



Why You Resist Risk and More... a Mindset Discussion with John Assaraf



Mindset can hugely impact how far you go in life. Entrepreneur and author John Assaraf shares how you can channel your brain power towards success.



John Assaraf

James: James Schramko here. Welcome back to SuperFastBusiness. This is Episode 848. Today we're talking about our mind. And I've brought along a special guest, John Assaraf. Welcome to the call.

John: Hello there, Mr. Schramko. Nice to be on. Eight forty-eight, wow!

James: Yeah, we're chipping away at it. I know you're no stranger to dedicating yourself to the long haul, you've had a few twists and turns in the business spectrum. I was reading about it in your book. Thanks for sending that, by the way.

John: You're welcome.

James: You have this book called Innercise. It was a good read. I just had a read of that recently.

Sharing a past, skeletons and all

And one thing that struck me, just sort of to set things up, is in the very early part of that book, you talk about how it wasn't just a straight path to living that life that you had dreamed of when you were a 19-year-old kid. You were actually extremely raw and open about some of the missteps you had.

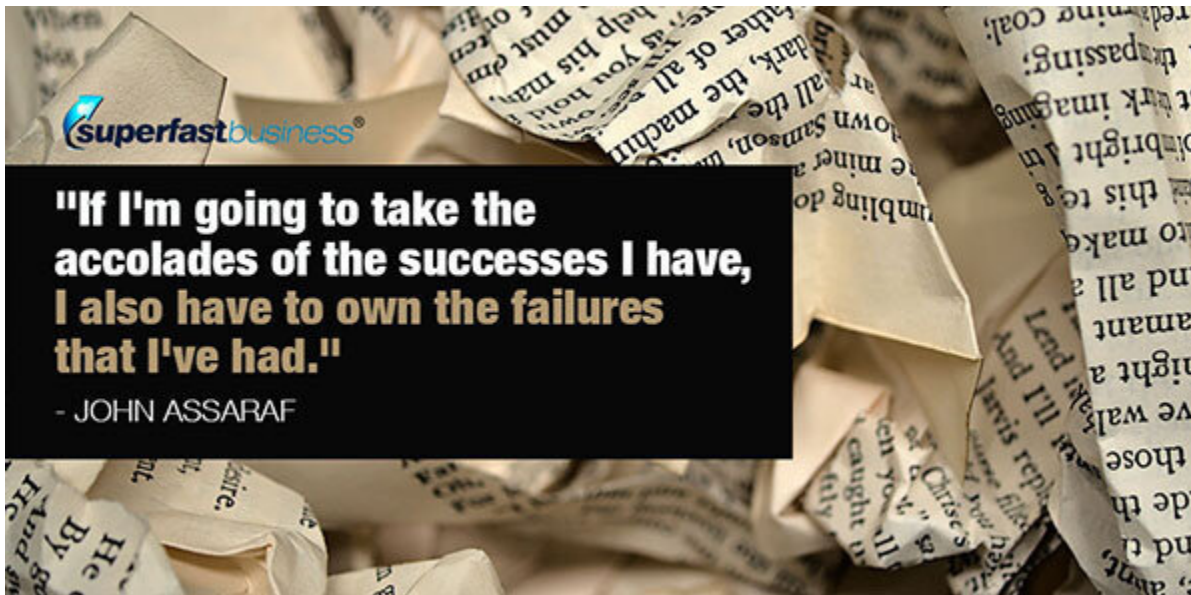
Sometimes that's sort of left out of people's sort of glossy Instagram life version of the life they're living. So thank you for sharing that in the book, because you make me feel a little more human.

I mean, you had some significant setbacks, in terms of relationships, business. And you went from that kid who was, I guess, harping on negative things that happened in the past, and you were bringing that forward into your life until you had an intervention from your friend, Alan.

Do you want to just share with us, why did you choose to reveal that in the book, what was that choice?

John: The book is a reflection of, obviously, my reality. And a lot of people who write books, who are out there on social media with, look how great I am, look at my successes, they sometimes forget, or they feel embarrassed to share, their failures. They fail to share what really happened on the path.

And a lot of times, you know, we see people that are successful, and go, Wow, we'd like to be just like them. And we fail to recognize that first and foremost, we're all humans, we all have limiting beliefs. We all have fears, we all have failures. You know, we all have sh*t that stinks, we all have skeletons in the closet. And that's real life.



And so I like to use my own life as a petri dish. I'm an explorer of being happier, being healthier, being more on purpose, giving more, having more, sharing more, whatever the case is. And for me, you know, if I'm going to take the accolades of the successes I have, I also have to own the failures that I've had.

I've had challenges with my health, I've had challenges with relationships. I've been divorced twice, finally married to my sweetheart for 21 years, we're together 16 years married. I've had six businesses, one was a major failure.

And so I think it's important for people to realize that the entrepreneurial journey, life's journey, is filled with ups, downs, highs, lows, ins, outs, sh*t that works, stuff that doesn't. And that normalizes the playing field.

Because then the question is, well, how did you overcome that? Not only how did you do that, but how did you overcome this, this, this, this, and that, which is part of every one of our real journeys.

And so I like to keep it real. And so I talk about anything and everything so that people just have a realistic view of what the journey is like.

James: It was interesting to me, because I'd say a good chunk of what I'm doing at the business coaching level that I'm at now is relating to mindset things and the conversations I'm having with people who are running successful businesses who are feeling, in many cases, isolation.

There's not many people they can talk to about what's going on in their business. They can't really talk to their parents, because they grew up in a different technology. A lot of their friends they went to school with are doing other types of jobs that you can't really relate. You know, if you're running a furniture store or whatever, it's very different to running an information business or building software and so forth.

John: Yeah.

Enter Mr. Brown

James: So when you were 19, you had these desires. You wanted the house, the car, the whatever. I imagine that's very common for young people. And these days with social media and influencers, I do see a lot of younger people who I'm working with fall into that trap and think well, that's what I want, too.

Now, at the same time though, you were still carrying some baggage, some mental baggage. And I'd like you to share with us what your friend Alan shared with you to overcome that.

John: Sure. So when I was 19, I was working in the shipping department of a computer company, making \$1.65 an hour. Now we're going back 40 years, just to put it into perspective. And I was getting in trouble with the law because at the same time, as I was working in the shipping department, I was involved with a group of kids that sold drugs. Yes, we did drugs, we did breaking and entries, and we were doing a lot of illegal things to make more money so we would feel like we fit in.

And that was on the heels of leaving high school at grade 11 after failing English and math. So I didn't think that I was smart enough, I didn't think that I was good enough to achieve success legally, because number one, nobody would hire me except people in the shipping department type of thing.

And my brother arranged for a meeting with this man who was a very successful developer and broker of real estate offices. And at lunch - this gentleman's name was Mr. Brown - he looked at me, and after hearing my story and my excuses, and all the crap that I gave him, he said, What are your bigger goals and dreams?

And at the time, I really didn't have any. And I said to him, I said, Well, I'd like a car, I'd like to move out of my parents' house. And I'd like to get a decent job so I can make more money. He said, That's all nice and dandy. He said, But what are some of your bigger goals and dreams?

And so I didn't know. He gave me this document that said it was the 1980 goal-setting guide. And the first question was, at what age do you want to retire? I was 19. I'm thinking, retired? My father is not retired. So I put down 45 years old.

It said, how much net worth do you want to have? And I looked at Mr. Brown, I said, Mr. Brown, what does net worth mean? And he explained to me, and I said, \$3 million.

Where do you want to travel? What kind of car do you want? What kind of clothes do you want? It asked all these questions, about three pages long. And he took this document, and he read it. He said, these are some pretty good goals.

And then he asked me this one question, James, and this one question and the one answer changed my life. He looked me square in the eye. And he said, John, are you interested in achieving these goals and health and wealth and relationships and business and financial? Or are you committed?

I said, am I interested? Am I committed? I said, Mr. Brown, what's the difference?

He said, if you're interested, you'll allow your present circumstances or your past control your thinking. So if you're interested, you'll do what's easy and convenient. If you're interested, you'll come up with stories and reasons and excuses why you can't or why you won't. And you'll keep reinforcing the habits that keep giving you the same sh*tty results that you're getting.

He says, but if you are committed, you will upgrade your identity to match your destiny. He says, you'll upgrade your beliefs, your habits, your skills, your knowledge, your self-worth, so that the vision and goals that you have on these sheets of paper are a match. He says, So are you interested, or are you committed?

And so I remember, James, I was nervous. But I said to him, Ah, I'm committed. And he reached out his hand and he said, in that case, I will be your mentor. And I said, Wow, that's great. What's a mentor?

And he went to explain to me what a mentor was. And that was the beginning. One question, one answer, one commitment changed my life. Because over the next 18 months, as I worked for him in his real estate company on commission only, didn't know anything about real estate, about selling about marketing, zeros, 19, I made \$150,000, which back then was five times more than my father did.

And so that was the beginning of a mindset shift for me, from all the reasons why I couldn't to why I can and how I will. And for the last 40 years, I got deep into the neuroscience and neuropsychology field. And, you know, part of what I do every day is behavioral neuroscience research, but then apply it to behavior, and how do we achieve greater levels of performance every single day, every week, every month by using our brain better.

James: We're going to touch on that in this discussion.

When you don't have a personal mentor

So, Mr. Brown, he sounds like a character from Reservoir Dogs. There'll be someone listening to this thinking, well, that's great, John, you were very lucky to have an intervention at 19 years old.

John: I was.

James: And it sounds like this guy might have been a student of Adlerian philosophy, you know, that the past is irrelevant, and you can choose your future. What if we're not lucky enough to have that intervention? Is it too late for us?

John: It's a common question a lot of people ask. And so my question back to them is, do you have a cell phone? Do you have a computer? Can you access YouTube? Can you access downloads of books or videos that are free? Free, free, free? People like you and I - think of this podcast, 800 and I think, 48 episodes of wisdom, knowledge, expertise for free.

So let's forget about, you know, not having our Mr. Brown. In the absence of maybe a resource like Mr. Brown, can we be resourceful? There are plenty of free things. Okay? If you don't have a Mr. Brown.

But let's say you want a Mr. Brown? What if you, instead of focusing on you not having a Mr. Brown, channeled your energy and attention on, I wonder what it would take to find a mentor, a coach? Whether I pay them or not is another story. But how can I find somebody to guide me, to help me save time, energy, money, and point me in the right direction, and show me, how do I upgrade my mindset, my skill set, and of course, my actions and the behaviors that can help me achieve the results that I want?



Now, that is the power that every one of us has. It's in the awareness that we have choice, that we can actually make better decisions. And when we are focusing on why we can't, we're actually de-activating certain circuits in our brain that can actually help us achieve what we want.

But in the absence of knowing that we have a \$100 billion, at least, bio computer that is willing to help us achieve every goal we choose, we get locked into the thoughts we normally have, the emotions we normally feel, and the behaviors that we take, because that is actually how this organism works.

So maybe we just need to be better operators of the tool we already have. I mean, that's why I wrote Innercise, you know, The New Science to Unlock Your Brain's Hidden Power, to give people some of the newest stuff on what's happening in their own brain so they can focus on their success versus why they can't achieve it.

James: Yeah, I learned quite a few things reading that book. It was a good summary. Of course, I've seen some of the ideas in other places, but you've brought them into the modern.

I mean, as a marketer, and a business person and a publisher, you have some really good endorsements, especially the Harvard psychiatrist and brain expert. I thought that was a nice one to have on the top of the book.

Everyone's got their critics

A funny thing happened, I went onto Amazon and I was having a look at the reviews, because quite often the reviewers pull out the insights into a book, that helps me with my own research. And there were a couple of one-star reviews saying, Oh, this is just a sales letter. Right?

As a marketer, I kind of smile, because that's obviously one of the reasons we have a book, is because we have a product or program, and that's where we actually have our real business. In your case, you're leading people to a software platform, I believe, that helps them do, what's it called? You can mention it and put a link to it.

John: Well, we have [Brain-A-Thon](#), which is me and several other experts teaching people about how to use their brain better. And then people watch that. And then some of them want to buy our Winning the Game of Money or Winning the Game of Business brain training programs. And we help them retrain their brain as we upgrade their knowledge and skills.

And yeah, the book, I learned many years ago, you'll love this, James, when I wrote my first book - that's usually up there, my team took it out for some filming we're doing - it was called, Having It All. It became a New York Times bestseller. I learned from my friend Jack Canfield, who started Chicken Soup for the Soul, he said, John, the only purpose to write a book is to get paid to explain it.

And so within the book, of course, there's ways for people to find out more about what we do. And some people don't like that, which I can appreciate. I think without any one-star reviews, we're not doing a good job marketing.

James: Well, I wanted to speak to that, because I then typed in my own [book](#), and I just thought, I'll go and check mine and see if this is the case. And sure enough, there was some one and two and three-star reviews. I think you actually have more five-star reviews than my book. And I was thinking, some people just suck.

Like, never publish a book if you're too delicate about the fact that not everyone's going to love it. That was one lesson for me. I mean, it was such a meta experience in mindset. And going through this phase of the comparison and understanding this, I've read your whole book, and I looked at it from a critical perspective. Would I learn something from the investment? And the answer was yes, there's enough exercises in there and enough information and action steps that you would.

And sure, you know, a QR code or a testimonial point of the product, is, I don't think it's obnoxious. So it was funny, but because you're so raw and open about the good and the bad, I thought this is a discussion I wouldn't normally have with an author, I would just keep that to the side out of wanting to present everything in a great light. But without those one-star reviews, I guess a five-star review wouldn't be worth so much.

But the book stands on its own. And let's talk about some of the concepts in there, just to sort of reinforce that.

John: Sure.

The neuromechanical reason goals are hard to achieve

James: So, why are goals so hard to achieve? You sort of talk about the traditional way of goal setting, as you work out where you're at and what you want, and then you just figure out the steps that you need to get it. But it doesn't work as easily in real life.

John: Yeah, there's, if we thought of our brain just slightly differently... And first I'm going to ask is, is your entire life experience really happening in your head? And the answer is, yeah. I mean, everything you're seeing, your brain's processing; everything you're hearing, your brain is processing; the meaning you give anything is the meaning you've learned.

And so the entire experience that we are having is happening, you know, in our skull. You know, there is no light in there, right? Light is coming in through our eyes.

And so when we think about our brain differently than just this three-pound piece of matter, we say, okay, our brain has some networks, like computer networks, and it has circuits. And certain networks cause us to behave in automatic ways. And that's called the default mode network. That's my automatic self.

And then we have these motivational circuits that activate neurochemicals that cause us to take action and be happy and high five each other and feel good.

And when we set a goal, and we use, let's say, our imagination, we're actually activating what I call is the Einstein part of our brain. The Einstein part of the brain can imagine, can figure out strategies, tactics, timelines, tools, resources, who we need, why this will work, why that won't work. And we can dream as big as we want.

But we also have another circuit, and it's actually the right prefrontal cortex - that's left, this one is right. I call that the Frankenstein's monster. The way that our brain has evolved, it's focusing, number one, on safety and survival first; number two, on avoidance of any pain or discomfort, like losing money, being embarrassed, being ashamed, being ridiculed, being judged, being disappointed. It's trying to conserve energy in case of one and two, and then it tries to figure out, how am I going to gain some pleasure out of this?

So the mechanics of how this bio computer's making decisions is to dream big, but to avoid any pain or discomfort, and it does this rapidly. And then this is layered upon the fact that there's a part of our brain that becomes habituated to a certain thought, emotional, behavioral patterns and results.

And so we think about, why is change so hard? And the reason change is so hard is because we don't develop patterns in one second, we develop patterns over a hundred days, 200 days, a year, two years, three years. So that all of a sudden, if we want to lose weight, or if we want to double or triple our income, we don't have all of the patterns necessary to sustain the thinking and the emotional control and the behaviors required for sustaining those behaviors.

And so when we set goals, we're using our conscious brain. But in order to achieve goals, we're actually activating subconscious patterns automatically that may not be in sync with the vision and goals that we have.

And so in the absence of understanding that in order to create a new pattern, to achieve the goals you want, whether it's losing weight and keeping it off, whether it's starting a new habit like surfing, whether it's having a better relationship, or doubling or tripling your income, we need to understand that it takes between 66 days and 365 days, according to the latest research, to create a new pattern that is reinforced and overrides the old pattern, it becomes part of the automatic default mode network.

So mechanically, goals? Easy to set. Goals are hard to achieve, unless we create a methodology to sustain a certain way of thinking, feeling or behaving. So that's the neuromechanics of goal setting versus goal achieving. We have these circuits that are triggered as protective mechanisms, and we do more to avoid pain or discomfort, whether it's real or imagined, more than we will and faster than what we will do to gain pleasure.

And so these are just a few of the tips that when we're setting goals, we should say, Okay, now how am I going to make this new X, Y, or Z, a habitual pattern that overrides this place in the brain called the striatum.

James: I love it. Some of the simple bite-sized nuggets that can be helpful in this is, your brain wants safety and efficiency. If you recognize that, it kind of explains why changes are threatening and anything new is going to be automatically resisted. Because your autopilot setting's pretty strong, right?

John: You got it. And what happens is, we end up in this habitual way of being, and we set up these expectation points and set points, actually, in our brain. So we have what's known as a financial setpoint, a business revenue setpoint, a profitability setpoint, a weight and fat setpoint in our brain.

And any deviation up or down from the setpoints works just like a thermostat does in your home. Right? It sends a signal, either the heat or the air comes up. In our brain, it sets a signal to slow down and sabotage or procrastinate, or to pick up, because we're not where we're supposed to be or where we're used to being.

And so understanding just these mechanisms, what happens is, most people, because they try and try and try and try, prefer to master disappointment, versus mastering the science of change. Why? Because at least if I master disappointment, I know what I'm getting. But mastering change takes a little bit more cortical energy, and most people aren't aware of the process. So in the absence of the process, it's really freaking hard work.

James: It is hard work. And, you know, reading your book, it's the first time I've realized that those brains where they put it in the two halves, it's not how the brain is actually physically structured. You know, you always see the picture, the conscious and the subconscious, and you think your brain must be, like, you know, top shelf and lower shelf.

Can we actually produce new brain cells?

Another thing that was really interesting, you know, just under the topic of neuroplasticity, was neurogenesis. And this is a theme that came up in a recent podcast episode I had, where we were talking about [kids and how you can raise your kids better](#). But a lot of the research that came from that was dealing with stroke patients who were at the end of their life term, and they were still able to develop.

And then I've seen the research where they take game consoles to retirement homes, and they let them play for half an hour a day or whatever. And they start improving their memory and their acuity, and so forth. So can you just speak to the topic of the possibility that we can actually make neurons?

John: Sure. So I'd like to talk about two things at once. Alright? So first and foremost, if you think about this, think of your brain as having, you know, 100 billion brain cells or 100 billion marbles. And think about when we're born, these marbles start to make connections and talk to each other, and the connections that are reinforced become part of your habitual self, and easy for you to go down these pathways, shall we say? Part one.

Part two, were you born with any limiting beliefs? Were you born with any fears? Were you born with a disempowering self image, or stories or excuses? The answer's no, we weren't born with any of those. So we developed these neural connections. The ones that got reinforced got to be permanent or soft-wired. Okay?

So now, where did all of this neuroplasticity research come from? Well, because we now have the technology to actually look deep inside a human brain. We use, you know, electron microscopes to look deeper and deeper, deeper into physical matter. We use telescopes to look out, electron microscopes to look in. We're finally able to see and videotape cells actually making connections.

And not only can we see cells making connections, we can actually see something that scientists did not believe. They didn't believe that we could make connections. They thought we were born hardwired, we're not, we're born soft-wired. They thought that we didn't have any ability to make new brain cells, that we were born with about 100 billion of them. And lo and behold, they discovered, Oh my god, there's actually neurogenesis happening in the hippocampus part of the brain.

So our brain is actually creating new cells. We can deliberately create new connections. We can deliberately reinforce the empowering positive construct of connections, as we learn to deactivate any of the disempowering, whether it's belief patterns, fear patterns, financial setpoint patterns.

And this was really what I call the discovery of the century, is you and I don't have to be victims of our parents, our environment, our grandparents, the marketplace. We can actually deliberately create and reinforce new empowering patterns that can match the vision and goals and dreams that we have.

And that is one of the most exciting things for me. And that's why I've been retraining my brain for 40 years. It started off with Mr. Brown, but I've been doing it for 40 years, and I just use it for health, for wealth, for relationship, for career, for business. And that's why I wrote that book. I wrote other books, but it was to show people that like Jim Rohn said, You can change. You're not a tree.

James: Well, trees change too. They have different rings.

John: Well, that's true.

James: Maybe a different metaphor.

Rewiring those negative pathways

You talk about flicking the switch. And I thought, that's fun, because a lot of people, especially in the last year or two, have been obsessively focused on news headlines and all the things that are going wrong and everything from climate change to pandemics. But we can flick the switch, you know, on purpose. And I suppose that's where you're rewiring these soft connections into new pathways.

John: You got it.

James: You touched it, and I'll drop a couple here - novelty and curiosity, pleasure and pain, purpose, focus, exercise, discomfort. I like the checklists and the frameworks in this book, because it is kind of the way I operate.

And you touched on a theme that I hold dearly. And that is, I first learned about this concept of the necktop computer from Professor Hewitt, and you talk about upgrades. You say, why not go from Fear 2.0 to Prosperity 6.1? And that is such a great scenario. We can rewrite the software in our brain.

And as you correctly point out, we're born without this, but we definitely get influenced by our parents, our environment, and those first five or six years. Right? That was like someone installed DOS. And if you want to overwrite that with OS, you can. And I think when you realize that, you don't have to just be a passenger in life, you can step in, hop in the driver's seat, switch it on. That's where your book gives you a couple of tools.

Dealing with stress and anxiety

And I actually, I took a photograph. I hope I've got permission, but I took a photograph of one of the exercises and sent it to one of my kids.

John: Good!

James: I hope that was okay. I'm probably breaking all the transmission of content things. But it was an exercise about dealing with anxiety and just resetting a little bit, where you're doing a breathe in and a breathe out. I'd love it if you could share that exercise.

John: Sure. So you know in the book, you mentioned there's the QR code, I created nine brain training audios that I give everybody for free, and I suggest you get them.

So if we understand something, I want to talk about stress, anxiety, panic, okay? They all fall into the same category. Would you agree that the definition of stress is when demand exceeds current capacity? So when the demand, whether it's financial demand, emotional demand, mental demand, physical demand, exceeds capacity, it creates this thing that we call stress.

When our body and brain feel stress, let's talk about the brain first. That means that a neurochemical has been released, okay? By this thing called the thalamus, into our bloodstream. And the resulting emotion, the energy in motion, we call stress, we call anxiety. Left unchecked, we may call it panic. Right?

So when we are dealing with a neurochemical release into our bloodstream, then the question becomes, is there a circuit or two that's been activated in the brain? And when this circuit actually is activated, it's called the sympathetic nervous system. When the sympathetic nervous system is activated, it releases cortisol, epinephrine, norepinephrine, and maybe even adrenaline at times. And a little bit is okay, but a little bit too much is going to cause us to be in a fight, flight or freeze emotional state and behavioral state.

But here's what we've discovered - by being able to actually see somebody in a stress state, with their brain scan going on in real time, we can actually see that with six deep breaths in through their nose (I call this Innercise Number One, it's called Take 6: Calm the Circuits). And the circuits I'm talking about is, calm down the sympathetic nervous system circuit. Six deep breaths slowly in through your nose, like you're breathing as slowly as you can, into your lungs, increase your diaphragm out.

And then if you breathe out, like you're breathing out through a straw through your mouth, slowly, slowly, slowly. In less than 90 seconds, you deactivate the anxiety, stress, panic, doubt, uncertainty circuit, fear circuit, and you activate the parasympathetic system, which is the calm and response system.

When the sympathetic nervous system is activated, you've just activated the Frankenstein's monster, the Frankenstein's monster's thinking, What if? What if I get hurt? What if I fail? What if this happens? What if I'm rejected, ashamed, ridiculed, judged, etc.? But as soon as you deactivate that, and activate the Einstein brain, which is the calm to response circuit, you can actually be in a state of awareness.

And when you move to Innercise Number Two, which is all around awareness of thoughts, emotions, feelings, sensations, and behaviors, and you do that without what I call a judgment, blame, shame, guilt, or justification, just pure awareness, now I can set an intention, which means I'm setting my focus, and now I set, what's one action step I can move towards what I want, and away from what I don't want? Now who's in control?

These two simple Innercise are the foundation that we should be teaching kids in kindergarten, grade school, high school and adults. But in the absence of knowing why I'm feeling this way, why I'm thinking this way, why I'm taking action or not, we are now victims of our old conditioning and programming and our ignorance, because we own this 100 billion-dollar brain, and we have no mortgage on it, but we don't have the user's manual.

James: Yeah. Well, I think that's what we're trying to get to, is create a user's manual for it. When I read about that exercise, I thought of that movie, *The Green Mile*, where the guy takes people's things and breathes them out, in like some particle smoke.

It is very similar to a technique I use when I'm surfing in big waves, which is a Navy SEAL box technique, which is a breathe in, hold, breathe out, hold, breath in. And whenever I feel my pulse starting to go and the adrenaline's flowing, I just reset.

I think everyone needs a reset. Just like a necktop computer would, you know? even these Macs, you know, you have to turn them off and start them again to refresh the cache to clear it out.

I love this stuff. You talked about the trigger, behavior, reward type thing, the reason you do things. It reminded me of a similar way that I learned, it was like ABC, which was activator, behavior, consequence. It resulted in me starting a podcast called [ThinkActGet](#), which was sort of mushing a few of the things you talked about, a few of the steps, sort of putting them together. I'm not going to go into that, because I've done it to death on this podcast.

If you can't stop it, replace it

But I think one of the great techniques you talk about, if you have a bad behavior, just find a replacement behavior. That's the shortcut, right? Rather than trying to stop something, switch it.

John: Yeah. There's, as you mentioned, the science of change, the science of habits, the science of behavior, is we are consistently predicting the future. So light comes in through our eyes, sound comes in through our ears, whichever way it's coming in, our brain is predicting in advance. Is this friend or foe? Is this going to hurt? Is this good? Like, what's the danger here?

But our brain is predicting, okay, what may happen in advance, and releasing the neurochemicals of the prediction. Not whether it's right or wrong, whether we have the neural network, okay, that says whether it's right or wrong, good or bad, painful or not.



And so every single person who's trying to change a habit, we know that there's something that triggers the habit, yes, there's the behavior, then there is the reward or the anticipation of the reward. It's actually the anticipation of reward is what drives the dopamine up more than the actual behavior itself. But we now discovered through a lot of research is that if you just create a replacement, you know, for that behavior for 66 days to 365 days, you'll still be triggered by certain things, you'll start to behave a different way, you'll still get the same reward.

And since our brain works, you know, on avoidance of pain, but also loves to get the reward or the anticipation of the reward, when we are just a little bit smarter, we can develop these new empowering habits and let go of any destructive ones, which is really one of the best ways to use this.

I've used it, James, to stop drinking alcohol, which I used to drink way too much of. I stopped drinking alcohol 12 years ago. I've used it to stop eating refined sugar, I've used it to go from being 233 pounds and 30 percent body fat to 195 pounds and a six pack at 60. It's the science of what's going on in here that you can use in order to achieve just about every single goal you have.

James: Yeah, you look pretty good for 60.

John: Six packs right here. That's actually been my goal. So I've been working diligently on that for the last, since October.

Exercises for the mindset

James: Just in rounding out, a couple of the other things in there, I identified with because I already have incorporated them. So it's kind of like they're validated for me. That was like, the visualizations. I picked up on that. Luckily, I had a Mr. Brown.

John: Oh, good.

James: He was a client of mine in 1995. I was a young salesperson, I was 23 years old. And he gave me this big box of cassette tapes. Remember those things?

John: Oh, yeah.

James: You know, you stick a pencil in to rewind them? And anyway, he bought a lot of vehicles from me. And he gave me this. One of the tapes, there was Maxwell Maltz, [Psycho-Cybernetics](#). And that's where I learned about visualizations and mental rehearsals and goal-seeking devices and stuff.

So your book's like a modern updated version of the same concepts that he knew about a long, long time ago, and probably the foundation for a lot of self-development books. But I'm so lucky I got into that half a lifetime ago.

One of the exercises you talk about, Back to the Future, is exactly the same exercise I use for my coaching clients. And another one that I really liked was the Flip Flop.

John: Yeah, Actors Studio.

James: Yeah, so these are great coaching tools. You can get the book, it's called Innercise, if you want to go through, find out what these techniques are and go through them. John Assaraf, look it up. It's available on johnassaraf.com. It's also on Amazon, evidently.

You'll learn about other things, like the smoke detector, and why setting too big a goal can sometimes mean you're pretty much guaranteed not to get it. I thought that was really interesting as well, it turns out there's a sweet spot.

John: Yeah. And it's different for everybody. And that's the thing, is to know, when we're setting goals, you asked earlier about goals, you know, if I set a goal to make a million dollars in a day, that might not be unrealistic to me. It may not set off my fear signal. But somebody maybe hasn't made a million dollars in a year or two or three or four, they're going to go, What? Are you freaking crazy?

So these mechanisms are triggered differently for everybody. But everybody's brain works the exact same way. That's the beauty. Right? The brain works the same, but the settings are different for each person.

James: That is a great summary point.

What you'll want to take away

John, just in summary, what advice would you have for someone who has listened to this podcast all the way through to now? So they're obviously interested in this topic. You've mentioned your Brain-A-Thon. It's brainathon123.com. And that's where you do your get together. Obviously, the book, Innercise, and [your website](#). What thought, or, you know, sentence or point would you like someone to really take away from this, if they got nothing else? What's your best advice? You're now Mr. Brown.

John: Sure. So I think number one is, if you could really imagine it, you can achieve it. Now, obviously, within the parameters of it being able to be done. So we're imagining colonies on Mars, and we have people in society that are looking to colonize Mars. But at one point, you know, President Kennedy said, we're going to put a human on the moon, and bring them back to Earth safely. We didn't even have the technology or the mechanisms by which to do that.

So if you think about anything that anybody has created, somebody's had to think about it, whether it's an individual or a group of people. And so you mentioned Maxwell Maltz's book Psycho-Cybernetics, but there's also Think And Grow Rich was Napoleon Hill's classic that, you know, Andrew Carnegie commissioned him to go out and write.

James: Maybe. Maybe he did. That's a bit contentious.

John: Okay. In the book is, you know, we become what we think about most. We achieve what we think about most, we overcome what we focus on, we're able to do so much more. And the essence of it is that you already have the organism, your brain, to be able to do that.



So if you have goals, if you have dreams within you that you are committed to achieving, by upgrading your mindset, upgrading your skill set, and taking the right actions in the right order at the right time, chances are you could five, 10, 20x your life's results by making a decision that that's what you want to do starting today. And how long will it take? Who cares? What's the difference? If you're going to be on the path to creating your life anyway, why not create a masterpiece?

James: Yeah, well, I think that's it. The big takeaways for me are, just a reminder, really, that we get to choose. It's a choice. You don't have to be a victim of your past. You can choose from now on. Hopefully this episode will serve as a tool.

I invited you on partly because you sent me the book. So you've intentionally created this episode. So there's a real lesson in that. If you've got a published book and you send it to me, that's a great starting point. If it's of a topic that's of interest to my audience, that's point number two. And because fully a quarter of what I do is around this topic of mind and attitudes and thoughts and habits and so forth, it's a real direct hit.

So I just want to say thank you for coming along and sharing, taking time out of your evening, I imagine it is.

John: Yeah, it is. And you may want to ask me, Why did I send you a book?

James: Well, I guess I presumed that it would be part of your marketing approach for people with podcasts, but maybe I'm wrong.

John: Partially right. I've been following your work and love how upstanding you are with amazing quality podcast guests. You speak the truth. And there was a story I heard or read or somewhere in the last, I'll say, year to two years where you designed your life. Remember when we got on the call, before you started recording, I said, How's surfing? I saw that you designed your life and your lifestyle and your family and surfing and how many days you want to work, and then you developed the model to live your lifestyle.

James: Exactly.

John: I knew we would resonate.

James: We would, yeah.

John: That's why I sent you the book.

James: That's the [Work Less Make More](#) one. I actually wore my T-shirt today as a tribute to Californian surfing legend Christiansen surfboards. I hope they sponsor my podcast. They could send me some equipment. I've bought three boards from there. They're just on your backdoor there, and they're absolutely amazing craft.

Thank you so much for sharing. This is Episode 848, [superfastbusiness.com](#). All of this is going to be fully transcribed and available at the website, we'll put links to John Assaraf's information and resources. I'm not even an affiliate of this stuff. I just really like the topic.

And John, I've known about you for many, many, many years. And it's a miracle that we haven't met face to face yet. And I'm sure that'll happen in the future.

John: That'd be great.

James: So thank you so much. And if there's enough interest or a few questions, we might ask you to come back and share some more, because obviously we can learn a lot from you.

John: Anytime. My joy. I love entrepreneurs, love helping anybody who's willing to help themselves and take inspired action. If there's anything that I can use my life for to make their life a little bit easier, the answer's yes.

James: Thank you.

John: You're welcome. Thank you, James.



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