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SPEAKERS

Edroy Odem, Todd Kashdan

T Todd Kashdan 00:01
Guys, are you on parler yet? If so, follow me at Scot McKay and I'll follow you back parlour is the new social media app where your first amendment right to free speech is king. There's no shadow banning no whining and it's not for the easily offended over 500,000 new followers this week alone including me, so I'll see you there. Also I got a care package from the guys at heroes soap today and in it was the soap they call the woods. Gentlemen, this makes your grandfather's Irish spring smell like a chemical lab experiment. soothing, refreshing, unmistakably manly and clean, no parabens, no unnatural chemical ingredients whatsoever. Only the good stuff, only the healthy stuff. Stock up also with spearmint, lime, sea salt and all the other all natural ways to get clean that make women want to take a shower with you. get dirty, get clean, get dirty again. lather, rinse, repeat. It's a beautiful thing. Use Mountain 10 for 10% off when you go to mountain top podcast calm front slash hero soap. And now here's the big show the topic is curiosity which I wanted to cover for some time now. My guest is best selling author Todd cashton.

E Edroy Odem 01:25
From the mist and shrouded mountaintop fortress that is x&y Communications Headquarters. You're listening to the World famous mountaintop podcast, and now your host Scot McKay



Todd Kashdan 01:37

All right, all right, gentlemen, welcome to yet another episode of the world famous mountaintop podcast. My name is Scot McKay at Scott McKay on Twitter real Scot McKay on Instagram Scot McKay on YouTube. The website is www dot mountaintop podcast calm and I invite you to join our married group of high quality big for men on Facebook at the Facebook group mountain top summit. With me today is a new friend of mine and he already feels like yet another brother from another mother. And the topic du jour is one that I've been looking forward to addressing for a long time, but just hadn't found the right guest. And that's curiosity. So without anything further, here is my new friend. And today's co host, Todd cashton. Todd, welcome, man. Hey, thanks for having me here. Yeah. Now, you know what, it doesn't surprise me a bit, that one of your bailiwick's as it were his curiosity because you're in the academic world. You're a professor at George Mason University in Virginia, and having a life of learning really owes itself in and of itself to curiosity in a big way, doesn't it?



02:42

It does, but I think anyone who's been in a university setting knows it's just because someone has a couple of extra letters after their name with a master's degree or PhD does not mean they're necessarily curious people. How's that? I would think so. Well, what you often find is that it people acquire more information you have this individual differences as some people, the more information they know, the more they realize what they don't know. Right. So like, I recently got into surfing I just got back I think we talked about this. I just got back to the Outer Banks.



Todd Kashdan 03:15

Yeah, good for you. And my my twin 13 old daughters, they're picking up. They're on a board like seven out of eight times, because I'm 46 years old, I'm getting up twice. And every single time I learned something on the surfboard, like where to stand, where to land, my front foot, where to put my arms. I'm just intrigued, like, how do I level this up? Right in terms of should my spine be straight? Should it be angled? That's a natural tendency of kind of iterating by figuring out what little nuance Can I add to get a little bit further and stay on the surfboard longer, but a lot of other people as they gain more knowledge about a topic, they start to kind of prematurely close up, they have the answers, you don't and so they want to be The reservoir you go to to solve everything for you. And so a lot of people you find become less curious as they gain knowledge and then a subset of people become more curious as they get knowledge. Well, first of all, it is absolutely acknowledged that learning to surf is a grueling experience. You'll rack a surround, and I'll

tell you what, after a four or five hour session learning how to surf Well actually, even if you're pretty good surfer. If you've been surfing big enough waves, it's amazing how you'll be out on a date with a chick later on that night and all of a sudden, there will be like a spigot that opens in your left nostril. And all this salt water will just drain from your sinuses right at the exact wrong time. You're laughing because you know what I'm talking about.



04:40

Well, you know, the beauty of learning something new is what I always train my kids on is scars blood bloody nose, salt, water dripping out of your nose. I mean, these are the signs that you put yourself, you know into the arena, Teddy Roosevelt style or decide like to go to battle with something and Oh man, you just cited Teddy rose.



Todd Kashdan 04:59

About Us became my favorite person. Next to Teddy Roosevelt.



05:03

The idea the idea of walking off, you know, a trip of skateboarding or surfing or rock climbing and not having any injuries, you should be skeptical of what that person did on that trip.



Todd Kashdan 05:18

And then Teddy Roosevelt's case if he hasn't already been shot before he gives the political speech, then he isn't mad enough. I know what a great story. I can't believe we didn't learn this in grade school. Oh, who knows why we didn't learn it in grade school. All I know is I've seen the actual shirt he was wearing. They have it at the National Park Teddy Roosevelt National Park in North Dakota. Oh, no kidding, dude, I didn't even know



05:39

that. I didn't even know that. Oh, yeah.



Todd Kashdan 05:41

But anyway, you're talking about how people tend to learn a lot and kind of stay there.

They're like, Okay, well, I learned everything I need to know about this. I'm smarter than the average bear. I'm certainly smarter than all the people I'm going to teach if I so happened to be a college professor. And then I'm done. I can relax. I can kind of coast for the rest of my life. I've actually seen that happen with people in the legal profession and God forbid people in the medical profession. And I think I've gone to probably six or eight doctors in the last decade or so, or someone in my family has and we knew more than they did. And they were being boneheads, they're like, you know, I'm not sure that's the right thing to do in this case, like, Are you challenging me? It's like, Well, yes, I am. Because I looked this up. And it said that, oh, hmm. It's like going to a nutritionist, and they're still saying, well eat a low fat diet. And here are the four food groups, you know, they could stick it up their ass. That's how people lose weight anymore.



06:36

I'm glad you, you perseverating on this point, Scott, because this is an important lesson. So we know that the more degree is the further you go to education, the more curious you tend to be. But that effect is really small. And if there's one really important lesson, it's we put extra weight on intelligence, and for some reason, we are bullish on intelligence, and we're just Sort of like, sort of bearish or neutral on curiosity, we tend to view people that are curious as generally annoying, prying overly involves before they're before you've formed a close intimate relationship with someone. And what I try to do is kind of explain Oh, you know, this is one of the elixirs for creating healthy interactions, healthy social relationships, and just like, be the type of passionate person that people want to spend time with. And this is not something you want to avoid. It's something that you really want to work towards becoming. And there's a great deal of variability in who's curious and who is and everyone knows this because when you go to a barbecue or a party, there's so many times that you probably leave and you ask yourself, like if anybody asked me anything about my life besides what I did last weekend, and what I'm doing next weekend, and many times the answer's no.



Todd Kashdan 07:57

Usually the answer's no. People love to talk about them. I mean, this goes back to Dale Carnegie. So if you want to win friends and influence people be the guy who's curious enough to want to know more about other people and what they're interested in. And when they talk about their interests, learn more. Listen. I mean, take the example that just came and went during this show. You just said you went surfing well, because I'm a curious person. I've done the surfing thing before also. And another aspect of being curious and you can talk about this if you want is I'm well traveled. I mean, the world is my oyster. I want to see everywhere I want to go everywhere. I want to taste all the food, see all the

sights, meet all the people. See what Cambodia smells like when you get off the airplane. All of that stuff is important to me because I'm insatiably curious, and, you know, the more experience you have, the more knowledge you have, the more you become, dare I say a jack of all trades and a master of none or very few, the more facility you have with simple conversation when meeting people and the more you You can take great interest or at least mild interest, any interest at all, frankly, in what someone else is interested in. And then when you can show that you have some knowledge, it builds instant rapport with that person and you've just made a friend.



09:13

Yeah, there's there's a lot there. I'm going to pick you up on being Scott, the International Nomad is one of the one of one of the beautiful things about traveling about and really, it could really be like traveling. Right now. I'm in Northern Virginia. I'm from New York, and like you were saying, Now I need to go to North Dakota to see Teddy shirt is when you travel to Moscow. I mean, the most important thing is not to impose your views immediately on where you're going is basically is you're like a spy. I mean, you're James Bond, your job is to figure out like what intrigues other people where do people stand and your job is not to win the arguments and kind of impose your perspective but really is like, Alright, you here have the opportunity to figure out how North Dakotans decode lan's, or whatever, whatever the term is, how do they view the world differently than people that live in, you know, the urban metropolis of New York City. And if I don't do that, I've missed the opportunity to develop practical intelligence and perspective taking. And one of the things that I bemoan about the educational system at the college level, and my kids going through middle school and grade school, is that people aren't really trained to seeing the perspective of other people. Now, you're told to do it, but you're not trained to do it. And it's a challenging thing to kind of, you know, for example, you know, the last movie I watched with my family was about a bunch of people on death row that were kind of falsely imprisoned. And to get in the shoes of someone that's been falsely accused of a crime and understand what it must be like for them mentally for their identity, and how their people don't believe them and trust them and they lose friends and they create enemies. You can To tell someone to take their perspective, you have to listen to that person's story to understand like what it's like to live in a world where the prison inside your head is completely different from the facts that other people are picking around you about who you are as a person.



Todd Kashdan 11:14

Well, that concept of being falsely accused, whether it be of a crime that ends up

incarcerating you wrongly for years, or even in a relationship where you're with someone who's extremely jealous, and they keep accusing you of cheating and accusing you of cheating. What it does is it makes you want to make things real, it makes you want to go out and actually commit the crime Damn it so that all this hate or all of this accusation is justified. It plays really weird tricks on your mind. And if you're incarcerated, obviously, you wouldn't want to go kill a man or something like that. So if you're not really going to have the wherewithal to act on what you're being accused of, it's just pure frustration. And you keep getting accused, and you know that you're the victim of a lie, and you don't like being a victim and you want to make it right, you want to take control, but there is no control to be taken because those who would listen to you aren't listening. They're not there to hear your side. So it's just got to be an incredible frustration at the meta level, not only to be incarcerated, but to be incarcerated for something you never did, for sure.



12:23

So here's what's cool about your relationship example, you escaped, right? You get you know, the idea of all these cues that often are not indicators that you cheat on your romantic partner, right, the smell of your shirt, you dressed up more nicely, why are you working on your core so often what you didn't do before? You know, if you read women's magazines, or men's magazines, they'll be these fake lists that all those things are indicators that your partner is probably cheating on you. Probably being the key word. So the idea of your partner being curious about whether you're cheating on them and the idea of you being curious of why you think your partner is wondering why you're cheating on you. This is the kind of curiosity that people don't talk about. So we gave it a name called deprivation seeking. It's very different than the pleasures of a purple butterfly landing in your arm, or finding out that your next door neighbor is actually, you know, works for the CIA. And actually, they've been kind of dropped off in Afghanistan to kind of take out killers. It's a different it's not a pleasurable form of curiosity. deprivation seeking is basically what it looks like. It looks like an anxious neurotic person. You seek out information to close the gap of something that's frustrating the shit out of you. And so these people when they're curious, they don't have a happy face. They're not experiencing pleasure. They're trying to reduce the displeasure of feeling uncertain about something. And it's important to know this because when your partner experiences deprivation sensitivity, they're not enjoying the process of finding out new information. They want to figure out whether their hypothesis has any merit to it. And so they're in a process of reducing their pain, the pain of not knowing you're trying to figure out what's happening, like, why is my partner accusing me of things. So you're in some ways experiencing trying to reduce your own pain. And if you don't collide in that conversation somewhere, to acknowledge like, You're both experiencing a high level of uncertainty, you're not going to be able to have a reasonable constructive controversy right there like either constructive,

controversial conversation where you're both talking about the pain you're experiencing. It's a form of curiosity, but it's not the way that we think about it in terms of like being this pleasurable, pleasurable learning experience.



Todd Kashdan 14:44

So the examples there would all basically classify under the zeigarnik effect. You got people whose loved ones friends were on the Malaysia Airlines plane that disappeared over the Pacific Ocean without a trace. You got people who have family members, his loved ones who disappeared on the battlefield in Vietnam. So you have a whole POW Mia movement, just so people can close that open loop in their brain and know what happened so they can get closure. And yeah, that's a painful curiosity that drives almost with an obsession, right?



15:18

So if you think about this societal wise right now, as we're talking, you're having a number of people right now that want certainty in a world where you're not going to get certainty. Right. So you're talking about COVID-19. There's no answer about whether you're going to be healthy. If I go up to West Virginia to go whitewater rafting, there's no answer, whether school is going to be open with your kids are going to be healthy or not. And then in terms of like, racial equality, there's definitely no answer in the next five years, whether it's going to be resolved. So there's this big question where curiosity comes in here, which is, how much uncertainty Can you handle and still take a step forward and move in the direction of things you care about in value, like can you do things, go surfing, spend time with your friends, go figure out a way to exercise despite knowing there's going to be some level of uncertainty of whether it's going to be quote unquote safe. And you're seeing what you're seeing is another dimension of curiosity, which is people are showing a very low stress tolerance, which is a dimension of curiosity of can you handle the anxiety of confronting the new and what I'm seeing is it's pretty freakin love when the United States like in general, like if you lust for the new, new conversations, new people, new tasks at work, new magazines, new websites, there's always a little bit of anxiety that something's going to bother you. And you need to kind of figure out and gauge how much uncertainty Can I do it and how can I make myself or train myself to be able to realize that Safety is not guaranteed. And that's part of what makes life worth living.



Todd Kashdan 17:05

Now, that's really profound in a real way, because it speaks to why there are relatively few

curious people, doesn't it? Because on the whole writ large people in general, kind of don't like change, especially when they get set in their ways of never little older. And what you just said, If I understood you correctly was curiosity, involves the necessity of confronting something new, which may change your mind may change how you do things in the future may modify your thought processes and even your operational processes in life. And that's scary to a lot of people. Right?



17:40

Yeah. You know, it's it's one of the reasons I'm just having this conversation on my driveway party the other day, that's all they are now is his driveway. So a bunch of people in the fire pit, and we were saying how, you know, not our parents, but our grandparents again, I'm 46 just to kind of give a specifier here. You know, my grandfather the I think Do that he would ever cut friends off because he could disagree with him. ideologically, politically, value wise, they're more religious, they're less religious. Now. They all just went to the pub to get the Irish pub around the block. They hung out, they played cards, they laughed, they drank, they smoked, they didn't put on seat belts, and they went back their wives and they complained about that. But to live in this in a modern world where people not just cut people off, but actually make a public Proclamation. If you disagree with me on this vote this topic, this issue, you can unfriend me now is a very new psychological phenomenon. And you're showing what's underneath that umbrella is being incurious. I agree. I love being exposed to you don't like the fact like Scott, i, you and i, this is our first half hour conversation. I have no idea where you stand on things and the idea that uncertainty is pleasurable. Like, let's see Scot pops up on these topics. And what I wish upon your listeners about hearing this is try to reframe it as would you want to know exactly on a piece of paper exactly where someone stands on every issue and topic? And do you require an 80% agreement? with how you would answer the same questions? Or do you want an open piece of paper and kind of like, let's see what happens. I'm going to go home and complain to my friends like oh my god, I met this guy who believes that like still believes that there's alien abductions are real. It's not because people falling asleep on the highways and in the countryside. And they believe in this conspiracy theory of like how the government is concealing information. I would love to hang out with those cats.



Todd Kashdan 19:44

Well, you would need that certificate of homogeneous opinion. If, wait for it. You have been told what to believe and you were dogmatic about it instead of forming your own opinions and thinking for yourself because what I've noticed is the first people to reach for an ad hoc hominem logical fallacy and call you names on Twitter or Facebook or people who don't know why they believe what they believe. And they've just been confronted with

something uncomfortable that challenges them in a real way. They don't know how to respond to



20:12

it add one other alternative explanation, which is they're just bad people. They're just how many, you know, thinking back to like, back the days, we were Cub Scouts and Girl Scouts is like how many merit badges and rewards and Pat's on the head, and you're being told you're a hero because you stood up to someone that disagreed with what the majority of people in your tribe tend to coalesce around. Okay, so



Todd Kashdan 20:41

yeah, I will, I will acknowledge that you have people who live in an echo chamber and they're getting a lot of dopamine rush out of it.



20:47

Yeah, they're getting a lot of social rewards. And I try to, you know, my core members of my tribe, are really pragmatic thinkers were and this is, let me kind of throw this out there. My favorite people in my social world are people you could never tell where they stand politically by reading what they've written over the last three years, because they just look at the particulars of specific issues. And I think those are interesting people like, I don't know where you're going to stand and where you're going to go and how you're going to modify your beliefs based on this new information that might change your priors of what you've learned over the course of your lifetime.



Todd Kashdan 21:27

I have a belief that I'm actually curious to know your opinion on. How's that? I've come to the conclusion. That one of the reasons why both right leaning and left leaning media outlets write such preposterous bloated headlines is they've come to trust that the vast majority of people won't read anything other than the headline before they draw a conclusion. And it's not necessarily that people lack sophistication or lazy. It's just we've come to a point in our life. If we're bombarded with so many headlines, the human brain is almost forced to make a snap judgment on all of them. You just don't have enough cycles in a day to dig into every issue and make sure you have the full skinny on any of them anymore.



22:17

Well, you just hit one of the major barriers for people experiencing a sense of wonder and intrigue in their lives. And the reason is the day to day lose. You know, one of the things that because, you know, I'm working on my next book, and, and to deal with COVID-19 because this is learning has been a nightmare for my kids. I'm reading a kid's book, children's book with my kids, in order for me to kind of let my mind wander about kind of where we're going to go with these these books. I need whitespace and so what I've started doing, you know, like, this is great, these two Chihuahuas and they do heavy metal bands, instrumentals and so they do they have Master of Puppets by Metallica. But I know

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Todd Kashdan 22:59

I've seen that Video no this guy's there cello. Yeah, like minimalist electric cellos and they're just bad asses.



23:05

I think it's like apocalyptic is maybe the name. So listen to that when I work out, my mind just starts, ideas collide. And so to go with your point, the data Deleuze it pushes people to being cognitively simplistic, you know binary yes or no. Do you agree or disagree thing to make a choice about this? Right? Are you for cap? Taking a knee? You know, are you for cabinet or not? Are you Serena Williams? Was she wrong to yell at the ref? Yes or no. And people don't allow space for people to have a nuanced view. And that's really problematic because every one of those situations should be a couple sentences to think about. And the idea of you check a box, like it's a census form is not a conversation that's just a tally of which group or tribe Are you a member of?

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Todd Kashdan 23:54

And at the same time, the media ends up manipulating what we're curious about. I mean, there's Yeah, innumerable important things going on in the world right now that the media is not covering, and therefore nobody is talking about because they don't fit the narrative or whatever.



24:09

That's exactly right. We just received my well being laboratory received a grant. And now we're studying strategies to reduce political polarization in the United States. And one of

the interventions is training people to realize we call it outsider amnesia. It's training people to realize how much whatever political party you link yourselves most closely to, of how much the other party has contributed to your quality of life today. And so what we do is we kind of present them some of the things that like all Americans have gained right you got like the national highway system, right kind of the the children poison act about not poisoning your kids. The idea of like prescription drugs have to be very clear whether it's good or bad for kids or not. And then only later do we tell them which party actually is the one that was responsible for These, these universal benefits, things that are like universal, right? Like everybody appreciates having a highway that can get you across from, you know, from California to Georgia. And then what you find is that people are like, Oh my god, I didn't realize that, like, you know what, maybe there is some benefit to having people that think differently than myself that goes in there and some people don't. And the idea is just kind of ways of exposing people a little kind of mischievous ways of that you benefit from being around people going back to your your nomadic travels, you benefit from being around people that think differently than yourself and have different backgrounds than yourself. And it's, it's something that we don't always appreciate. And it's almost never what the news Told you it was gonna be. And it's very, you know, not that I want to think we talked, we said, we're not gonna get political, but you know, I think one of the things that I've been what was many things have been moved, but one of the things I bemoan right now is people are being forced to reckon with that you need diversity in your life, but no one telling them the why and the how. And the only way to really persuade people is not to shove it down their throat. But to just kind of show them. Like what happens what. And that's kind of what we do. We do a gently right playfully and gently of showing them. And so let me give an example that goes off of right now, the current modern issues. If I was a history teacher in high school, which I might at some point, because I'm getting a little bit sick of college universities, and I was teaching about World War Two, I wouldn't be talking about Russia, and Germany, and the United States necessarily all the time. I would be asking students this in my class, okay. I just taught you about World War Two. What I want you to do is get into groups and like, what would it be like, if you ended up living in Malaysia? You were a single dad. You're raising two kids, and you owned a farm? What would it be like? Here's some information about Malaysia go. I'll see you guys in 10 minutes. There's no answer to what I just asked. It's all about this, you got to learn about Malaysia. How is it linked up to the allies, the axes, I actually have no freaking idea. This is just off the cuff right now. And then. And what I want you to do is it's kind of like imagine like how World War Two operates during and after is going to be different depending on who you are, what your background is and where you live. And we don't do this enough, these exercises enough about thinking about things, that there's not one singular perspective as World Affairs happen. And I think this is the thing I think we need to teach people to be critical thinkers, but just because you age out of grade school, doesn't mean you don't need the same exact training. And we know this just from you

know, everybody we socialize with.



Todd Kashdan 27:40

what's beautiful about what you just said is instead of giving kids answers and having an opportunity to spin, how they're going to think about it, which plenty of teachers actually take great pride in doing right definitely parents do. But what it does instead is it teaches those kids to start being curious enough to form their own opinions. And, actually, we went to a TEDx event for kids for pre teens, which was very cool. And in addition to having speakers, they broke the kids up into groups and had exercises very similar to what you were talking about. And one of them basically was a giant risk game. And they had probably two or three kids per country, right made up countries. And they told them, what their country was like socially, and the relationship they had with the other nations and then told them to go make deals with the other nations like they were the United Nations for the betterment of their own country. And it lasted about an hour. And the kids were so smart. Oh, my gosh. They're so smart. They're smarter than most of our politicians, at least as far as we know about what's really going on. Right. And I like you. I thought that was a brilliant tack to take with kids to help develop their minds so that they really think for themselves. It's beautiful. One of the things you said a little while ago, Todd was basically the We're never going to get all the answers. I can roll that up into what I like to call God's dirty little trick. I mean, no matter how small you want to make the god you worship, that God is going to be a lot bigger than you are. And a lot of people don't like to try to wrap their head around how little we're ever going to know. We're all going to die without having known a whole lot. And I'm reminded of a quote that touched me very powerfully. It's by Charles Krauthammer, the legendary conservative political commentator named Charles Krauthammer, who died tragically of cancer just last year. And he was asked by one of the fox news anchors if he was scared of dying, and he said, I'm not scared to die. I'm just upset. I'm never going to know how it all turned out. So resonated with that, you know, I don't care how long I live on this earth. I would have loved to been able to find out what it's going to be like 100 years from now or 200 years from now. And there's always going to be something going on when it's time to draw our last breath that we would have loved to have been around for. And I'm not sure anybody else other than me and Charles Krauthammer and I ever think like that. But I know it's something that someone who's inherently curious would think. And that's why I love that quote, and I kind of felt for the guy, you know. And the other thing you were talking about that I don't want to let flow like water under the bridge without addressing a little bit further, is the idea of kids and developing curiosity in them because I think what we default towards is that Oh, all kids are curious, because they're kids, and they're just sponges for information, which on one level is true. But then again, it's amazing how if you take your kids on a cross country journey, they'll stare into their tablets, or some other electronic device when there's


beautiful scenery going on outside of the car in the Rocky Mountains, and Emily and I have to say, you know, snap your fingers and say, Hey, kids, look out there and I'll go Oh, that's really good. You know, it's like, hey, look, there's a herd of bison on the side of the road. They're like, Oh, yeah, whatever. And these kids are like seven and nine. And I'm here, you know, 50 year old guy, and I'm twice as curious as they are. And I mean, I'm the kind of guy that when an airplane flies overhead, I look up and see what kind of plane it is and what airline it flies for. I'm just like that. I mean, I have Shazam open constantly, when I'm listening to the radio challenge myself, like, oh, man, who is this artist, the name of the song, you know, I never actually knew who sang that. And I'm always shows me things. I'm just that guy. And yet, one of John Cougar Mellencamp most famous songs from the 80s is Jack and Diane, and we've mentioned that on the show before, and part of the refrain is, oh, yeah, life goes on long after the thrill of living is gone. And he's talking about a couple of teenagers and I've never resonated with that lyric. I remember being in high school not even understanding why it was in the song like, what that's not a thing. That's not what goes on.



31:56

You know what I mean? Well, first of all, I'm glad you shared that quote, if that's the first time with your audience because it resonates with me well, because it matches up with Marcus Aurelius and Epictetus and all the stoics. One of the things that I've taken from stoicism, which is really just the early harbingers of cognitive behavioral therapy, which is the best therapy you can ask for, if you suffer from anxiety or depression or psychological difficulty is that you have to come to grips with your mortality, not in a iron clad fist sort of way. But in terms of like in terms of an openness of like, Listen, there are going to be things that you're not going to know and you have to wake up each day, appreciative of you can acquire experiences information and enjoy yourself with the knowledge that you've got a limited end game here, in terms of how many days you have left, and many people do the exact diametrical opposite and are so defensive and try to fit in as much as possible for completeness before they die, which is very different than I'm going to be open to what the world has available to me that I've limited amount of years to be exposed to things. And there's been a little bit of an awakening or realizing of the idea of being proud because you've got five hours of hypomanic levels of sleep for the course of three weeks to get work done, is no longer given the same appreciation. It was even like three years ago, now it's if you get full eight hours of sleep, you have more stamina to have these long standing, extemporaneous, playful, interesting conversations and you're more likely to have like enough vitality. So you'll ask questions and talk to you know, the stewardess and the waitress and the cashier. And when you when you get these five hours of sleep, you might get the work done. But you're not really available for your romantic partner, your kids and these random strangers. And so there's a level of appreciation of

about the world that kind of wasn't there. A few years ago, I spread the script of hard working men. But I think trying to intentionally realize your mortality is an effective strategy to make you more open and receptive to the new the unfamiliar, the uncertain and the complex. It's it's a strategy to build curiosity and a search for meaning in your life. And Viktor Frankl talks about this in his Opus as well. Man's Search for Meaning. There we go, the perfunctory Viktor Frankl reference, every show has to talk about Viktor Frankl Oh, man, I wasn't sure if it was there, Teddy and Viktor Frankl together?

 Todd Kashdan 34:30


Oh, yeah, but I mean, hey, what can I say? You know, there's a certain kind of guy who's attracted to being a guest on this show. And a lot of things add up independently of each other. The name of your book is curious, which is posed as a question. It's curious with a question mark. But you just talked about wrestling with your mortality. And that brings up as a nice segue, fortuitously enough, your new book, which is the upside of your dark side, which is something we've talked about, not only on this show, but in my practice. At group for men called unsettled. One of the things I talked about with them in terms of embracing change and inventing their own new normal quote unquote going forward is think about your dark side. Think about not necessarily being Mr. Nice Guy. What would you have to uproot? What would you have to get a little bit rough with? What do you really have to consider what rocks Do you have to lift up and look underneath and see what centipedes and creepy crawlies are under there, and you really do have to address it? And conveniently enough, that idea and curiosity are also very closely related, aren't they?

 35:38

Yeah, this is actually a trilogy. So I'm working on the the final book of the three.

 Todd Kashdan 35:43

No need to give that away just yet only that a surprise

 35:45

of note one of the chapters is called the teddy effect in honor of Teddy Roosevelt, about the benefits of psychopathy, Machiavellianism and narcissism when expressed properly, and I think these are these are all qualities He's that we just say, Hey, listen, this is toxic. Let's stay away from this. This is radioactive. But the thing is, is you look at the Michael

Jordan's the Kobe Bryant's the Lee Iacocca is Harvey feel about these people. One of the big reasons that these people are effective is because of particular ways that they express narcissism and psychopathy.

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Todd Kashdan 36:19

Well, I think you bring up an excellent point. You know, another one that comes to mind is Lance Armstrong. People who excel at individual sports have to be very, very selfish people. No doubt. I mean, I'm in a group of people who have traveled the world. And, you know, kind of along the lines with Norman Schwarzkopf says, quote, if you're the smartest person in the room, you're in the wrong room. I always feel like I'm in the right room whenever I'm with a group of those guys, because I'm sitting in the midst of guys who are among the two or 300 guys in the entire world who have been to every country, like all of them. I mean, I asked the guy at one of these meetings, it's a really douche group of people who've been to more than hundred countries. It's called the traveler century club. And I said, Well, how many countries have you been to? And he just looked out in space and shrugged his shoulders and said all of them. And then he and another guy. What was the last one? What did you say? What's the last one? Oh, it I forget which one was the last one for him. But for a lot of people, it's either South Sudan or Syria. A lot of people had it done. And they had to go back and get South Sudan crossed off, you know. But I mean, I was, you know, along for the ride is a fly on the wall. And he and another guy, were recounting how they went to the same hotel in Angola. And the same lady was working behind the counter, but I'm just like, shaking my head. I guess. It's just absolutely crazy. There's



37:40

there's always another level,

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Todd Kashdan 37:41

right? But these are incredibly selfish people. I mean, they're just, they're collecting countries. And it's sometimes difficult to be in the same room with some of those people. And plenty of them are great, great curious, yeah, wonderful personalities, but a lot of those people are really very self centered. Another thing I think it goes along with the idea you just expressed which will be controversial. I don't think there's ever going to be another United States President who isn't clinically narcissistic. I think you have to be to withstand it. I mean, there isn't a fire suit powerful enough to withstand but you're going to have to withstand in the social media age as the president of the most powerful

country in the



38:23

world. Yeah. Before this phone call. We were talking about Scott Adams and he had a great book when Bigley, I am disappointed that most people don't realize that there's a superpower to be able to have that kind of resistance to criticism. No, it's obviously all strengths, have a weakness and all weaknesses have some kind of elements where there's a strength in there somewhere. But the idea that you can actually make bold decisions, despite the world disagreeing with you in real time, is a superpower. Now how to hone that in is a very complicated psychological question. But you're right. You know, the disappointing thing is how many quality And virtues are going to be dismissed from potential candidates because they lack that psychopathy superpower of being, you know, bullets that come at them basically become gumdrops before it reaches their flesh.



Todd Kashdan 39:14

Well, most smart heights, amazing individuals are going to be too smart to ever run for president. Yeah. All the right candidates that we really want won't show up. They'll go Oh, hell no.



39:24

Well, also their most solutions require very sophisticated answers of balancing short term pain for long term gains. And as we become more focused on the here, and now we have difficulty of kind of realizing have in a three year plan, this is the best strategy. And there's just such a vocal minority that lacks the perseverance and persistence to deal with short term pain.



Todd Kashdan 39:50

Here we are two curious guys going on and on. as it should be. Yeah, we've run out of time. I want to go ahead and point these guys to both of your books Todd and what I'm going to do is I'm going to take the upside of your dark side and curious and I'm going to put them at the top of my Amazon influencer page, which you guys can check out by going to mountain top podcast calm front slash Amazon. And I will also put a dedicated link to Todd's book curious which we were talking about for the lion's share of this show at WWW dot mountaintop podcast calm front slash curious see you are I owe us, Todd. It's a pleasure to know you, man. This is a fun conversation and I have a feeling we could have

done like a 10 part whole series on this subject talking about everything we're curious about. So I appreciate you, man. Thanks for dropping by today.



40:40

Oh, it's my pleasure. I'm coming back. I'm writing a book just so I can come back.



Todd Kashdan 40:43

Yeah, do it man. I love repeat guests. And guys, if you haven't visited mountain top podcast calm, go there and sign up for 25 minutes free to talk to me about what's on your mind with regard to where you are right now and where you want to be. It's absolutely free. It won't cost you a dime. All you do is Click that button in the upper right hand corner and schedule those 25 minutes at your leisure in real time and we'll talk you'll find me to be exactly who you expect me to be. And if it seems appropriate that we should work together, we'll put together a plan of action that takes you from point A to point B in terms of where you want to be compared to where you are right now whether that's in your relationships with women, your relationship with your career, or just getting more adventure in your life. It's all there for you at Mountain Top podcast.com and until I talk to you again real soon This is Scott McKay from x&y communications in San Antonio, Texas. Be good out



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