hear it without flinching or fixing?

And if not, it's a growth edge. And the core idea for me of what a friendship is, is this place that allows us to discover our growth-edge and to facilitate the discovery of somebody else's growthedge.

you are able to treat others as you treat yourself because you've just added capacity, self-capacity. Well, I think it sounds a bit transactional as opposed to a more Eastern philosophical view on it.

And here's another one, judge not, lest ye be judged, right? I'm okay with judge, not. Yeah. Without any issue that if I do judge negatively, then I might be judged negatively.

So again, being transactional and having a consequence of negative. It's all second story stuff because if you judge, you're going to get it. I'm okay with judge not and it's not the golden rule.

You brought up the goal. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. I just think do onto others. It's enough. Just do right by others, right? By others have to know what right is.

Again, that's the honoring piece and you have. To know, um, you know doing right, is attached to fixing for me. So we have a, This is also baked into the culture, and it is something that becomes clear in a relationship.

The greatest gift that we can give to each other as a friend is presence. It's just presence, full stop. It's not I'm going to fix you. So if somebody comes to me, you come to and or you know, men are more guilty of this.

I think it's anecdotal. You're just revealing my own biases here. My own bubble. But men. Are more. Guilty of. This than women. And my wife for 40 years has kept saying, I am not asking you to.

Fix it. Just want you listen to I don't need you fix it I know. It is not broken. I want you to listen to me because as I empty the reservoir, things happen for me.

But your tendency, your inclination, and your habit is to step on that because my discomfort makes you uncomfortable. This is about you, this is your stuff.

So I need you grow so you can just be with me Be and really be with me not you're with. Me. I'm speaking.

Closing Reflections on Connection

i'm emoting i'M having feelings and you uncomfortable and You are numbing them out with your internal dialogue You're judging you going or or your your rearming with with Your next bomo.

Oh me just I just want you to Be with Me your presence is the greatest gift that you can give to me and That is a lesson that can be learned inside a friendship.

Well, you brought it to male-female dichotomy here as it relates to this ability and a skill that could be learnt. What is it about this that genderifies it, do you think?

I'm not sure. I have some hunches But I'm not sure. Some of it, again, in the second story, we elevate. It's Cartesian. I think, therefore, I am. Well, that's BS.

It's really time we move beyond that one, but the culture has not quite gotten past that. So I am more than just my ability to think. And when I, and there's a certain chauvinism about that, that doing trumps everything else, the doing Trump's being, it tramps presence, taking action, in the second story is everything.

So we have a certain kind of chauvinism that is born out of that, that makes a hierarchy out doing acts as opposed to presence acts that dismisses feeling states as feminine and is very dismissive about that.

And we have. And in reality, it's much easier to do. It's easy to it. Super easy. You don't have to. Do your homework. Don't. Have to suffer the impact of this this messy thing called feelings.

So when the feelings come up. The gender that is more conditioned, psychologically conditioned by the culture to take action in the world and to show up as strong and silent.

So I feel therefore I am. Exactly. But for men to feel, we feel threatened and we do not have a nervous system. that is conditioned to handle too much feeling.

What happens is we handle to much feelings just as if you take too many breaths, you oxygenate, we go to sleep. Now not everybody goes to asleep after five breaths or after too emotional in the body, but And you can train yourself to have capacity astoundingly quickly, but untrained, we go numb or we shut down almost instantaneously.

As an example of that, try listening to a cable news station that's off-brand for you. Just see how long you could handle it. Very diplomatic, off-brand.

Off-Brand, right? I actually do it. I have to say that I look upon this as a test for me, going to the off brand input and just seeing how I can deal with it and tolerate it, and move through it not inculcated into my operating system, actually.

Yeah. Yeah, but it's no simple task. I mean, what is more challenging? I'm speculating here, correct me if I am wrong. What is challenging than the thought stream which suddenly becomes wild horses running through your thinking?

What's more challenge than that is the somatic discomfort. It feels awful. Yeah, and I think that it does feel awful because if you put yourself into this experiment, you realize that what you're doing is you just abutting against your, again, your operating system.

Yeah. And that's very uncomfortable. But I that think it's almost like a hormetic stress that ultimately it builds resilience. So that's why you have just given me the perfect blur for my book because it is about it.

It is a, it, is it about an operating system and building resistance so that your operating. Gains more capacity that not resistance resilience, resilience.

Excuse me. Yeah. Is it say it? Is about building resilience? So your. Operating system, um, gains more. You can show up for more, Right, we call that a hermetic stress in biology.

A hermatic stress, I'm writing that right here. Hormetic, a hormetic that, it's why we cold plunge, sauna, exercise, et cetera, because that level of stress actually builds resilience.

When you exercise the muscle, you tear the muscles fibers, they build back stronger, and that's how you gain muscle mass. So it is the concept of hormesis, the good side of the stress.

Okay. That's also going into the. Really? We better start work on the, on, the revision on at least the appendix of our net. Um, I, i've enjoyed our, our friendship, uh, immensely thus far.

It's, who, you know, whose to think at this stage in life, he gained a new, a, new pal. And I sure appreciate that. Yeah, it's wonderful. I'm looking forward to seeing you again soon.

Hopefully you'll be out here or maybe I'll Be out there. Yeah. And I will say that the book taught me a lot. It wasn't didactic in a sense. the sense that we are learning this together and that there was work to do.

And I appreciate how you did that. That was very effective, that were all in this, together, and we're doing our best. So that was a very well done. In a way, your film directorship kind of skills came out a little bit, because I felt like I was being guided through a story.

And so that's how I appreciate the book. Thank you so much. Okay. Well, thanks for joining us today and I hope we get together soon. Really appreciate, the invitation, love the conversation and we'll give a big hug to Lise and yeah, I do hope that we see each other soon, be well.

All the best. Many thanks to Barnett Bain, again, for this wonderful book and for his thoughtful and timely conversation. His book, how to be a friend in an unfriendly world, is a reminder that connection isn't accidental.

It's intentional. and it's deeply human. If our discussion today resonated with you, I encourage you to spend time with this book. I found it to be very, very helpful.

It's one to keep close and certainly a book that you wanna share. As always, thank you for joining me here on The Empowering Neurologist. Until next time, take care of your brain and, certainly, of each other.

Bye for now.