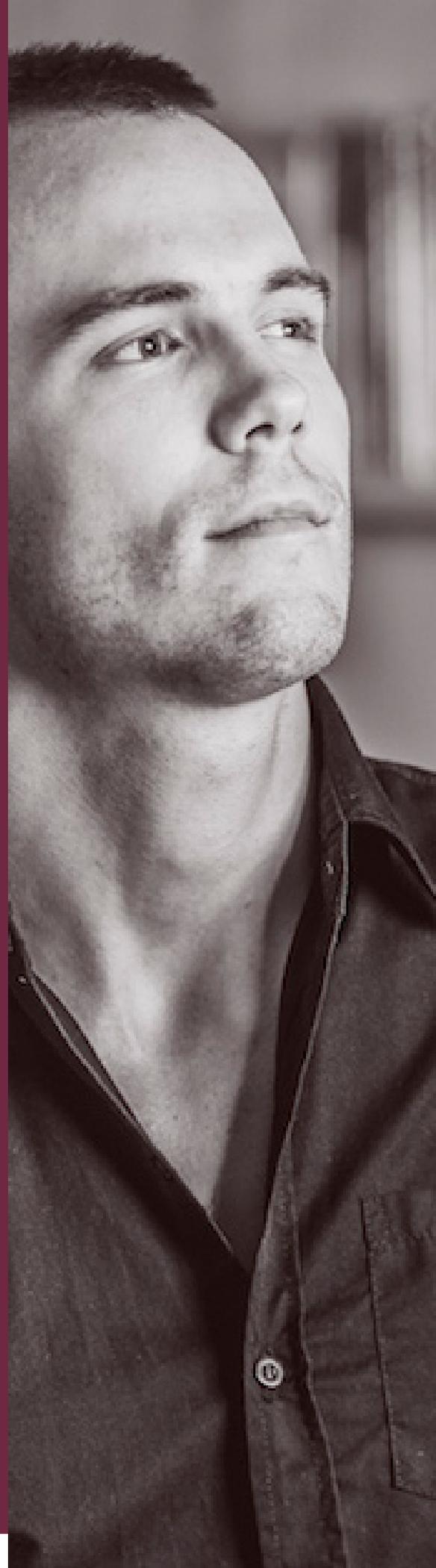




SuperFastBusiness presents

# When Becoming Successful Doesn't Make You Happy

Material success doesn't automatically equal happiness. How do you manage your emotions so that you get the most fulfillment out of whatever state you're at in life or business?



# When Becoming Successful Doesn't Make You Happy

by SuperFastBusiness



## John McIntyre

**James:** James Schramko here. Welcome back to SuperFastBusiness.com. This is Episode 591. And we are covering the topic of emotional mastery. And for this topic, I've brought back John McIntyre. Welcome.

**John:** James, how are you, man?

**James:** Good. Now, you have been on my podcast before. And last time, we were talking about a different topic altogether. Would you like to join the dots between that topic and this topic?

**John:** Sure. I'll try and make it a short story. So back in, I think it was 2012 or 13, I think, **we did a podcast on email marketing**. And, you know, I was building that business, running a business for three or four years. And then 2015, I found myself in Colombia, I'd just come off Richard Branson's island for an invit e-only event.

## A bit empty

And you know, on the outside, life was great, making money, we had this penthouse apartment overlooking the city, really, really awesome place, but I wasn't happy. You know, I'd sort of gotten to that place where I'd achieved some semblance of success and from the outside, everyone – family, friends, things like that – will look at it and go, wow, like, life is great. But inside, I'm like, not that I was majorly depressed, but I was just feeling a bit empty, I guess. I was like, 'Is this it?' Like, I don't just want to feel OK. I want to feel totally in love with every moment, you know – if not every moment, then as many moments as possible of every day rather than just going through the motions.

I tried to solve it logically for a long time, like a lot of us are trying to do. I tried to think my way to an answer. And that didn't work. Basically, it wasn't until I started to go down this emotional path of learning how to, you know, it starts to veer into woo-woo-ish territory, so we can talk about that. But it wasn't till I dove into that, that I actually started to get some, basically to find the happiness, find the meaning, find the energy and the fulfillment that I was actually seeking.

And that was 2015, and fast forward to now and I feel more alive, more happy, more satisfied than I've ever been. Much more calmer, and in a lot of different ways, not just in business or with money or with anything, but, like, with family and friends and the gym, performance has increased just across the board, because I'm not getting in my own way, the way I used to.

And here we are having this conversation.

**James:** So you're saying, you weren't emotionally fulfilled visiting Richard Branson's Island.

**John:** No. I mean, aspects of it were, like, wow. There was this surface level like, man, this is awesome, this is like... I just kind of made it, that whole

feeling. But then there's this, just this sense of, you know, I think a lot of us go through that period of like, what, is this it? Like you kind of do it and then you're like, yeah, but on a daily basis, how excited, how good does it feel to live your life? Like, are you bouncing out of bed in the morning excited to do the things that you're doing? Or are you sort of just checking your emails and doing the business stuff because that's just what you're meant to do?

There's this sort of subtle difference, it's subtle in a way but also quite a large difference. Sort of like, you can make a lot of money and feel like a boss. I've known plenty of people who make tons of money but so many – no, I don't know about how many, but a lot of them do seem kind of empty at the same time.

**James:** Yeah. I was being massively cynical there, by the way. I wonder when people post those pictures or talk about visiting Richard Branson's Island if even they believe for a second that that's somehow significant. Because usually, you'll find people pay money to go to those events, and it's prettymuch open to anybody, if you're a member of any of those mastermind groups. But maybe it works on the outside world, but I wasn't sure how that would fulfill someone.

**John:** Well, I think it's the...

**James:** Maybe people get caught up in the whole bubble of the mania of it.

## Inside out versus outside in

**John:** Well, this goes into like the inside out versus outside in. I think what I was trying to do is create an outside, like an external experience to change an internal state. And so the idea is, if I go to this event or if I go make money or if I do something on the outside, in my external world that's going to somehow have a really major shift on the inside and make me feel good about life, for example.

And you know, these things do work for a short period of time, like buying a new car, a new house or buying a new anything, you get that short-term kick. But eventually, you return to your baseline. And so what I found is that like, I think for a long time, I was looking for things outside me to give me that sense of satisfaction.

And what I've realized now is that it's really the other way around. It's more like, the metaphor I like is, I go into Latin dancing here in Thailand, and is it when you're dancing, your goal is really to dance and have fun. You're not trying to get to the end of the song. You're not trying to get anywhere. Or if there is a destination, the destination is really to occupy this present moment and to express the energy of the song and the energy you're feeling to dance your way through it. And it's really, it's the whole, like, destination versus journey. And I think what happens is, you know, in life, especially entrepreneurs, right, we get so focused on this goal. That's usually why we get in there. We're going to get to some point some time in the future that's going to give us the sense of, 'I made it.'

But I think where you sort of get lost is, you think that the outside world is going to come in and change how you feel, when you want to actually realize, well, I feel like I've realized, is that it starts on the inside. Like, if I was going to Richard Branson's Island, because I had like an inner sense of emptiness, that's never going to work. It's never going to end well.

On the other hand, if it came from a place of, I already feel abundant, I already feel happy, satisfied, fulfilled on the inside, you could still go to Richard Branson's Island, or have these different experiences, but they would be better if they were an expression of the happiness or fulfillment that you already feel, rather than the answer or the way to make yourself feel happy. Does that make sense?

**James:** Sort of. I think, when I think about one of the people who are pretty keen on going to that island, it would be Yanik Silver. And I know he probably feels very good about collecting people's fees to go to that island and then donating the profits to Branson's charity. So he has a real purpose behind it. And he's very purpose-driven. He's a wonderful human and I suppose he's doing it for that reason, whereas some of the other people who are paying to go to the island....

And I don't mean to labor this point, but I think it's fascinating, because it's totally on point about people doing things to either please other people or to fit with what they think success means, but then when they do it they realize that all they've got is a big credit card bill. And maybe a few networks and a brag-worthy story and maybe even a picture. And the funny thing is, some

people actually get asked to take down those pictures, allegedly by Branson's people saying, hey, listen, Mr. Branson is not your good friend. If you could, please remove that claim from your website.

So I'm sort of poking fun at some of the people who do that for their marketing. It does seem hollow from the perspective of if that's all you got, then then I feel sorry for you. But like you, I have been on a pursuit to find happiness in my life that doesn't necessarily come from the traditional Lamborghini, big mansion-type aspects of life, which it seems like in our space, we're often told that that's what success looks like, where people hire those actors. Or they lease a jet for one-way ticket and get pictures in that, as if that's going to impress us.

And it's kind of like those airbrushed photos in magazines of how people are supposed to look. It starts to distort how we're supposed to think about success. And if you fall for it, then I guess you're creating a recipe for unhappiness. Is that what you found?

**John:** Yeah. You know, I don't know if anyone's, I think some people get caught up in thinking oh, there's this malicious sort of overseer or the government or there's big businesses trying to manipulate us all. I'm rather think, like, looking at evolution and evolutionary psychology, and like the reason we are attracted to things like social status, you know, which would be a plane or a jet or a Lamborghini, we're drawn to these sorts of things. A lot of this is, I think, just hardwired into who we are. But yeah, what I'm finding, and it sounds like what you're finding as well is it's a very shallow sort of sense.



## Happiness as a choice

I think the reason why it doesn't work, too, is that, like, if you need to buy a Lamborghini, or buy a house or go to Richard Branson's Island to feel happy, your happiness or your satisfaction and your fulfillment is, you're placing it, it's always outside of yourself. Whereas the big shift that I find that's been for me, I'm curious if this is what you found, is the big shift is realizing that you actually create your own happiness. It doesn't come from something outside. You can buy a Lamborghini and then it's almost like you give yourself permission to feel good for a few weeks or however long it is, but I think the next stage of that is realizing that happiness is really a choice, that you choose to feel that and then you live from that feeling on a daily basis and do the things that make you happy, for example.

**James:** It's kind of a difficult one because I feel somewhat privileged, having been able to experience a lot of the things that other people would aspire to. And I say this with total humility.

I worked my way to the top job that I could get as a high-paid General Manager. And then I quit that to have my own business. And in that time, I've had a spoil of riches. I've lived on five acres in a mansion, I have had luxury, exotic, expensive vehicles which I paid cash for, mind you. I have flown in nice planes. I've done zero gravity flight. I've traveled around the world and been in nice hotels, I've eaten fine food. When I was at Mercedes-Benz, we got to drive everything.

It's only after experiencing all of that, you know, whether it's ballooning over Cairo or ziplining in Belize, like, I've really done some incredible stuff. After all of that, it's funny how a simple thing like walking down to my local beach here, paddling out and catching a few waves on my surfboard, it makes me significantly more fulfilled and gives me a more centered, calm feeling of satisfaction. Something about that, balancing out, walking barefoot, being in in the ocean, doing the work – you have to do the work, there's no outsourcing with the surfing. I'm not getting towed in on a jet ski, for example.

And you get punished if you disrespect Mother Nature. If you think for a second you've got it beat, it'll slap you like you've got no idea. And if you can work with it, and if a wave lets you ride it, as Laird Hamilton would say, then

you can get the most joyful experience. I've been shaking with adrenaline and excitement after some of those rides and feeling completely content. Or even just simple stuff like watching a penguin pop up or a turtle or a seal or dolphins swimming past. It's just magical. And even just before this call, I was just watching the sunset go down over where I live, and it just resets you. It doesn't matter what happened before that, it's all washed away.

## What if you still want a Lamborghini?

And so anyway, I guess what I'm saying is it's easy for me, because I've experienced lots of fantastic things that other people still have yet to experience, and I now have found what makes me happy. What if you haven't experienced all of those things? What about the person saying, "Well, yeah, that's great for you, John, but I'm still pretty interested in living in a mansion and flying in a jet and having a Lamborghini"?

**John:** I mean, where I came at it from like, you know, in 2015, I never had a Lamborghini, for example, or flown in a private jet, but the way I looked at it was, I could fast forward, you know, I'd just go into my head and think, well, if I'm not happy now, and I've already done, you know, a decent amount of things, is really more money or more of these luxurious experiences, is that really going to change much? And I knew that, you know, I think what a lot of people do is they think it does, so they go and spend 20 years doing it. And then 20 years from then, they're like, what was that all about?

And so, the way I look at it is, you just start to look at like... The thing it took me down my path and where I went with it is kind of going, well, what makes me happy now? Not, what do I think's going to make me happy, like, you know, you buying a car, but what gives me joy, I think, right now? And that leads you down quite a different path.

And anyone can do this. I think anyone can realize it. They can go out and they can enjoy the sunset, or they can look at the fact that when they did get something that was really, you know, a special experience, it didn't transform them. You could even look at how, the amount of luxury that the average person is surrounded by in the modern-day world, compared to someone just 25 or 30 years ago. Like the fact that we're having this conversation on Skype on the internet would in different sides of the world, would probably, you know - because everyone's got smartphones, Kindles, I'm just looking around

my room, like tables, clean drinking water, all these different things, these symbols or these expressions of abundance that we almost glance over.

And so like, we already have all these things that, if we didn't have those things, we'd be like, 'If I only had that thing... If I only had an iPhone...' or we'd be, 'If I only had the internet and could just call anyone anywhere, then I'd be happy.' And we have all these things, and in a lot of cases it's not making people happy. We have this, you know, the skyrocketing rates of things like, you know, mental health issues. And so that's what I would look at, that we already have this abundance and it's not automatically making us happy and fulfilled. There's more to the game of fulfillment than that.

**James:** Yeah, I mean, there's plenty of kids probably where you live there in Thailand, in poor neighborhoods, are smiling and laughing and playing games in the streets, right?

**John:** Right, right. And so one thing I've had to be careful of is like, because you can go too far in that direction. You start to think it's better to be poor, or it's better to be in a sense of lack. And where I'm at with this now, it's like, neither's better than the other. You realize that your happiness, your sense of fulfillment in life is really, in a lot of ways, independent from your external life situation, as you can see with the kids who are running around and they're happy even though they've got barely anything.

## Where the keys are

**James:** That's interesting, you say "independent". I remember reading in a book, I think it was Charles Haanel, but it was that your outside world is a reflection of your inside world. So basically, if you're not happy with the way things are, it's probably, you look inside yourself and that's where the keys are. It think it was "The Master Key System, Mental Chemistry", something, it's a double book or so.

It was a really profound thing for me. At the time, I was feeling a little bit overweight and feeling like I wasn't having a good enough life. This might have been, I don't know, seven or eight years ago. I was grinding it out - I traveled from Sydney to Toronto, and I was heading down to Atlanta to speak at an event. And I was just feeling a bit unhealthy. Like, I had good money coming in,

and good status. But I wasn't feeling like I was living just yet. It was like I was still definitely in what other people describe as a grind.

And over the last five years in particular, I've made significant steps to change my life. And I agree with you. It's not about having nothing. I'm very happy to have things, and financial security being one that's particularly important to me.

And I definitely want my health. As I age, I think I'm a little bit older than you, that's become more and more of a priority. And I wrote a book about it, I'm so passionate about it. That's, you know, **Work Less, Make More**. I think people are working too much. And quite often when I'm coaching people at **the highest level that I coach**, their stated goal, more often than not, is \$10 million a year. It's amazing how common this one is. That's the number one goal. And I really question that.

And what I've found is, quite often people get to the point where they're doing a couple of million bucks a year, three or four million, five million, and they feel like they've already achieved all the things they'd set out to do. And they do sort of get into this phase of, 'What now? What I do now? I've got the house, I've got the car, I've got the wife, I've got the kids, got the business. I'm famous. I'm rich. I'm going to the gym. Like, where do I go from here?'

**John:** Right.

**James:** And that's an interesting one. So it always helps to hold up a mirror, I think, and get inside there and ask some questions.

**John:** Yeah, you start the whole, like, concept. The world, the world just reflects back at you your own feelings and beliefs about how it's meant to work. And so it's really interesting that you mentioned that, because that's when you start to change. If people think or believe on a deep level of feel that you have to work really, really hard to make a lot of money, they'll create that experience around them.

You know, I don't think you have to get woo-woo about it, it's just like, even if it's just a matter of when you operate from that belief, you just behave in a way that creates that situation around you. Whereas, if you believe that well, maybe you can work less and make more, you're going to be more open to

creative ideas, suggestions, relationships, people that are going to support that belief. And so that's the interesting thing.

**James:** I'll play with this metaphor that I just thought of today. I was looking at a stuffed toy that sitting around here, and I have projected into that stuffed toy a real personality. Like, because it's so cute. You know, you might end up talking to it or, or giving it a pat on the head, because, even though it's just...

**John:** What's his name?

**James:** One of them's Rusty.

**John:** Oh, OK, cool.

**James:** Because it's got, like, a reddish brown. Basically, it's probably just cotton balls and fabric, right? And a couple of beads sewn on as eyes, but it's, you can give it that personality and it takes on a meaning that you've projected onto it, that may not necessarily be there, which I think some people do with their purpose on Earth, like, why they're here. They project a meaning to that, and also in their business. They might feel like they're a loser and keep becoming a loser. They might feel like they're a winner and have innate confidence, and somehow carry on as if they're confident and they're more resilient. They just bounce back faster than other people.

## Is it depression?

So I'm wondering, when you talk about people who get down a bit emotionally, are you talking about depression?

**John:** I think it's any time. Like, when I think about emotional blocks or getting stuck, whether it's fear or self-doubt or... I mean, it could be a full-blown depression, or it could just be that, you know, someone's got a thing that they're trying to do but they're going in this cycle, this loop where they're not taking action. It might be like they want to write a book – I spoke to one guy and he's been trying to, you know, meditating or something for 25 years, and he wants to write a book about all this stuff, and he thinks it's his whole purpose, but every time he sits down to write, he just gets so caught up in self-doubt or imposter syndrome, those kind of thoughts and feelings, that he just doesn't write anything.

You've got people like that. I think you've also got people like the people you said, who, they might have achieved all these external symbols of success, whether it's the family, the money, the business, the body, all these different things, but they don't have the internal sense of purpose or mission or the sense of like.... Life is just, you know, it's more than just setting and achieving goals.

And so like, that could be the same person where there's this, they've been constantly sort of, you get kind of deep with this, but you might look at like, some people who feel the need to drive so hard in certain aspects of their life, it might be that the only reason they're actually doing that is not because they're driven in a positive sense, they're doing it from love for the game. A lot of people are like that, especially in business - well, in every area.

I think a lot of people end up doing it because they're using achievement to cover up some sort of insecurity which, you know, easy examples of this are things like a bodybuilder taking steroids, who deep down somewhere deep inside, he feels insecure or vulnerable or something and his way of dealing with that problem is to go and you know, get really big in the gym and create this big persona of a tough guy. And so that's a really obvious example.

I think a lot of us do it in very subtle ways that don't always help us, right? Especially in business, you know, you'll do things where people will avoid things that highlight their weakness. Or they'll avoid having conversations with people because it's too uncomfortable, even if the conversation really is important.

**James:** I remember the Warren Buffett documentary, and I think his sister said that Warren uses money as the scorecard. He can't help it, that's how he keeps score, and he's competitive. One could argue he's got enough. And I think he gives some of it away as well.

**John:** Right.

**James:** And good for him, if he's happy doing what he does, but I wouldn't swap places with him. Do you think most business people are even aware of their emotional situation?

Mistaking the word for the feeling

**John:** Wow. A few years ago, I would have said, "Yeah, probably." Now, you know, the path I went down of learning to just feel my feelings basically, I've realized that there's a difference between, like, when someone says "I'm angry or depressed," or "I'm frustrated," or "I'm stuck," or "I'm afraid," or, you know, they described their feeling with a word, the word isn't the experience.

And the best way I can illustrate this, again, using a metaphor, it's like if you go to a really nice restaurant, nice pizza place, you sit down with your friend and you order your pizza and it comes over. But before you can bite into it and just enjoy it, your friend starts talking, you know, "Do you know how they make this pizza? It comes from this place and the olives are from over here. And here's the special process they use to make the dough..." And he just keeps talking and talking and talking and talking, he doesn't shut the hell up. And you look down at your pizza, you're like, 'Man, it's getting cold right now.' And so eventually, you just tell the guy, "Look, shut up, man. Just let me eat my pizza." And so you grab a piece and you bite it and you don't think about the pizza. You don't have this monologue in your head just like this guy had, you know, talking like about all the pizza as you're eating it, you're just eating it. You're just putting it into your mouth, you're biting it, you're probably going, "Mmmm..." You know, just that satisfied sense of you're fully in that moment experiencing that piece of pizza, without the mental architecture around it.

Whereas, what I found is extremely powerful with emotional stuff, is a lot of people will get caught up in the, they talk about their emotions, as in, "I'm angry," "I'm depressed," "I'm..." all these different things, or "I'm happy." But to really feel your emotions means to feel them the same way you would taste the pizza. And in that frame, I think a lot of people are very, very disconnected from the way they feel, which is why they're not, you know, it can take them years and years and years or decades even to realize that they're not actually happy, they're not actually as satisfied as they think they are.

And my process took me on this path of learning how to reconnect and start to feel my feelings. It sounds so simple and so silly saying it out loud. But really, it's a subtle difference. But once I started to do that, that was what opened me up to this whole idea of like, wow, maybe I'm not as happy or as fulfilled or as satisfied as I think I am. And then because I was aware of that, then it actually became easier, way easier to see the things that lit me up.

Then it became a lot easier to navigate life from that perspective of what feels good rather than what I think feels good.

**James:** You know, I remember really reaching a point where I just wrote down on my whiteboard all the things that were making me unhappy. That was my task list, to change them. You know, I wasn't happy where I was living, wasn't happy with one of the business units I had. When I sold one of my business units, the website development business, I was quite happy about that, because it was a source of constant frustration.

And the most recent time that I was annoyed was today. I just caught myself in a moment feeling annoyed, and I confronted myself with that straightaway. Why is this annoying? What's the lesson here for me? How will I prevent this happening again? What steps can I take to release this anger and then move past it? And I don't get annoyed very often these days. I'm super chilled.

**John:** It's all that surfing.



**James:** It's definitely the surfing, there's no question. If more of the world surfed, apart from having a crowded lineup, I think there'd be a lot less war. It's very soulful.

And you know, look, the kind of person who's listening this far into this podcast, and it won't be everyone who's on my database, based on my previous experience, episodes like this will either get a super positive response or a super negative response. We're nowhere in the middle here.

**John:** Yeah, wow, I'm excited.

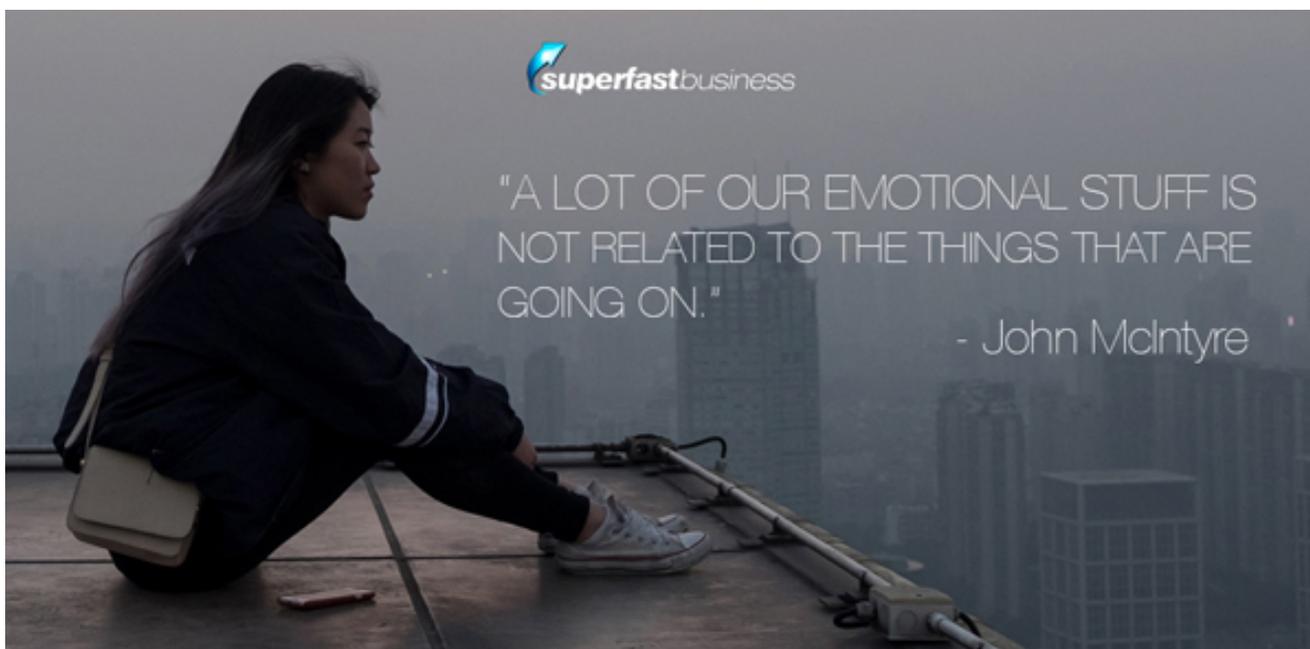
**James:** I had a topic similar to this at one of my events, and it was it was both the highest-rated presentation and the lowest-rated presentation from the same audience. So it was polarizing, and that's because it's confrontational. And you've said multiple times in this one, the word woo-woo.

It's also, I don't think it's been classed as super manly to talk about emotions, or to cry as a man and all of these things. Yet, over time, I think we've seen a little more vulnerability come into the marketplace. I've seen a few marketers do quite well putting themselves out there as a crash test dummy or, you know, sharing pain and experience. **Storytelling** seems to be making its way more into mainstream, and I think there's no more important story than the story we tell ourselves. And that's why a quarter of the work that I do with students centers around the self part, the you part. The mindset that goes along with that is the driver of everything on top of it. It's such a foundation.

## What does John have that self help doesn't?

What do you think's different about the way you've been treating it than self help practices in this area?

**John:** That's a really good question.



Well, the way I think about it is really that a lot of our emotional stuff is not related to the things that are going on. Like, if we're afraid or angry, we're

getting triggered by what's going on. Very rarely is it the situation that's actually triggering us, it's that we've locked some kind of experience inside of us from a long time ago. A lot of it goes back to childhood stuff. It might just be from a traumatic period of some other time.

And what happens is, we go into our business, we go into our relationships, and these things happen that seem to make us feel angry. But if the situations were what were making us feeling angry, then they would make every single person feel the same amount of anger. But what we find is that some people are way more triggered in certain situations than others. And other people are just completely calm, they're like a Zen monk, nothing fazes them, and that specific thing doesn't faze them.

And so it's not the situation that we're really reacting to. What happens is, we have these experiences that we haven't fully processed or let go of, that is sort of buried deep inside us. And then what happens is something goes wrong in the business or something goes wrong in a relationship or our girlfriend or boyfriend or whoever says something and it triggers us. And what it's really doing is, that's not making us feel bad, that's triggering the energy. It's almost like that's pressing into this knot in our muscle or a better metaphor I think, no one really cares about knots, so I mean using the metaphor more of an emotional cancer. That there's this thing, this disease, emotional disease inside of us from an experience from a long time ago that we haven't let go of. And when someone else, or something happens in life that sort of triggers this, it's not that experience. It's that, it's almost like that experience went directly into the cancer and just pressed into it really hard.

And so what we're really reacting to, and we're angry, is we're reacting to that old experience from a long, long time ago. And it's a feeling more than it is a thought, right? And so I think that these feelings, these memories or experiences that we haven't let go of, these are what are driving our negative thoughts. This is what are driving our negative thought patterns.

And so what traditional self help does with, like, positive thinking and gratitude, even therapy, even meditation. I was meditating for five, six years, and this didn't really fix the issue for me. It's all playing at the mental level. So you've kind of got this emotional aspect of things, these experiences that happened, which I think, in many ways, generate our mental patterns.

And what traditional self help does is trying to almost crowd out the negative thoughts with positive thoughts. Really, the ultimate outcome of that is that it hopefully changes how you feel in a deep level. But to me, I think a better way to do it would actually be to go, you know, what if you could go directly to the emotion that's underneath, these emotional cancers that are driving these negative emotional patterns? And what if you could rip that emotional cancer out from there? Then you wouldn't have these negative thoughts that are cropping up all the time. You'd almost, like, remove the problem at the root.

And then what I found actually is, and this has been true in my own life, is, as I've done this for myself, all the old school traditional self help stuff like positive thinking and gratitude and visualization, it's so much more effective once you've cleared out the emotional stuff. And the more of that you clear out, the easier it becomes to lock into that, you know, the uplifting, sort of that killer mindset, whatever you want to call it, that place of just power. The easier it becomes to lock into that.

And so, yeah, the way I've been thinking about it is like, yeah, traditional self help, it's just playing at that surface level. And what I've found is, as you learn to feel and taste these feelings, like you know, eat the pizza, this is what allows them to dissolve and that then makes a lot easier to latch onto the state, the mindset, the energy that you're trying to create.

## Clearing the cache

**James:** I got a new PlayStation game the other day and tried to play it. And I found that my kids had loaded that PlayStation up full of memory, with saves. It didn't have enough memory left to take the game, couldn't play the game.

**John:** Right.

**James:** Such a reminder, because, you know, it's the past scars of this box, you know, the work that's been done on it before has prevented it from making progress now. So I had to clear the cache on this thing, reset it, to be able to accept the game. And it sounds a lot like what you're talking about. If you could purge the cache and all that emotion, start fresh, then you got a lot more capacity to deal with what comes along.

And I think what you said, it reminds me of this crazy boss that I used to have

and you could, just one little tiny thing – I remember there was a sales rep had a can of Coke sitting on his desk, and my boss spotted that can of Coke and he screamed across the showroom and he swiped that can of Coke and he sent it meters and meters away (that's feet for our overseas listeners). And it sprayed everywhere and he was screaming at this sales rep, like, "How dare you put that on the desk in this Mercedes-Benz showroom?" And, you know, it probably wasn't just the Coke that caused that reaction. It might have been the fact that he was being sued by his business partner, that he's got a parking ticket, that his driver was late to pick him up, that his lunch didn't have the right herbs on it, that his shoes got scuffed walking through the door... Whatever else, they just add up and add up and add up.

And it doesn't matter who you are, whether you're super famous, or just ticking along in your own pace. Everyone has stuff going on under the surface. And if they're reacting unusually to the inputs that you're seeing on the surface, it might be because of all this iceberg of hidden emotion.

So John, I'm very curious, how do you clear the cache on that emotion? How do you clear it out?

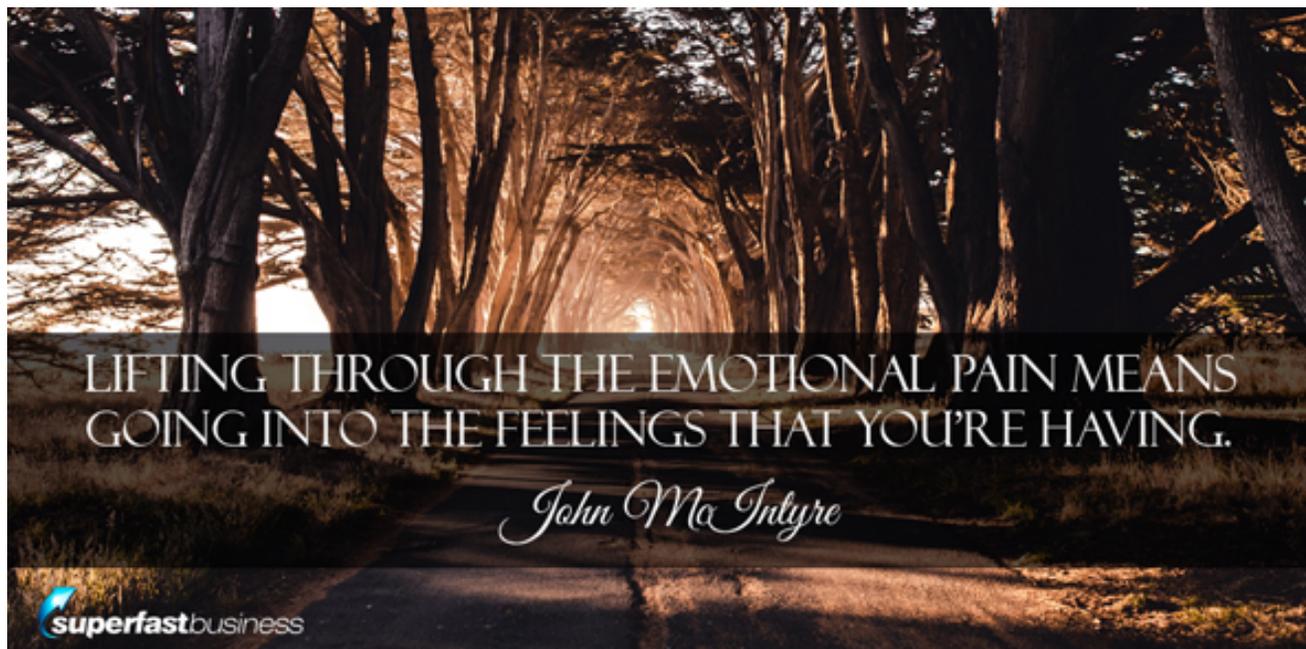
**John:** It's really simple, but it's far from easy. And it goes back to, the main technique of clearing this cache... I love that metaphor, by the way.

**James:** Well, feel free to use that. I'm good with the metaphors. That's my thing.

**John:** Alright, so how do you do it? So we talked about like, the feeling of learning to feel your feelings. I talked about how you really want to be eating or tasting your feelings like you would taste a really scrumptious pizza. You're not thinking about it you're not articulating it, you're not giving it mental labels and things, you're just tasting it, being present to that experience.

And so what I found has been the most, it's a really simple technique, but it's incredibly powerful, is learning to do that with your feelings. And one thing to think about is to think that anger isn't – like, anger is a concept, but what it refers to as a sensation within the body. It might refer to a heart rate that is increased or, you know, maybe you've got some goose bumps on your arms, or, you know, your neck's getting kind of hot, or your fists are clenched, right? And there's this sensation when you're angry, where your body feels different.

And so this is the technique basically, is when you get triggered, that instead of thinking about it, because thinking is almost like a way we avoid feeling our emotions, they're uncomfortable because of what they're reminding us of. You know, this guy in the dealership, who knows what that was triggering, but whatever it is, his way of avoiding that is to go and express that and swipe the Coke because it distracts him from the underlying, it's like his fundamental emotional state.



So this is very, very uncomfortable work at first, because it's taking you into the pain. It's almost like when you go to the gym, like you're building emotional muscle. And the way you build that is by lifting through the pain. And lifting through the emotional pain means going into the feelings that you're having. And it's the most important time, the critical time to do it is when you're triggered. So you practice it when it's easy, but the most important time where the real work is done is when you get triggered, you're angry, or you're stressed, or you're anxious, or you're frustrated, something happens to trigger you and you apply this basic technique or tool where you feel into the energy of the emotion. So you feel it as a sensation, as energy that's flowing around the body. And it's almost like that process of feeling it is what I found in my life and I've been teaching this to clients, to friends, that technique, that way of doing it, is almost like what gradually over time will dissolve that emotional pattern.

And if you repeat this enough times with a given trigger, eventually the trigger is gone. And then something that can happen in the future that would have

triggered you, you know, just made you so bad, triggered you so badly in the past, that'll happen one day in the future and you won't have any reaction. You'll be like another person who just never reacted to that specific trigger. And so that's the technique. I mean, you can get very deep into it, how to do it, how to apply it, how to practice it, how to train it, but that's the basic idea, is learning to feel your feelings, not as words but as experiences and sensations within the body.

**James:** Now, I was feeling it today. And my reaction was to put in place a system to prevent that trigger being fired. You know, like welding up the gun barrel, it can't ever spend another bullet my way.

**John:** Right. So now, I mean, I think that has a place, but this level, the way this works is, it's very, very interesting if you can feel into that moment when you are triggered, before you think, before you go and figure out, like, trying to create the feedback loop or prevent the whole thing from triggering next time. You literally engage with that feeling, like as you're pissed off in that moment, and you want to swear or whatever it is, however you usually react to that, stop. And you don't think, you just feel. You just be present with that experience. Like it's a pizza. You'd be present with the experience of that emotion and it just changes things, man. I don't know how else to put it.

**James:** Well, I feel more than present. I mean, it just completely overrides my whole body. I feel intense feelings around it. It's kind of like food. You know, a year and a half ago I stopped eating gluten. If I have even the tiniest trace of weird foods, my body will tell me. I react, even if I drink coffee, even if I have oats, which I know is a different kind of gluten and non-cross-contaminated, specially source ones, I can feel the energy go through my body just a minute or so later from when I eat. I'll start sneezing if I have a particular type of food that I react to.

So I'm becoming very sensitive, and I actually think some of it might have come about from this osteoarthritis that inflamed my joints and caused me to, you know, I've really started to connect with the feelings of my muscles and my joints, and I can literally sort of unlock my neck by just concentrating on it and relaxing, and then learning about holding my breath so that I could surf bigger waves, and slowing down my pulse and blood pressure monitoring and those sort of things. I feel like I've got a lot more awareness of my own body.

And I've done really well at removing myself from the ability to be put in a position of compromise or stress or drama. I've designed my life around avoiding that, for example scheduling work on certain days of the week and protecting my days off vigilantly, so that they don't get encroached. Because, for example, if I would have booked appointments seven days a week and it caused me not to be able to surf, I'd feel the anger. I'd be so upset that I had allowed that to happen, to compromise the pure joy by having a weak system. So yeah, it's weird. I do feel it, and I protect myself from getting that again.

## On the topic of surfing...

**John:** So on the topic of surfing, there's a book called Stealing Fire, I think, by Steven Kotler. Have you read it?

**James:** The name does sound familiar, and I may be guilty of having Kindles on my device that haven't been read yet.

**John:** Yeah.

**James:** Actually, I do know the book, and I heard reviews about it and I wasn't enamored with it when I delved into it.

**John:** OK. So yeah, the basic idea is, just for the listener, the basic idea is this guy talks about how CEOs and Silicon Valley people and SEALs, navy SEALs, they're all using, trying to hack into what are basically altered states. Some of them are using psychedelics, and....

**James:** That's where it lost me a bit. I'm like, OK, I get it. And maybe there should be LSDs and stuff – there's a lot of research on the tripping and things.

**John:** Right.

**James:** You know, I'm like, does that border on just playing a lot of PlayStation or watching movies or going into a state of flow outside of the real world, like Second Life or Facebook, which is where most adults are spending. And do you know the average American watches more than four hours of video a day? So I just wondered, is this escapism?

**John:** Well, it's funny, the reason I mentioned it is because there's one section where he talks about the benefits of MDMA in like, treatment of PTSD. And as

far as I know, it's the most effective PTSD treatment that's out there. It's currently in trials and stuff. But I don't want to get into any MDMA so much as he found that what you could get from three, I think, therapy sessions with trained MDMA therapists, blah, blah, and really use that for personal growth, you would get from eight weeks of meditation. So if you meditated every day for 20 minutes for eight weeks, you'd get the same result. But here's the interesting part. I thought you'd find it fascinating, is that surfing did it in five weeks.

**James:** Right. I have no doubt, and I know they're using surf therapy for people with emotional problems. Even the fact that you're getting out in the sunlight would have to help with your vitamins and the dopamine release and you know, you lose weight, you get fit, you build resilience. My pulse dropped significantly. I went from the 70s to the 50s. I sleep better because I'm actually tired. I mean, I paddled three kilometers just before this call, in my session.

**John:** That's incredible.

**James:** And it's actually almost surreal. Like, never in a million years would I have thought that this is what I would do on a daily basis. Like, I would just grab a board, stick a wetsuit on, walk down to the beach, bare feet, and paddle out into the rip, the part where if you don't have a surfboard, and you're not able to swim, it'll kill you. And if you do have a surfboard, and you know what it is, it's called an elevator.

**John:** Right.

**James:** So we actually look for the part of the beach that will suck you out to the ocean and we hop in there, and out you go, out the back, and then you take off on these little liquid mountains and slide along them....

**John:** You make me want to surf, man.

**James:** You basically do it over and over again until you're exhausted, and you get the big smile on your face and you feel genuinely satisfied, like you've done something. Then walk back home, have a shower, and then it's back into whatever, and it resets you. So I've found my thing. I'm not surprised, and I'm looking forward to wave pools, because that's going to do two things, I think. It will help society be more balanced and calm, and it will also lift up **my surf**

**website** property interest, which is a long term play. But I think once it's in the Olympics, it's going to be a little more mainstream.

**John:** Surfing's going to be in the Olympics?

**James:** It is, yes.

**John:** OK, awesome.

**James:** You heard it first. Actually, anyone listening to this podcast has heard it a thousand times. And poor Tim Castleman, if he's listening to this episode. He's made a rule where if I say the word surfing, he has to skol, so he's already drunk by now.

**John:** Oh, wow. I think he'd be well beyond drunk by now.

**James:** Ah, well. I'm hearing you. So what you're saying is, we should just open up our feelings. If we weren't thinking about it before, it's a new topic. Maybe we could question if the things that we thought made us emotionally happy are just mirages. Perhaps we can go back inside ourselves and do some reflection, or just letting go of the logical analysis and just feeling it. So it's like getting more real, isn't it? It's like taking your shoes off and feeling the earth again.

**John:** It's a bit like that. Yeah, like that. That's what I would say is like, yeah, go and start experimenting with this basic idea or feeling into or feeling your emotions as though they just sensations, they're just things going on, especially when you're triggered.

## Far-reaching benefits

And I think what we really touched on, I don't know if you wanted to bring it up, but just talking about, like it will improve performance. Like, when you're emotional and you're impulsive, and you get caught up in the negative stories inside your head, you get triggered, like that is not where you're going to make good decisions, it's not where you're going to be productive, it's not where you're going to focus on the right things in the business, given whatever the vision or the goal is.

And so, to me, this isn't just like an airy fairy thing to have a bit of fun with and

let's all Kumbaya and sit around a fire and dance. Like, it's not about, I mean, it's partly about that essentially, it is going to make you feel better. So we just thought, like, about surfing, right? There is an aspect to this where you will feel better, you will enjoy life more, but the other side to this is it will make you better at whatever it is that you do, whether it's business or your family or the gym or surfing, all these different things that I think, that's really one thing we talked about. It's like, wanting people to understand that this has real performance benefits. It's not just a thing for hippies in elephant pants.

**James:** Yeah, I'll go so far as to say I think I'm a significantly nicer person since I took up surfing. If you go back 10 years ago, 10 years to the day I was just about to quit my job, and I was pretty wound up, fairly stressed, drank too much coffee, didn't get enough sleep, was running a business on the side and I was probably a bit angry. And I was I was a hardcore boss, no doubt about it.

**John:** I'll bet.

**James:** And that's the face I had to put on on a daily basis, was to go into battle. And I've, over the last decade, unwound that, and especially after the last half a decade, found my improved health and mentally. And you know, businesswise, it does line up with my book, **Work Less Make More**, available on Amazon, is this whole concept that you can still be very successful financially and with relationships and have a rich and full life and still not be super wound up. And a lot of it is, and I really should have put more on that, perhaps, on the emotion side, but I'm big on **getting enough sleep**, which I think would probably be number one first step to help someone deal with their emotions, is to take the edge off, right?

**John:** Oh, dude.

**James:** People are a bit towy If they don't get enough sleep, they get a little bit wound up. Most accidents happen, a lot of arguments happen because of not enough sleep. So I do talk about that, and I talk about scheduling your tasks and routines and those things to get you clear, and avoiding being a workaholic.

And if you do tune into emotion, I mean I wanted to cover this topic on this show because I think it really is important, and it's the foundation which you build on and I also think it would help you be a far better leader to your team

if you're emotionally stable and attuned to other people's emotions, and it will help you sell better if you're tuned into your customers. And I'm sure you, as an autoresponder guy, John, it would help you be more empathetic if you can slide into someone else's emotions. Like, beyond understanding your own, if you can get a good sense for other people's emotions and tune into that, it would make you pretty formidable on the sales front.

**John:** Absolutely, yeah, hundred percent, man.

## What John's up to

**James:** So, what are you doing over at [ThatWhichIsAware.com](http://ThatWhichIsAware.com)?

**John:** So, you get to a point where like, this whole arena of this kind of, you know, emotional mastery or whatever word you want to give it, there's a lot of books out there and resources and courses that are so fluffy, and they're still operating in that sort of woo-woo paradigm, that so many people miss out on what I believe is the value.

There's books which I've read, which I really appreciated, I got a lot out of, and I've recommended them to so many people, but a lot of people just, it goes either straight over their head, they just don't get it or it doesn't click, the language rubs them the wrong way. A lot of people have this like, anti-wow-woo thing, where anything that even sounds a little bit like that, they're just, 'No, I'm not going to touch it.'

And what I found is that, just seeing how this has transformed my own life in so many different ways, I just have this feeling, that I think the world needs more of this, and it needs people to, you know, what I'm good at. I think, being a copywriter, and just personality-wise, I love to simplify things. And so what I'm trying to do with [ThatWhichIsAware](http://ThatWhichIsAware.com) is taking some of these concepts which a lot of people would, you know, some people would probably think is woo-woo when talked about in a certain way. I want to take them and make them far easier to understand, and just more practical. Instead of getting all caught up in the different words and getting all fancy with it, just trying to make it really, really, really practical, take out as much of the fluff and baggage and weird stuff as possible and just say, look, here's the technique. Just do the technique, see what happens. Here's what you might expect.

The way I'm approaching it, man, is like that technique we talked about, feeling into your feelings. To me, this is, it's a skill. It's a skill just like learning to play the piano or learning how to surf as a skill. When you start, you're not very good at it, and it's going to be kind of hard to feel what's going on. But as you practice it, you get better and better and better and you know, example of scales, for example, when you use piano, or, you know, doing surfing drills. The equivalent of that for this might be doing something like meditation, where you're practicing in a very controlled environment. However, the purpose of it is not to stay in that controlled environment, it's to take that skill or that skill set that you're developing, and apply that to live a better life.

And so that's the approach I'm taking, is trying to take a lot of these concepts which, a lot of people I think, have a hard time either digesting or understanding because of the way some of these so-called gurus talk about it. And I just want to simplify the hell out of it man, so as many people as possible, especially entrepreneurs, just because I've been in business for six years, and I believe I really just want to help more entrepreneurs get into this stuff because I think if they can do it, if I can help them do that, they're going to be better people, they're going to be better entrepreneurs, they're going to be able to help more people, they're going to be less distracted and going down all these weird paths and just focused on their mission. And to me, that's really why I'm doing it. That's why I'm here.

**James:** Do you have kids yet?

**John:** No kids yet. No.

**James:** That'll test your emotional mastery, my friend.

**John:** I do love kids. Don't have any of my own, but I do love being with kids, yeah.

**James:** Other people's kids are awesome.

I think having kids taught me the most about emotions. They are extraordinary, and something to look forward to. So there you go.

It's been a pleasure chatting again, John. Thank you for coming back and giving us an update on where you're up to, and I think you're doing some great

stuff there. Your website is [ThatWhichIsAware.com](http://ThatWhichIsAware.com). I've been speaking with John McIntyre, this is Episode 591. Thank you so much, John.

**John:** Thanks for having me. James. See you.



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ideal business  
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