



PRODUCTIVITYIST

POSITIVELY SPEAKING

with Dan Lerner

and Alan

Schlechter



Mike: I'd like to welcome Dan Lerner and Alan Schlechter to the productivity's podcast. Thanks for joining me, gentlemen.

Dan: Thank you for having us.

Alan: Thank you very much.

Mike: This is going to be one of those episodes where we've got a lot of guys on a mic. We just finished talking about different parts of the world where we live in, different parts of North America. I live in Victoria; they live in New York. I love New York. The West Coast is someplace that they want to come, especially Victoria. We just talked about comic books, which anyone who's been listening to my show for a while knows I'm a huge comic book fan. We've already warmed things up and this makes me happy to go into this conversation. It's fitting because you, guys, this is kind of work where you guys are into, both of you. Why don't we talk a little bit about the power of positivity when it comes to productivity, especially. Why don't you tell us a little bit about how being positive and having a positive mindset can really help you with following through all the things you both need to do and really want to do. I think that's a good place to start off.



Dan: I think it's a great place to start off, actually, so, thank you. It's an interesting one. Everyone wants to have positive emotions, right? Most people want to have positive emotions. The idea that we just want to be happy is a wonderful thing. But, what if we take it one step further? What does happiness do for us? I mean, yes, it's great to feel good, it's great to have a smile on your face, or whether it's calm or joy or thrilled or safe, positive emotions are clearly important. But when we look at the idea of being productive, they actually do really interesting things to our brain. Some of the studies that we tend to share talk about how people operate differently when they're primed with positive emotion. We talk about one study that dealt with five-year-olds. And how those five-year-olds who are prompted to simply think of the things that made them happy. The prompt was, "Please, think about something in the next 30 seconds that makes you really happy." How the kids performed better on basically test of kind of legos, putting things together, they were more productive, they were more collaborative, they're more accurate. And then we jump to physicians and we do something similar, which is we prime them with positive emotions. Really simply, they give them a bag of candy and they feel better. They diagnose symptoms



Dan: up to 20% more accurately. We are seeing accuracy when it comes to positive emotions, we are seeing collaborative work when it comes to positive emotions, we are seeing a number of different benefits. At the same time, anytime we're striving to be productive or really pushing ourselves, there's often a level of stress that comes with that, for pushing ourselves to do something. We are seeing accuracy when it comes to positive emotions, we are seeing collaborative work when it comes to positive emotions, we are seeing a number of different benefits. At the same time, anytime we're striving to be productive or really pushing ourselves, there's often a level of stress that comes with that, for pushing ourselves to do something. Stress is a natural thing. But what we found in other studies, that when we're primed with positive emotions, we deal with stress better, our cardiovascular systems recover better, they don't hijack us, so to speak. So, whether we're trying to be more productive, more accurate, less stress, so and so, and that's just for starters. Positive emotions go a long way, they do more than just make us feel good.

Mike: Now, how can having an optimistic outlook on life and optimism, lead to saving time? Because it's not something that people would normally think that there's a correlation



Mike: there. I'll want you to take that one.

Dan: Optimism is a really interesting thing when it comes to productivity, again. Because, again, we're pushing ourselves, right? When we're trying to be productive, the odds are we're not always going to get there, we're not always going to be as productive as we'd like. We're going to make mistakes, we're going to falter, we're going to slip up. And one of the things that optimism does is help us work through those challenges. Let's say you're trying to get something done-- we work with a lot of college students. Let's say they take a test-- or for other listeners who are not in college, they have a big meeting, they have a big presentation. And it doesn't necessarily go as well as they'd like. What happens, we found with students and everyone else beyond college, is that, when you are pessimistic it's a lot harder to get up and try again. With optimism, we look at things and think, "Wait, you know what? This kind of things happen, it's an opportunity for me to try again, it's not like just kind of bombed the test or did poorly in a presentation or meeting that it affects everything else in my life. It's like, that was one meeting. That was one day. Tomorrow is another day. I can get back on the horse, I can ride it again, I can do it and better."



Dan:

We don't hit the wall in the way the pessimists do, which often will say, "Apparently this is not right for me. I'm not good enough and I'll probably never be good enough." Because when pessimism hits, it tends to be wide reaching, "I bombed the test, maybe I'm not that smart in any of my subjects. Maybe my friends realize I'm not that smart. Maybe I'm not going to do so well in the ball game that I'm going to play in tomorrow. That girl I want to ask out, well, maybe she won't like me either." And they tend to spread. But with optimism, it tends to stay much more local, "Yes, it's one test, one meeting. Okay. Next up. Let's go." A great study by Martin Seligman, he looked at baseball players back in 1986, baseball teams. He found that when he collected the press clippings from all of the New York Mets that season and all of the St. Louis Cardinals that season, the way they talked about bad days were very very different. The Mets would say, "Yes, I had a bad game," or "They hit really well." It's not me, it's something else. Well, the Cardinals would say, "We're having a terrible season. We can't hit, what the hell, let's just face it," or "I just don't have the skill to steal a base," and that came from the player who led the league in stealing bases the year before. So they tend to shut down for the season or they shut down more for



Dan: the semester, and for non-students, they shut down for more of their life. So it allows us to really move forward in a productive way.

Mike: Okay. I want to talk a little bit about developing positivity early on, because I think that we're all parents here. I get to see my kids every single day because I work from home so I see them constantly. How important is it to instill the idea of being positive or having an optimistic outlook? How important is that to start as early on as possible? Is that something you want to jump into Alan?

Alan: This is Alan. I'm all over that. [laughter]

Dan: Actually, let me take this one too. [laughter]

Alan: So optimism, when they tried to look at the genetics for optimism, they actually weren't that strong. And when you want to talk about imparting an optimistic attitude to a child - which is-- optimism is a really key component of resilience, your ability to bounce back. It's actually very transgenerational. Just as you can pass down traumas from generation to generation, you actually pass down resilience and optimism, and you tell stories to your kids from a very



Alan: young age. I have an eight-year-old, and a seven-year-old girl right now, Macy and Marlow. And I talk to them about how my father, who is alive, that when I was their age he actually was very sick and we were very worried as a family. But the whole family we took care of each other, and my dad got better. And it's a way of talking about illness, and it's a way of talking about all of the things we did to stay together as a family, and things that we did that made me feel good at that time. I would say the biggest way we show optimism to our kids is less pointing it out to them, which parents love to do, but much more showing them-- you know, when we get stuck in the airport for three hours, are you the parent that says, "This really sucks," or are you the parent that says, "Okay, it's time to play the ultimate game of war?" Which happened to us, and we bought three decks of cards, and we started playing this crazy game of war together. That moment when things are difficult you say, "How are we going to make the most of this?" How can you see it in a slightly different way?

Mike: Yes, I mean, one of the things that I try to do with my kids is showing them is so important. I think that playfulness is something that I really like to show my kids. We talked about this before we jumped on the air is that, like I've got Lego



Mike: figures, I could see them and their specifics. See? This is the other thing is, I love avatars, right? I've got the Lego Calendar Man from the Batman Lego set. He's there because I'm a time management guy. I've got a syndrome, because I use his quote from The Incredibles and a Talk. Of course I've got Green Lanterns everywhere. I've got Vision, the Marvel character, because vision is important, I believe. All these things.

And my son, he loves coming into my office and just seeing all of the playfulness there. How powerful can playfulness be when it comes to -- not just positivity, but also how that can help with performance?

Alan: Dan and I would have to arm wrestle this. And what you can't see is I'm a bit stronger than Dan. [laughter] So we could just agree right now that I'd win that. No, actually, Dan is stronger than me. Dan, you want to take this, or--?

Dan: Well, you know what? I'll actually like you to take it. What I'd love to share is the observations that you've spot on, I'd say, they actually affect a number of different ways that we can help our kids. So, if we look at mindset, like the growth mindset



Dan: versus a fixed mindset, the idea that, “I have the ability to learn, I have the ability to change.” We can look at studies, for example, of fifth-graders. I believe this was done by Carol Dweck. These studies showed that when fifth-graders read two different kind of biographies, one group read about Albert Einstein, one group read about Thomas Edison, and the other group read about Helen Keller. One set of biographies were the idea that they were born really smart; the other set of biographies were that they worked they way to success. And we found that those fifth-graders who had read the latter, worked really hard. They were far more likely to ask for help, they’re far more likely to accept tutoring, they’re far more likely to take on bigger challenges. So just by being surrounded by examples, by role models, being read stories or even being around other people-- For example, when we’re around people who show greater willpower, we’re far more likely to do it ourselves. So, no matter what it is, when we tell them stories or show them examples, they’re more likely to emulate optimism, willpower, growth mindset. So, I think what you’re talking about be it action figures or otherwise it has to resound with them, and sharing those stories is really important. So I’ll take that. Alan, if you want to take the rest of that, be my guest.



- Alan:** Dan and I were actually just teaching the class-- we have a whole section on the body, and we talked about how throughout the lifespan right now--.
- Dan:** By the way, I'm sorry, and the class we teach-- just for our listeners, it's a class called The Science of Happiness.
- Mike:** We're going to dive deeper into it because people like Science of Happiness, they'll want to know. I'm going to want you to unpack that a little bit in a second, but let's get back to Alan.
- Dan:** Sure, sorry, go now, yes.
- Alan:** So the idea-- we have a whole section on the body, and as people get older they exercise less and less and less. But we didn't start out the first five years of our life thinking, "Oh, I better wake up and exercise today." It's just built into us, that play was a natural quality that children have. When Dan's son Julian and my daughter Macy saw each other recently, within two seconds they are playing tag, they are running all around. And that is actually how kids learn. So it's not-- I think many parents think that when they're doing playtime it's kind of frivolous, it's a little icing on the cake, but it's actually the cake. That when we play with our kids, and they build up that



Alan: intense bond with us, they love to play with us so, well, that's how, actually, how we're then later on able to set limits with them. Because when they love to play with us so much, they're much more likely to follow our direction later on and more much likely, when I say, "That's going to be too much" or "We're not going to be playing in a little bit," then they're going to say, "wait, I want to keep playing with that person." Play is essential. People come to me all the time and they want to talk about how to discipline their kids first. And I usually-- no, the first thing they need to know is how to play with them better.

Mike: Right. And it's interesting because one of the things we just picked up not too long ago-- Tim Ferriss recommended the Monopoly card game. I don't know if you've seen this but it's literally a deck. You can play a game of Monopoly with this thing in 15 minutes. It's amazing. My son who's seven is killing us in this game regularly. He understands it because it's a simpler version of the game. You have to get three full complete sets of properties to win. That's the way you win. You don't have to have the most, you just have to have three. It literally is -- my wife does not like board games very much. My son is very competitive. We normally buy collaborative



- Mike:** games for him and that's the one of the things I love about board games right now too. There's a lot of collaborative ones, but this game takes us 15 minutes. We get that quick hit of play that he needs and plus -- and I'd love to hear your thoughts on this too -- it breaks a pattern. Because there's so many patterns that kids and people can fall into. I can easily fall into the pattern of reading articles online. My son, and we're seeing this more often with kids in general, screen time, like it breaks that pattern and gets you into something else. What do you think about that disconnection or stepping back so that you can move forward with more energy and focus going for? How does that play into the whole scheme of things?
- Dan:** Go for it, my friend.
- Alan:** This is Alan, just to clarify that question. I think it's actually a lifelong challenge for everyone these days. But you're really talking about the power of human interaction, in a way, in directing play with a person.
- Mike:** In real space, yes, as opposed to-- because we all grew up with friends, like you guys are friends in real life, like you see each other. I think our kids, our generation is going to grow up



Mike: with their friends are mostly ones that they've maybe met once or twice that they know on Facebook, right?

Alan: Right. And Dan and I, by the way, one of the things that cemented our friendship and lead to an occasional physical conflict between us was-- [laughter] Back 'em, was Back 'em.

Dan: Oh, man, he's so good at it.

Alan: I love you for saying that.

Dan: It's true, man. It's taken me two years to be able to say it [laughter] It's the first time I've said it. And you know, we're not in the same-- you know. I can't even go there right now.

Alan: But so, when you're playing games-- and you said it really well, games are really changing right now, board games. They're getting so much better as, I think, a reaction to the internet, like they had to remodel themselves. Because video games are so engaging, you go into flow when you play them, even if it's a very kind of junk flow, but when you're playing a board game you're still moving, you're still physically active,



Alan: you're shifting around the board, and you get that human interaction, you have to work with another human, the mirror neurons in our brain are still lighting up. So there's a lot of evidence for them being actually amazing ways of learning rules-- just, as you said, learning how to compete, that's wonderful, but also learning how to actually enjoy the game. We talk about this all the time with kids, as I say-- I draw a line on the board and say, "if this is the total time--" I play a lot of Connect 4.

Mike: Yes, I read the bio. [laughter].

Alan: Okay. I love Connect 4. "If this is the total time we play Connect 4, for 20 minutes, winning and losing is really like a micro-second. It is just a last little moment and then we go on to the next game. Would you rather have a great time for 20 minutes, or just be upset with that one little moment, or would you rather hate the whole game and then be happy for one moment when you win?" Most kids are like, "I'd rather be happy for the longer period of time." Yes, you got to enjoy the game at some point, it can't just be about the winning. See? You get to teach so much when you play games with kids.



Mike: All right, so let's unpack your course that you guys teach, The Science of Happiness. I just want to know, how do you be happy? [laughter]

Dan: Oh, that's easy.

Mike: Let's just do this. Right now let's just solve everybody's problems. You've got 10 minutes, go. [laughter]

Dan: Okay. You should have asked that upfront, we could have made this like a six-minute podcast at least.

Alan: More, man.

Dan: You know, I'll tell you what. The way that we address this is that, and we say this very early on in the semester, is-- our course is called The Science of Happiness, and we tell the students that it is not really a course about the science of happiness. Happiness is absolutely a part of the course, we have a class on positive emotions, but if we call it what it could be called, which is The Science of Well-being or The Science of Thriving, we'd have like seven students. We recently had 175 students because it's The Science of



Dan: Happiness, everybody wants to be happy. We break it down for them, we try to keep it simple, we try to keep it manageable, why? no one wants to get overwhelmed. What we do is we offer one of the theories that is one of the leading theories right now about living up a fulfilling life, which is called PERMA. It's, again, Martin Seligman's theory, of the University of Pennsylvania. PERMA. P stands for Positive emotions, E is for Engagement, the R is for Relationships, the M is for Meaning, and the A is for Achievement. Basically, the idea is each of those are buckets. We don't need to have them all overflowing, because that's not realistic. But we need to have at least a drop in each one. And everyone's levels are going to be different. For example, if you have great achievement, that A in PERMA, that's fantastic, but if you have a totally dry barrel when it comes to the R, relationships, and you have no one to share those achievements with, how wonderful can they be? Not as wonderful, right? If you have great meaning, but you really don't have much positive emotion, it's really hard to be thriving in your life. So happiness is one element, it's the positive emotion part, but if you really want to be thriving, this one theory, and there are numerous theories, would say to focus on these five areas. If you are not feeling terrific, maybe you should look and see



Dan: how you're doing in each of them. Maybe you need to focus on one of them to get a little bit more in that bucket." Now, that being said, the other thing we say to our class, and we always prep it by saying it's the cheesiest thing we'll say all semester, and it pretty much is, that you are all beautiful little snowflakes. And then they groan, and rightfully so. But the idea is, "look, for you sitting in the front row maybe emotions are really essential to you and you need a lot of them, and you need a little bit of engagement. but for you in the third row maybe engagement is really your thing, and you need fewer emotions. So, focusing on those five, but also understanding what's right for you is a really nice way for them to go through the semester, and then to go through the year, and then to go through their lives with a bit of a matrix that they can follow, that they can track, that they can strive to keep well fed.

Mike: You know, it's really cool that you talk about it this way, because I've been reading a lot more Bruce Lee lately, the martial artist. One of the things-- the quote that he throws out there that I keep coming back to when it comes to productivity, time management, because -- and by the way, you're right the Science of Happiness, people-- It's like Tim Ferriss's 4-Hour Workweek, people are going to buy that book



Mike: but it's really not about working four hours. It's feeling like you've worked four hours in a week. It's all about-- there's optics there, right? Lee's quote of, "absorb what is useful, discard what is not, and add your own to the mix." I think that's a lot of -- I like seeing more of that in the world because I think the personal component of things like personal happiness, personal productivity it's getting lost in the speed of culture. What are your thoughts on that? Because I think that there's -- because everything moves so quickly and I know that -- Alan you've talked about stepping back and having those common tranquil moments. I think that because the culture of speed is just so prevalent that we lose the personal component along the way.

Dan: Go for it, my friend.

Alan: I couldn't agree with you more, that I think it is very-- most of our media encourages us to seek out happiness. And when we think of happiness, that's a very activated emotion. We want joy. When you think about what you want on your weekend, when you look at pictures of a vacation it always shows people adventuring in some way. But actually when you look at the positive emotions that most influence,



Alan: for instance, our immune system-- so in the Pittsburgh common cold studies, what they did was they gave young adults, undergrads and people in their 20s, they gave them the common cold, they injected it up their nose, and they put them in quarantine for a week, and they watched-- before they did this, I'm sorry, they assessed their positive emotions and their negative emotions. Turns out negative emotions have much less of an influence on our immune system, but positive emotions have a significant impact on our immune response, how long we had the cold. They measured this, by the way, by collecting the kleenex, by literally connecting the snot of the subjects. But what they saw when they looked deeper into what positive emotions most impact our immune system, it's tranquility, it's serenity, it's being calm. And those things-- I mean, you're mentioning kids before, those are much harder to elicit in kids, and I think is something we forget about a lot. But when I take Macy, my older daughter, I just have this very profound memory. Dan just took his son hiking last weekend, but when I took Macy into the woods once, we were walking, she just turns and she goes, "This is peaceful." I have never even heard her use that word before, and I said, "What's peaceful? What is peaceful?" She said, "Less people, a little more quiet, more trees." I'm like, "Okay, that's peaceful."



Dan: You know, I was going to just tack on to that just to say, I'm so glad you brought up Bruce Lee, he is one of my favorite guys out there. We showed something in our class about unique voice. Sort of realizing you, your best. The quote is, "Martial arts is fully expressing myself." One of the many interesting things about it that quote it's that it's not about martial arts being something-- and he goes on to expand on this, that he can show people, that he can move overly quickly, that he can do all kinds of phoney movements as he says, but it's about him really having taken the time to do what's right for him. To sit back and think about, "who am I? What is it that engages me? What is it that I enjoy? What is it that allows me to pursue something that I love?" Not how someone else defines it, but how he defines it. And by taking that moment to step back, what he does to pursue it is really realizing his own path to well-being.

Mike: One of the things that I've found is that when people really finally connect with what they really need and want to do, when they finally take that step back, I struggled with this. I left a really good job at Costco to eventually do what I'm doing now, which I started off at the lowest possible place when you're doing this stuff. It's not like you jump online and



Mike: all of a sudden everybody knows who you are. It take some work and some effort whereas Costco you got a paycheck. Everything was coming and people thought, "Why would you leave this full-time job that's giving you five weeks vacation. You're on the way up." And it's about, yes, I would go home and I would be miserable. Now, that's not to say Costco is not a great place to work. It just wasn't a great place to work for me any longer. I think that not enough people spend the time doing something. It's the same thing with tools. I get this a lot too where people will say to me, "What tool should I use for my to-do list?" I say, "I don't know." When they said, "What do you mean you don't know?" I need to know how you work. How would you like to approach your to-do list because then I can help you with it, but it's a personal choice. I think obviously what you guys talk about I think it should help people tap into those personal choices and remove some of that doubt that they face when they're in the face of what expectations society and culture has around them. How does doubt and uncertainty affect people when it comes to positive psychology, because it's there and it's always there. It's always this resistance or this as Seth Godin called the lizard brain or this part of your brain, the fight-or-flight part. How does that affect the positivity that you have and keep



Mike: you from moving in the direction that you really want to move in. How do you combat that as well?

Alan: It is Alan. Uncertainty is at the heart of anxiety. That is what we say lead to anxiety, that when-- that fear is true danger. But anxiety is perceived danger. And I think that one of the ways that uncertainty and doubt play into positive psychology, and I think, we talk about choice a lot, and Dan can speak to this really well, but that issue of the over abundance of choice in our society leads to an enormous amount of uncertainty about our decisions and then leads to a kind of paralysis. Or tremendous regret and a feeling of lost of opportunity, make one over another, and--.

Dan: Just to break that, I mean, let's look at it this way, Mike, there was a time when-- in a very short story, is beautiful and it's the paradox of choice. the idea is, there was a time-- You remember when the Walkman first came out, right? So when it first came out, you had one kind of black headphones. And they kind of sucked, and they kind of hurt. They were kind of scratchy and they kind of cut your head. But you were excited. You could have music in your ears and you were walking down the street, you were like, "Oh, this is amazing".



Dan: So there was no choice. Those were the headphones you had. And then next thing you know there was a silver pair. So you had to pick - there's black or there's silver. If you pick the black, "Okay, I didn't get the silver." The silver? "Okay, I didn't get the black - big deal." But now you have Beats and a million other kinds. Skullcandy and high end and low end and colorful and green and blue and so if you buy one, it's not like you're forgoing another one, it's that you are forgoing a thousand other ones, and by doing that you all of sudden you buy one and you don't enjoy as much - you keep thinking about the ones you didn't buy. And that can be painful and that's what's happened in almost everything we do in life. Thank you very much, Internet, for all the personal reviews that don't matter. You're like "oh - Bill F hated his pair."

Mike: You focus on the -- what I do is -- that's what happens is you look at the reviews and the one star ones stand out because they are the ones that they glare out at you. Unless they are the majority of ones, in which case you have got other things to look at. But with Costco, I use that example all the time. Costco, you walk into Costco and you want to go buy ketchup, you have two choices - the three pack of ketchup or the giant can of ketchup. And they're both the same brand. So you can do one of three things: buy the three pack, buy the can or



Mike: don't buy ketchup.

And what happens is Costco is willing to take the bet that you will buy ketchup because you're already there. And so instead of having 15 different types of ketchup, which also can lead to you not buying ketchup, they are just simplifying the process, right? And that's why when people go to Costco, the common complaint is "I went into Costco to buy butter, milk and eggs, and I spent 400 bucks." Because they weren't fatigued by the choices that were all presented in front of them. Instead, they got to be part of the whole experience. And eating food off the demo tables never hurts either. But paralysis by analysis is a real thing.

Dan: You hit it right on the money, especially with food. There's a study that was done on jam that had the tasting tables, right? One table had six kinds of jam -- this was study done out in Mendel Park, California -- and the other table that was rotated in had 24 kinds of jam. And people would come by and they'd taste the jam. From the table that had six kinds of jam, 30% of the people who taste the jam, bought the jam. But from the table that had 24 kinds of jam, only 3% of the people bought the jam. So in a way, Costco is doing us a huge favor by



Dan: saying, "you got three choices - pick it". And even if people are like, "I wanted more variety," for most people it minimizes their worry, it minimizes the choice they have to make and thus, it minimizes the anxiety - the regret they feel for not having bought the 23 other jams. It works for us.

Mike: Yes, absolutely. One last thing I want to get to before we wrap up. Alan, we touched on the Green Lantern which means we can't not talk about willpower before we wrap up. [laughter] We can't - it's right there. The reason I'm a huge Green Lantern fan is because willpower is something I believe that you really need to have and it's an important fuel. It's important part of -- and I like to say that I have a pretty solid self-awareness of knowing when I'm best at doing certain things.

We all know that willpower, and anyone who's been listening to the show for a while, knows that we only have a certain amount per day and it's how you use it that determines-- during the right periods of time and such. I'm a night owl so I use my willpower sparingly in the early part of the day and then when my creative energy comes up, because I know my energy is higher later in the day, that's when I'm ready to take



Mike: on Parallax. [laughter] That's when I'm ready to take on the world, right? So what is willpower, how do you define it and how important is it that you understand how it works in terms of saving you time and maybe frustration and allowing you to optimize the moments throughout your day?

Alan: I think Dan and I think that willpower is essential and so we have an entire class dedicated to the subject of willpower, using a lot of Baumeister's work who's been one of the premiere people to study it. And the idea that you need to harness your potential is central to the class. But if you feel like you don't have the impulse control and the regulation and that ability to make the choice between what you want to do and what you should do, so that you can actually make the choice of what you're actually going to do, is essential. And then I think Dan and I actually have - there's so many different ways of looking at your willpower.

I think the biggest domino for me with my willpower, and you mentioned that you're a night owl, is very much sleep. For me, when it comes to willpower, I think sleep. When I get a good night of sleep, then I wake up and I eat the right way. And some people really want to connect, some people would say



Alan: maybe over connect, the issue of glucose in food with willpower - and that idea. So when I sleep well I eat well. And when I eat in a really healthy way, that maintains the most willpower I'm going to have for the day. And knowing that just like you're saying, I know it around two o'clock every day, I have no willpower. Melatonin's coming up in my brain and it's saying take a nap. And if I let myself take that 15 minute nap, then I have willpower right up until the evening when it's dinner time. And if I can make it to then I have that feeling of achievement from the day. But I want to let Dan speak as well on this subject.

Dan: I think Alan hits it right on the head when it comes to nutrition and how that affects our willpower. One of the other major ways of looking at willpower is that it's a finite resource. And that as we use it throughout the day, it's like gas tank - or it's like a muscle. Once you've gone to use your muscle - to work that muscle at the gym, it's tired. You've pushed it as far as it's going to go. So trying to use it again is really tough. In the morning - so there's a reason for example, why Mark Zuckerberg wears the same thing every day. Because he doesn't have to make his choices in the morning and any choice we make will mean we're expending willpower. He



Dan: He just throws on the hoodie which means no choice to be made. And it's the same thing with President Obama and having just a couple of suits in the closet. Same thing with Steve Jobs and the black turtle neck. When we get up in the morning, if we have 16 choices for breakfast and we have to make that choice, well we just expanded a little bit of willpower. And we're starting to drain early. If we have one choice - I try to go to my Irish oats every morning, I'm not expending willpower on what I'm going to eat.

So everything we do throughout the day, every choice we make, every initiative that we take on, every time we say no to something or say yes to something, every time we say I'm not going to do that, we're expanding our willpower. Thus if we're able to design our day in a way where we simplify our choices and save that willpower for the things we really need it for - the project we're working on later in the day. Then we have that ready at our disposal and we're far more likely to be able to get done what we want to get done.

Mike: I think that's a great way to wrap up although I would say wouldn't it be great if we all just had lanterns and rings - and we could just charge them at any given time just with an



Mike: oath. Just with an oath. Just with a simple oath and we'd be good to go.

Alan: And if our only weakness was the color yellow.

Mike: Or wood [laughs] from eons ago, yes. When someone said "oh, the Green Lantern's weakness is yellow", that's ridiculous and the former Green Lantern's weakness was wood. Really? [laughs]

Alan: I love that you're talking golden age here. [laughter] I love that you just went there.

Mike: Gentlemen, thanks so much for joining me on the show today. Where can people find your work? I know you've got the book which we're going to link to in the show notes, which of course - the book is called How to succeed in college and life. You Thrive, right? You Thrive is the name of the book. How to succeed in college and life. Where can people find you online to learn more about the science of happiness and positive productivity?



Dan: Well you could certainly start with the book site which is www.youthrive.info. Not only is there information about the book, there's information about us, there are resources that you can go to, assessments that you can take online and some really nice links to some great colleagues we have that are doing really interesting work in the field of positive psychology. You can certainly find me at www.daniellerner.com as well. And Alan is a You Thrive guy so -

Mike: And one thing I want to mention too is that my friend Srinivas Rao interviewed you guys for the Unmistakable Creative podcast so I'm going to link to that in the show notes as well because Srini does a great job with interviews and I'd be remiss if I didn't let people listen to you guys talk on that show as well. It was you Dan wasn't it - it was just you right?

Dan: That's right. It was just me.

Mike: So Alan and I we'll talk more about comic books while everyone else listens to that. Alright - thanks for joining us guys.

Dan: Thanks so much for having us. It was really a pleasure.



Alan: Thank you. This was such a pleasure

Dan: Yes it was.



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