Episode 300:
How to Manage Burnout and Overwhelm (Without Sacrificing Performance)
with Dr. David Rabin

"*Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication.*"
— Leonardo da Vinci

Today we're joined by psychiatrist, neuroscientist, and inventor, Dr. David Rabin. Dr. Dave is the co-founder of Apollo Neuroscience, Executive Director of The Board of Medicine, and Medical Director of The Apollo Clinic.

He has spent 20+ years researching the impact of chronic stress—developing cutting-edge, non-invasive therapies to combat trauma, addiction, and mental illness.

Dr. Dave's new book *A Simple Guide to Being Alive* has just been released. It's a practical guide to building a life of performance, joy, and longevity in a stressed out world.

This is Dr. Dave's second appearance on the podcast. He first joined us in Episode 176 where he gave us a masterclass on the evolution of stress—and how true healing cannot begin until you experience absolute physiological safety.

In this episode, we're expanding that toolkit to battle the relentless overwhelm that people are faced with today.

We'll also go through:
• How overwhelmed parents can clear the chaos in their households.
• The real reason ancient healing practices are being reprioritized by modern medicine.
• Why your health tracking device might be doing more harm than good.
• How to upgrade your mind for greater focus and productivity.

Let's WIN THE DAY with Dr. Dave Rabin!

James Whittaker:
Dave, great to see you. Thanks so much for coming back on the show!

Dr. David Rabin:
It's great to see you too! Thanks so much for having me.

Yeah, of course. Well, I love you. I love the first episode we did together. I love the book that you have prepared. We put up all of these clips online, millions and millions of views, so we've got so much great stuff to talk about today. The first question I had for you is we have so much information at our fingertips today.

And what we're seeing now is this epidemic of disconnection and loneliness where we have a tool in our pockets, especially in the Western world, almost every single person, like how often do you meet somebody who doesn't have a smartphone? Almost never.

So basically everybody has these supercomputers in their pockets that have this incredible ability to connect us together and to help us feel more communion. More community. It can help us to unite old friends. It can help us to stay in touch with people we normally would lose touch with and easier, very, very easy and lots of people. Yet somehow, we have become reliant on these things for information in a way that has resulted in chronic nervous system dysregulation. Part of the reason why that's happening is because smartphone technology is, again, there's nothing wrong with it as a tool, but it's very powerful and it can be used for anything.

You can use medicine to heal and you can get addicted to the same medicines if you misuse them. That's exactly what we're seeing with smartphones. We're using them not to bring us closer together, but to enhance this one of my favorite words, which is Schadenfreude.

So many people go into social media and are being targeted both by content and social media that is other people suffering. We've created this very strange culture that empowers people to take pleasure in other people's suffering and to not take care of ourselves in the process.

That's a really dangerous recipe. Because when we use a smartphone to, for instance, distract ourselves or numb ourselves to discomfort, rather than to use it to connect and to build community, then we are just perpetuating discomfort. That creates a stress response in the body that persists for a very long time and ultimately can increase the likelihood of disease and decrease the likelihood of learning effectively. Because the nervous system doesn't learn well when we're stressed out. It actually shuts down learning.

And so that was a big inspiration for me in writing this book because I realized that we were just not being taught this properly and even in medicine, we're not being taught this properly. And so I wanted to make sure that we all can have a real conversation as fellow humans about how do we think about using technology in the world today?

Yeah. Awareness and attention. All that stuff. Yeah, I feel like one of the core themes of your book is bringing it right back to attention, right?

Oh yeah.

There was a passage that you wrote in the book that I want to read out for everyone because I think it's really powerful, not just because of how well it aligns with win the day, because I think this really stood out to me.

You said, "The secret to winning is ironically quite simple. Distraction is the enemy. Focused attention is true power. Win your attention and you win the game." Do you want to tell us a bit more about what that means?

Win the day.

Yeah, that's right. Win the game and the day.

Our attention, which is not taught properly, is effectively the gateway to our consciousness. So when we choose to pay attention to anything, that thing by our choice is allowed to enter into our awareness and become more concentrated in our awareness. The more time we pay attention to something, the more that thing concentrates. That's kind of where the word concentration comes from. More of that thing is taking up more of our attention in our minds. So it's concentrated. There's more of it there by percentage of attention that we have.

When we decide to allow the environment or whatever's around us, or the pings from our phone, to decide what we pay attention to, then we've just given up the control over what's allowed in. And if you think about it, from the Buddhist or the ancient meditative perspective, where attention is everything, what they believe that science is now proving to be the case, Western science, is that when you decide to pay attention to something, you're inviting it into your awareness, especially if it's something in the present moment. Like something like a feeling in your body, you're inviting yourself back into the present.

The present is the only time that actually exists. The past has already happened and it's gone, can't be changed. And the future hasn't yet happened. The future is determined by what we do in the now. But if we spend all our time thinking about and paying attention to what we regret or did in the past, and what has passed and trying to change it, or shame ourselves for it. Or we spend all our time worrying about the future. Then there's very little time left to just be here now in the moment that exists. So all of us is distracted by, for the most part, the past and the future, because we're not taught about how important it is to just focus your attention on what's going on right now.

And what's interesting is…

The mind can be anywhere. So the mind can be in the past, in the future, in somebody else's mind and some other planet, or it could be in the body. And the body is always in the here and now. That's where we start to talk about the way we're taught to focus is totally backwards. We focus on our thoughts as if every thought is valid and worthy of our attention. That's not true.

We all have nonsense thoughts all the time and when you start to actually think about what thoughts you're having and observe them, rather than just act on them by default. Or just assume that they're valid because you're having those thoughts, then you start to realize that something somewhere between like 85-90% of our thoughts on an average day are totally nonsense and not relevant to anything that we're doing that day. So when you take control of your attention, you're literally taking back your power as a human being. Because you're bringing yourself back into the moment where that power exists.

So intentionally taking control of your attention, obviously so important.

What about for someone, I'm thinking about the teenager who's addicted to their phone, who's making the decision mindlessly just based on habits to grab the phone without even thinking about it. So their attention is there without that conscious thought. How can that person then develop the awareness to have more attention to get the most out of this tool that you're talking about?

A lot of it starts with choosing the content that you take in. So you can doomscroll or you can distract yourself with random stuff that is not related to you or relevant to you at all, just because the algorithm decides to feed it to you. Or you can take in educational information. When we were kids, you had like Nova. Or like Bill Nye. Those are all things that are usually on screens that we intake by choosing to pay attention to them, but they're educational and teaching us about the world and about how to think better or more effectively, or how to feel better ,or how different parts of our bodies work or the universe works or whatever. You're enhancing your education through science and learning.

And that is, I think the way in for a lot of people is to make, and part of my motto is, we need to make health fun and easy. Now we make it like a chore. If you treat it like a chore, then people aren't going to want to take time to put their attention on it to do it. We're just going to relegate it to the last priority, but if you make it fun and easy, then people are like, "Oh, learning could be fun. That's something I should do more. Not distracting my..." Or feeling. Feeling your own emotions.

When you feel an emotion, it only lasts for about 60 to 120 seconds. Then it sends you the message that it's trying to send you because it's not, emotions aren't good or bad. We're just taught they are. But they're not good or bad. They're just signals. And so when you feel the signal, it only lasts 60 to 120 seconds. Then you learn why you're feeling it and what you're supposed to do about it for it to get out and move. Emotion is energy in motion, so it needs to move.

Right now, we are effectively teaching entire generations of people, for generations. We're teaching them, don't feel or don't trust your feelings, trust the data, trust what you measure, trust that you can see. And not everything we can see is actually real. Not everything we can see is something we should trust. That's one of the fallacies that we've struggled with in society and education for a long time.

There's actually an order of operations. You probably remember that from math. When you have a complex equation, there's certain parts you do first and then the other parts happen after and that's how the equation actually works and gives you the outcome that you're looking for. It's no different in experience. In experience, we are supposed to feel first and then think and then act, not think and then act or just act compulsively. You get what I'm saying?

Absolutely.

Yeah.

Feeling has to come first because when you feel first, then you actually understand what the signal you're getting in the moment is trying to tell you what your thoughts and actions are supposed to be. Then you can base your actions off of a real feeling. Not, "What do I think about that feeling?" "Oh, that feeling sad. I shouldn't feel that. What's wrong with me that I feel sad?" Then you start those self-judgment loops that actually prevent you from getting to the action that is the goal. Instead we seek numbing and distracting because we shut the emotion down and then it just becomes painful and anxiety inducing.

There's been some people recently that are talking about this idea of not reliving past traumatic events with someone like a therapist because all you're doing is reinforcing those negative experiences that you have gone through. You're visiting them instead of spending that time on thinking about what type of future that it is you want to create. And of course, thinking about how you show up in the present a bit differently as well.

How do you feel about that balance between revisiting previous traumatic events versus how you show up in the present and then designing the future you want to create?

It's a great question. I think it's nuanced. The complexity lies in that we're not just going back to revisit past traumatic memories. What trauma is it's a moment that changed how we saw ourselves as people. That could be a moment of any kind of hardship. If it changed how you see yourself as a person from somebody whose actions and decisions matter, who has agency and power, to somebody who's a victim of circumstance, meaning that you used to be somebody who you did something and X, Y, Z happened and it made you feel effective and powerful and good about yourself, and then you have some hardship happen and maybe you don't have support afterwards and somebody you trust says, "Why'd you let that happen to you?" Then all of a sudden you start to think, "Well, maybe things just do happen to me. Maybe I don't have any control over anything. Maybe I am a victim of circumstance."

The victim mindset is a mindset of powerlessness. Whereas the growth mindset is a mindset of adaptation and resilience-building. Literally growth. That's how we become stronger. Both are stimulated by stress, hardship, and challenge. Same often stress, hardship, and challenge, but the way that we react to it is different. The goal is to, if you think about the human being as an automation machine, then what we're really talking about is when somebody experiences stressful hardship or challenge and they're not supported afterwards, and they start to change

the way they see themselves as from agent of power to victim of circumstance, that's what we're getting back to. We're not actually reliving the trauma.

People don't have to relive their traumatic experiences. In healing trauma, which in this definition of something that changes how you see yourself, almost every single person in the world, if not every single person, has had something that has happened to them that had that kind of impact. We're really just going back to the moment where the way you see yourself changed. And then why? Then when they start to realize it's like, "Oh, well, I had this thing that happened to me and that isn't what did it. It's the people I talked to afterwards." Or it's what happened afterwards and their body starts to change as a result of the event, that's the trauma. We do not ask people to relive their events in trauma therapy, and that is not the goal.

The goal is when did you start to see yourself differently? When did you start to notice that you felt like you don't have control over your life or that you can't keep yourself safe anymore or you can't trust yourself to keep yourself safe? When did you stop trusting yourself? Those are the questions that start to actually unearth the moment where somebody realizes, “Oh, I changed my self-perception.” Not “X, Y, Z happened to me and that's why I am the way I am.” It's “X, Y, Z happened to me and then I decided to change how I see myself.” That's what we're getting back to. And when you can isolate that event, which most people can remember at some point, at least a little bit, then you can really start to get to the core of what's happening in the nervous system when you start to see yourself as an agent versus a victim and what happens when you take back your power.

And that's so powerful. And in the first episode, you mentioned this idea of is it possible that the story that you've been telling yourself isn't the full story?

That's one of my favorite questions.

It's huge, right?

Yeah.

I'm getting chills just thinking about that and talking about that. You have a list of affirmations that you include at the end of the book there.

It seems to be one of the biggest things that comes up in your work is this idea of people feeling unworthy of love. Where does that come from? Is there some common experience we go through? Is it just a basic fundamental human need?

Love and connection is a fundamental human need. So if you think about Maslow's hierarchy of needs. There's physical safety on the bottom of the pyramid and that's like air, water, food, physical, safety, shelter and then sleep because if we don't sleep, we'll die. Above that is connection and love. Everything else about becoming whatever our full selves are meant to be, whatever that discovery process is of getting to what we call self-actualization, discovering your

actual capability as a human being in this life, is completely squashed when you don't have those core foundations of the pyramid met.

So obviously if you don't have enough air, water, food, or physical safety, and sleep, and you die, you're not going to discover yourself. But what we forget is that we also need love and connection that is unconditional and recognized as unconditional to achieve our potential, to even have a hope of achieving our potential. The reason why that doesn't happen is because in our society, it is effectively taught, intentionally or unintentionally, that love is conditional. And that for us, oftentimes we are taught growing up that if you do certain things or you express certain emotions at a certain time or a certain way, or emotions that are undesirable like anger or sadness in public, or around people that are uncomfortable with it, that those are not welcome.

Then when those are not welcome, you're not necessarily shown loving support during those times. Many people are shown guilt, shame, scorn, judgment, criticism. Much of the time it's directed towards a person. It's not like, "Oh, let's help. It must be so hard for you. Let's sort through your feelings. Let's talk about it. I'm here for you." That's not what most people hear. Most people are here like, "Get over it. Suck it up. Stop being such a pussy." That's what most people hear growing up.

That's what I heard growing up. When we start to take a step back and recognize that we are love energy incarnate. Love is the baseline state. It's not something you have to perform to get. It's not something you have to do anything to receive. Love is something that you have by nature of being born that is your literally baseline state that's always there.

Just by recognizing it for yourself, you start to realize that it's unconditionally available to you at all times. You don't have to do anything to get it. If you're taught you have to do something to get it becomes conditional. If becomes conditional, then it's not safe.

Is it conditional on I am worthy? Because it's almost like that's if I'm worthy of love. Do you need to feel worthy before you can feel love?

No, because children experience love without knowing what worthiness is.

When a mother snuggles a baby and rocks it back to sleep when it's waking up in the night, or a father. Whenever that loving connection is shown, that is a nonverbal experience of love before anyone has any idea what worth is. Because that loving connection provides a physiological support to the safety nervous system governed by the vagus nerve that tells your entire body, "I am safe right now to survive this moment."

Worthiness, that's a feeling. Worthiness is a thought process. If we focus on the thought first, then we miss the feeling. The feeling is love. It's there. It's always there. So is fear. We only have so many moments to pay attention to anything. You can choose. Choose fear if you want,

but love feels better. If we think about attention as a finite resource in any moment, then we regain the power to choose what we invite in at any moment.

You can invite fear, love, or anything in between and worthiness is the thought that follows. So if you choose fear or you choose not love, then we often wind up down the road of the thought process questioning our worth. And if you choose love, then you realize that you're worthy because you have it and you know it's always there because you've self-reinforced it by choosing it over and over and over again.

Does that make sense?

Absolutely.

What if someone's gone through a relationship breakdown, divorce or they're just like, "I cannot believe this has happened to me." I feel like everyone has at least a few days, few weeks, a few months of just, "Wow, lives."

Divorce is more common now than ever. It's more common than staying together.

Yeah. If you've got kids in the mix and just the financial burden of all of a sudden now we have to move into different houses and now we've got ... Yeah.

Yeah. It's really, really hard and…

Moments of heartbreak like that are just so, so difficult. And I think a lot of it leaves us feeling unworthy because we start asking the wrong questions. And I have this saying in the book, if you ask the wrong questions, you get the wrong answers. And if you ask the right questions, get the right ones. And I think it's so simple, but it makes so much sense.

If you have a breakup with somebody or any kind of relationship challenge and you ask, "What's wrong with me that this keeps happening to me? Or what's wrong with me that this happened to me?"

Then guess what? Your brain is going to come up with a bunch of things that are wrong with you and that's what's going to be fed back in. And if you pay attention to those things and you give them validity as if they're equally worthy as all of your other thoughts, then you will start to feel pretty bad about yourself pretty darn quick. The alternative is to ask a different question, which is: What can I learn from this experience? How can I grow from this experience? It's a very different question.

It's a very subtle difference, but a very important difference. Because one of them is a victim mindset question. When you ask, "What's wrong with me that this keeps happening to me or that this happened to me? " You're making an assumption when you ask that question that there's something wrong with you at the core. And that's usually not in almost every case why these relationship issues happen. It's because of all the other things you mentioned. Financial

stress, legal stress, responsibility stress, school, work, everything, life. Life being chaotic. And we were not designed for that life.

We are currently living in a full-on habitat crisis in the Western world right now and we did not evolve for this. We evolved for nature and connection and less responsibilities but more togetherness and more community where there's mutual humanity exchanged that reminds us of the sameness that we all share. Reminds us of the 99.9% genetically identical nature of all of humans and that we share most of the same core wants, needs, and desires across the board, especially biologically all the same.

Yeah. It's a message we need to get out there more and more, I feel like. So I feel like it's a perfect segue for it. My wife works, I work, we got two young kids, you're in the same situation, you're focused on your career, but you've also got, you want to show up and be a great parent at home too.

For someone who is feeling that overwhelm and that stress every single day, what is the very first step that they can do to have their household run with a bit more harmony?

The first step is to, again, hesitate to repeat myself, but to ask the right questions and to notice when you're asking the wrong ones. When you think about what stress does to our behavior and to how we feel, when you're under chronic stress, the first signs are poor sleep, irritability, being short with people, being nasty, demanding, whatever, but not nice and not kind, poor attention and focus, low empathy.

Empathy gets shut down because you don't want to empathize with a lion chasing you in the jungle. You need to get out of there. When we're under chronic stress or stress of any kind, emotional or actual real stress threat, 80 to 90% of our blood and resources is going to skeletal muscles. Not to empathy, not to creativity, not to recovery, rest, not to emotional management.

None of that matters when you're worried, your body thinks it's in a fight or flight situation. So the very first step is to take care of yourself. And to remember that's actually the lesson. That when you ask the right question, when we ask, "What can I learn from this challenge I'm facing right now?" That's what we call an introspective or self-reflective approach that helps us to not look inside ourselves with our judgment and critic turned up to max.

It's looking inside yourself with compassion, forgiveness, and gratitude. and saying, "Oh, I noticed that I'm doing some of these things right and I'm trying really hard, which has to be right. I'm trying my best, but it's not working. I'm still having fights every day with my partner." Or "I'm still struggling to get X, Y, Z out of my relationship." Usually when we take better care of ourselves and I know it sounds selfish, I know the first thing that people think is, "Wow, Dr. Dave is a selfish asshole, and that's self-indulgent, and he shouldn't be saying those things." But it's just that it's mistaught.

When you love yourself and you're not seeking that validation from anyone else, from the outside, then you have dramatically expanded capacity to show that love and affection and connection to everyone else because you're not going into every relationship wanting or seeking. You're coming into it from a place of contentment and already being filled up.

Does that make sense?

Yeah, absolutely.

So self-care, that's why I think is one of the big things why we're in this self-care movement is because we're moving from this old mindset of self-care and taking care of yourself and prioritizing yourself as indulgent to, oh wait, we actually realize this is fundamentally essential for human thriving. And when we take proper care of ourselves, then we can take even better care of everybody else. And then we achieve what in Judaism is called shalom bayit, which is peace in the home, which is one of the biggest mitzvahs that anyone can do.

Mitzvah is a good deed in Judaism and it's one of the biggest mitzvahs that anyone can do and it's very hard. You have to constantly maintain it and think about it.

I believe the science is showing that it really all starts with self-care. When we take care of ourselves, and we're fueled up, filled up, and feeling good, we are so much better at sharing that with everybody else.

And you set a good example for your spouse too, right?

Exactly. Live by example.

Yeah, absolutely.

Be the change.

That's right. Be the change.

Last time you were here, you said the source of all anxiety comes from thinking about things we don't have control over. So the antidote is to think about things you do have control over. Now I put that clip up online without the full context.

People love that one.

Love it. Millions and millions of views.

Now you don't get millions and millions of views without a few haters coming along for the ride. So for the people who say anxiety is not that simple, is it that simple?

It's two things. Yes, it is that simple. Biologically speaking. You have to think about attention and understand it for what it is, which is a finite resource. It's not infinite. You don't have unlimited attention dollars and you're going to some shopping spree where you could just get whatever you want, it doesn't matter, with one click buying. It's not how it works.

You have a certain amount of attention at any moment, call it 100%. And every time you give some of that attention away, you only have what's left over under your control. For example, if you only have 100% of your attention and you spend what most people do, 40% of it thinking about the past and regretting the past, or wishing you had done things differently, or shaming or guilting yourself over things, decisions you made. Then you spend the other 40% thinking about the future. And the future hasn't happened yet and the past is gone. So the future and the past effectively do not exist. The present is all we have. So that only leaves 20% leftover for whatever you're doing right now in the present moment. How likely are you to be successful at anything you're doing if you only have one-fifth of your human attention capacity available to you?

You're literally like 80% or more likely to make mistakes and just have to start over and do it again because you don't have your full capacity. When you think about what you're inviting in, that your attention is the gateway to your consciousness. So what you pay attention to, whether you choose or not, is what is allowed in. If you pay attention to things you can't control, then for 80% of the time, call it the 40% of the past and 40% of the future, that means 80% of the time you are inviting input that makes you feel out of control.

Evolutionarily, when you look at the biology of what the amygdala responds to, the core fear center of the brain, that responds to feeling out of control, uncertainty, newness and overstimulation, too much, too loud, too fast.

When any of those things are checked by paying attention to things you don't have control over, you're literally just giving up your power. You're inviting in the feeling of uncertainty. Uncertainty being one of the biggest evolved fear triggers we have. Because it's there to keep us alive.

Uncertainty in the jungle could mean there's suddenly food available or it could mean you're about to die. The amygdala defaults to “you're about to die” just in case, and that's what's happening now. That feeling of uncertainty translates through the amygdala into the cortex as the feeling of anxiety. The feeling of restlessness. That is a huge part of this because we have control over our attention. So we can choose and when people do this, for themselves, they get it. When you take a few deep breaths by choice, or you get a hug from a loved one on a bad day, or you hear one of your favorite songs come on on a bad day, you instantly feel better. That's because your attention has just been directed to something you can control. Just like going for a run, or doing any kind of moderate exercise, or doing anything that's relatively healthy and natural by choice. Eating, smelling delicious things, looking at a beautiful sunset or the ocean or anything like that, you are choosing to control your attention.

It reminds you of what you can be certain of, which is that you have control of your attention right now, and then anxiety starts to drop dramatically. Over time, you train the neural networks to respond that way.

Then the other piece that we didn't talk about that much last time, I think we touched on it is…

The other piece of anxiety comes from repressing feelings. Avoiding feeling. Because feelings are signals that want to be felt. Imagine them like a little kid. They're a part of you. It's sending you a message. It's like, "Hey, pay attention to me. Pay attention to me. I need you to feel me." And you're like, "No, shut up. Go in the closet for the next 10 years and I'll come back to you when I have time." Then what do kids do? They just start screaming louder and louder and louder. Then maybe they try to pry your eyes open or try to drag you out of bed or whatever.

Something I know all too well.

They'll do whatever it takes to get your attention. Your feelings are no different. This is where Buddhist philosophy, talks about this very elegantly, this idea of resistance and avoidance. Avoidance being a form of resistance to feeling. Create suffering, and suffering is fully avoidable. Pain is not avoidable. It's inevitable. We'll all feel pain at some point in our lives, but suffering, which is the most unpleasant form of pain, is completely avoidable by prioritizing feeling.

When we repress our feelings, then they get stuck. When they get stuck, they just get louder and louder and louder and that manifests as anxiety. That's something we can't really control. Feelings are coming up to be felt. If you can't feel them right in this moment, set aside some time a couple days from now to feel them where you can feel them and be comfortable and safe to do so. But you can't repress feelings indefinitely, because it will just cause more restlessness and anxiety in the body. We can shift that balance by learning to control our attention and direct it back to feeling first, thinking second. If we judge the feeling first, then we don't feel it. We just say, "No, it's bad." Or, "I'm bad for having it."

Yeah. And that's just applicable for someone who has severe anxiety, right? Because there's a few questions last time. People who don't really understand your background, they might stumble across a video being like, "Oh, Dr. Dave has never worked with someone with severe anxiety before." I'm like, "I think you've worked with people with the most severe anxiety a lot more than you have with people with just sort of a moderate case of it from ..."

For sure.

Most of my patients are what Western medicine labels as treatment resistant. So when people have failed multiple full courses of standard Western mental health treatment, my specialty is what's called effective disorder. It's mood-related. So it's anxiety, severe anxiety, depression, PTSD, and substance use disorders. Things that we've really struggled to treat well with

Western medicine. These people, by the time they get to me, I'm in a lot of ways like their last resort or near last resort. They are basically ready to give up hope that they could ever feel different.

We have tremendous success rates because we bring them back to the basics and remind them that usually through a process of deprescribing medication they don't need, combined with teaching them psychotherapy skills and techniques and giving them the tools they can use like Apollo and other things, like some simple breathing techniques and reminding them of where their power lives, then they start to learn how to access that power on their own and realize they're not actually a victim, they're an agent. Then everything starts to shift. Because they know when they take an action to go do X, Y, Z to feel different, that they do. It actually works, even if it's just for a moment, because they chose to prioritize doing it.

And once you give people, I feel like they just, the moment they can experience and feel that progress that momentum gives them a bit of hope and it's like, "Wow."

And then it's a positive feedback loop of hope rather than misery. Our brain does feedback loops left and right. We can choose to create automation loops around anything. That's one of the parts of the book that I love the most because we don't talk about automation and human learning enough and that's true multitasking. It's not task switching, which is what most of us are highly trained to do now where we just like do one thing and then we switch to another thing and we go back and we lose a little bit each time.

We increase our likelihood of mistakes each time we switch. And some people like chefs or doctors and other folks can get really, really good at that, but it still increases our chances of error because we're task switching and we lose a little bit every time we switch. True multitasking comes from automating certain thought processes like I am worthy of love or I am grateful for being here in this moment. I'm grateful for getting up today and having energy.

And even though I slept two hours last night because I moved the night before and didn't get in until 2:00 AM and I had to head to the airport at 4:30, I'm just grateful that my plane landed and took off and even though it was an hour late, I'm here.

I can find gratitude for that. Because I've just practiced doing it, my brain has learned to automate the process of looking for grace first, looking for opportunities for gratitude first, looking for pain second. But a lot of people look for pain first. A lot of people look for suffering first, and that becomes part of their identity. That's the switch, which is not as hard as most people think. It's just that we weren't taught how to do it properly.

Well, let's do move into the Win the Day rocket round, 10 questions and some quick answers. So you've been on the show before, so you've already done a rocket round. So I've got 10 new questions. Dr. Dave has never even seen these before. So 10 questions for some quick answers.

I didn't even know this was happening.

Exactly. He's very nervous right now. The first one's a bit of ... Actually, we'll see how much of a curveball these are for you. Number one, if you could eat one meal for the rest of your life, what would it be?

One meal, like one dish or like a cuisine?

Yeah, exactly. Could be. Yeah.

That's really hard.

This is the question that stopped you out of all the ...

It's really hard. I'm trying to think of something I wouldn't get bored of eating quickly. I don't know. Maybe probably like matzah ball soup.

Yeah. Nice. Here we go. Nice.

I had a lot of that. Yeah.

Yeah, there we go.

Yeah, it's healing. It feels good.

Matzah ball for the soul.

Number two, out of all your research, what discovery has had the biggest impact on your day-to-day life?

That's a much easier one. I think the biggest discovery was this idea around safety being biologically encoded, not just in the way our neurons talk to each other, but all the way down to our epigenetic code. I co-led a study with some very esteemed colleagues. The study was led by Dr. Candace Lewis at Arizona State University and Rael Cahn at USC here in LA.

We are able to show through studying severe trauma, treatment-resistant PTSD, much of which was in veterans, that when they experience MDMA-assisted therapy, which is a radical molecular safety enhancing experience, that it's not just their neurons that are changing how they talk to each other, it's the epigenetic code of their stress response genes that change. Which is the code inside the cells that is recording memory over time that gets passed on to generations, future generations.

So we can pass trauma down and we can also stop the cycle in our generation. For me, knowing that it's possible to stop the cycle of inherited trauma is one of the easily, most cool,

exciting things in mental health ever, because we can do that in our generation. What could be more empowering than that?

Amazing.

Number three, what do you say to yourself before an important performance?

I got this.

Number four, what's the biggest myth about anxiety?

The biggest myth about anxiety is it's bad. It's not bad. It's not good or bad. It's just a signal. It's a signal there's uncertainty in the environment. So going back to what we were talking about earlier, if you spend more time focusing on things you can't control or that are just outside of your control, like what other people think about you or the future of the past, then you invite uncertainty in. Then you're increasing anxiety biologically.

It's not good or bad. There's a biological link between uncertainty and how we evolve to interpret and process uncertainty for survival. So anxiety is not bad. It's actually good. It's not good. It's good. It's helpful for survival.

Number five, if you've got an intense workout to do, what music are you putting on?

Ooh, house music.

House music. Nice.

And if it's a really intense workout, drum and bass.

Number six…

What's one thing all parents need to remember more often?

It is that children are sponges. We think about in psychedelic therapy that there's this really important period of about 48 to 96 hours, like two to four days after you have a psychedelic experience where your brain is in a heightened neuroplastic state. So every time you learn something new, you get like 5X to 10X the amount of learning when you're in that what we call the critical period. Kids are in that critical period until they're adolescents and they're sponges. They're sponges specifically to parental behavior and parental thoughts and feelings.

Most parents don't realize that their kids absorb from them more than anything else, more than from anyone else, and that it's not necessarily verbal absorption, it's actually bottom up experiential absorption. Feeling absorption. So when we are regulated mentally, emotionally, when we demonstrate resilience and adaptation, when we demonstrate mature coping

mechanisms and humor and all of those kinds of things that help us adapt more effectively, our kids absorb that without even having to be taught or told.

They just absorb it like a sponge. And that is really, really cool. So it's not so much about telling our kids what to do or lecturing them. Sometimes we have to talk, but it's actually more about modeling. Be the change, live by example. That is what our kids soak up more than anything else that makes them resilient, adaptable, successful humans.

So important.

Number seven, what's the most important part of your daily routine?

Probably my wind down at night and just making sure that I have two to three hours before bed where I'm not working, not looking at my phone, not looking at screens, not overstimulating myself because my days are really, really busy. I wrote a clinic, I wrote a startup, I have a nonprofit, I have a book and I have two podcasts. I have a lot. I have a one-year-old, my days are crazy.

For me to be able to keep all of that up and continue to perform at a very high level that I have trained myself to do, but that also has to be consistent with my professional ability and the kind of care I have to be there to provide people and be present, I have to get good, deep, restful sleep and I know that and I know that I don't if I don't wind down.

And so that two to three hours before bed is absolutely, for me, the most important part of my routine to get me ready to go to bed so that when I hit the pillow, I am just ready to go out. And I start thinking about myself sleeping before I sleep and welcoming it. I'm like, "This is going to be great. I'm so excited."

You had a testimonial from our mutual friend, Dr. Michael Breud, who actually was the one who first connected us in your book too.

That's right he did. I love Michael.

Yeah, he's great. Shout out to Michael Breus.

Number eight, what's the biggest lie the health and wellness industry continues to pedal?

You're full of good ones today.

The biggest lie is not even necessarily intentionally told, but it's the idea that you can optimize your way to wellbeing because it's not optimization. Optimization is confusing for a lot of people. It's really just about word choice, but optimization almost implies there's something wrong with you that you have to fix.

What I describe in the book that modern neuroscience and biology are really showing is that there's nothing wrong with us. We're living in a habitat crisis that we did not evolve to cope with. It's actually not that we need to optimize ourselves to better cope because there's something wrong with us. There's nothing wrong with us. We're not broken. We are actually remembering our baseline state and what is there underneath the surface, underneath the bills and the texts and the social media and doomscrolling and all of it and the news. It's what's underneath all of it, what's always been there since we were little kids.

It's more of a remembering than it is in optimizing.

I try to optimize as much as I can in general. But, for me, optimization is how do I get back to creating safe space for my inner child to come out and play. To be curious and safe enough to discover new things that enrich my life, rather than being afraid of newness.

When we're stressed and we're worried about something wrong with us, then fear is generated from the inside and then we feel like we have to optimize or we're not good enough. That just keeps going around in an endless circle because you can never, if the fear is coming from inside, there's no amount of optimization's going to fix it.

Yeah. So good.

Number nine, what excites you most about the future?

Ah, the future.

I was going to say, I know you touched on a few things already today, right?

What excites me most about the future is that…

I firmly believe that based on the current science that we are going to cure the first mental illness by 2030. And by cure, I mean have treatments that are available to people that some of which are already available now, like ketamine-assisted therapy that are really a combination of talk therapy and psychotherapy, psychedelic medicines and technology, and to some extent AI, that allow us to get people into sustained remission from mental illness. Like the data we see from the MDMA studies where you could have, instead of having medication for life like we do now for most mental illnesses, you have your 3 to 12 doses over 12 weeks and then you're ideally 80 to 90% symptom free for years, and we're seeing that.

We have the data to show that that's happening in trials. Now we need to do what they're doing in Australia, what Tania DeJong is doing, so cool. In the US, we look at the evidence from those studies and we're like, "Eh, not sure." In Australia, they look at the exact same studies and they're like, "Oh, these studies show this works." Because it does. The studies are really good. They're better than any studies we had of antibiotics when they first came out and antibiotics were one of the best discoveries we've ever had.

So to me, I think when I look at the data objectively, I see psychedelics as being the equivalent or comparable to the effect that antibiotics had for infection, a formerly terminal illness that's now massively treatable at scale. Psychedelic medicines and technology are going to do that for mental illness.

I'm proud of Australia getting it done.

They're really doing it.

And last question, number 10. If you could put one message on a billboard for everyone to see, what would it be?

You are worthy of love.

Good way to put a bow on our episode today. Love it. Well, there are a bunch of ways to connect with Dr. David Rabin, and we'll link to all of these in the show notes. You can follow him on Instagram @drdavidrabin. Check out some of the work he's doing at apolloneuro.com and get a copy of his awesome new book, A Simple Guide to Being Alive on Amazon. Again, all that and more will be linked in the show notes.

Dave, what a pleasure. Thanks so much for coming on the show.

Thanks so much for having me. This was great.