



How To Use Your Alter Ego To Perform Better In Life With Todd Herman



Find out how harnessing your “other self” can help you achieve surprising success in business and in life.



Todd Herman

James: James Schramko here. Welcome back to SuperFastBusiness.com. This is Episode 635, and we're going to be talking about mental stuff, mindset. We're going to be talking about the mental game of business. I've brought along someone who's pretty strong into this mindset stuff, Todd Herman. Welcome.

Todd: Schramko, you are the epitome of winning. Six hundred plus episodes, that's consistency, man. That's how you win.

James: Yeah.

Todd: Thanks for having me, buddy.

James: Well, I got into it early and just kept doing it because it worked. And I figured out that it's a way for me to earn without having to be able to type, which is important. I haven't been a great typist, and I do prefer to talk than just about anything else. So imagine that, harnessing my winning power.

Todd: Yeah, well, are you dyslexic?

James: I'm not dyslexic, but at school, I was at one stage prescribed Ritalin because I wasn't connecting the dots. I was just gazing out the window and I wasn't concentrating. And I was also a bit younger than the rest of my year. I was like, literally the second youngest person in my whole year, and I was kind of a late developer. I didn't really hit my straps till 21. Twenty, 21 is when I started performing in a work capacity.

I love this topic. It's like, just a huge topic. It's a big core to my own belief system. And I put in my book around being able to look in the mirror, you'll see who's responsible for your success. I put a huge focus on taking responsibility for your own life and not having a lottery mentality, that the only way you'll get ahead is to win the lottery or that someone's going to somehow magically bestow and bequeath you with an inheritance. Like, take that responsibility. I think having kids young made me more responsible.

I put so much time and effort into reading about and understanding the way that we think, and this is such a big topic. And I'm glad you've tackled it with your book. You sent me across a copy of *The Alter Ego Effect*, which is fantastic, and it's the power of secret identities to transform your life. So no doubt we'll touch on that.

Todd: Yeah.

Some background on Todd

James: Firstly, just a small introduction to you. It doesn't have to be a long, epic saga. But I'd like to start with how I met you. And that's through we have a similar circle of contacts, and I think my favorite time that we got to chat was about a year ago, actually, at Traffic and Conversions event. We found ourselves in some artsy studio bar where there were pixie fairies and, what's that, absinthe?

Todd: It was interesting.

James: And we got to have a nice chat there on the side for a while. We had so much to talk about, so many things that we agree on and think about. And I've watched your rise to success with your online business, I've seen lots of your videos. And of course, when I was coaching [Ryan Levesque](#), I saw a lot of your case studies around segmentation and how you've been using that to get the right people into the right part of your message so that they increase conversions.

So I've watched you, I've observed you, I've listened to your content. I went through your product. I promoted that at one stage. And I just like that you've come from a sports background and applying this to business, because that just makes sense to me.

Todd: Yeah. Well, I mean, it's worked out in the end. I mean, I started my peak performance and, you know, mental game coaching company 22 years ago now, and it was 1997 when I started it. But the parallels between athletes and entrepreneurs are just, they overlap perfectly. It's funny because I can get off a call with one of my pro athletes and hop on a call with someone like you and it's like talking to the exact same person. There's not very much difference. I mean, both people have high level of risk tolerance, both people are typically, you know, they're very ambitious or achiever types. But I think the shared contact that we have, that I knew that you were an extremely quality human being, is [Andre Chaperon](#), because I think the world of Andre and he just can't say enough nice things nice things about you as well.

James: Oh, Andre and [Anita](#). What a pair.

Todd: I know.

James: I love those two. Both have been on this podcast several times. And through the time that I've spent with them, I learned a lot about what it's like to be a good human. I mean, they're just genuine. And I even went down and had a meal with them in Gibraltar. Just very accommodating people.

Todd: Yeah. Good people.

By the way, the reason I asked you about the dyslexia is, I've got dyslexia and I've found so many people, because you and I had this fantastic chat, you'd mentioned last year, and I've found that so many people that I deeply resonate with end up coming from some sort of, you know, quote unquote, learning disability. I think you're learning enabled. What it's given me is a superpower to think of things very strategically, because the type of dyslexia I have allows me to think in pictures and very abstractly, quickly, so it helps me as a coach or as an advisor with people because I can cut through a lot of the noise and the detail and get to it, and chunk it up to the level where it sort of matters when it comes to making decisions.

But to answer your first question, which is a quick little synopsis on myself, for the listeners, I live here in New York City now. I've got my little brood of three kids that we're raising inside of, I tell people that it's like raising an oak tree in a thimble, but we're doing the very best that we can, in this place that I love. But I grew up on a big farming ranch in Western Canada originally, and, you know, came through and was a big person that loved sport, ended up getting a football scholarship and was a nationally ranked badminton player. And so sport was a big part of my life.

When I got done playing, I started volunteering at a high school coaching football, and I always talked to the kids more about the mental game. It was kind of my strength, and I got into mental game stuff out of actually just a real need. I was someone who unfortunately went through a really bad trauma at a young age and not to get personal with people, but I've no problem sharing it. I was sexually abused at like, the age of 12, and I needed to get into mental game stuff just to survive, almost, just that kind of dark stuff that happens in your head. And I became really good at working with other people on it, too, and sort of rose my way up.

And I'm a byproduct of mentorship. I reached out to a phenomenal mentor, the biggest name in the space, Harvey Dorfman, who wrote the kind of bible of the mental game world. Worked with him, kind of studied under him, he sent me some pro clients, and sort of the rest is history. And I went on to work with entrepreneurs as well, because it's a natural progression, and lived all over the world with it. And now I'm kind of in this space of the last, I think, five or six years, I've done a lot more stuff online and lucky enough to be around and watch smart people like you to see how to do it right and avoid the missteps that it is very easy to take.

James: I think, because it's just not a linear step-by-step process if you want to have a business. I've been reflecting a lot on this, actually, because I'm ticking over a couple of anniversaries. I just passed the [10-year anniversary of quitting my job](#) and 10-year anniversary of having my membership, and actually pretty much roundabout 10 years since I've been podcasting, as it turns out. So power to you for all that ability to take a positive path from negative situations.

Todd: Yeah.

James: I mean, life's not easy for many. I've had all sorts of challenges as well. And you don't have to travel far to hear a car crash story or any kind of tragedy from any business leader. They've all got their park bench story in some way. But it's probably from those situations that is going to make or break you. And you've equipped yourself with the things that have helped you soar.

Inner voices and alter egos

One of the first times that I heard the concept of an inner voice was when I was reading a book written by Herb Elliott, who was a long distance runner, and he was talking about this little inner voice that sits on your shoulder, and you can have a conversation with it. And I saw some of these themes coming through in your book where it's not just us, is it? There's like, multiple versions of us, or you call it the alter ego. We can basically tap into other versions of us. I'd love it if you could articulate that in a far better way than I can.



Todd: Well, I mean, I like to go back to the history. So, and I say it in the book, well, A, I didn't invent alter egos. You know, the process of me working with higher and higher caliber athletes, all of a sudden, this kind of golden thread started weaving amongst the ones who were consistently performing at a high level and allowing all of their capability to show up on the field. Because nothing is more frustrating than when we know we can be performing better, but, you know, for whatever reason, it's not getting onto the field. And again, I'm using the word field not in a generic sense, not just sport, but just in life in general.

So I used an alter ego when I played football, and then when I started out in business, I was so insecure about how young I looked. And you know, who's going to listen to me on stage talking about mental game coaching when I look like I'm 12, even though I'm 21? And I'd had some good success working with people, you know, like youngsters. And so this golden thread, it kept on talking about persona or character, you know, stepping into a different version of myself or, you know, alter ego or secret identity, something like that. And I was like, wait. And I codified the process, and that ended up becoming the thing that I became known for in pro and Olympic sport.

But its lineage goes all the way back to 44 BC when Cicero, the great Roman philosopher and statesman coined the term, and its root actually means the “other I” or “trusted friend”. And I think that’s a really important anchor point for people to think about this through, because we all need allies in order to get to where we want to go, right? Like you’re a byproduct, just as much as I’m a byproduct of having good relationships that have helped make connections for me, to make business easier or faster, whatever the case is.

But most often, people don’t build an ally internally. They have this voice that talks back to them that might be about judgment and criticism and doubt and worry and imposter syndrome then, or bringing up past trauma or whatever it might be. There’s any one of a number of kind of arrows that the enemy likes to use to slow us down and stop us. But the idea of using an alter ego is something that has been proven throughout history that people have used consistently. But it builds that trusted friend internally, to help us move past that resistance and maybe get us out there and do the things that we most want to go do, in the way that we most want to go and do it.



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~ Todd Herman



And it taps into this one great power that human beings are gifted with. People think of, you know, something as super powerful that we have is, you know, love or gratitude or all these positive emotions. But those things aren't unique to human beings. Other animals have those emotions, love and caring and affection. But the thing that we're gifted with is that creative imagination, and even Einstein said, you know, the imagination is far greater than knowledge. And our creative imagination allows us to suspend disbelief about what we think we can or cannot do. We also use it to then create a heaven from hell or a hell from heaven.

But an alter ego allows us to tap into the power of our creative imagination; suspend, you know, whatever disbelief I have about what I think I can or cannot do, and tap into the traits and abilities and qualities of someone or something else that pulls our innate talents out onto the field for us. So we can actually perform through some other idea, and it's super powerful for people.

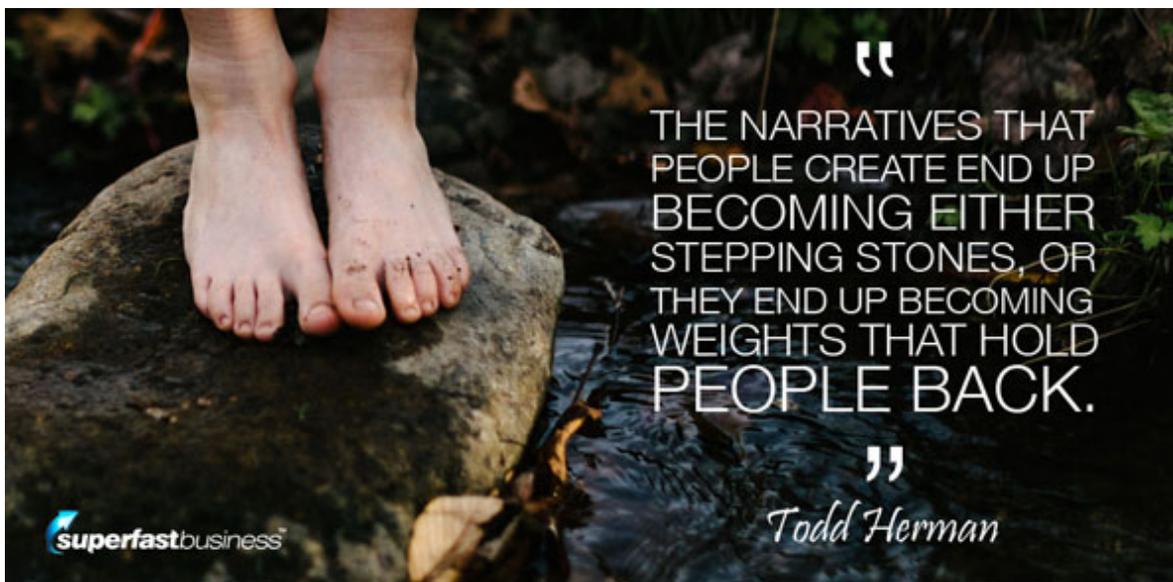
Because, I mean, James, I am actually more well known as being a quick hit artist. I wasn't typically that type of mental game coach or advisor that stuck with people for long periods of time. I was kind of brought in to help someone that was in a slump, or who needed to make a change fast, because those were the tools that I had. And the alter ego method was one of the go-to tools that I would use. Because I would get a call on a Wednesday, when someone's performing on Saturday at the US Open out in Flushing Meadows here in New York, and I didn't have time in three days to, you know, get them to do meditation, and teach them meditation, which for me is one of my go-to strategies. Like, you know, it's undeniable that meditation is one of the most powerful things that you can do to perform at a high level. I've failed to find anything else that is more superior than that. But in a short-term, and a long-term strategy, alter egos were super powerful, because I could actually build one quickly with people and then could transform their performance, because they were leaving that kind of wounded self, or that self that was defeating them somehow on the sidelines. And they were taking this other persona out onto the court to perform, and it was this magical, graceful way that they could get their capabilities out there.

The difference from self talk

James: So how does this fit with words like, I'll just introduce a few words and I want to tell me if they're different or similar. We hear words like self-talk, or self-belief. Are we on the same sort of track here?

Todd: Well...

James: Or are they different?



Todd: They're different. So, self-talk is just the chatter that's going on. When you build and employ an alter ego, you know, when you start thinking of how you'd be performing if you were James Bond going out there, what happens is, because we've experienced our story and our narrative for so long, we naturally build up a bunch of roadblocks that don't necessarily need to be there, right? Like, the narratives that people create end up becoming either stepping stones, or they end up becoming weights that hold people back, just depending on how we look at them and how we use them. But when I take a look at James, I don't live inside your head, I don't know every single minute of your day. And so we naturally create this "grass is greener on the other side" effect. When we look at someone else, and we go, "Oh, well, it makes sense that Todd could do that, because of X, Y, and Z." Or, "It makes sense that Daniel Craig could have that," or insert any name. Rafael Nadal. And we gloss over people's lives.

Well, if that's something that we do, me as someone who's a practitioner works with people one-on-one, I'm just simply going to use that to my advantage with people. And that's what an alter ego does. Because if I'm pulling in and I'm acting to and through Rafael Nadal on the court, I'm not carrying with me all of his insecurities, because I don't know all of them. I'm not in his head. But what I do see is all his great character traits or abilities that he brings on to the court, and that's what I'm leveraging. So my self-talk changes when I leverage these ideas and step into them.

That's what I did when I was going out into the business world. I was insecure, I lacked confidence, I wasn't decisive and it was causing me to just basically sit on my hands and not take the action that I knew I needed to be taking, but I wasn't doing it. Because I was worried about what other people are going to think of me, and worried about my age, and worried about how young I looked, and worried about if I didn't have all of the information yet. And, you know, wasn't a professionally trained coach, or whatever the case was. But the moment I started tapping into this power for myself, after using it on the football field, and I was like, "Wait a second, I used it on the football field. Why can't I just use this idea in business?" And I started to create this other self that was going to go out into that world, and it was someone who was going to be confident, the traits that I wanted to show be showing up – confident, decisive and articulate. Someone who knew what they were talking about, was confident with what they were sharing with people, and took really decisive action with it.

Superman in reverse

And what I did was I employed something called enclothed cognition, which is a psychological phenomenon I'll talk about in just a second. So what I did was – I've got perfect vision, James – back then, I had this belief that people who wore glasses were smart, articulate, they were successful. And so I was like, wait a second. When I was on the football field, when I put on my helmet, that's when I became Geronimo to go on the football field, which was my alter ego. So in business, what can I wear, what can I put on to activate this other alter ego? So I went out and I bought a pair of non-prescription glasses, at the age of 22. Nowadays, wearing glasses, like, for dress, is a very popular thing. Back in 1998, it wasn't. In fact, the optometrist at the lenscrafters in West Edmonton Mall was like, "Wait a second, you got perfect vision. People don't wear glasses if they have perfect vision." And I was like, "Can you please just give me the glasses?"

And that's what I would use. Those glasses meant that when I put them on, I was stepping into, I was doing my reverse Superman. Because that's where I was getting the idea from. You know, Superman puts on the glasses to become Clark Kent, the mild-mannered and accepted version of himself in society, so he could kind of, you know, operate amongst regular people without being bothered. And I was putting it on to be the Superman version of myself in business, who was confident, decisive and articulate. And when I put those on, my alter ego's name was Richard, which is actually my first name. I wouldn't have the thought that I was insecure. I wouldn't have the thought that I'm too young. That was just what I was building in my head. And it helped me to get to, you know, wherever I ended up.

But this idea of enclothed cognition, this is simply employing something that we all do. I mean, what it is is, we as human beings, we create meaning, we attach meaning, to clothing or things that we wear. And how this happens in action is, the Kellogg School of Management here in the US did this study to just see how it played out, and they brought in a bunch of university students into a room and they had them look at this puzzle on the wall. And I don't know if you've ever seen this puzzle before, James, where they have the word of a color and then it's colored in a different color. So it's the word "green"

James: Yeah, I do, it's one of my mind training games does that.

Todd: Yeah.

James: It says the color, then it's got another color but in a different color, and you have to decide if it matches the top color or not. It's a pretty tricky game.

Todd: So in this one, it's it's like the word green, but then it's colored in yellow. And you got to say the word, because our brain actually processes the color first, not the word first. And there's a like, say a grid of say, 25 boxes. So they have these students come in, and they have to say the word going across, and they're tracking their accuracy, their detail, the amount of mistakes that they're making, and then how quickly they did it in. So they have all these students go through it, and they leave.

And then they bring in another group. And individually, they hand them a white coat. And this time, they do the same exercise. And when they hand them the white coat, they say, Oh, this is a painter's coat, put on the painter's coat and do the exercise. So now they do the same thing, track all their accuracy and how many mistakes they make and how quickly they did it.

And then they leave and then they bring in another group, they hand them the exact same white coat, but this time they tell them that it's a lab coat or a doctor's coat, and then they do the exercise.

Well, the reality is, the people who wore the painter's coat performed no better than the original group. They had the same amount of mistakes, and it took them about the same amount of time to do it. People who wore the lab coat, though, or the doctor's coat, performed it in less than half the time, and they made less than half the mistakes than the other people. Why is it? Because when they put on the lab coat, they adopted the traits of someone who's in a laboratory, which is someone who is methodical, careful, someone who is detailed. And so that's enclothed cognition in action.

So I talk about it in the book, that there are any one of a number of devices that people use to help them pull the qualities that they most want to show up on to their field of play.

James: Is this the artifact?

Todd: It's the totem and the artifact, exactly. Using something to help activate the qualities that you most want. So for me, I employed this idea, I didn't even know what the idea of enclothed cognition, but what I did was I had already associated that glasses meant someone who was smart and decisive, and I simply employed it. And I enclothed my mind in the cognitive state of the type of person that I wanted to be on that field.



Is it faking it?

And the reality is being, sometimes people are, isn't this being inauthentic and faking it till you make it? And it's a terrible term. Like, you know, I mean you talk about messaging, and you're amazing at messaging all the time. Well, if you're trying to sell the idea of helping someone get past themselves, don't use the term "fake it till you make it," because just the word itself, "fake", no one wants to be fake. Well, this idea has nothing to do with faking it, because the moment you start doing something in order to impress someone else, you're operating from what I call the "trapped self". Anytime you're doing something for someone else, it never creates a great performance. And it creates a lot of resistance. Doing something to deceive others or trick others, that's definitely being inauthentic. This has nothing to do with that. This has everything to do with saying, "Who do I want to be showing up as, so that I can perform at my best and to my capabilities, and not have to suffer through the resistance that seems to be showing up for me?" but really honoring the fact that we as human beings, we have this phenomenal capacity for possibility at our core self.

Recognize that power, and then be very intentional about, "This is who I want to be showing up as on the field of play of business." Or for myself, when I go into my little kids, I'm not going to bring confident, decisive and articulate Todd to the table with my kids. They don't want that. What they want is fun and playful, get down on the floor and play with them, and the gentle version of myself. So when I go home, my alter ego, you know, because I'm a newish parent, my oldest is almost six, but still, I had to get used to that as well. And because I spent all my day dealing with ambitious, high-achieving people, and I'm a challenger personality with them, to really challenge them to move forward, if I go home and I bring that to them, because it'd be very easy, because that's just habit and routine, it'd be very easy for me to bring that attitude with them. And that's not fun for them.

So one moment where I was catching myself bringing that challenger personality to my middle daughter, Sophie, who has this fantastic emotional bandwidth where she can have meltdowns that could rival anyone, and here I am challenging that, and it's only just prolonging it, I stopped myself and was like, wait a second, Todd, check in. This isn't who you most want to show up as for your kids. And so I thought to myself, "Well, who most embodies the character traits that I'd like to show up with for my kids? And it was Mr. Rogers. And so for people internationally who don't know who Mr. Rogers is, he's a prolific children's entertainer on public broadcasting here in America for 50 years from the end of the 1950s all the way up until he passed away at the turn of the century. And he was just amazing with kids. And he had this gentle kind of soul that he had. And so I stopped and I started activating that side of myself and really thinking through the idea of Mr. Rogers and what would he do in that moment. Well, he gets down on one knee, and he would probably embrace Sophie. So that's what I did the very next time she did it. Well, what would normally have been a 5, 10, 15-minute meltdown melted away in like, eight seconds. And I just hugged her. And then like, just like most little kids, she was off playing and doing whatever they were doing a few minutes later.

But to understand that we all have these different stages and roles that we play in life, we're not one single self. We have many selves that show up in life, and it's an extraordinarily healthy way to view ourselves. Because then, we create context. And we take a look at the context of that field. And we go, this is the self that I want to show up. You know what? I don't have the belief in myself, or whatever it is. But I can leverage the idea of stepping in as my inner James Schramko, or inner whatever it might be for someone, and you can act through those traits.

Totems and artifacts

James: Yeah, it's interesting when you start introducing different characters, as you're saying these stories, it's bringing back a lot of thoughts. I'm linking ideas, like I'm thinking of acting, it's a lot like acting. I did acting classes when I was younger, to improve my confidence. And then I realized that we are literally acting through life. You know, if you can play the role of the successful salesperson, you might actually be successful. And so you lean into that role, and you do what a successful salesperson would do. I remember there was this incident when I was 24, I was getting similar feedback to you. A customer actually said to me, "You are too young to be selling BMW."

Todd: Oh, yeah.

James: And this guy, he said, "Nice tie." And then his wife reached across, grabbed my tie, turned it over, and it said "Target," and she threw it back in my chest and said, "No, it's not."

Todd: Aww, wow.

James: So I went out to David Jones, which is an expensive store here in Australia, guess there's an equivalent over there, Marks & Spencer or something, I'm not sure. But I bought the most expensive tie I could find, it was a Gieves & Hawkes from Savile Row in London. It was a lot of money at the time, but when I put that tie on, I believe that was like my artifact to feel confident and reassured. I knew if someone turned that tie, they couldn't be disappointed.

Todd: Yeah.

James: And I transformed from this young 24 to an older 24. And actually, I had glasses at the time, because I needed them for prescription. Within a year, I was the number one BMW salesperson in Australia.

And then I think I continued that tradition of artifacts. It went on to be things like a Rolex watch, and nice shoes, and a Montblanc pen and all those things, which I've now actually, in this stage of my life, I've started discarding those things. I don't value them as much as I used to, because I think I've let go of those artifacts because the James Schramko that I am now is a different version.

Todd: Yeah, well, when you started telling that story, I think it's a fascinating lens into how you've built yourself over your life and how you show up today, because you are so far away from the Savile Row, Gieves, you know, wearing a tie guy. And it's almost like, you know, and I'm not saying you literally have done this, but there's this other self that's now magnified where you're almost like, you're not rebelling against it, but the intent that you originally did it through was because of someone else doing that to you.

James: Yeah, I can see it.

Todd: Right? And making you feel like garbage. And so, now, this person who shows up in boardies and T-shirts and flip flops is you saying, "Hey, you know what? I can be successful on my own terms, and I don't need to wear some frickin' tie to have someone like me.

James: I think I was also in such a beastly industry, it was such an aggressive, testosterone-charged, dominating, challenging industry. Like, it crushes people. It really is a tough industry, the motor industry.

Todd: Yeah.

James: I had a whole quiver of power ties that no one could mess with, like I was unstoppable. But I've shed those things. Just out of curiosity, do you require glasses now, or do you still wear them as an artifact?

A deliberate persona

Todd: No, I don't need it. So there's this great quote from Cary Grant, the kind of golden era actor in Hollywood. You know, debonair guy, British man who came over to America and just rose to the top of that industry and in the 1940s and 50s. And he has this great quote where he said, "I pretended to be somebody I wanted to be, and I finally became that person. Or he became me. Or we met at some point." And Cary Grant is someone who suffered with depression for a good chunk of his life, and he was trying to be very deliberate about how he wanted to show up in life, and sort of bring this more polished and debonair self out, and very charismatic man. And that's exactly what he's known for.

But there's this point that happens where, yes, in the beginning, you're being very intentional about who it is that you're trying to activate. Beyonce did this with Sasha Fierce perfectly, and you know, she needed Sasha Fierce because she was a young girl growing up in Houston, gospel singing. Family, gospel, home, you know, always at church on Sunday, singing. In fact, she was drawing crowds at a young age because of her voice. And then she started getting into, her dad brought her into and created a group, and the group started singing more provocative lyrics and you know, dancing provocatively on stage or whatever. And that wasn't who she felt she was at her identity. But she wanted to explore this creative side. And so Beyonce had this huge resistance to go out there. So she created Sasha Fierce, which was a way for her to creatively express herself out there and leave that kind of more pure version of herself, whatever it was, Beyonce, on the sidelines. And then later, you know, when she came out with her album, Sasha Fierce, she retired her, because she had become the entertainer that she wanted to become.

Well, for me, I didn't need the glasses after probably six months, even. I just continued to wear them because I liked the way that it felt. And even to this day, I wear glasses now as basically just a totem and an artifact and a signal to other people that I'm showing up in this way. And of course, me as someone who's, you know, leading the charge on the alter ego stuff, even the eyeglasses are on the cover of the book. But no, there's a point where you become that person and you don't need that tool to help you get past whatever the internal resistance is.

James: Got it. That is interesting. It's fascinating to me that you became business Superman by dressing like Clark Kent.

Todd: Yeah, well....

James: It's a dichotomy.

Todd: Yeah, yeah, exactly.

James: Other words that come to mind are hypnosis or modeling, you hear about these sort of things, like taking on patterns of someone you want to be. Is it similar to that?

Todd: You know what, I actually don't know enough about even that NLP world.

James: OK, we'll skip that one.

Todd: Yeah.

The multiple self theory

James: What about multiple personality disorder?

Todd: It has nothing to do with multiple personality disorder. In fact, there's been a lot of the psychology world that's been in upheaval the last few years because some of the pillars that have held up the philosophical thought of psychology have been torn down. Like, some major studies, like the Milgram experiment, the Stanford Prison Experiment, all experiments that have been factually discounted because no one has been able to replicate them.

And the other one is one of the pillars of psychology for the longest time was that the healthiest people in society are the ones who have a single self, one organized self. And that has now gone out the window. And the fastest growing part of the psychology world right now is this study of multiple self theory, which is that people who actually understand that we live in the world of context, like I was saying before, and they identify themselves as my parent self, my business self, my peer and friend self.

And we all understand, like, James, how you show up in business, there's going to be elements of your personality that are different and magnified than when you're just hanging out with your mates and, you know, having a beer or something like that. Or when you head out on stage, there's a different element of how you're being magnified internally. There's no, like, just one single James that is there. And the people who try to operate from that place, there is some evidence to show that they are the people who typically have the highest rate of mental health disorders.

James: Yeah. I think in my case, I'm getting this daily contrast where when I go surfing, I'm really in a different mode. Like, if I'm switched on for coaching, and I'm solving someone's big problems, surfing is almost the antithesis of that. It's a very self-pursuit, instead of putting all my focus on someone else. When I want to improve my performance, which is like, you shouldn't take up surfing when you're in your early 40s. That's my tip for people. It's a bit late. I used to be athletic. When I was a kid, I used to sail from the time I was like, seven or eight through to 21. I got second in the world titles by the time I was in my 20s, so I was an athlete at some point, to get back to that. So sometimes I actually imagine like, there's a crowd on the beach, cheering me on and I'm thinking I'm channeling my inner Kelly Slater when I take off on a big wave. I just think, I've got this. I think, what would Kelly do? Would they be sitting around floundering, or trying to go for a wave that's not going to make it, or whatever? No, they pick the right ones they take. So I'm trying to tune into kind of like that, what would a professional athlete be doing?

Todd: Yeah.

James: I was fortunate enough to spend a whole week with a professional surfer athlete friend of mine, Christo Hall. You probably know him, he's a fabulous marketer. And he was tuning me up, wave after wave, for a week. And I progressed more in that week than I did in years. But I'm always thinking, what would Christo do? What would he tell me now? How do I become that surfer? I have had a transformation, I can actually surf now, which is terrific, and constantly improving. But I do go into athletic mode. I'm switching between athlete and business mode, and I'm switching between focusing on me versus focusing on other people. And then of course, you're throwing family in the mix. Yeah, I can see how there's different roles we play.

Todd: Well, and I mean, think about it a moment. You know, like, Christo, and again, I wasn't around when he was competing, but if Christo only identified himself as a surfer, and he competitively surfed, if he was getting to the end of his career and his entire identity was about surfing. That's why, like with some of my clients, they have a really tough time with transitioning out of sport. Because that's all they've ever known, that's all they ever identify themselves as. And then it's like, well, if I stopped doing this, then who am I? kind of thing. And that's the single-self mentality. That's where we've actually been consumed by something.

Just the way you articulate it just now is like, I've got my athlete self or competitive self that's going out there, and then I've got my entrepreneur self. That right there, now you're creating more worlds for yourself. So if one isn't working out for you, you can still feel good about who you are as a human being. Because maybe the entrepreneur one is going well for you. But if you only consume your life up with being an entrepreneur, and that's all you identify yourself as, then if the world of your business isn't going well for you right now, then it's definitely going to be filtering into who you are when you get home and how you are when you're with your friends.

When money and media is all you've got

James: That's my greatest concern, when I look at some of these sad mofers riding around in their Ubers on their phone as a professional vlogger or whatever. They're driving around in their Bentleys talking about making hundreds of thousands of dollars. And I think, gosh, seems like that's all they do, that's all they've got. Like, what happens when that doesn't work anymore? I fear for their mental health, for sure.

Todd: Yeah.

James: And as long as they're happy, great. But I just can't see it ending well.

Todd: No. Well, I mean, if now, the idea that in order for you to compete in social media, that you always have to be on, as someone who has been working with high-performing people for a long time, the fact that you are not creating a line of delineation for your field of play, that you're a business, and you're now just letting it consume all of you, I can tell you 100 percent, I can guarantee you, you are going to be running headlong into mental health issues.

James: The ones who go live all the time, they're the ones I think are the most at risk. That's the reason why I've made a choice not to do that.

Todd: Yeah.

James: So I think there needs to be off time. Can you have a life that's not shared 100 percent on social media? That's like, the challenge these days. Gosh, it's a recurring theme on my podcast. Anyone listening to this knows that [I see it as a huge risk](#). And I'm observing this through [kids as well, how they're interacting with technology](#). They can just get so absorbed. There is no life outside of this one zone. So this is extremely helpful what you're talking about here. I don't want to get miles off topic.

Todd: But it is, it's all in the same. For me, it's all in the same. Like, James, 82 percent of my professional clients, athletes – Olympians, entrepreneurs, public figures, entertainers – 82 percent, I have sent off to work with one of any one of the seven therapists around the world who are highly skilled and trained in working with people through trauma and personal history stuff. OK? So it is extremely relevant, because a big part of the narrative of achievers is that a lot of them, not everybody, because we're not going to use that stroke across everybody, but a lot of them have had some tough stuff happen to them in their past.

And we've all had stuff. Every single human being on the planet has experienced trauma, because trauma can be experienced from a car accident, from even just seeing something bad happen, it can be processed as trauma inside the brain. Now the deep expression of it, of course, now there's levels of it. And so me, I'm doing mental game coaching, peak performance and high-performance stuff with people, and that whole lens is about helping people move toward and forward towards their goal or whatever it is they're trying to realize, and do that with less friction, less stress, less anxiety, OK?

So the moment that I, because I'm rattling around inside of six inches of someone's ears, and the moment I find and poke something that disturbs the emotional wellbeing of someone, I am not a qualified therapist. So I have a roster of people. My point about that is, it is an important topic that people understand. You're going to see mental health, because it's definitely hitting an apex right now, with the amount of people that are being open with its discussion. I'm one of them. I know that the next decade of my life will be dedicated to talking about this subject a lot more.

My point with this is that it is an important topic. People do need to be mindful of the fact that if you're always going to be consuming on social media, and then creating only for social media, if you can't just be with yourself, then it's a recipe for just real issues for people. And it has to be talked about, because the expectation is crap, what people are saying around what you should do with social media. I really like a lot of what Gary Vee talks about. He's got smart messages, but he has a group of people who's around him, documenting him, so that he doesn't even need to think about it. The act of thinking about it, when you're solo, is very, very tough on you.

James: I'm so glad. I mean, this is profoundly important. I feel like I'm the voice in the wilderness, you know, because when I'm talking to entrepreneurs on a daily basis or chatting to them, you get these ridiculous scenarios, right? Let's imagine there's a marketer out there who's been marketing for 15 years, who spends 100 grand a month on ads, who's been promoted by all the big dogs, and then one day decides to do social media. And then the next month, lo and behold, they make sales. What a shock. And then they start selling products, teaching people how to make money on social media, with all the appropriate income disclaimers, of course. And people just get sucked in like a vortex. And like, they think this is what you have to do. And this is the only thing, and now you got to go live every five seconds. You got to be all over everything. You've got to dedicate your whole life to this because you've got to have big goals and you're going to make a lot of money.

There's a few people out there pushing really hard in social media, especially with income projections, that basically it's like, if you don't have a private jet or or a big house or fancy car or whatever, then you're basically a failure is the message that gets pushed. And it confuses people. And I can understand why they get attracted to it. But you only got to watch the Fyre Festival documentary on Netflix to get an understanding of the disconnect between reality and the perception that's put out there by this.

So I see media as a great tool. I mean, I meet people like you on social media as well. But it's something I think you have to be disciplined about. I like this whole concept of reflecting and ruminating and thinking about things and having a conversation with yourself, I've always done that. I love books like Maxwell Maltz's Psycho-Cybernetics. That's where I first learned about that subconscious and all of those things. And visualization, I've been visualizing for decades. And I still think probably at least a quarter of what I'm helping people with in my coaching relates to mindset and and calming them down and getting focused. Like, it's such a big topic. I could talk to you for 100 episodes. No doubt about this. It's such an exciting topic.

Todd: Well, maybe that's our joint podcast, we're going to talk about mindset and business.

A quick summary

James: It could be like, every single chapter of your book is just like a power topic. But we should just make an effort to summarize some of the things we've talked about here. I'll give it a stab.

We've sort of talked about how there's some parallels between high-performing athletes and high-performing business people. They're tapping into some of the same techniques, and that you can develop multiple characters for yourself to step into to get the job done. It's not being fake, it's not being inauthentic, it's just utilizing a tool that you've got access to to empower yourself to get an amazing result. You talked about artifacts that you can use, devices to enhance that or make it easier. I think you might have broken a couple of your own rules, though, with telling people about it. But that's OK. The teacher has to sacrifice sometimes to to make the point.

Todd: Dead on.

James: It's like, every time I do a case study, I know it's going to get copied, right? You give up your darlings.

Todd: Yeah.

Just what is authenticity?

James: And you could basically harness that alter ego and use it as an asset to move forward and get what you want in life. You've introduced me to a few ideas here where, you know, it's OK to have different dimensions, you don't have to be the same person in every possible medium because we're in a contextual world.

Todd: Yeah. I have this real love-hate relationship with the term authenticity. I think it's been brutalized, bastardized, overly used, caused people to really, actually not get out there and do what they most want to do, because the perception of "Oh, is this me being authentic or inauthentic?"

We have to understand that human beings are always evolving. It's an intrinsic part of who and how we're built. We're always exploring new sides of ourselves. We have this sense of learning and growth. And if you're not honoring those things, the world is built on polarities, there's a duality. You're either growing, or you're decaying. There is no in-between. And so this more healthy look at yourself as you're constantly evolving, whether you tap into an idea of leveraging an alter ego or you use some other device, then it helps you to be the best version of you on the field. I don't care whether or not in your mind you're playing through the idea of Wonder Woman or Superman. I just got to experience great value from you.

James: I'm sure the odd romantic has envisioned a lover avatar, when they're looking to up the game, you know?

Todd: Yeah.

James: I think that this is a healthy discussion. It turns out, I'm using some of these ideas, and thank you for sharing some of yours. Being vulnerable, basically you're opening yourself up a bit, but you just keep those glasses on, buddy. You've got this.

Todd: I appreciate it, man. Appreciate it.

The Alter Ego Effect

James: So, let's talk about the book briefly, because we covered some of the thoughts and themes in it. It's called *The Alter Ego Effect: The Power of Secret Identities to Transform Your Life*, by Todd Herman. I presume it's going to be or is available on the major distribution channels.

Todd: It is, yeah. So I mean, this is traditionally published, so I, you know, went through HarperCollins. It's available around the world. You know, Amazon.com. To actually make it easy for people to find the links if they go to AlterEgoEffect.com, we've got this great, you know, link generator that you click on it, and it's going to find the right store for you wherever you're located. But yeah, I mean, it's out February 5th, and, you know, this is a concept that I've been working on for 15, 16 years, and I'm excited to get it out into our mass general world and not just keep it kind of tucked away inside of my training world.

James: It's like you've reached into your toolkit and pulled out your favorite sort of hammer or whatever.

Todd: A hundred percent.

James: You've been using it with your students, and now it's out there. As a [fellow author](#), I can relate to this. I've got tools in my toolkit that I've been developing, and I want to get them out into the world as well. So thank you for sharing this one.

Todd: Yeah, thanks, man.

James: Good luck with it. I'm sure it's going to go well, I can't emphasize enough how important mindset is to put some attention on. Because if you ignore it, it'll bite you in the backside, I think.

Todd: Well, you're just having the awareness alone, checking in on yourself. I mean, we're living in our heads all the time, so I'd much rather, if I'm living in my head a lot, then I want to create the best home possible that I can be operating inside of.

James: That's a lovely way to think of it. I actually really like Sherlock Holmes and his mental palace.

Todd: Yeah.

James: Have you seen that, where he just visualizes and meditates like you said, and he goes into... Since watching that, I tap my inner Sherlock Holmes when I'm trying to remember something, or I want to be really able to concentrate. I go into my mental palace as if I'm Sherlock Holmes, and I can find anything. I have this amazing belief in my ability to recall things and remember things if it's important.

We've all done it

Todd: Yeah. See, you're the perfect student for me, James. Because you've highlighted so many of the ideas. And the great thing about this is one thing I want to remind people of too is, and I say it in the book, this is actually me trying to take this idea back to the world, and I'm trying to cause people to remember something that you've already done.

People, I don't need to convince you on this, because you've already done this. It's a part of the human condition. We've all done this. We used to play with ideas as a youngster, whether it was being a fireman, or an astronaut, or our favorite footy player or hockey player, or whatever the case is, we've all activated this idea. I'm just trying to remind people, especially those that are a little bit longer in the tooth, and now are in their adult years, that this is something that is an extraordinarily powerful part of how you're built. And to not just leave it tucked away in the past as some idea, "Oh, it's cute when you used it when you were seven." No, it's not. It's something that people have used to become and get their most successful self out there at any age whatsoever.

James: This has a lot of parallels with an episode I did. It was [Episode 471, talking about fun](#). People have forgotten to play and have fun.

Todd: Yeah.

James: I've actually covered this a few times. Someone said something along the lines of adults are like humans who have had the kid beaten out of them. Maybe we should go back to what we know, what was natural and more organic. I think actually, as I left the shackles of corporate entrapment and started to find myself over the last 10 years (by the way, that sounds terrible, "find myself", it's so hippy trippy) you know, as you tune in more, I think life can be a lot more rewarding.

Actually, we also covered [Episode 594, was Play Your Way to Success](#). So you're basically saying, remember what it was like as a kid to play cops and robbers, or, you know, nurses and doctors, like you can still tap into those characters that you want to be and take on some of the benefits that come with that, according to the research that you pointed out.

Todd: Yeah, absolutely.

James: Thanks so much, Todd Herman, you're a legend. And I hope you'll come back and give us some updates and pontificate on mindset matters again, because this isn't going anywhere, this topic.

Todd: No. We've got more shows in us, buddy.

James: Thank you

Todd: Thanks.

James: See you later.

Todd: Thanks, man.

James: All right, there you go. So I recommend that you check out *The Alter Ego Effect*. Todd Herman, what a wonderful guy. Thank you so much for sharing.



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enjoy with James's personal
coaching

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