
Jerry: Hi, guys. Thank you so much for coming on the show. It's, uh, it's really a pleasure to, um, on the one had revisit with you, Ben, and on the other hand, to, uh, turn the tables on you, Dan.

Dan Harris: (laughs)

Jerry: Um, so but before we get started, let me ask you both to introduce yourselves.

Ben Rubin: I'm Ben, uh, the CEO of 10% Happier and, um, Jerry, you know, I've had at this point a couple of years of, uh, various conversations including the last iteration of this company, um, Change Collective. So, it's been quite a journey since we've, uh, had that conversation.

Jerry: That's right. I think we're at episode now 55 or something, and you are in Episode 13 if I remember, so that tells we're, um ...

Ben Rubin: Lucky 13 (laughs).

[00:01:00]

Jerry: Lucky 13. That's right. And Dan, which we all jokingly refer to as the voice of God.

Dan Harris: Yeah. Voice of God. Um, not the mind of God-

Jerry: No.

Dan Harris: ... but, uh, de- definitely have the vocal chords. Um, Dan Harris, uh, I have a couple of jobs. I am the co-anchor of Nightline on ABC News, and also, uh, the weekend edition of Good Morning America also on ABC News. Uh, I write books. Uh, my first book was called 10% Happier, uh, which is kind of a jokey and yet serious take on meditation and, um, and that turned into a company with my man, Ben. Uh, so we are co-founders along with another guy named Derek Haswell of, uh, the 10% Happier Company.

[00:01:30]

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative). And again, we had a chance to talk in January, uh,

Dan Harris: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: ... for Dan's podcast and, uh-

Dan Harris: That was a blast.

Jerry: Yeah.

Dan Harris: You're great.

Jerry: I'm excited to have co-founders on. I love having co-founders on the show and I
[00:02:30] love talking through the issues associated with, uh, all of the challenges as we were
talking about just before, um, we turned on the mics. co-founder conflict tends to
be the number reason why start-ups fail. And, uh, of course, as we often say, well,
running out of cashes but the impediment to properly funding a business tends to
[00:03:00] be co-founder conflict, and it is the number one issue that folks come in to Reboot
for. It's the number one issue that, you know, coaches and I encounter. That, and
the sense of isolation and, um, loneliness associated with the job.

Dan Harris: Hmm.

Jerry: Um, this is all followed quickly by complaints about the investors, which we'll get to
later, (laughing) 'cause I met a couple of your investors. So ...

Dan Harris: I don't know that we have any complaints about our investors.

Ben Rubin: Not yet.

Jerry: Not yet.

Dan Harris: Yeah. (laughing)

Jerry: Uh, yeah.

Dan Harris: Our investors are actually kind of amazing. I mean I'm new to this-

Jerry: Any, any startup who lives long enough will-

Dan Harris: Yeah.

Jerry: ... will find ways to complain.

[00:03:30]
Dan Harris: Yeah. I, I, um ... Well, part of the dynamic with, uh, between me and Ben is that I
am such a newbie to ... I, I've been a journalist my whole life not a, not a business
person, but I don't ... Although my, my, my brother is a venture capitalist, um-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dan Harris: ... I don't actually know-

Jerry: The infamous Matt Harris.

Dan Harris: The infamous Matt Harris. Um, I don't actually know much about what VCs do. But the guys, uh, and, and women who we've dealt with or at least, that I ... from perspective are phenomenal. They're like awesome.

Ben Rubin: Yeah.

[00:04:00]

Jerry: Well, we- we'll, we'll, we'll go for a long walk after this recording, and we'll talk a little bit about that. I'll ... What I'll say briefly is shark tank is just the beginning. (laughing)

Dan Harris: Yeah, yeah.

Jerry: It is, it is not a picture of the entire experience by any stretch of imagination.

Dan Harris: Fair enough.

Jerry: So, you know, we were talking via email. We were talking as we were setting this up about some of the ideas that might be helpful to talk through here and I think that, um, it will be a bit of a story that would be helpful for people to hear. And, you know, the first thing I would say is yours is a relatively unique co-founder relationship.

[00:04:30]

Dan Harris: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: Um, aside from one of member of the team being God or certainly the voice of God. (laughing) Um, ca- Ben, why don't you tell us a little bit about that story?

Ben Rubin: Yeah. Just as we were sitting here, I was thinking about, um, you know, we, we now know each other very well then but, um, when we decided to co-found the business together just about a year and a half ago, we didn't know each other that well.

Dan Harris: I was thinking about the same thing actually-

Ben Rubin: Yeah.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:05:00]

Dan Harris: ... but, um, I had no idea what I was getting into.

Ben Rubin: Yeah.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ben Rubin: And-

Dan Harris: I'm glad I did it. Very glad but I had no ... I, um, I once heard the co-founder of Nantucket Nectars saying if I had known what this was gonna entail before I started, I would never have done it.

Jerry: I think there's a lot of people (laughing) listening who can relate to just that.

Dan Harris: Yeah.

Jerry: Not even as a co-founder but as an entrepreneur.

Dan Harris: Yeah.

Jerry: But take us back to that story.

Ben Rubin: Yeah. So, you know, when we chatted, um, about, you know, maybe three years or two and a half years ago, Jerry-

Jerry: Yeah.

[00:05:30]

Ben Rubin: ... we were starting a business called Change Collective which is a course platform working with lots of different Dans ... right? ... lots of different authors and bringing their material to mobile device and helping people change behavior. And so, uh, we met Dan in the context of that sort of initial startup vision and, you know, the, you know, the, the nitty-gritty, um, aside, you know, what, what happened when we launched Dan's course is it changed our entire business.

[00:06:00]

Uh, but it did it kind of in slow motion where, you know, looking back at it now, uh, it seems entirely clear that, you know, we made a shift from our broader course platform to 10% Happier. When it was happening, uh, it was really exciting, provoking, and challenging, right? We were, um ... You know, we'd launched at that point eight or nine different courses. Uh, none of which had been a real success until we launched 10% Happier.

[00:06:30]

And, you know, I remember actually sitting, I was in, uh, at that time San Francisco pitching the Change Collective vision, uh, having just launched 10% Happier and getting just really negative feedback across the board from friends, from investors. And, uh, then I went back to Boston, and I spoke with, uh, actually someone that I think you and I both know, Jason Jacobs-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ben Rubin: ... of Runkeeper. And he, you know, he's a very sort of fiery guy and I gave him this Change Collective pitch, and he basically said, "Why are you doing this?" Right? [00:07:00] "Just burn the bridges. And if you're telling me this, you know, meditation thing and 10% Happier and Dan Harris is like the thing that's working for the business, just go that direction and burn the bridges."

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ben Rubin: And, uh, it was a very, you know, again, in, in retrospect obvious but in, in the time is very challenging partially 'cause we didn't know what Dan would be like as a co-founder.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ben Rubin: And there was a lot of pressure to look at Dan as an example as just a celebrity name-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ben Rubin: ... attached to a product.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ben Rubin: Um, and, you know, why would you ... That is by the way, you know, every VC, [00:07:30] every investor hates this celebrity-driven type concepts.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ben Rubin: And so, sort of wrapping our minds around potentially working with someone very closely who, you know, has a, a different background and different, um-

Jerry: And as he admitted, no experience as a business person.

Ben Rubin: No experience as a business person, uh, and, you know, some serious ego as well (laughing) in addition to some serious-

Dan Harris: Actually-

Ben Rubin: ... some serious meditative practice.

Dan Harris: ... I have the ego but not really the celebrity.

Jerry: Right. (laughing)

Ben Rubin: Worst of both worlds.

Jerry: Uh-huh (affirmative).

Dan Harris: Yeah, I know that (laughs).

Jerry: Yeah.

[00:08:00]

Ben Rubin: But yeah. It was, uh, at that moment, it was, you know, leaping to the unknown, um, thinking about working with Dan, uh, and, you know, it's been an incredible experience, but it was very challenging at the time.

Jerry: Let, let's stay with that for a moment 'cause, um, I remember our podcast conversation. Um, it's one of the few podcast conversations that we've had that when I listened to it after it was broadcast that I cried because that was the conversation that we had where I [inaudible 00:08:29].

[00:08:30]

Ben Rubin: I'm smiling 'cause I made Jerry cry.

Jerry: You made Jerry cry (laughing) because I revealed my own struggles of depression at that time and my own suicidal impulses and that sort of thing. It was a very, very powerful conversation. And, and there's something ... I said this off mic to you but I, I recall it. I remember you carrying this fear about ending up with a smoking black hole again. That was a phrase to describe your last venture before Change Collective/10% Happier.

Ben Rubin: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:09:00]

Jerry: One impact that that have is a sort of contextual backdrop to what was going on.

Ben Rubin: Yeah. I mean it was huge, right? We were ... I was essentially staring again at that black hole, uh, but also at potentially massive success, and, you know, they're both right there.

Jerry: A massive success that was not what you originally envisioned.

Ben Rubin: Potentially. Right. But at that point-

Jerry: Right.

Ben Rubin: ... unknown. Right.

Jerry: Right.

[00:09:30]

Ben Rubin: And it's a very uncertain moment, right? We, um ... I remember very clearly, you know, you know, Dan, you, you've, you've mentioned now that you really like our investors. you know, some of the advice that they were giving at that moment was, you know, "Do whatever you want Ben. But are you crazy?" Right? This is ... "This is a really big direction shift and you guys are almost out of money, and you know, you know, Dan seems like a nice guy, but how committed will he really be? You know, is he re- you know, you're gonna invite him in as a co-founder of the business, what ... He has a ... He has another job. Like what does this even mean?"

[00:10:00]

Dan Harris: I bet they were asking the right questions.

Ben Rubin: Yeah.

Dan Harris: Those were the right questions. I don't take offense with that.

Ben Rubin: Yeah.

Dan Harris: That's what good investors should tell you.

Ben Rubin: But it was, uh, you know-

Jerry: But what did it do for you internally? Or what it did do, uh, to that internal dialogue that's going on?

Ben Rubin: You know, there were ... I, I'd say there was, uh, there was an internal journey that went from, um ... I think I resisted for a long time whether going in the 10% Happier direction because there's just ... Even though there wasn't that much success behind Change Collective, there's so much momentum.

[00:10:30]

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ben Rubin: And my worry about creating another smoking black hole, um, was preventing me from seeing the better direction I think for quite a while.

Jerry: And it, and, and, let's be clear that the 10% Happier direction included not only going all in on Dan's content as really a, a platform for these great teachers to come on and talk and, and to really participate in the application, but it was also opening up to bringing in ... forget the fact that Dan was a celebrity ... bringing in after the fact someone for you and Derek as a, an equal partner.

[00:11:00]

Dan Harris: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ben Rubin: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: Um, that experience alone-

Ben Rubin: Yeah.

Jerry: ... emotionally, there's I'm imagining some risk in that for you.

[00:11:30]

Ben Rubin: Huge risk. Yeah. And, you know, not, not only that, but someone who again didn't have any business experience, right? I remember this one momentous conversation where you said something along the lines of, you know, "I'm not a business guy. So I don't really understand this. But why wouldn't I own 90% of this if I'm ... (laughing) you know, if it's, it's my brand and my idea and like I'm the man? (laughing) Like why?"

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ben Rubin: "Explain that to me?"

Dan Harris: Can you explain it again? (laughing)

Ben Rubin: Uh, I'll explain it to you in about two minutes (laughs).

[00:12:00]

Dan Harris: (laughs) Well, luckily, the infamous Matt Harris stepped in. Um, for anybody who doesn't know Matt, um, he's a VC at Bain Capital and really kinda midwifed the deal-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dan Harris: ... and put- stepped in the middle of it, talked to me about the basics of venture economics and what was reasonable and what wasn't and that's what allowed it to happen.

Ben Rubin: Yeah.

Jerry: But I'm curious, Dan. Having heard the backdrop, I don't know if you guys have shared this before but having heard-

Dan Harris: Yeah.

[00:12:30]

Jerry: ... the backdrop of, uh, what Ben was going through. Um, had you heard that story before?

Dan Harris: Yeah. Well, I remember taking a walk with you through Central Park after the course, the, the first 10% Happier course had come out, and we were talking about how it done well, and I was saying to you, "Well, maybe you ought to sh- shift the company to 10% Happier." And you were like, "Well, my investors aren't gonna

wanna do build a company around a celebrity." And I kept thinking you guys need to raise the bar on what a celebrity is, (a)-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:13:00]

Dan Harris: ... and, um, and you, you definitely seemed reluctant. And I got it actually. I mean if, if, uh ... While I will not put myself in the category of being a true celebrity, I still get why you wouldn't wanna hinge your business on somebody who's got so many other things going on, who you don't know that well. I, I thought the advice you were getting from your advisors and your own internal, um, resistance to it actually was wise. Um, uh-

Jerry: But what about his internal state of mind, the, the fear that he was carrying?

Dan Harris: About?

[00:13:30]

Jerry: About it failing again.

Dan Harris: Oh. But look, I share that, and I, I actually am happy to have somebody in my orbit to whom I can outsource some of that anxiety.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dan Harris: Um, I like the fact that, Ben, I know no matter how much I'm worrying, he's, he's doing ... he's, he's working double time. Um-

Jerry: Did you know that he was carrying the fear in the beginning?

[00:14:00]

Dan Harris: Yes. Uh, in the beginning? No. Um, I mean I sensed that he was an anxious guy. Um, uh, I wouldn't say, um, crippled by anxiety but de- definitely a warrior.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dan Harris: But like where I come from culturally, like that, that ... I say that as a compliment.

Jerry: That's a badge of honor.

Dan Harris: Yeah. Absolutely.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dan Harris: Um, but as I've gotten to know him quite well over the time we spent and now we've spent a lot of time together, I now have a much better sense of yes, the, the

[00:14:30] amount of, uh, anxiety he works within. And look, I've got my own pronounced history of the trifecta of depression, anxiety, and panic disorder. So, we're brothers in this particular struggle.

Jerry: Right. So, I want you to hold on to that. We may circle back to this sort of shared experience. One of the things that happens in a relationship is that we unconsciously choose someone that's ideal for us to work through our issues with.
[00:15:00] This is a co- core Buddhist concept. If you read John Welwood's work for example, he'll ... he explores this really in-depth.

[00:15:30] And this is true not only of romantic relationship, but it's also true of co-founder relationships, which I often joke as, you know, sexless marriages (laughing) or marriage. (laughing) Um, and there's a ... I was looking for where the similarities were and the sort of ... Forget the context of the environment of the story and, and, Dan, you- you've done such a brave job in describing your own journey in 10% Happier. This is a phenomenal book.

Dan Harris: Thank you.

Jerry: Um, because it's also funny, but it's also heartbreakingly warm and real. Um, but one of the things that I see, and I can see it almost intuitively in the relationship between the two of you, is this notion of this sort of shared brotherhood, and you used that term. And that's one of the things that we do in our co-founder relationships is that we pick someone unconsciously who can ... who's a perfect foil for us to work through those issues. He's a younger version of ... with a completely different context, and there's a relationship there.
[00:16:00]

Dan Harris: Yeah. I like to joke he's a younger version of me except for better at math. (laughing)

Ben Rubin: And quite a bit taller.

Dan Harris: Yeah. (laughing) I wasn't gonna go that way, Ben.

Jerry: That was not fair, you. (laughing) It's either passive-aggressive. Let's talk about that.

[00:16:30]
Dan Harris: Passive-aggressive?

Jerry: Yeah (laughs).

Dan Harris: That was aggressive-aggressive.

Jerry: (laughs) So what was the experience like for you, Dan?

Dan Harris: A complete Elmer Fudd, uh, you know, stumbling into something I had no idea was getting into. Um-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dan Harris: ... uh, I liked the idea in theory of, uh, you know, once, once that first course came out and it was-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:17:00]

Dan Harris: ... successful, it was ... And actually right around that time, coincidentally, my boss, the president of ABC News Ja- James Goldston or some- I go way back with him where he's been not only my boss, but he's been a friend and an adviser for a long time. He actually recommended, "Hey, you should start thinking about a subscription service."

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dan Harris: Um, and I was, you know, familiar with the success of, of course, my friends over at Headspace-

Jerry: Mm.

Dan Harris: ... and, um, so I was really ... I, I liked the idea of doing this company. Of course, I was, as Ben said, you know, really I had no idea what I was getting into. Um, uh, so yeah. I guess that's the long and short of it. I was excited but, uh, completely ignorant.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative). So take us to today. How is the relationship working today? And, you know, this is in effect an opportunity to just sort of work on some issues here. Forget for a moment the audience. How is it working? And what would be helpful to talk through?

[00:18:00]

Dan Harris: I think ... Well, I'm gonna let Ben take the, the lead on that but, but I do wanna say that, you know, when you're talking about that time-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dan Harris: ... that Ben was in when, when he was dealing with sort of an uncertain future around Change Collective which where they were running out of money, you know, things weren't going super well. He was dealing with having to make the leap with me and not knowing too much about what kind of guy I would be to work with-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dan Harris: ... which is a- again all ... Like I didn't even know what kind of guy I'd be to work with, am, and having to raise money in that environment.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:18:30]

Dan Harris: And so shift ... uh, turn the ship around. We have to ... We lost some people internally as a consequence of this. We have to get new people. We had to bring me on as a co-founder and talk me into what the economics would be and then go out and raise money. All of that in one like two-month period.

Ben Rubin: And, and relaunched our product.

Dan Harris: Yeah. And relaunched our product and actually did it, i- i- beautifully, beautifully.

[00:19:00] And I think that actually really cemented our relationship, the watching him ace that and, and, and ha- and having my brother point out that "Hey, look, let me tell you as somebody who's been in this business that what he just did is a like a Triple Lindy so we should just be aware of that."

Jerry: Okay. So I'm-

Dan Harris: So I think that really set us up in a good-

Jerry: I'm gonna ask you to hold, and ... Dan. And Ben, I want you take in what Dan just gave you. Yeah. Okay? We're both admirers of Ben. What you described, what your brother said to you, this is a Triple Lindy. Okay? For a guy who's convinced, 'cause let's be honest Ben, who's convinced that it was gonna be another smoking black hole, okay? This is magic. This is really hard, you know. Y- your buddy, Dan, has a safety net. You have a whole nother life here. This is all Ben's got.

[00:20:00]

Dan Harris: Right. Yup. That's a great point.

Jerry: Right? This is it. He's doing the Triple Lindy without a safety net.

Dan Harris: Yup.

Jerry: And even though ... right? ... he doesn't have the family you have, he doesn't have the obligations, the consequence of failure, and you can relate to this Dan 'cause I've read your book, the consequence of failure is existential.

[00:20:30]

Dan Harris: Sure. And he has obligations to his employees.

Jerry: Yes. So I noticed your pronouns. Are you a co-founder, Dan?

Dan Harris: (laughs) That's a really, really interesting thing you picked up on.

Jerry: Uh-huh (affirmative).

Dan Harris: That's absolutely right. That, that, uh, our employees is what I should have said.

Jerry: You both have responsibilities. Now, but, but you may be ... [inaudible 00:20:58]
[00:21:00] may not merely be a function of the fact that you've got a safety net someplace else. You've got an entire career that's available to you however the twist and turns it may take whether it's a new show on ABC or another book or anything along those lines. You've got these other things going on, but you both carry the sense of responsibility. And what you noticed about your buddy, Ben, is he feels it.

[00:21:30] I mean we're joking before just before we turn on the mics and started recording how he was taking care of even you, Dan, and saying to me, "Well, Jerry, you know, you can talk about this stuff and talk about this stuff." Right? Does he do that with all of your employees?

Dan Harris: Yeah. Well, Ben and I will talk a lot about the fact that he views, uh, leadership as a kind of service. And then I can sound [inaudible 00:21:52] a little bit like a trope, um, uh-

Jerry: No. He's been listening to my podcast. That's why. He [inaudible 00:21:57].

[00:22:00]
Dan Harris: Well, yeah, but I mean even, even in the context of, you know, he had gone to Burning Man over the summer, um, because he's a gigantic weirdo and he goes to Burning Man, and, um, uh, he ... There was, you know, when you go to Burning Man or any social outing with a bunch of people, there are some questions about like, "Who's gonna kinda just like take the lead and pick up where you set the stuff up and what are we doing tonight" and all this stuff.

[00:22:30] And Ben struggles with like, "Am I always gonna be in CEO mode? Do I always have to do this?" And then I think he realized after a while, uh, " Yeah, okay. Well, I'm gonna take the lead here because, uh, people like to ... people like to be led." I think I've re- referred to it recently as the, um, benevolent dictatorship of Ben.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dan Harris: Um, and, uh, so he kinda just carried the mantle of helping everybody steer toward making, uh, uh, mutually, uh, agreed upon decisions about where they were gonna camp and what they were gonna do, et cetera, et cetera because he sees it as a kind of service, uh, and, uh, yeah, I think that's great.

[00:23:00]

Jerry: Okay. So we're gonna stop talking about you in the third person, Ben.

Ben Rubin: Yeah.

Jerry: And ... Yeah.

Ben Rubin: Yeah. Uh, well, there's two warring things going on. I'll, I'll, I'll get to both of them, but the first is, you know, deep appreciation, you know.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ben Rubin: That was, uh ... It was a very difficult time and I, I think, uh, we did pull off a pretty incredible pivot. Um, and, you know, it gives me a lot of confidence on myself and, and in the team that, uh, despite, you know, really incredibly difficult odds and finances and, you know, I don't think anyone, you know, standing on the outside would have bet on us making that flip, uh, that we pulled that off.

[00:23:30]

Ben Rubin: And that's just ... But I both am deeply appreciative that that's been seen and it also, um, gives me a lot of confidence that what other, other struggles I personally or we as a team face, we'll be able to, uh, do our best and meet them. Um, but the, the second piece that, um, I'm bringing into this is, you've mentioned this quality of, um, leadership. And, uh, almost the first thing that I thought of when I heard you talking about this was, you know, don't forget the rest of the team, right?

[00:24:00]

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ben Rubin: It's like I didn't ... I certainly, uh, I played a ke- one of the key roles but, um, you know, our co-founder Derek, um, in that time period helped us execute on the pivot, and relaunched an entire product and developed some credible new content with Joseph and Sharon. Um-

[00:24:30]

Dan Harris: Yeah. And he did it with one arm tied behind his back-

Ben Rubin: Right.

Dan Harris: ... 'cause we ... our engineering team was not, was not gigantic at that point.

Ben Rubin: Right.

Dan Harris: Yeah.

Ben Rubin: Oh, and the other person I wanna mention is, uh, we had at that point some three-person team and the only person who stuck with us during this transition was Brent-

Dan Harris: Right.

Ben Rubin: ... um, who, you know, heroically essentially took the entire technical code base and shifted it from Change Collective to 10% Happier. Um-

[00:25:00]

Dan Harris: Amen. That's absolutely true.

Ben Rubin: Yeah.

Jerry: So I'll give you one of my favorite leadership quotes and it's, uh, from Lao Tzu. Leader is best, who when the work is done, the people say, 'We did this ourselves.'" Leader is best, who when the work is done, the people say, 'We did this ourselves.'" "

Ben Rubin: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: Right? And Ben, you're nodding deeply. Um, in my view and in my observation, that's how organizations scale humanely. You know, Dan, when we met in, I guess it was December or January and we broadcast, we did that podcast, you were asking me a little bit about my Buddhist practice. And my practice shows up in that kind of a belief. What ... I think there's an opportunity that's implicit in all of our organizations which is for each of us to grow as human beings.

[00:26:00]

And in the two or three years that I have been hanging out much less frequently than you with your co-founder, I see the growth. And that expression of a kind of well-managed ego not, uh, falsely, uh, self-denigrating in the guise of humility but a sense of just groundedness. Yes, what we did was difficult and it was hard and that's not on the side of the team. Let's not ... Let's remember that this is a collective experience. Um, that's a hallmark of really high quality, emotionally intelligent leadership. Um, Daniel Goldman would be proud.

[00:26:30]

Dan Harris: A friend of the company by the way.

[00:27:00]

Jerry: Okay. That's what I thought. Yeah. So, great. You guys are great. Everything is great.

Dan Harris: (laughs)

Ben Rubin: No problems.

Jerry: No problems. You love each other. You say nice things to each other. You learn about each other's origin stories. Oh, I didn't really ... I hadn't ... So everything is good.

Ben Rubin: Not always.

Jerry: Not always.

Ben Rubin: Uh, I think there's a couple of challenges at both-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ben Rubin: ... our relationship and, and a company that, um-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:27:30]

Ben Rubin: The one I, I think that I'd like to start with is actually this, you know, Dan, you mentioned this brotherhood around, um, anxiety really.

Dan Harris: Yeah.

Ben Rubin: ... and like you and I are both very, um, anxious to go there automatically. Fear and anxiety is just part of who we are and one thing-

Jerry: They're in the core values (laughs).

Ben Rubin: Yeah. That's right. Um, and, you know, the goodness is as meditators, we often see it.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:28:00]

Ben Rubin: Um, not always, but sometimes. And, and yet the thing that I struggle with pretty deeply is that, um, Dan, um, Dan and I can kinda spiral together into-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ben Rubin: ... negativity very quickly.

Dan Harris: Yeah.

Ben Rubin: And I find that Dan amazingly like you having a bad day can spiral into the entire team through me.

Dan Harris: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ben Rubin: Right? 'Cause your anxiety catches to me and then we're anxious together, and then, you know, somewhat in a non-constructive way sometimes, and then I can

[00:28:30] spin that right back out into, you know, a group of people in Boston who otherwise would have had a great day.

Dan Harris: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ben Rubin: Uh, so that's something I personally struggle with and I think it's part of the dynamic that we've created.

Dan Harris: I think that's legit. And that's also-

Jerry: Yeah. I was gonna say, Dan, do you recognize this?

Dan Harris: Totally. Um, I, I also think part of the issue here is that, you know, when you said the team in Boston ... The team is in Boston. I live in New York and so there is a, um ... And the reason for that is because th- the Change Collective started in Boston-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:29:00]

Dan Harris: ... and, um, I have lived in New York for 17 years and that's just the ... We have this bifurcation that's, um, built in on many levels not only bifurcation geographically but also sort of in terms on bandwidth that I have this whole other career.

Jerry: So I'm gonna interrupt you.

Dan Harris: Yeah. Go for it.

Jerry: Wh- Why are you explaining that to us?

Dan Harris: We're explaining to the listener.

Jerry: Why?

Dan Harris: To give a sense of the depth of the challenge.

Jerry: I see. 'Cause I was wondering if you felt guilty about that.

[00:29:30]

Dan Harris: There are things I feel guilty about. Um, there are definitely things I feel guilty about, but that was just related factually. It is related to some things I do feel guilty about though.

Jerry: How so?

Dan Harris: Well, I think when we talk about leadership, and you pointed out before that I referred to his employees instead of our employees that I ... It's interesting that I ... It's interesting to me that, you know, I have redesigned my entire news career around not actually having any management, uh, responsibilities. Nobody reports to me.

Jerry: Right.

[00:30:00]

Dan Harris: Um, and I like that. I'm, I'm ... I love get- being involved in my projects and it shows that I do the stories that I'm working on, the books that I write. They're not really into management. Um, and yet we're all leaders in a way-

Jerry: Yes.

Dan Harris: ... and I recognize as somebody who's been at ABC News for a long time that I do have a responsibility in ter- in, uh, leadership. Maybe ... It's maybe not management technically speaking but I am, uh, uh, a high profile veteran employee and-

[00:30:30]

Jerry: Well, there's another way in which your leadership is actually manifesting itself, and that ... and, uh, Ben pointed that out and it's the phenomena of emotional Wi-Fi. See, this is-

Dan Harris: Explain that.

Jerry: Yeah. See, th- this is a consequence of authority, agency in power within an organization which, uh, is not described in organization charts. It's not described in job descriptions. And it goes like this: "Oh, shit. Dan's feels anxious. And even though we're a couple of hundred miles away in Boston, we feel it."

[00:31:00]

Dan Harris: Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

Jerry: Right? And even though you've successfully avoided for most of your adult career being responsible for employees, and that's what some of that languages is all around. You're an individual contributor in your career and, and you enjoy that and you've been successful. There's nothing wrong with that.

Dan Harris: Yeah. More like an auteur.

[00:31:30]

Jerry: More like an auteur except that all of sudden you find yourself in an interesting replication of family dynamic known as a company in which your emotional state starts to have an emotional impact on the other people in the company. And that is an unavoidable consequence of having that leadership seat.

Dan Harris: Yes. And I think I stumbled into it as I said before Elmer Fudd style without thinking through those consequences.

[00:32:00]

Jerry: That's right.

Dan Harris: And so when you ask why I was explaining, the multi-leveled bifurcation within the company and I was explaining that out ... in part explaining it to make sure that everybody was up-to-date on the facts but also because it is connected to things that do concern me about my responsibilities and whether I'm fulfilling them accurately.

Jerry: That's right. That's the guilty piece.

Dan Harris: Yes.

Jerry: Am I being a good manager?

Dan Harris: Yeah. Is it ... Guilt is not the r- I don't know. I mean [inaudible 00:32:27], you know uh, I'm, I'm prone to guilt.

Jerry: Yeah. Guilt maybe too strong word.

[00:32:30]

Dan Harris: It maybe too strong a word. Just something that I have my antenna up about in terms of, um, this is probably an area where I can do better.

Jerry: Right. So let's relax. The desire to do better and let's stay with the meditation posture, the meditative posture just noticing it.

Dan Harris: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: Right? So notice that there's a storyline, but, you know, every time, we have an anxious state of mind, every, every feeling state gets interpreted by the prefrontal cortex and is del- and is, uh, married to a storyline. And the storyline might be, "Oh, shit. This is gonna be a smoking black hole again." Or the storyline may be "I never said I was gonna be a manager. Who said I was supposed to be manager? I ... Let me explain to you. I know nothing about business." Right?

[00:33:00]

[00:33:30] Because what we're doing is we're responding to the storyline, right? Now, if what I'm saying before is true and it is that part of the unintended oftentimes unrecognized responsibility of a leader is to actually be aware of their own emotional state. Then being aware of the storylines that we start to create around that is really a key way of working with not suppressing, working with the anxiety and the fear that arises in the leadership seat. Does that make sense?

Dan Harris: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:34:00]

Jerry: So one or the other of you starts to have a feeling state of anxiety. Ben's storyline might be, "Oh shit. Are we gonna fail?" Dan's storyline might be, "Oh, shit. Am I

gonna run?" I don't know. Make this up. "Tail between my legs back to the studio MB- at ABC. Sorry. I didn't mean to name the competition.

Dan Harris: [inaudible 00:34:21] one conso- one consonant away.

Jerry: Right. One consonant away. "You know, am I gonna ..." Like all those people said, [00:34:30] "Dan, what are you doing? Come on. Stop playing in this startup" or whatever it is the storyline is.

Dan Harris: Nobody said that by the way.

Jerry: Good. They're probably jealous.

Dan Harris: I'm ...

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)?

Dan Harris: I, I, I don't labor under the delusion that people are spending that much time thinking about me.

Jerry: Oh, I like that. Good. Okay. Whatever it is though, that feeling, when the anxiety comes up, how do you guys handle that? What do you do? Yeah. Ben.

[00:35:00]

Ben Rubin: You know, we usually just jump right to the issues. Right? It's like very tactical. It's, um ...

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ben Rubin: I think the, the, the anxiety is seen but not spoken about-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ben Rubin: ... for the most part. Right? It's, you know ... whate- whatever the issue is. Right? There's a, a number that's off for a month or a piece of press that comes out about someone else that strikes us in the wrong way and, you know, immediately it's like tactics.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative). And, and tell me the story. What, what happens? Does one of you email the other? So you see some piece of news about a competitor. "Oh, [00:35:30] look at what [inaudible 00:35:35]. Uh, and look what they did. They're both smiling."

Ben Rubin: Yeah. It starts. It usually starts with an email and then, you know-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ben Rubin: ... the next time we're, you know, in conversation, We swim back to them. It's like, "Well, what, what did that mean?" you know, or that, you know, we can see the anxiety just like passing back and forth.

Jerry: All right. So the narrative goes the anxiety. There's some spark ... There's a stimulus. There's some data point pop. It starts the anxious mind that ... And then the story making starts, and usually it ends in a threat of some sort. Right? There's that anxiety and Dan- and Ben you said something. You said, "We then start to go right to the, the issue." Right? What ... Dan, you've been practicing and working with teachers for a long time. What's happening to Ben in that moment? Let's just talk about Ben in the third person again. So anxiety and you go right to the planning point. What's happened?

Dan Harris: Yeah. Actually, I feel like in, in most of our interactions it's him talking me off the ledge.

Jerry: Ah, so you go to that state.

Dan Harris: Yeah. Yeah.

Jerry: Okay. So Ben, what's happening to Dan in that moment?

Dan Harris: He ... You, you tend to hide your anxiety from me. I mean I see it.

Ben Rubin: Yeah. Well, I ...

Dan Harris: That's part of this [crosstalk 00:37:00]

[00:37:00]

Ben Rubin: I'd tell you why I had my anxiety because you have so much of it (laughing) to go around. I'm worried. I'm just so worried about this spiraling.

Dan Harris: Yeah.

Ben Rubin: 'Cause if I show him my anxiety and then-

Jerry: It's gonna spin to us.

Ben Rubin: ... believe me. You're not gonna pull me off me the ledge.

Dan Harris: No, I'm not gonna pull you off the ledge (laughs).

Jerry: All right. So he goes, he goes to the-

Dan Harris: I might who knows.

Jerry: He ... That's a good question.

Dan Harris: You never even ... You've never actually really given me a shot to do that.

Jerry: Okay. We're not gonna let you get out of control. (laughing) He, he goes to the
[00:37:30] planning point. How are we gonna respond to this particular pinpoint thing? What's his mind doing?

Ben Rubin: Well, I'd say sometimes he goes even further. So, I'll give you-

Jerry: Yeah.

Ben Rubin: ... uh, an example. We, um, we had a new, uh, content concept-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ben Rubin: ... that he'd been working on for a while and, you know, Dan went out and pitched it.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ben Rubin: And some of the feedback-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ben Rubin: ... was negative, right? It was like, "Oh this is, this isn't mass market enough. This isn't, this isn't gonna ... You know. This particular piece-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ben Rubin: ... maybe isn't gonna be good.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ben Rubin: And Dan immediately went to the entire ... at least from my perception -

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:38:00]
Ben Rubin: ... it was like the entire conception around this company, the content that we create is not mass market.

Dan Harris: No, no. That's fif- That's ... I, I ... You're absolutely right. I spun it way too far but I didn't go that far. I basically said, he ... "Ben and I had come up with this. We got

really excited about the idea of meditation content and then I went out and pitched a particular piece of content and got very quite negative feedback.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:38:30]

Dan Harris: Or let's just say it didn't work. And then I, I universalized to our whole content fantasy is just that, a fantasy. I didn't say the whole co- company was screwed. But ... So Ben is actually right.

Jerry: But the logical conclusion is ...

Ben Rubin: Yeah. Well, I-

Jerry: What's the logical conclusion?

Dan Harris: No, no. I didn't ... That wasn't my logical conclusion.

Ben Rubin: But I, I went there.

Dan Harris: Well, there we go.

Ben Rubin: And that, that's my own-

Dan Harris: That's an example. Okay.

Ben Rubin: That's my own story.

Dan Harris: Yeah. Yeah.

Jerry: So this is beautiful. So what happens is (laughing) uh, experience-

Ben Rubin: How's that?

Jerry: ... data point, emotional state, conclusion, storyline conclusion.

Dan Harris: Yes.

[00:39:00]

Jerry: Not necessarily true, not necessarily false. Just a storyline. It provokes response in Ben.

Ben Rubin: Smoking black hole.

Jerry: Smoking black hole 'cause that's where it ends up, you know. It's always gonna end up in Smoking black hole.

Dan Harris: Right Yeah.

Jerry: So but then he does the quote/unquote "servant leadership" thing and he suppresses it. I'm not gonna talk about it. So he doesn't spin Dan up. And now we have the dynamic. Okay.

Dan Harris: Yeah. That's it, that's it. That ... I would say-

Jerry: It's accurate.

[00:39:30]

Dan Harris: ... that you put your finger on it.

Jerry: Okay. So, not an unfamiliar dynamic. Um, to me, in other, um, relationships, it's something I do to myself. I can, I can have that entire arc all within my own mind.

[00:40:00]

Right? Okay. So I wanna explore a couple of quick things associated with it. Dan, what is ... What's the benefit for you to go to that place? What, what benefit do you derive from going to the anxious place? And I, and I'm not asking to elicit the opposite response. Sometimes people [inaudible 00:40:17]. I literally want to

[00:40:30]

create, you know, you know, a genuine response to: How is that response in service to you? You've done enough internal work to understand the meanings of it.

Dan Harris: Yeah. Yeah, yeah. I think seeing your situation with dry eyes is important.

Jerry: So being anxious, you associate being anxious and identifying the threat on a sort of grounded basis as quote, "seeing things with dry eyes."

Dan Harris: Well, to a certain extent it is, and then you crossed the line into useless-

Jerry: Okay. That's-

Dan Harris: ... rumination and fear.

[00:41:00]

Jerry: Right. So, so that's the well-schooled adult Dan speaking.

Dan Harris: Yeah.

Jerry: I wanna hear it from the unschooled-

Dan Harris: The kid.

Jerry: Yeah.

Dan Harris: Yeah.

Jerry: I wanna hear from, from the childhood survival strategy-

Dan Harris: Yeah.

Jerry: ... that said, "When it doubt, get anxious."

Dan Harris: Right.

Jerry: Okay. So, that kid. You remember that guy.

Dan Harris: Yeah, yeah. He's right here.

Jerry: How ... Why was it valuable for that kid? Why was ... What did it do to ... for that kid to go to that place?

[00:41:30]

Dan Harris: Hm, just thinking about options, right?

Jerry: Ah, so notice thinking about options. Options that would what?

Dan Harris: Get me out of the situation, figure out what the right strategy moving forward would be, et cetera, et cetera.

Jerry: Okay. There are three basic wishes all human beings have: to love and be love, to feel safe, to belong. Three. Safety can feel physical. Am I well-fed? Am I not being hit? Am I living in a place without violence? There's something about going to anxiety that keeps you safe because it lays out what my options are to deal with the threat that's in front of me.

[00:42:00]

Dan Harris: It gives you some agency for sure or sense of agency.

Jerry: It gives ... That's, that's the key. This ... The, the little nuance that you just shifted to, that was your adult coming back in.

Dan Harris: Sorry.

[00:42:30]

Jerry: That ... No. That's beautiful. (laughing) I'm glad for it. It gives you the sense of agency.

Dan Harris: Yeah.

Jerry: And that's why the state of mind goes immediately to planning. I call it the planning mind. Well, what are we gonna do? We got a no shit moment. What are we gonna do?

Dan Harris: What's, what's the better ... What's the alternative move there?

Jerry: Well, what does meditation taught you? What did you ... What do you learn on the cushion?

[00:43:00]

Dan Harris: Just investigate non- judgmentally.

Jerry: And pause, sit still, investigate non-judgmentally, hold yourself because the wish ... There's actually two, two wishes in that rush to plan. The first wish is I wanna be safe. The second wish is I fucking don't like anxiety. How the hell do I get rid of this as quickly a possible?

Dan Harris: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:43:30]

Jerry: And what the Dharma te- taught- teaches us is "Oh, actually stay and investigate the thing that's scary." Now let's take it into a business consequence. Why would a ... Why would it be a benefit for a leader to not rush away or rush off the cushion when anxiety arises? Because there's opportunity implicit in the threat because there may be options that don't occur to the planning mind if you move too quickly. And as you both experienced, if you move too quickly to the planning mind without giving ventilation to the emotional feeling, you can spur anxiety in everybody around you. The smartest people in the company tend not to be the CEO.

[00:44:00]

Ben Rubin: This company aside.

[00:44:30]

Jerry: (laughs) The smartest people in the company tend to be experts in their areas of responsibility. Let's say for example you have a server crash. "Great. What are you gonna do about that, Dan?" "I don't have a fucking clue. I don't know how to build servers. I don't know how to recover them." What's my job as a leader? Get my feelings under control, pause, create some space and not pass the baton of the anxiety to the head of engineering who's trying to work their hardest to do what they know what to do which is build ... rebuild the server. Does this make sense?

[00:45:00]

Dan Harris: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: So, the baton passing of anxiety that goes on between the two of you can slow down if you investigate the benefit. "Oh, right. I'm going to planning mind because planning promised me, promised me something false. It promises me that I'll never feel anxious." Well, th- the threat that seems to be so evident can be managed by thinking. And then we take a step back from that, then something really magical happens, and we can create the space for people who actually are skilled.

[00:45:30]

[00:46:00] And they may be within the company or outside the company to comment and say, "Oh, what's happening?" Existential threat to the company. You have this brilliant resource in your brother. "Hey, Matt. What would you do?" Right? You got a friend in Jerry. "Jerry, we're having this conflict. Dah, dah, dah, dah, dah. What would ... What should we do?" I feel like I'm lecturing a little bit. I wanna ma- check in. Is this landing for you, guys?

[00:46:30]
Dan Harris: It is landing. We ... Actually, you're, you're ... You, you do this tactic quite a bit when I'm perseverating about something. I think just yesterday we were having a big conversation about something and you'll often say, uh, you know, "There's gonna be an expert in this particular issue, you know, or, or experts and, let, let's, let's look around. Let's talk." Um, which is actually a good way of kind of bursting me out of my little doom cycle of "Look, oh yeah. There's probably some sunshine we can bring into the situation." And ... So I think you intuitively go to what Jerry is talking about.

[00:47:00]
Ben Rubin: Yeah. I think, I think at our best, we, we do. But, you know, when it's a particular actually tough moment or we're tired, we'll that play that anxiety ping pong, and then I'll, you know, pass it on to the rest of the team as well just as a bonus (laughing).

Jerry: Well, the emotional Wi-Fi knows no end.

Ben Rubin: Yeah.

Jerry: It just goes bang, bang, bang, bang, bang -

Ben Rubin: Yeah.

Jerry: ... bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang.

Ben Rubin: One thing I realized sort of sitting in and listening to that conversation is that, um ... And I'm not sure whether this is ... where to go with this but I'll-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:47:30]
Ben Rubin: ... throw it out there is that I think we use anxiety as way of, um, looking for opportunities.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ben Rubin: I know I do. I'm, I'm, I'm starting to realize that like I will go look for something to be anxious about-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ben Rubin: ... because you know, if I'm not anxious about something, we're not making any progress. We're not doing any better. And, you know, the- there's a ... the rational side of my brain, the adult side of my brain says I could just as easily look for opportunities to be excited about and to be able to help people meditate or go deeper. You know, th- there's a flip side to the anxiety, which is, you know, excitement and compassion, and loving kindness, which could drive thinking and planning and finding of opportunities. But, um, the very thing that, you know.

[00:48:00]

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ben Rubin: We were just celebrating around like this terribly anxious moment with Change Collective-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ben Rubin: ... and making a pivot and, you know, the Triple Lindy. Like that's all ... That all came out as like being boxed into a corner and being more anxious than I've ever been in my life.

[00:48:30]

Jerry: Uh, th- this is brilliant. Brilliantly self-aware, and it's wonderful and I wanna reflect back on it. Ben, what you're identifying is that sometimes we use the habit of anxiety to actually create, um, forward momentum.

Ben Rubin: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: We use the habit of anxiety to create what we perceived to be, uh, motion, and I joke that we often confuse motion for meaning. Um, and I love how you started to think about well is there ... are there ways to reframe that experience? In hearing that story, I recall, uh, a moment. Dan, I'm also subject to panic disorders and I officially have PTSD.

[00:49:00]

Dan Harris: Rock on.

Jerry: Um, and I remember one time sitting in the meditation cushion and being overwhelmed by anxiety. Just, just ... It just came out of fucking nowhere. Like I just was "Where is this coming from?" And it's that moment that I heard Pema Chodron's voice in my head say to me like a dog, "Sit. Stay." And I could watch my mind run through a whole long list of all the things to feel anxious about, and every single item that I was supposedly checking off the list to make sure everything was safe was in fact, making me more anxious.

[00:49:30]

[00:50:00] And so instead I just actually let the feeling ride through me, and then it passed and then I actually could think clearly about all the things that I might actually be

[00:50:30] troubled by. And that's what I was reminded of when you were talk- when you were speaking about it. For me, the anxiety habit of mine was a way to deal with say anger. In my family, anger was dangerous, so any time I was angry, get anxious 'cause that's actually safer.

Dan Harris: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: Right? So suppress the anger, get anxious. "Phew, now I'm anxious. Now, I got to figure out what I'm anxious about. But by pausing the whole thing, I can break that chain that runs through my family or runs through the organization, and I take responsibility for my own internal state. And I see Dan ... I see Ben is struggling to do that in his efforts to ho- to hold his leadership seat. Does that resonate?"

[00:51:00]

Ben Rubin: Yeah. And it, it resonates and, you know, the ... What I'm struggling with is I, I find that it's very effective. Right.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ben Rubin: And I, I almost don't know another great way of operating right. The effective thing that I know how to do that's my go-to is to go find something to be anxious about and then jump into planning.

[00:51:30]
Dan Harris: That's not fair on you because you've spent a lot of time, um ... We, as a company, um, spend a lot of time getting super excited about a stuff that's gonna help people to be cool and just we wanna see it exist in the world, and, um, you know, you spend all of this energy of late thinking about like a YouTube channel that you're really excited about and, uh, wor- working with producers on and looking at, uh, other people whose work that could be inspirational for us and, uh, we've got this UX revamp that we're in the middle of that everybody is really excited about.

[00:52:00] You pushed me to write this book that's coming out of New Year's that, um, that we got really excited about the concept and I went out and executed it. So there was anxiety that braided through a lot of these products but the impulse on most of them was, "Yeah. Wouldn't it be cool with if ..." So ... And I thought it was quite brilliant and beautiful what you framed before about like the difference between motivated by an- motivation by anxiety or motivation by loving kindness/creativity/excitement, um, /compassion. But I do actually think that a lot of what we do as a company and that you do as a CEO is actually motivated by, uh, the for- the latter.

[00:52:30]

Jerry: Okay. How did that feel hearing that?

Ben Rubin: I think it helped me realized that yeah, sometimes it is. Um, it still feels like even though rationally I'm like, "Oh, you're right. We do get excited about things and we do things out of passion and interest. It still feels like, uh, the most effective way,

the most, you know. If you really wanna do the Triple Lindy, you got to be back against the wall.

Dan Harris: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:53:00]

Jerry: So, so notice that tendency. I, I saw something else happen here and I'm gonna point it out without saying that somebody did something wrong. The experience that we, that we often have with these sorts of feeling states, the impulse is to move past them as quickly as possible. We, we have that impulse ourselves, but we also have that impulse for each other.

[00:53:30] And Dan, what I was a little concerned about was that there was a little bit of "Ben, don't feel anxious" (laughing) implicit in "Let me give you the list of reasons why what you're doing is okay" which was motivated by love and care and concern for your co-founder and your friend. And there is a benefit to allowing someone to

[00:54:00] work through the cycle of their own experience so that they can arrive at the place of self-soothing not because Dan tells Ben that Ben has done a good job but because Ben tells Ben that Ben has done a good job.

Dan Harris: Fair enough. My apologies for not allowing you to self-soothe.

Jerry: It's, it's, it's a, uh, (laughing) it's, it's, it's a normal human impulse.

Dan Harris: I know. It was also motivated by accuracy. I mean I'm a journalist, I couldn't. (laughing) But, but, but I just, you know, it's just not true. It is a story he's telling himself.

Jerry: Yes, yes. And you can relate to telling one's self a story.

[00:54:30]

Dan Harris: Oh, yeah. Definitely.

Jerry: Right, right. And that, that kind of back and forth ... See, what we're identifying, what I'm trying to give you are means to slow the anxiety baton passing-

Dan Harris: Yeah.

Jerry: ... that might exist within the organization and it's counterintuitive to say in order to slow the baton passing, allow the person to feel anxious.

Dan Harris: Sometimes you got to let him burn it off. Yeah.

Jerry: That's exactly right. And but I also love something else that's happening which is you're both starting to reframe, quote, "anxiety" as energy. It's energy with a story attached to it. The story, if we shift the story into something positive, all of a

[00:55:00]

[00:55:30] sudden, it becomes not anxiety but in fact energy for motion, energy to move forward, energy to do things. That kind of sophisticated movement and working with your own mind is really powerful within an organization. It first requires a sort of pausing and recognizing where we are and then moving on, which then leads me to close out with one little tool that I would suggest.

[00:56:00] And this is something that, Ben, we may have talked about before but we ... It's something that we teach in a boot camp and some, something that I encourage all over our organizations to do. And it goes like this: It's called red, yellow, green. Okay. And what ... It's a very simple exercise is that before we start a meeting, we just identify what state we're in. Red, yellow or green.

[00:56:30] Red is I am off the charts. And for, you guys, it might be anxiety but for others it may be anger and maybe, you know, complete distractedness. I'm physically present but my mind is so torn that I'm not ... I'm barely even here. Yellow, I'm here but sort of not here. I'm still carrying a bunch things. Green, I'm fully present. I'm right in my body. I'm occupying things.

[00:57:00] We typically start almost every engagement like our partners' meetings begin with red, yellow, green. The point is not to then psychotherapeutically work with whatever content is going on. Oh, I had a fight with my spouse last night and so therefore, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. It's just to notice non-judgmentally our internal state. So we give some voice and space to it so that then the content of the work that we do is not infused with all of that energy.

Ben Rubin: Yeah.

Dan Harris: Or at least infused 'cause you're less likely to be [crosstalk 00:57:14].

Jerry: Yeah. Less infused.

Ben Rubin: Or not unconsciously infused.

Jerry: That's right.

Dan Harris: Yes. Yes.

Jerry: That's right. And so what ends up happening is we're just, "hah." It literally is a nanosecond of meditation. It's like-

Dan Harris: Right.

Jerry: ... boom. Oh.

Dan Harris: Yeah. It's mindfulness.

[00:57:30]

Jerry: It's t- It's pure, secular, direct mindfulness. It's "How am I actually doing?" Sharing that without necessarily going to the content if you don't want to allows the other person to the say, "I'm in the green. He's in the red." Instead of what normally happens emotional Wi-Fi, I'm in the green, and all of a sudden I'm in the red and I have no reason ... I have no understanding why it just went into the red other than the tightness in Dan's voice has caused my amygdala to go hyper alert, there's a threat.

[00:58:00]

[00:58:30] It starts to break the sharing of the feelings of, of the negative aspects of the feelings and create space for empathy and compassion. "Oh, you're having a hard time? Maybe this really difficult, um, intellectual concept that we're about to talk to, maybe we can talk about that tomorrow. Let's just give you a little space today." "Good that's great. Thank you so much." "Okay. Good. Now, we got to go." More human workplace. Does this seem workable?

Dan Harris: Yeah. Definitely.

Ben Rubin: Yeah. It seems like it could be really useful. And it's that ... I think the worst cases of the emotional Wi-Fi are, are you know, when you ... when we're both in red or yellow and, and it's not acknowledged then-

Jerry: That's right.

Ben Rubin: ... it just sort of spreads.

[00:59:00]

Jerry: That's right. I'm envisioning all, all of your, uh, work colleagues calling me up and thanking me for stopping that.

Dan Harris: Yeah. Especially since it's often like in a conference call (laughing) and I'm in the middle of something else and-

Jerry: Right (laughs).

Dan Harris: Yeah. Absolutely.

Ben Rubin: The next thing we have to work on is if you keep on saying red, red, red, red, red. (laughing)

Dan Harris: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: I know a few meditation teachers who might be able to help (laughs).

Dan Harris: I'll get your number.

Jerry: Well, I think with that, we should probably wrap. I wanna thank you both.

Dan Harris: Thank you.

[00:59:30]

Jerry: Um, you know, uh, I think this was, uh, just, uh, a really curious experience and, um, you know, I know that the folks who listen to the podcast will really benefit from this dialogue. And as I often say, you know, just knowing that the experiences that we have are not unique to us can really break that sense of isolation that goes on. And that's a really important, um, collective experiences going on. So, thank you for that. Any last word before we dial out?

Ben Rubin: We really appreciate the help, Jerry.

[01:00:00]

Jerry: Oh, it's my pleasure.

Dan Harris: I'm red.

Jerry: (laughs) All right. Thank you so much.