Episode 200:
How to Scale Success with Graham Weaver

"We must all suffer from one of two pains: the pain of discipline or the pain of regret."
– Jim Rohn

Hey winners, welcome back to Win the Day!

The quote for this episode comes from Jim Rohn and says:
"We must all suffer from one of two pains: the pain of discipline or the pain of regret."

This is episode 200! I'm so excited we've made it this far, which of course would not have been possible without your support. So thank you for listening, for watching, for sharing, for taking action, as we bring the Win the Day mentality worldwide.

And because it is Episode 200, I wanted to bring on a very special guest – someone I've admired for a long time.

Graham Weaver grew up in suburban Ohio where he would listen to self-help cassettes while mowing lawns. They obviously worked because, today, he is the founder and CEO of Alpine Investors, with $16 billion in assets under management.

Alpine is a people-driven private equity firm that invests in software and services businesses. With over 20 years of experience in private equity, Graham founded Alpine based on the belief that exceptional people create exceptional businesses-- a PeopleFirst philosophy that guides the firm's choices today.

When he's not inspiring growth at Alpine, Graham teaches a top-rated strategic management course at Stanford's Graduate School of Business (GSB).

He has an MBA from Stanford University and a BS in Engineering from Princeton University, where he graduated with highest honors and was also captain of the national championship lightweight crew team.

This guy gets it. He understands career, mindset, health, family, and how they all come together for a Winning Life, and we're super lucky to have him with us.

In this episode:
• The shift in mindset that put Graham at the helm of a billion-dollar business.
• How to stay motivated to do the boring reps.
• What your metric of success should be at the end of each day.
• Why life is suffering – and how to choose something worth suffering for.

Before we begin, the right bit of inspiration can completely change the trajectory of someone's life, so if there's a friend or loved one who needs to hear this episode or could use some help to Win the Day, share it with them right now.

Let's WIN THE DAY with Graham Weaver!

James Whittaker:
Graham, great to see you. Thanks for coming on the show.

Graham Weaver:
Thanks for having me, James. Super excited to be here.

I'm so excited. I love every bit of your journey. So to kick things off, when self-help material first came on your radar, what was your life like at that time and why did you find it so compelling?

Yeah. I was probably 12, 13, 14 years old, I was mowing lawns. That was the best way to make money in Ohio. You go back and forth in the hot sun and the Sony Walkman came out around that time, so I'd listen to music and that would help the time pass a little bit. But then one day I went to the library and there was this audio tape that said, Think and Grow Rich, which you're very familiar with. And what 13-year-old doesn't want to think and grow rich? And so I checked it out and started listening to it and it was life-changing.

If you go back to where I was at the time, my parents had just gotten divorced, so I had a pretty unsettled foundation. I didn't have a lot of friends and like a lot of people at that age, you're trying to figure out who you are and where you fit in, and I didn't really have a place I fit in and so I was looking for some kind of foundation and these audio tapes of which that was one just ended up just giving me some frameworks that just really sunk in. And then you can imagine just going back and forth, line after line in the hot sun almost brainwashing myself with this content. So I just grabbed onto it. I just was at a place in my life where I was looking for something like that and I found it.

Just forced repetition. Mowing the lawns up and down as you're getting all of these great lessons. Bob Proctor. Do you know Bob Proctor?

I don't. No.

He's from the movie The Secret. He passed away fairly recently. But Think and Grow Rich was the book for him that changed everything. He would read it every single day. And he said to me that 99 people out of 100 would read the book and do nothing with it. Which of course goes for all self-help material.

That's true.

So what is it with you? Why did you do something with those things that you learned?

Well, I was one of the 99% for a while and I'd just take comfort in listening to it. I'd feel a little better just hearing the content. But then my sophomore year in high school, I wanted more than anything to make the varsity wrestling team because in Ohio that's a big sport and it was the only sport I could do. I wasn't good enough to play basketball or big enough to play football. I was right on the cusp of being able to make varsity as a sophomore but I got knocked out by the captain who came down to my weight class. The only weight class that I looked at and I could make the varsity team was at 125 pounds. The only problem is I was six feet tall and I weighed 150 and I didn't have much body fat to start with, so dropping 25 pounds was insane. That was really the first time when the years that I'd been listening to these tapes had sunk in and I was like, okay, well I'm going to make this commitment. In fact, I can picture I'm in this wrestling room, we're having this party after this tournament and we're having pizza, and I look up at the board and I saw the names of all the starters and I saw the 125, and I was like, I can beat that guy.

I literally took the piece of pizza out of my mouth and threw it in the trash and I was like, that was the moment I'm going to commit. Then all those things I'd been listening to came into focus and it was the hardest thing I've ever done even to this day. I was eating very little. And the very next morning after I threw that piece of pizza in the trash, my alarm goes off at 5:30 because I was going to go on a run. And that moment was probably the moment where I was like ... I got up. I made the decision about I'm not going to just lay here and think about doing this tomorrow. I'm going to do it right now, this morning.

It's 20 degrees [-7 degrees Celsius] in Perrysburg, Ohio. My Walkman batteries are freezing. But I go out and did the run. And it changed my life. I just started having an identity of someone who could set some clear goal and then work backwards from it. But I can't describe how hard that was. I mean just eating 900 to 1100 calories a day for three years, working out two, three times a day, and once I could do that, then a lot of things opened up after that.

Yeah, that's for sure. I could imagine. What was the first goal you ever wrote down? Do you remember? I know it's taking you back a long time.

Yeah. That was it. It's really awesome that you're asking about writing down goals because that was really the turning point. I would be sitting in class and I would write out, it was a little obsessive, but I would write out my weight and the workout I was going to do, what I was going to eat and then I'd write out all the things that I had to do that day and I would do that three times a day. I would write out my goals three times a day. It just put those things so deeply into my subconscious that I just started working toward those. Everything that I wrote down came true in that time. The grades that I got, the athletic achievements I wanted to have. I don't mean I didn't fail. In fact, wrestling ended up being a failure because I was so exhausted and skinny. I made the weight and I made the team and I made the varsity, but I wasn't that great. But just the ability to bring those things into my life was unbelievably powerful and then that was something that I have carried with me to this day.

What was your level of self-belief when you were young writing down those goals? Did you believe it to be true or did you write it down and the process of writing it just kept you focused and you developed that belief over time?

I 100% did not believe it was to be true at the beginning. All these tapes and all the things would say, write out your goals. Write them in the present tense as though they've already happened. “I am the number one rower in the United States” when I'm a 135 pound novice freshman. But write it down in the present tense as though it's already happened and then write the things you're going to do to achieve it. They all said the same thing. There's a part of me that didn't believe that the first time when I was in high school, but then as I started to see that come true, then, James Clear talks about when you take action towards something, you're making a vote for your identity as that person. What happened, James, is my identity slowly started to change from, “I'm a mediocre athlete” to “I'm someone who can achieve what I write down on this piece of paper and I'm going to do it”. Then I started choosing things where I felt like the outcomes were going to yield to just effort.

For example, rather than playing tennis or wrestling in college, I rowed crew because I felt like there was a lot more correlation between the linear inputs of just pounding away at the rowing machine versus the outcomes, whereas the other ones had a lot more variability. So the identity that I had is if I can map out steps, I know I'll take those steps and if those steps will lead to being successful, that's a goal that I can hit.

You talk about that idea of the infinite energy that can't really be computed. When you're young you need to have something that's realistic, but I hate to tell people that it needs to be realistic at the same time. You've got to figure out based on your body type or whatever it is that you're pursuing, there needs to be some level of being realistic there. But I feel like once that's done, you've got to throw everything else out the window and just believe that anything is possible.

Yeah. It's a combination. I would say it differently. At least the way I tell myself is I don't necessarily use the term realistic. I use the terms exogenous or endogenous. So exogenous would be like, okay, Graham, you're going to write a Grammy winning song. That to me feels exogenous. There's a lot of external events. I could practice for the next 10 years, I'm not sure if I could do that or not. Now, maybe for Taylor Swift, that's endogenous. For me, that's exogenous. However, a goal like hitting a certain time on a rowing machine was incredibly endogenous. There was a series of steps I could follow. There was a number of hours and minutes I could put and I could add that up and linearly get to that. So that was the way I thought about it. Less realistic. Because the goals were not realistic that I set at all, but they were achievable with a number of inputs that I thought were in my control.

I love that.

Do you feel like rowing is the number one sport that all young people should do? And the reason I ask that is because I didn't do rowing at school because my parents said, "We're

not dropping you off at four in the morning to the local river." Which I get now as a parent. But the people I saw who did rowing, they had a level of discipline. They had an understanding of the reps and recovery and nutrition and physical strength and all of those different things. It's something I wish I did when I was young.

I thought it was great for me. It mapped really well to my mindset and just the number of hours I spent staring at the monitor of a rowing machine, I got turned on by that. I liked that. I liked timing everything. I liked seeing progress, improvement. Back then the rowing machines didn't calculate your time, so you would be doing this mental gymnastics the whole time. Okay, I'm one second behind. If I hold this split, I got to lower it one second to hit this time. I just loved that. So I wouldn't say rowing is for everybody. I think some people really would not enjoy that at all. But for me it just happened to fit really well with my mindset and mentality.

You got to find what lights you up.

Yeah.

In Think and Grow Rich, it talks about the quote that every adversity carries with it the seed of an equal or greater benefit. What do you feel like was the biggest challenge that you went through when you were young before your professional career? The biggest challenge or adversity that you faced that you were able to identify an equivalent benefit from?

I'd go back to rowing. My freshman year I was a novice and I wasn't good at all. I basically didn't make a boat. And then I came back, worked harder over the summer. My sophomore year I started having good erg times. Got a seat raced out of the boat right before sprints, which was devastating. My junior year, now I'm coming back. Now I've got one of the best times on the team and I make the boat, but our team doesn't do that well. So I'm just coming back and persisting. Then senior year, for a little brief period of time, I had the number one time in the nation on the rowing machine and was captain and we won the whole thing. What came to me from that experience was this mindset that if you just give me enough time, I'm going to make it. It was not about me being really fast out of the gates. It was just me like The Terminator just taking one step forward over and over and over.

That was so magical because that was exactly the path that my firm Alpine took. Instead of talking about a four-year timeframe, it's been a 23-year timeframe. So thank God I had that experience of rowing where I was like, okay, well I'm getting my ass kicked in the early days, just pummeled, but getting up and doing it again and then getting my ass kicked and getting up and doing it again. That was exactly what happened when I started my business. The first decade was that, basically, but I had in my head that if I just keep going, it's going to work out and that's what happened.

With those attributes of determination and persistence and the resilience that you built up and obviously unlocked in you as well, do you feel like you would've been successful in basically any industry that you went down if it wasn't private equity?

Going back to what I was saying before about exogenous and endogenous, I think that's a big part of it. So for example, the summer between my first and second year of business school, I went and spent some time at hedge funds because that was the hot thing back then. That's what everyone was doing was working at public stuff. It seemed like the money was great and whatever. Personally I didn't think that was a winnable game. You're making investments. You ask any investor who's in that business, what's their edge? They all say the same thing. "Oh, we have a long-term perspective." Every single person says the same thing. So I'm like, you don't really have an edge because every single person says the same thing. Secondly, you have this long-term perspective, but your investors can pull their money out in three months, so you might not live to see that. My answer to your question is I would be successful in anything where I could map that back to a series of endogenous activities. I will win at that game. You give me time and the ability to map that back, I can promise you I will win that. But not everything lends itself to that formula.

Do you think about that like a compound interest graph? Like exponential returns?

Yeah. Absolutely. That's a great way to think about it. You're making this little progress. So what we do is we set these massive crazy goals that when we set them, people, including us, we all think we're just nuts. And we put them out in five years. Then we set a one-year goal that is like what's the milestone or the pillar that we would have to hit to know we were tracking to that five-year goal? Then we come back from that and set a quarterly goal. What would be the next pillar to hit that one year goal? And then every quarter we readjust that goal and then every year we actually readjust the five-year goal and the one-year goal. What happens is the quarterly stuff seems completely endogenous. It's like make this many calls, talk to this many owners, invest in this many businesses. They seem very doable.

In fact, we like to say we want the quarterly column to have about a 90-95% success rate of hitting it because you want people to have momentum. You actually want to set those goals almost low because you want people to feel like they're hitting that. And what's nuts, and this is what you were just saying, James, about the compounding, is that you start stacking these quarterly wins, one after the other. You have 20 quarters to hit that five-year goal. We usually hit it in two and a half years because they really start to stack on top of each other and you make so much headway. So it doesn't feel like that. It feels like you're doing little small things, but you do that over and over and over and over. They absolutely compound.

And when did starting your fund first come on your radar?

I worked on Wall Street. By the way, I'm just going to share what it was like. I don't know if anyone's come on here and talked about this experience, but I come out of school, I have a great resume, I have all kinds of different alternatives. Everyone talks about Wall Street. I go to

Wall Street and everyone's like, "Oh yeah, it's amazing," and whatever. And I go there and the first thing is they're talking about building these "financial models". It's like this isn't a financial model. You're basically putting an income statement, a balance sheet and a cashflow. It was so not cerebral. It was like I learned how to do that in two weeks and then I did that for two years. It was just ridiculous. I used about 1% of my brain power working a hundred-hour weeks. And when people throw out hundred-hour weeks and you don't really think about it. Okay, well that's getting in at 9:00 AM and working until 11:00 PM, seven days a week, but it doesn't even work like that. Sometimes you pull all-nighters and whatever. So anyways, a horrible experience. And then the culture's bad. It's like being hazed in a fraternity except for the part when you get through it and then you're a brother and they love you. You skip the second part. You just get hazed. You just get the hazing part.

Until you leave the industry.

To answer your question, when it first occurred to me about starting a company was just thinking, why does it have to be like this? Why do you have to hire the best and the brightest and treat them awful, horribly and use 1% of their capacity? Why is that what we're doing right here? I remember thinking, this is ridiculous. I have so much more to offer. And that was when I thought to myself, okay, I want to start a business because I want to take that person who graduates, who wants to just run through walls. Remember that person's been in school from the age of five to 22. They're just like, put me in coach. I'm ready to go take over the world. Literally, that's where they are. And you put them in this box in this cubicle and give them financial ... It was ridiculous. So I wanted to start a firm where that person could actually run through walls and we're going to help them run through walls and teach them how to run through walls. That was when it first occurred to me to start a firm, and then starting it was way harder than I ever imagined. But when I was on Wall Street was when I thought I should start a business.

It's interesting when you think about what a business would look like if you had every single person in that business working in their zone of genius. Something they enjoyed doing, something that gave them that creative spark. See some of the big companies where some of the best innovations have come from that freedom.

That is the innovation is can you hire people and help them use 90% of their capacity? If you can do that and you're playing an endogenous winnable game, you're going to win that game. It's not easy to do that because you have to have a lot of training and really good people have lots of options. They get really antsy in their careers. They want to always be growing, but that's the magic of them. You have to get in front of that and you have to celebrate that, not pound that out of them.

Your first fund. Wasn't a success out of the gate.

No. I mean-

At least you lived to tell the tale!

Yeah. So I get through the Wall Street experience, I get through business school, I quit my job. I'm going to start this fund. It takes me a year to raise the fund because I'm a 28-year-old with no experience. And frankly in hindsight, people were smart to pass on that first fund. I hate to say it. But I did convince a number of individuals to back me in the first fund, and then we lost money. And I say we, it was me. We had a team, but I take accountability for that because I was supposed to be the person who knew what I was doing. And we bought companies that didn't have moats and didn't have great management teams, things that we understand a lot better, but it was awful. Now we're fundraising. 23 years later we're fundraising. And I say, oh, we had a tough first fund, but we learned a lot. It gets one, maybe two sentences. It was 10 years. It wasn't one or two sentences. It was actually 11 years. We had to buy all those businesses. We had to work our way out of those companies and we had to have that anchor of that track record around our neck for 11 years.

So it wasn't like, oh yeah, it was this tough first fund, but hey, here we go. And also by the way, when you're in year five, you don't know that year 23 is going to be great. Your only track record is horrible at that point. It was brutal. I'm convinced we had to go through that though to get to the peak where we are now. In fact, we had our offsite last week and one of my partners and I were just observing. We were stepping back at the big awards night and we're looking over this whole thing that we built and just feeling really proud. We were talking about that and we were saying we had to traverse through that. Because if you think about how most people start a private equity fund, let's say there's two people and they worked at XYZ massive fund for however long, and then they spin out and they're going to do it on their own. And their first fund is great, or not great, let's say it's good, it's above average. They never have anything compelling them to think, create, tear stuff down, start over, use their imagination because they don't have to. They're going to end up around average maybe a little bit above average.

For us. We took our whole thing down to the studs and we had the humility that comes with that. So everything has always been on the table for us. We've used our creativity and imagination, I would say more than probably most firms in any industry. We schedule it, we prioritize it. It's a huge part of our culture. We could talk more about that if you want, but it's been an absolute game changer for us. So I think going through the depths of hell is why we could ascend to the level that we ultimately did.

It's like how Apple succeeded because they had to. They didn't have the money or the resources. They had to say, we need to fit this piece into this computer with the space that we have. We don't have all the extra money. Figure it out. That's the way to do it. And they were so successful. I love that scarcity creates innovation and creativity.

Yes. Scarcity, humility. You have to have a growth mindset. We had to challenge everything. We admitted we didn't know what we were doing. We had to find giants and learn from them. But then that muscle actually propelled us really far. The analogy I had when I was in college was I went to a school where I didn't take calculus. I was way, way behind. I was an engineer at

Princeton. A lot of these kids had, without hyperbole, they were two, three years ahead of me in math. And I'm having to read ahead in my math book to do my physics problems. Therefore I was establishing those habits at a time when they were coasting and those habits are what propelled me. And that same thing happened at Alpine. Just getting our ass kicked so badly early. We actually established some really, really good habits that have actually accelerated even as we've been more successful.

I think that's so interesting. And I read somewhere or heard from you somewhere that you would ... Maybe it was in your talk that you'd lost 50% of your friends' money in that fund. How do you stay optimistic and how do you turn up with that confidence and energy that you need to be able to make smart decisions when you're in that mental rut? Because often it's not our own money that we lose. It's losing someone else's or letting someone else down that can feel a hundred times worse.

It was horrible. And the story you're talking about is I had this large investor. Actually I'll say. His name is Tom Steyer. He ran for president a number of years ago and he was one of the first people that backed me. I would go to his office once a month and just report bad news after bad news, after bad news. It was awful. Because he was the one person who believed in me and I was letting him down. That was the answer to what was compelling me as well. I wanted to do right by him. He backed us and I wanted him in fund two, three, four, five and it turned out to be a fantastic decision for him. But what kept me going was, one, we had an amazing team. There's a quote that a problem shared is a problem halved. And we had a group of us that were all just in it.

Literally one of my partners flew to Detroit and ended up running one of our businesses there for a year. Another partner flew to Maine and ran the company there for two years. We were just in it together and it made it so much more easier to shoulder all the issues we were having. And then the other thing is we would see some bright spots. So yes, things aren't going well, but we'd have maybe one company and one thing that was working and then we could see that vision and start to scale our bright spots.

Thought you were going to say that the bright spot was that there’s a meteorite coming towards Earth and it's not going to matter anyway!

One thing you mentioned there that I thought was really interesting is that you still turned up, you still communicated, and you don't need to be right a hundred percent of the time. But if someone's communicating and they have that integrity, someone that can recognize that and they're backing you as the jockey to eventually get it right, speaks volumes of your leadership style and your character.

You said it right. So if someone is not performing, you want to see one of two things with someone. You want to see performance ideally. And if they're not performing, you want to see effort and communication and candor. I did not have the performance part. I leaned in on the other pieces, which is a lot of candor and a hell of a lot of effort. I think Tom could see both of

those and appreciate them. Also thank God he was the person in those shoes because he gave us the opportunity to have a second fund. He could have crushed me, not just by not investing, but more just spiritually. I will always be indebted to him and I will always try to be that for other people in my life because the way he showed up was just unbelievable.

One of the most frustrating things I feel like in business is a lack of communication that when you're trying to get a hold of someone and they're just not responding for a long time. I've noticed that. There's so many ... That smoke and mirrors game. It's like, just tell me how it is just straight up, then I can deal with it. But if you don't have the information or you can't get someone on the phone, it's so frustrating.

No one has ever accused us of smoke and mirrors or lack of communication. We have a lot of things, but that has not been on the list.

I love it. Well, getting a yes is so important. Getting a yes in these conversations is that one of the reasons you've been able to build all this stuff. What are you focused on to get a yes in the most important conversations, whether it's to raise money or whether it's to connect with a business that you're potentially interested in buying?

It's a great question.

I'll use an example of an employee. We're trying to get this incredible employee to join us, which is a place we spend a lot of energy. We want the very, very, very best people. The very, very best people have tons of options and we want them to join us. The way I've come around is you got to go upstream and say, if I was that person, why would I want to work at this firm? And before you even get to that getting to yes part, it's like have I made this firm a place where that person should want to come to work? Is this a job that if this were my sister or my brother, would I advise them to take this job? Forget all the smoke and mirrors, to your point for real, would I want them to take that job? And start there.

When you start there, now all of a sudden, I, Graham Weaver, I have full conviction that this is the absolute best place that you could work for this part of your career. I believe that in my soul and down to my bones that that's true. I don't remember where this quote came from, but it was selling is actually just transferring your conviction to the other person. So first part is how do you gain that conviction yourself? And as I said in this case, it was by building a firm where I really do believe it's the place for them to work, and then it's just transferring that conviction to the other person.

When we're selling something really complicated, we build an offense deck and a defense deck and the offense deck has our four or five key points we want to land, and the defense deck has the four or five key objections that they're going to have. Then the critical part is we actually bring those objections into the conversation. So if someone says, well, the reason I don't want to join your firm is because I really want to eventually become a CEO or I want to do this or whatever, then we were bringing that in the conversation and say, here's how we can support

you on that journey over the next five years. So it is funny because the objections are never that complicated. If you take five minutes, you're going to know what the objections, you could write them down and you know what they are, and then just bring those into the conversation.

What about the frequency of money, like limiting beliefs around whether or not you feel like you have earned or deserve the right to be able to access money or to be involved in some of the dealings that you're in? There's a great book called Pitch Anything by Oren Klaff. Have you read that book?

No, I haven't. No.

It's amazing. He talks a lot about you can't necessarily come at these things from this scarcity limited belief that you don't deserve this money and that person has it and I'm trying to get their money. You need to be coming from a position of strength, the value that you are the prize and you can provide this amazing value and create that harmony essentially.

Let's say we're pitching an investor. Today if I'm pitching an investor once again with every single ounce of my being, I believe that we will be the highest returning investment that they will have in their portfolio. Not just this fund, but the next fund and the next fund and the next fund and the next fund. And then if you're running a foundation that is doing research for cancer and you're trying to entrust that money with someone to give you back as much money as you can to save as many people's lives as you can, that this is the best thing that you can do. You have almost an obligation to invest in your highest returning things and that we're that thing. I hate to say it, but I honestly truly believe what I just said.

I know a big thing that you do as well, when you buy some of these businesses, you're very big on listening to the staff who are already there, which I think is great. It sounds like you are spending a lot of time focusing on what questions need to be asked and just giving people a voice to be able to communicate what they're feeling. Because those strong but unspoken feelings can damage all of these different things. You'll never be able to address an objection if they don't tell you what it is necessarily or if you're not aware of it or if someone's working for a company and they feel like they don't trust you because they've never been able to trust anyone in a leadership position because they've never been asked a question or they've never felt heard.

I love that you just brought that up, James. That's so cool. So one of the things that we do that's a little different is we're putting our own teams in place almost every time. Imagine that you're a VP of marketing or even a lower level marketing person at XYZ company. And the founder comes in and says, Hey, guess what? I just sold this business to Alpine Investors and here's Sarah Smith and she's your new CEO. You're freaking out. There's a lot of things wrong with that for you. The first thing that our CEOs do, or in this case Sarah Smith would do, is she's going to go on a listening tour. She's going to sit down with the top people at the company and she's going to sit down with a notebook and she's going to maybe, depending on the person,

somewhere between 45 minutes, an hour and a half, and just start asking a series of questions. How long have you been here? What's your role? What's going well? What else? What else? What else? What's not going well? What else? What else? Where should we be spending our time? If you were me, what would you prioritize? Where are we wasting time? What are your biggest ideas that you have for the business?

Now this VP of marketing, says, wow. The most common thing they say is, I've worked at this company for 15 years and no one's ever asked me my opinion before. By the way, if you went and hired McKinsey to come and tell you your strategy, you know what they're going to do? They're going to do exactly that. They're going to talk to your people, and then they're going to talk to your customers, and then they're going to synthesize all that and give you back an answer. So if Sarah does that herself, she has a number of benefits. One is she's going to understand it better because she's doing the work. Number two is she can, I guess, save the money on McKinsey. And number three is she's building rapport with the people who get to share that with her, and then she'll synthesize that information and come back. It doesn't mean that she takes every idea that everyone says.

Let's say that a woman, Alex said, Hey, I think we should go international. And she could say, Hey Alex, I heard you about international. That's not a priority we have right now, but it's in the parking lot and I appreciate that. That's okay. Alex still feels heard. She still feels like she had input in that. So it's incredibly powerful. And also we have an expression, which is the answer is always in the room. Here's people who've talked to customers and worked on this product for 15 years. The answer's in the room. And so having that mindset is how we coach our CEOs to go into these businesses.

The answer is in the room. That would change the focus on everything, wouldn't it?

Yeah.

Just coming into the room with that mindset.

The answer's in the room. And so when we do brainstorming, when we use our imagination, sure, those brainstorming sessions can lead to research you need to do. But the actual idea generation is going to be in the room.

I also think it's increasingly rare these days, and I don't know why that people need to feel like they matter. They're not numbers at the end of the day. These are real people and the best businesses have great people driving them. So you need to make sure that people feel like they matter in these companies. People have got families and their own things to worry about if they feel like they're just completely absent or that no one cares about them of course you're not going to get ... It's just good business that you actually see these people and let them know that they matter.

If you look at, this poll is done every year, Harris Interactive and Gallup both do a poll that's similar to this and they do a huge swath of the US economy. And the statistics are that roughly 70% of people that are working are disengaged. They don't feel like they matter. That's tragic because imagine that you're a mom and you go to work every day and you're literally just feel disengaged and disempowered and you're not excited and whatever. Think about how you show up to your community and your family and everything, and then conversely, imagine you're that same person and we can help you link what you're doing to the mission, the vision of the company, why it matters, how you're important. Now imagine how you go home to your kids, your community, your friends. It's not just business. It's half of your waking hours. And that half of your waking hours needs to be this epic adventure that you're on because it's half your life. If you can tap into that, which you can, it makes not just a huge difference in the results, but in your employee's lives.

The impact on health and everything else. It's crazy, isn't it? What about a young person that you want to mentor or someone that you want to bring onto your team? What qualities are you looking for in someone that you want to mentor or just a young person that you want to be connected with?

Over my entire career, I've learned that attributes are way, way more important than experience. So we index really heavily on attributes. And what I mean by that is who someone is more than experience what they've done. We've found that to be way more highly correlated. When we're hiring for almost any role we want to hire the high attribute candidate. The number one attribute that we look for is this will to win. It's one of these things where if you do an interview with someone and you go through their background from, let's start in junior high or high school and go through yesterday and literally go through your entire background. Depending on the age and experience of a candidate, it could be 2-4 hour interview process. That will leap out of that interview or it won't. People are like, well, how do you measure will to win? You will know or you will not know. And that's something we can't teach. So that's number one. Will to win. Self-awareness and ability to get along with other people and then grit and persistence. Those are the big attributes that we find to be really correlated, and they're really not that hard to get at in an interview.

How do you find a candidate who may have those attributes but they just haven't been put in a position where those attributes would've come out of them? Or is it by the time they're in their young 20s, would've come out at some stage?

Sometimes those attributes may not show up as much in a specific role in their work, but they will show up earlier in their career. For example, one of the women on our team who's absolutely amazing, she was a ballet dancer and just the intensity that she threw herself into that. She didn't know the difference between a music sheet and a financial spreadsheet or anything, but she had this intense will to win. And we're like, well, we can teach people finance, we can teach them private equity. We can't teach what she had that she demonstrated as a ballet dancer. So it can come anywhere. It doesn't have to be in your last job.

So good. Are you looking for a track record of discipline, recognizing that you can apply yourself to get a result in a completely random field that might not relate to that? Like the Jim Rohn quote from the start of the episode, we must all suffer from one of two pains. The pain of discipline or the pain of regret. You don't strike me as the type of person that wants anyone around you who's living with the pain of regret.

I personally don't spend a lot of time with the pain of regret. I want to come back to that.

Your question is yeah. It does come up. It does come down to discipline. It does. It's the will to win, but you won't demonstrate that if you have a flash of a will to win and then it goes away for a month. That won't get it there. But going back to your thing about regret, during all the time I was mowing lawns and listening to audio tapes I don't remember who the speaker was, but had this exercise, and I've used this exercise hundreds and hundreds of times with my students. Basically a genie comes out of a magic lamp and grants you a wish that whatever you throw yourself into with your career and your life, it's going to be unbelievably successful. It might take 10, 15, 20 years. It's going to be super hard, but it's going to be this journey of a lifetime. What would you wish for? I just remember thinking that was the coolest thing ever. Then the end of it is that's what you should do with your life.

That exercise I've personally probably done almost every quarter for the last 30 years or so. And that's the regret minimization exercise, which is, okay, you know you're going to be successful. What do you want to do? And maybe you can't do that thing tomorrow, but if you hold that out as your North Star, if you give yourself enough time, you will be able to start working toward that and eventually have that be your journey.

We can talk about family stuff a little bit later, but I was wondering on that, do you talk about that or do you think about that in terms of how you want to show up as a father?

I do. Yeah. My kids are now older. I have two teenagers and actually a 20-year-old, and they're older now. We have different conversations now than we did, obviously when they were younger. What I'm realizing is that they're taking in things from me from osmosis, and they're watching what I'm doing, how I'm talking about work, how I'm talking about teaching, how I'm talking about even the goal of trying to win some tennis tournament or something. That is sinking into them more than me lecturing them or telling them how they should live their lives. All three of my kids have those same characteristics themselves about throwing themselves into things with everything that they have and really going for things. It's just because that's what they grew up with. That's what they saw. They saw me talking about, Hey, I'm starting teaching this quarter and this is what my goals are. And then they watch me work at it and they come to class and they see the energy, and then they've taken that on. So that's been probably more, just being the person that I want to be has probably been the best thing I could do as a parent for them.

I love that.

How do you motivate someone who isn't pulling their weight?

It's a good question. So I think that if someone's not pulling their weight, there could be a number of things that are going on. Okay. One could be that they're in the wrong role. One could be that maybe they're unclear what needs to happen. A lot of times it will appear like a lack of motivation, but it's actually just a lack of clarity. They're not exactly sure what they should be working on. Sometimes they're working for the wrong manager, and actually the problem is a level above them that's the manager. So we'll try to dig in and understand why they're not pulling their weight. I can't teach motivation. I could give an exciting talk, but that'll wear off in a couple of days. So if changing those three or four things isn't the unlock, and often it is, then that just might not be the right fit for them to be at Alpine.

But typically, if we've made the hiring decision right on the front end, it usually is, I always say it's our fault. And so I'm saying, can we find a role, the mentor, a manager? Is there lack of clarity? And usually solving those things will unlock them to get excited.

And it's not really the sexy reps that get you the result. How do you stay motivated to do the boring reps?

You're dead on James. The word that I use when I talk to students is, I always say greatness is not these big sweeping, exciting motions. It's super tedious. I use the word tedious. People say discipline. Okay but I literally think it's just tedious. My day is absolutely not glamorous. I'm pounding out a blog, I'm working on a lecture. I'm redoing a speech for the 37th time. I'm reading investment memos over and over. I'm doing one-on-ones with my people at work. I'm scheduling time to brainstorm with the team. I'm talking to an executive coach. It's not this spectacular magical stuff. It's just pounding away at the little tedious stuff, doing the stuff that you know need to do, and then doing it the next day and then doing it the next day. And I like that. Again, I think going back to what I was saying before, I have a huge goal that I can map back to endogenous activities, like I'm going to win that. But you still got to do the activities, which can feel very tedious.

For sure. What's the difference between focusing on winning versus focusing on not losing?

I think I spent the first 10 years of Alpine focusing on not losing,

And that's where I got the question from. I'd heard you say before, you focused on not losing people's money rather than trying to create this amazing business in return.

Typically your goal in investing, I use the term in my speech, if you're looking for asymmetric outcomes where you can put in $1 and have this infinite number of dollars you're making. When I first started investing, I would invest $1 and focus on how do I not lose $1? I like to tell the story I had three times in my life where I wrote in an investment memo that it was mathematically impossible to lose money on this deal because it had asset coverage, or we

were going to cashflow out of contracts in certain number of years. All three times we lost money. And so protecting the downside just did not work. And then-

Unsend.

Yeah, exactly.

Then I started realizing you can build an entire career off of one good investment. So what if every investment you're making has this crazy unlimited upside? Now, we're not venture capitalists, we're buying existing companies, so we have to manufacture that. But what if there's no upper bound on the outcome of this business because there's lots of companies we can add to it. There's a huge market. We can do lots of add-on acquisitions. We can solve certain problems. So there's almost unlimited potential for that business. What if every time we're investing a dollar, we have that upside? In a given fund, we have 10 companies and three of them hit on every single metric. We're going to be one of the best performing firms in the world.

Conversely, if you're investing in things where there's a capped upside, you need every single thing to go right always, which by the way will never, never happen. That mindset is exactly the mindset that I started having for my own life. So I started realizing, okay, that mathematically makes sense for investing. But what if that's your life? What if you're putting yourself and your life into these things that have unlimited upside, that you're playing for the win, you're looking for adventure. You're going where you have energy, you're going to have goals that you're super excited about. What if you just did that in your life too? I think that asymmetry is even more applicable in your life than it is in investing.

Absolutely. What does win the day mean to you, and what's your metric of success at the end of each day?

If I had to simplify it, it's just being present. If I've done a good job of mapping out my priorities and my calendar, then whatever I'm doing is the most important thing I could be doing. Like right now with you, this is the most important thing I could possibly be doing. And if that's true, then I can be completely relaxed in this moment. I just think that's what life is. It's so energizing. It's freeing. I'm going to be more creative, have more fun. And so try to be just right here right now, not in my head, not thinking about the next thing or the prior thing. That's winning the day. That's winning life.

I think that removes just so much anxiety as well. Like worry about what's going to happen from the future or what's going to happen or what has happened in the past. Just being totally present's just a much more peaceful and productive life.

Yeah. The last three or four years I've been on this real deep meditation journey. I've come to the conclusion that thinking / overthinking is 100% useless. I used to think that I have to work all these problems out, and I'm using this time wisely and whatever. I've come to realize that activity’s almost entirely useless. And just being right here right now is the best use of time.

Now, right here, right now might be let's work on a problem, but I'm not going to work on that problem while I'm having lunch with a friend and stressing about that. So I think just being present would be for me, winning the day.

I love it.

Can you take us into the goal setting framework that you use with your students at Stanford?

Sure. Yeah. So surprisingly, I always think people are really good at setting goals, and surprisingly, they're not. And most people think they're good at goals, but here's what most people do. I'll start with the mistakes people make. The first one is they think they have goals and they're around nebulously in their head, but they've never written them down. So they actually really don't have goals. And I think that's because they're afraid if they write them down, they might fail or they might be too structured or might take away spontaneity. There's all these things. So first one is write them down. Secondly, the other mistake people make is they set their goals way too low. And when they set their goals way too low, it doesn't get them out of bed. They're not charged up. They're not ready to take over the world. Those are the big mistakes.

What I say is, the first thing is you have to ask yourself the question, what do I want? I've talked to an executive coach every week. On average once a week for 15 years. Executive coaching is just really 137 ways to ask the question, what do you want? And it's a hard question. What do you want in your relationship? What do you want in your life? What do you want in your career? What do you want for today? What do you want for your kids? But making space to ask yourself that question. That's not going to happen in one hour. It's going to be a continual process. Then when you get clear on that, then I say when you want to set a big goal, three things. One is go out at least five years because almost every obstacle you can imagine can be overcome within five years. So you can open up the aperture remarkably with a five-year timeframe. Second is don't worry about how. My favorite coaching quote is, the how is the killer of all great dreams. So relax that. And third is ask yourself what you would do if you wouldn't fail five years out relax the how. What would you do if you couldn't fail?

I spend a lot of time with students on really getting clear on what their answers are to that question. They always know the answer and then they get flooded with limiting beliefs about why they can't do that. And I'm like, okay, relax that. We're getting into the how. You just answered your question. That's the most important thing. You know where your heart is, you know where your energy is, you know what you really want with relaxing those three things. Then now we start the process of the how. So let's write down all the obstacles that you have that are going to get in the way because that's really powerful because otherwise they're going to be stuck in their head, keeping them from action. When you put them on paper, the obstacles just become to-do items.

My students at Stanford are great at crushing to-do items. They just have to get them out of their subconscious where these fears are paralyzing them and put them on paper. For example, I don't know how I would pay off my business school loans if I started a company because how would I fund my company in a way that would allow me to pay a salary that would allow me to have enough money to also make the payments on my business school loans? That's a completely achievable problem. You can overcome that. Has anyone ever raised money and paid themselves? Yes. Okay. So now we can deal with that. So step two is writing down all the obstacles, limiting beliefs.

Then there's the imagination part. You sit down and I play some music and we're going to write down 30 things you're going to do to move toward that, including five people that can help you along the way. You're just going to write and you're just going to have to sit there and think. Then you're going to write down literally a list of 30 things to move toward that goal. Then for each one of those things, you're going to write the most immediate first steps. So research XYZ industry would become, okay, I'm going to actually sit down and put 10 minutes on my calendar, do a Google search, buy two books on the topic. We translate those actions into the first step. So that's the next step.

Then the final step is the daily part. Your goal at the top of the page, and then write the three things you're going to do today to work toward that goal. then I ask them to put two hours on their calendar where it's just blanked out where they're going to write on the goal. Because some of those actions don't fit neatly into a 15-minute activity. So that's the process.

First is really decide on what you want. Get clear with the five years out, relax the how. What if you knew you wouldn't fail? Write down all the obstacles and limiting beliefs that are going to come up. Make a list of 30 items and actions, and then on a daily basis, just take a step toward that. That process will allow you to hit pretty much any goal. But as I said, it's tedious. It gets really tedious. That daily thing of writing down the three things you're going to do and then doing those things.

It's in my journal template. What three things will I do to make today a win. I've done it every day now for multiple years, and it's just incredible. It works, doesn't it? It's so good. And you mentioned before when I asked you about someone who's not motivated, you said one of the things was clarity.

Exactly.

You can't go through the exercise that you just went through there and not have clarity.

That should then make you super motivated to get your ass into gear to go and get to work.

Yeah. And if you run out of clarity, do the list of 30 again. That's it. I mean, that's all you got to do. If you're not clear, if you run out of activities, then go to the list of 30 things again and do that again. It's not complicated. It's tedious.

Get excited to do the tedious stuff.

Yeah, exactly.

In episode 178, we had Harvard psychologist, Dr. Ellen Langer. She came on the show and she said that our expectations tend to be fulfilled. I know you're big on this idea of assuming success, so how does one assume and expect success in the world we're in today?

I think it comes back to what we were talking about about setting goals, and I think when you set a goal and work toward it, and then you vote today with three activities toward it, there's a part of you that assumes the identity of someone who has already achieved the goal. So if you think about it, where does our identity come from? It comes from typically the past. It comes from, I'm not good at this, my jokes aren't funny. Also, our identity has a lot of real negative things in it. This person told me this, my parents said this. And it's this passive thing that just happens to us, but when you can start setting goals and working toward them, you can actually pick your identity and you can have your identity be coming from your future and from your destination.

And that was what I learned way, way back when I went on that run that first morning is like I started changing my identity just by moving in the direction I wanted to go. It's that simple, really. It's like, okay, well gosh, in the past I've been undisciplined and lazy. I haven't been good in relationships. It's like write it down, where do you want to go, and take a step toward that. You can't help but having your identity move you toward there. So I'd say it a little differently that it is expectations, but it's even deeper than that. It's like you're changing your identity to be the person that is capable of going in the direction you want to go.

She was talking about words like don't use words like hope and try because they have the expectation of failure built into them.

Yeah. And I would say just use action. That's even more powerful than any of that. It's like I just took action. I went on a run this morning, so if one of your goals were to get fit, it's like I voted. I went on the run. I am now marching tangibly toward that goal.

So good. I'd love to switch gears and chat about a bit of family stuff if you're open to that.

Sure.

How did your perspective change once you had kids and how would you describe your parenting philosophy?

Yeah. I had kids at the same time I started my business, so it was a very-

Funny how that works out, right? Yeah. I've seen that story happen so much.

At the time when Lehman blew up-

Even worse.

And our firm was in big trouble, I had three kids under the age of five, including a two month old daughter. So it just coincides. I don't know. Maybe when you're young, you can handle everything. For me, the first one was I wanted to be there for my kids. I wanted to be a very involved father. I wanted be home for dinner every night. I wanted to go to their sporting events and not have it be a big deal that dad was there. Of course dad's there. He goes to all the things. I don't go to all the things, but I go to as many as I can. So I wanted to just be a really big part of their life. And so to do that and start a business, pretty much everything else went away.

So for the first 10-12 years of Alpine and the first 10-12 years of my kids, I did my work and I was at home with the family. That was pretty much it. And that was intentional. Two other things I'd say about kids. I heard the best speech about parenting ever at a very unlikely place. It was my oldest son's first day of little league. He's seven years old. And all the parents are all lined up and this guy who's been doing this for 30 years, he gets all the parents in the baseball diamond and he says, "Look, I've been doing this 35 years. Let me just tell you a couple things. First, none of your kids is playing professional baseball. It's not going to happen. Sorry to burst your bubble. That's not going to happen. None of your kids is probably playing in college. That's probably not going to happen. And probably 85% of your kids aren't playing in high school. So you don't need to get your kid a pitching coach at the age of seven. You don't need to get them a hitting coach. This season is about this season. It is not a stepping stone for your kid playing in the major leagues. It's not to get them in college. It's just about right now, this season."

I'm paraphrasing. He used a lot more F bombs and swear words and stuff. But it was the best parenting advice I've ever received, which is like each stage is really just about that stage. And I think it's so easy as a parent to think, okay, second grade's about getting into third grade and they got to learn their alphabet and they got to learn to walk and they got to do this and this and this, and of course all that's going to happen. They learn to ride a bike. But it's not like you're moving the kids toward a destination because the destination is they leave the house, which is the most heartbreaking thing that's ever happened to me and my second one's about to leave. So it's like that was the best parenting advice that I ever got.

So plot twist, so little league is actually the biggest feeder club for the Yankees now or something. That's so good. A lot of people that I talk to, it seems to be that transition from teenage years to adulthood is a tough one because there seems to be very much a degree of randomness that you don't really control the friends that your kids ... Obviously you can help instill the values, but there's such a degree of randomness with who they happen to hang around. Have you got any advice for parents who might be in the thick of it raising teenagers where they're just not feeling as confident as they once were about their future?

I mean, you really nailed it, which is it does have a lot to do with the friends because at that age, the teenage years, that's the biggest force in their life is they want to be accepted, they want to be part of a group. Gosh, we've just been so blessed that our kids have chosen and been friends with really nice kids that they want to be more like, and I actually don't know if I have good advice on how to change that, except maybe you're putting them in environments where they're meeting kids like that. So sports is a good one. Whether it's organized sports or music or martial arts or whatever it is. If you can be putting your kids in environments where they're more likely to meet kids that are going to share their same values. My biggest goal was that my kids played sports in high school, not to get them into college, but mostly just because the alternative is they're just going to be screwing around and they're going to meet kids that are also screwing around.

Napoleon Hill said drifting is the primary cause of failure. If you've got a sport to focus on-

Yeah. That was probably what we set our kids up to do a little bit, is to be able to play sports in high school, and then those ended up being their peers and kids that they spent time with. Again, you can't force that on your kids, but help them lean into that thing, whether it's, again, music or drama or something. If you can find what they're excited about and really lean in to that, that's a way better place for them to probably meet people that are going to be friends that they're going to want to hang out with.

Second last question before the rocket round, I first discovered you on TikTok and I was in a feed where there's just so many crappy creators out there. You have done an incredible job being exactly who you are, and it's awesome to see you gaining such massive traction. You are just killing it on the socials at the moment, which I guess it's probably unlikely to feel or associate or identify as an influencer these days, but what are some of the things that have happened behind the scenes that have helped you become successful on platforms like TikTok?

Without any dancing!

I started writing a blog during COVID where I love writing and I've written all this stuff down. I just never published it. I started writing a blog, and that did really well. People really responded well to the blog, and it's all the stuff we're talking about in this podcast, and I had a blast doing it. Then I would send it and we'd be at the dinner table and I'd ask my kids, "Hey, what'd you think of the blog?" And they'd be like, "Oh, yeah, yeah. Well, yeah, we haven't quite got to that yet." Even when the blog was about them, they never even read the blog. I mean, maybe they read one or two. So then I'd watch them scrolling away on TikTok for hours or for a long time and so I started taking some of the content from my blog and making it into 60 second videos, and then they started doing really well.

For a while, every single video I did just blew up and I started to realize that content wasn't on those platforms. In fact, it was the exact opposite content. It was like, here's how I made

$30,000 a month of passive income without working and buy my program, and you too can do that and here's how I flipped houses and here's the cryptocurrency that's going to, it was awful. It was actually really detrimental I thought. So I said, you know what? I need to be the counter voice and say, okay, we're going to set goals. It's going to take you a long time. There is no get rich quick. It takes discipline. Here's how you can start. Here's how you can win the day today to start moving you toward. I'm sorry, but there is no $30,000 passive income thing. I've invested in 500 companies. Never seen that before. And I'm sorry to burst your bubble, but this is going to take some work, but that's great news because you can do it. I started being that voice, and again, I think people didn't really want to hear that, but I think there was a part of them that probably knew that that was probably more true than some of the other stuff on there. And so it morphed into me almost feeling like I have to be on that platform and be the other voice.

You do. It's an obligation now. I feel like you got to keep it going because-

It does feel that way.

Yeah. You could put up the most well-produced video, but you inspire through leading by example. That's what I took away from when I first seen you on there.

Thank you. Thank you for saying that.

It's awesome.

Yeah. And it is absolutely humbling to be putting yourself out there. I mean, it is so humbling. You put all this energy into a video. It goes nowhere or it goes somewhere and the trolls in the comments and the stuff they say, and of course the stuff they say that hurts is the stuff that's kind of true and that's getting your own insecurities and stuff.

Damn you, faceless troll. Yeah, you were right the whole time.

Exactly. But there's also beautiful comments and amazing people on there and people that are really touched and that share all kinds of incredible things that they did with their life as a result of a video they saw or a speech, and that's unbelievable. Almost literally not believable. So that really is cool when I see things like that and people take the time to write me emails or send me notes and things. And it is true. I mean, I really do believe that for certain people, my content is getting through.

That's actually why I say at the start of the show, just the right bit of inspiration can completely change the trajectory of someone's life. Them seeing a video of yours could be the catalyst. A video that you won't even remember posting could literally change someone's life and then countless others as a result of that.

And it does sometimes. Sometimes they have a decision to make to go one way or the other way, and they know. They already know which they're supposed to do, and maybe they just needed a little bit of a push, someone to remind them of that.

Isn't it nice when you see some random strangers coming into your defense of the other strangers that are attacking you in the comments.

That's true.

It's great, isn't it?

Actually, I love that you say that. Yeah, that does happen. My followers will come to my defense when some troll comes on there and it's really nice to see.

I usually like to just to sit back and then oh, wow, it's great to see the army come through. A final question before the rocket round. On your best day, what's an affirmation that you would write on a flashcard that you could show yourself on your worst day?

It's probably just, you only need to be here now. You only need to be what you're doing. Whatever you're doing, just be there and that's enough. That will be all you need to do at that exact moment. Because I think my worst day is me in my head, beating myself up or stressing or whatever, and I think that would be the thing to pull me back is like, hey, just be in this moment now.

Well, let's move to the Win the Day rocket round. 10 questions.

Let's do it.

Just some quick answers. Number one, what quote inspires you the most?

I'm going to go with Vince Lombardi, coach of the Green Bay Packers, and his quote is, "The Green Bay Packers never lost a football game, but on a few occasions we ran out of time." That quote has had more impact on my life than any other quote, because that's how I just think about myself, which is like if I'm not winning, the game's not over. I'm just going to keep the game going, and I've never lost a football game and I'm not going to run out of time, so let's go.

I love it. Number two, morning coffee or evening wine? Either of those? I know you've-

I don't drink either. I don't drink caffeine or alcohol, so I'm boring on that one. I guess it's morning water.

Number three, what's one bit of advice you would give your 18-year-old self?

This is a pretty deep advice. I don't know if the 18-year-old would really grasp this, but if the 18-year-old could grasp this, I would say life is going to present itself to you as an external game, but it's an internal game. Meaning you're winning or losing that game is going to start with your internal game of what you're telling yourself you can and can't do, what you believe and knocking down your obstacles and limiting beliefs, but that's an internal game.

Love it. Number four, what book do you gift the most?

Definitely we've gifted the book Good to Great by Jim Collins the most. I mean, I don't even know if the book sold five million copies. We might have gifted 100,000 of that. I don't know if that many, but we've gifted that a lot. It's a classic book about how a leader into a new business and can turn that business around, and he's just based on great research and well-written.

Number five. Is there a vulnerability you once hid within that became your superpower?

I think it's insecurity and feeling like I'm not enough was the vulnerability, and it became a superpower because I think I just wanted to prove to myself that I was enough and then little by little would take the actions that would cause me to have self-esteem. One of my colleagues once said, "If you want to have a high self-esteem, do esteemed acts." And so it almost forced me into if I did like myself and I was proud of myself, what would I do? So that became a superpower.

That's a great reframe, isn't it?

Yeah.

Wow, that's awesome. Number six. What's one thing you've learned about failure?

It sounds so cliche, but it' just keep going and that if you keep going, the failures have ... Again, sounds cliche, but the fairs have been the most propellant things in my career. It's when you quit after the failure that they can be fatal.

Number seven. If you could sit on a park bench and have a conversation with someone alive or dead, who would it be?

I mean, if I really can do anyone, I'm going God. I mean, I had so many questions.

My daughter's four years old. She's hitting me up with all these questions lately. Is God alive? All of these different things. It's hard to answer these questions with young kids.

I would have so many questions, but about what the purpose and what the meaning and what I'm supposed to be doing and why did this happen. I mean, I could go on for hours and hours and hours.

Earth and the whole all of outer space. There's a million questions, isn't it?

There's so many.

Yeah. Number eight. What tool or resource best helps you run your life or your business?

We use this tool, I think I was describing this earlier, it's called a one-page plan, and we go far column is your mission, vision, values. Then five-year goals is almost your North Star. One year is a milepost and quarterly is what you're doing this quarter. Then one year and quarterly you put someone's names, initials. They have deliverables, dates, deadlines. You can hold people accountable, and it's a one-page sheet to basically bring your goals to life and actually create activity to be working toward them. We took that from Verne Harnish's book, Rockefeller Habits.

Yeah, love it. Number nine. Share one thing on your bucket list.

I'd love to go to ... I've gone on a bunch of meditation retreats. I'd love to do one in India with some real Monks or something. I think that would be really cool.

Awesome. And final question, number 10. What's one thing you do to Win the Day?

I'm going to go just working out. I think that's something I've done every day for 35 years, and once again, no matter where your mindset is, it's going to be great after you hit a hard workout, so I go with that.

Do you always do a first thing in the morning?

I do a first thing in the morning. I know physiologically it's probably better to do it later, but psychologically I think it's better to do it right away.

Get it done. Get it done. Well, there are a bunch of ways to connect with Graham and we'll link to all of these in the show notes. You can follow him on Instagram at Graham C. Weaver, check out his talk, How to Live an Asymmetric Life, and download his goal setting framework. Again, all of that and more will be linked in the show notes. What a pleasure, my friend. Thanks so much for coming on the show.

James, it's been an absolute pleasure. Thank you so much.