

Dave Asprey:

If you haven't heard about the benefits of Camel milk, it's totally worth your time to look into this as something you could add to your Bulletproof diet. Camel milk is something that I learned about from Walid, the owner of Desert Farms who's the largest seller of Camel Milk out there.

Camel Milk got its start in the autism community because it's non-reactive, the way Camel milk is. Now, it's just become one of the new super foods that's out there. One of the reasons is that it's full Lactoferrin, which is a natural substance that's present in mother's milk that has antibacterial, antiviral, antiparasitic, anticancer properties. It doesn't have lactose or Lactoglobulin. The stuff that makes lactose intolerant people unable to process milk from cows. Desert Farms' camel milk is also organic. It's tested for heavy metals and actually 900 different contaminants. It is [Guido 00:00:50] certified, GMO free, has no bovine growth hormone or anything weird like that, and it's pasture-raised, so it's all grass-fed.

Desert Farms is offering a really good deal of Bulletproof listeners because they were at the Bulletproof conference, and we got to be friends. They're giving away a free bottle of camel milk for you. All you have to do is pay for shipping and handling. Just head over to desertfarms.com/bulletproof to get your free bottle of camel milk right now. That's desertfarms.com/bulletproof.

Automated:

Bulletproof Radio, a station of high performance.

Dave Asprey:

You're listening to Bulletproof Radio with Dave Asprey. Today's cool fact of the day is about mastery. People who really have achieved a level beyond other people. I look for masters when I interview people on Bulletproof Radio. Here's a cool fact about a master. Dr. Yoshiro Nakamatsu who is the inventor of the floppy disk and 3,300 other patented [interventions 00:01:56] is one of those unusual genius master-level people. He's also a biohacker. He hacks his genius by intentionally staying under water until the moment just before he drowns. He believes that it stimulates his brain. He actually invented a tablet, so he can actually take notes under water. It turns out he's right. That treatment stimulates your brain to make more capillaries. When you get into that Pseudohypoxic state, which is similar to what happens when you're doing the Wim Hof Breathing Method or art of living or something else like that, you actually can go into a theta state which is where intuition and creativity happen.

When you put pressure on your head, you're actually making your mitochondria closer together, so your electrons don't have to move as far. They move an awful lot of time, so a tiny difference in how far they move equals better functioning brain. This crazy guy paid attention to how we felt and what worked. Well, 3,300 patterns later, you could say he's crazy, or you could say he's a genius. You could just say he mastered it. If you're a regular listener,

you've heard me share my list of top 10 biohacks. Let's talk about number nine: fun hacks for the Bulletproof mind.

It may sound weird, but hanging upside down is a great way to hack your brain. Regularly inverting trains your brain capillaries, making them stronger, more capable to bring oxygen to your brain. It's pretty straight forward. More oxygen in the brain means better performance. I get my daily stretch and my dose of oxygen with my Teeter inversion table, which is so central for optimum focus, concentration and mental energy. That full body stretch elongates the spine, and takes the pressure off the disks so they can plump back up. Less pressure means less pain. If you have back pain, even if you've been lucky enough to avoid it so far, you really want to Teeter to invert everyday to keep your back and joints feeling great. For every 35 years, Teeter has set the standard for quality inversion equipment you can trust.

My friends over at Teeter have decided to show some love to Bulletproof listeners. For a limited time, you can get the Teeter inversion table with bonus accessories and a free pair of gravity boots, so you can invert at home or take the boots with you to the gym. To get this deal, which is a savings of over 138 bucks, go to getteeter.com/bulletproof. You'll also get free shipping and a 60-day money back guarantee and free returns, so there's absolutely no risk for you to try it out. Remember, you can only get the Teeter with bonus accessories and a free pair of gravity boots by going to getteeter.com/bulletproof. G-E-T-T-E-E-T-E-R.com/bulletproof. Check it out.

Today's guest is someone who doesn't know it, but someone who actually probably saved my career. If not, really helped accelerate my career way back in the day. Before I tell you who it is, I'll tell you a little story. I was 26 years old. I made six million dollars at the company that held Google's very first server. When it was Larry and Sergey and one server, and they needed to put it somewhere, they came to a company where I helped to start the consulting group inside the company called Exodus Communications. I found myself in short order, being a 27-year-old, attending board meetings for a company worth \$36 billion on the stock market. I wasn't allowed to speak at board meetings, but I got to see them. I attended executive staff with people twice my age and about 100 times my experience, because my experience was only a few years in Corporate America.

I was an engineer with a little bit of Asperger syndrome. I used to describe my job as taking ideas that are crayon-simple, and redoing them in finger paint for executives. I did not understand them. I thought they were crazy people. Truly, their behavior made no sense to a rational, logical brain. Then, I picked up a book that absolutely changed my ability to do this, and it was called The 48 Laws of Power. This was a book that had taken quite a while to write with a cultural anthropology, stories throughout all of history, looking at how people in power got in power and stayed in power and distilling the essence. It was one of the books that I will just never forget because I read this book, and a week later, I

sat in the executive staff meeting. I'm like, "Oh, my God. These people are not crazy people. These people are powerful people. The rules they follow are not engineering rules. They're power rules."

By learning that switch in my own ability to think about this, I learned how to function in Silicon Valley, how to work at the venture capital firm, how to raise money and how to do what I do at Bulletproof. If I didn't have those rules to make me stop thinking like a robot and start thinking like a chess player, I wouldn't have done it. The author of this book is Robert Greene who is sitting here on YouTube, those watching YouTube channel or on iTunes.

Robert, thank you for your work. It feels like 15 years ago, but your book totally changed my career, so thank you.

Robert Greene: Well, that's great to hear, Dave. I'm expecting a check any day now. I mean, just kidding. That's a great story.

Dave Asprey: Here's what your book didn't teach me how to do.

Robert Greene: Oh, uh-oh.

Dave Asprey: I mentioned I made six million dollars when I was 26. I lost the six million dollars when I was 28. I'd write you a check, but it might have a decimal point at the beginning of the number.

Robert Greene: Oh, I see. Okay.

Dave Asprey: Unfortunately, but that wasn't your book's fault. That was actually my own fault, and that's happened in Silicon Valley, all over the place. Since that time, you've applied that similar incredible rigor to some other books like *The Art of Seduction*, looking at what happens when people seduce other people, which is also very interesting how you characterize the different types of seduction that happen. *The 33 Strategies of War*, and the 50th Law, which I just think is hilarious. You actually wrote it with the rapper, 50 Cent, which is super cool. What a mash-up. I wouldn't have imagined. Then, most recently, *Mastery*, which is also a hell of a read. You've just gone through over the past 20 years. Ever since I've been working, and just written these books that distill knowledge in a way that no one else has been able to touch, in my experience. I want to ask you questions from each book in this interview.

Robert Greene: Sure.

Dave Asprey: The intent is that for, probably, my guess, there's about half a million people that hear this interview eventually, so I want to make sure that we add values. They get actionable things from each of the questions. First question is in the preface for the *48 Laws of Power*, you quoted Machiavelli. You said, "Any man

who tries to be good all the time is bound to come to ruin among the great number who are not good." Why did you pick a quote like that?

Robert Greene: Because it's so completely true, and it's one of the first quotes in the book. It distills my experience and why I wrote the book. Basically, I am not a naturally manipulative Machiavellian type. I'm more of the naïve, innocent type, particularly when I first went to work. I've had many different jobs, but when I started in journalism. I worked in Hollywood and many other places. I wasn't the devilish Machiavellian type, and I made some common mistakes such as never outshine the master, law number one. I transgressed that law and paid the price for it. Basically, the idea is they're out there. People have come up with the percentage for how many very highly-Machiavellian people there are. It's almost genetic, 5%, less than that. Something like that. Most people aren't like that. Most people need the 48 Laws of Power. They need to understand it.

For instance, if you're an artist or more of a creative type, you're going to think that, "Well, my talent, my creativity, that's what's going to see through in my career." Boy, are you naïve because you're going to suffer from all of the assholes out there in film or producers. The people who control the money control the power. You're going to be in a lot of trouble. If you might be a good person, but there are a lot of bad people out there. The bad people tend to come, get into positions of power. It's a book to arm you with knowledge, like you helped you in those meetings. I felt that that quote from Machiavelli just summed up what I was trying to communicate.

Dave Asprey: I definitely have come across that 5%. Often times, they do end up in positions of power.

Robert Greene: Yes.

Dave Asprey: You talk in 48 Laws of Power about how Galileo works with the Medici's. How does, "Never outshine the master" actually come to play? What does that really mean?

Robert Greene: It means something very basic. People in power are human beings. They're not of a different genetic code than you or I. They have insecurities. They feel that maybe other people don't respect them as much as they should. They're looking at those around them through an insecure lens. You're not aware of that. You think, "Well, that boss of mine. He/she is so powerful. He's above all of those petty things." You will try very hard to impress that boss. You will work extra hard on a project. You will try and befriend everybody else in the office, and you're not aware that in the process of doing that, you might be making that boss feel insecure, as if, "This younger person, 10, 20 years younger is smarter, is more hip. People like him or her more." You're a threat, and you're not aware of that because you think, "Well, work. It's all about doing the best job." No because whenever you put three people together, politics intervene.

That person, that boss is looking at you, going, "Is this person a possible threat? Is he/she making me look bad in comparison?" Through that lens, they might decide, "I don't like this person. He's maybe or she's maybe too smart for the job. I don't trust them. I'm going to fire them." When they fire you, or they demote you, you'll never know why. They'll never admit that it came from outshining. They'll never admit that envy was maybe the root of it. They'll come up with an excuse. Something about your personality, something about you, not fitting in, not being a team player. Whatever the bullshit is. They'll come up with the excuse for why you're fired. Therefore, this is a classic example of what I said. People who are creative and talented aren't aware of these kinds of things. You are inadvertently perhaps digging your own grave by trying too hard.

What I talk about in Mastery, I go through this. Really, when you first enter a job, you want to do what I call, "The Benjamin Franklin Strategy," which is mute your colors, not be so brilliant, fit in, look like someone who works hard but isn't a threat, be a master observer. You're going to find in the end, you'll have a longer and better career. The Galileo method is the reverse perspective on that, and that what he did in naming the Jupiter planets that he discovered through the telescope was he named him after the Medici's. He made his master look greater than is humanly possible, associating the Medici's with these planets. Instead of making yourself look good, which is what you would normally do without thinking about it, you want to make the boss, the master look brilliant. You want to make them feel even greater. There are many ways to do that, and that's like power of a higher level. Not outshining is power 101. Going to the level where you actually literally learn how to make the master feel greater about him or herself is another level that will eventually help raise you up.

Dave Asprey: When someone gets fired for outshining the master, do you think that these Machiavellian masters have admitted to themselves inside their head that that's why? Do you think it's just a vague feeling of discomfort, so they just swatted it?

Robert Greene: Well, two things on that front. In the game of power, I tell people it doesn't matter. Who cares what's going on in their head? All you know is you were fired.

Dave Asprey: A fair point.

Robert Greene: That's the game. You're playing chess. The guy moves the king, and in a very bad way. What's going on in his head? You don't care. You just think, "It's a bad move. I'm going to counter it." I mean it's an interesting question, and I don't know. I think, in some cases, of course, the master is aware that there's envy involved. In my new book, I have a whole chapter on envy.

Dave Asprey: Oh, good.

Robert Greene: It's an insidious emotion. It's the most insidious emotion of them all because the moment you feel it, you try to disguise it. You're going to tell yourself, you feel a

twinge of envy for that younger person who might be more talented. Then, you're going to immediately justify that emotion by saying, "Well, actually, they're not a good person. They're aggressive. They're assertive. They're blah, blah, blah." You're going to cover it up. The boss either is a little bit aware or maybe to the point where they're not even aware at all because it operates very quickly, this covering up, because we don't want to admit to ourselves, particularly a boss, that we feel insecure.

Dave Asprey: the reason I ask is that I am a CEO. Bulletproof is a rapid growing venture-backed company. One of the things that I've noticed amongst my friends in Silicon Valley is that they people who can hire the absolute rockstars and allow them to shine are the ones who create companies that outperform. The act of being a CEO is an act of self-awareness. I do a lot of neuro-feedback. I run a neuro-feedback-like institute for training my own brain permanently, so that I can become aware of what's actually going on. They're like, "Do I believe the story I told myself?" I'm putting this on as if you are the master, how do you avoid being an asshole? I don't remember that rule, but I would love to know the antidote for that.

Robert Greene: Well, oh God, I could write a whole book about that.

Dave Asprey: Yes, please do.

Robert Greene: I am, but a lot of it depends on being result-oriented and not being inward looking where you're thinking about your ego and how other people perceive you. What you want in the end is to make more money and to have a more successful company. I know, for instance, in one of my books, I talk about General Patton in the 33 Strategies of War, very brilliant strategist. A difficult person, but a brilliant strategist. He kept coming up against this thing where he was brilliant, probably the most brilliant general we had in World War II. He kept being blocked in his career by people like Eisenhower and Bradley because he was a bit abrasive. He kept thinking, "Well, don't results matter? We're in a war where lives are at stake. Shouldn't be my strategic genius be more important than my personality?" Well, even in war, there are people who care more about their ego, about how they're perceived by other people.

If I were to build a monster CEO, and Machiavelli talks about this, it would be someone who's extremely adaptable, extremely fluid, doesn't have preconceived notions, is open in the moment, a zen thing and is completely realistic and results-oriented. If you're an angel investor or you're a CEO, your game is to make as much money as possible. You want to hire somebody who's highly creative. It is possible that you're going to make a mistake. You're going to hire a snake in the grass. Someone who's not only brilliant, but is very ambitious and is actually looking to take your job away from you. There are scenarios like that. Maybe it doesn't apply to you, but often, people will hire that kind of snake who, in the end, is a real threat and does ruin the company or take things away from them. You have to be very clever, and you have to see

through people and be able to judge their character. In the end, if you are fluid, if you can learn from your mistakes, and you can be realistic and care more about results than your ego, that would be the monster CEO.

Dave Asprey: The ego awareness is the core, and that's the very core of the neurofeedback where I spent 10 weeks of my life now, with electrodes glued to my head.

Robert Greene: Wow.

Dave Asprey: There's a lie detector to tell me when my ego is in-charge versus me. I'm still not done, but it's designed to create that zen thing. Speaking of zen, you're actually a practicing Zen Buddhist, right?

Robert Greene: Yes, I am.

Dave Asprey: Does that influence your writing? Tell me about your Zen Buddhist practice and [crosstalk 00:19:24].

Robert Greene: Well, I mean I've been interested in it since I was very young, but I've only been intensely practicing and meditating everyday and going deep into it for about seven years. I can't say that the 48 Laws of Power, because it predates the meditation. I've been very influenced by the philosophy, by the thinking for many, many, many years. Certainly, since I began the practice, which is mostly meditation, what we call zazen, but also involves ... I do go to group sessions, and I do read a lot. I have other ways of getting the knowledge, but the main thing is zazen has had a tremendous impact on my writing. It had a big impact on mastery and is having an even bigger impact on the book that I'm writing now.

Dave Asprey: I am very excited to read your new book. There's great wisdom in the Buddhist practice. Even Bulletproof Coffee, the idea for it came to me in Mount Kailash in Western Tibet. I went there to learn how to mediate from the masters. There's definitely a connection there to the [eco-awareness 00:20:31] teachings that you've been studying.

Robert Greene: Yes, yes. The other thing is it's not just book knowledge that matters. It's something very experiential. In writing a book, I find the problem is sometimes, which is for anything, you tend to rely on clichés, on formulas. You're not alive in the moment. You're not thinking in the moment. You're not thinking for yourself. You're relying on second hand concepts that people have given you. This practice has shown me, just like the man who puts himself in the water, nearly asphyxiates himself has taught me how to be very alive in the moment when I'm writing. It's a constant struggle. It's had impact on me on many, many levels.

Dave Asprey: Okay. Do you look at how the words feel when you're writing them? Is that what you mean?

Robert Greene: The new book, I'm trying to capture a certain essence, a certain tone. The book's about human nature. I have to be thinking and reflecting on what it is I'm actually saying go to a deeper level and connecting with the material instead of relying on abstract concepts. The other thing, on a more basic level, is I'm a very audio-oral person. I'm literally mouthing the words as I'm writing. There's a spoken context to it, and I have to hear what I'm literally writing.

Dave Asprey: The reason I'm asking is I've just finished my third ... I guess this is [inaudible 00:22:15]? Fourth big book, and hopefully, my second New York Times best seller with any luck called Head Strong. This book, I dictated most of it using the dictation function just on my Mac. There's something, I think that the Buddhist practices at [Wislim 00:22:33], so I'm familiar with talking about any of the power of the spoken word and even [omen 00:22:37] and things like that. There's something different when you say it. It's interesting because you're typing, but your mouthing as you type. When I'm writing, I'm looking for the sensation in my physical body. Does the sentence feel good? Does it go in without a splash, like a professional diver? I've never really asked someone. In your writing, I'll just tell you. Your writing is incredibly complex. It's better than mine. Just as a writer, I think I wrote a pretty damn good book, but no, it's not at the level of yours. I just want to know how you do it.

Robert Greene: Well, I don't know how to answer that, but I can say that I don't do anything else. I don't. I don't have other jobs, really. I do some speaking. I do some consulting, but mostly, this is it. What do I spend my day? I'm thinking, I'm thinking, I'm thinking. I'm going deeper and deeper and deeper into it. A lot of books, quite frankly, are written by people who are very distracted. I get the impression that they're very distracted. They're a professor who's teaching, who's grading papers. Then, took six months off to distill thoughts, but they're not really there, and it shows because the first chapter is good. Second chapter is getting boring and repetitious. By the end, I totally peters out. They're distracted. I don't know what it is. I can tell a writer who's focused, who's really in the moment, who's really captured what they're trying to write. There are people around today who would do that brilliantly. I read a lot of biographies for my work, and there's some great writers out there who captured their subjects.

Dave Asprey: Who are two or three that stand-out, just off the top of your head? Two or three writers who you think don't read the books just to look at their style.

Robert Greene: Well, Robert Caro would be on top of the list for biographies. The Lyndon Johnson books now heavily-researched, devotes his whole life to it. That's all. He really is based on other books on Robert Moses, et cetera, but the level of intense focus that you can tell when you're reading it, but also the fact that he knows the subject. For instance, in my book on strategy, my version of the Art of War, which is the 33 Strategies of War. The hero of that book is Napoleon Bonaparte for me. I called him the Mozart of Warfare. He was a genius, the first 10 years of his career, a genius strategist. Nobody else can compare to him, and

I gave myself the task. What made him more brilliant than others? None of the writers I read ever really answered that simple question. What was the single source of this man's genius?

Now, it took me a while. I read 12 biographies. I read a 1,200-page book on just his military campaigns. I felt like through that, I came to an understanding that the genius of Napoleon was he had a highly-organized brain. He could assimilate massive amounts of information before the advent of computers, and he could organize it in his brain. When it came time to plan a strategy or to adapt a strategy in the middle of a battlefield, the man had more information that he could access in his brain. It was brilliantly organized. Nobody else really ever said that. I mean people alluded to it. People alluded to it, but to say that in a simple sentence because if you think about it, the application is amazing. That is a highly-creative skill. Something that can make anybody a Napoleon is to be able to learn from that, to know that organizing your thoughts is a very powerful technique. Anyway, to get back to your question, through research and thinking, I dug deeper than I think a lot of other people did on that particular subject.

- Dave Asprey: You must have read Robert Asprin's biography of Napoleon as one of your 12 books. Is he familiar?
- Robert Greene: Is that a relative? Is that a relative?
- Dave Asprey: Yes. He's my great uncle.
- Robert Greene: I have that book. Yes, I have it.
- Dave Asprey: Yes, I bet you would. He's crazy, crazy great uncle. He lived for five years in whatever region he was writing a book about. All history and get to know all the people, visit all the sites and just obsessive like Asperger's runs in my family. I don't know if he had it or not, but super detailed work.
- Robert Greene: Is this your father or grandfather?
- Dave Asprey: He's my uncle, so great uncle.
- Robert Greene: Mm-hmm (affirmative), okay.
- Dave Asprey: Yes, he would have been like my grandfather's brother.
- Robert Greene: Oh, I definitely read the book. It's very familiar. I'm sure it was good.
- Dave Asprey: Yes, I mean you've read probably more books than me which is a lot. They all come together for me, but anyhow, I was just intrigued when I realized you've dug that deep. You had to have read that book. All right, there's another one quick story about organizing thoughts. There are different people who will

teach. Jim Kwik is a good friend who teaches speed reading. He's had a lot of Hollywood, a lot of CEOs, that kind of-

Robert Greene: That's so funny. I find that always funny. I collect these things where the name Kwik is into speed reading.

Dave Asprey: Isn't it great?

Robert Greene: There's so many examples of that. I've got to put that in my list. Anyway, go ahead.

Dave Asprey: Yes, K-W-I-K.

Robert Greene: Oh, oh, oh, I see. I thought it was ...

Dave Asprey: Yes, but still, it matches.

Robert Greene: Yes, yes, yes.

Dave Asprey: He does this superhero thing. He taught Wolverine and all the X-men cast, just like a fantastic human being. He teaches some stuff like that, but I've looked at how I do. Sometimes, when I'm doing biohacking things, for five years, I ran the Web and Internet Engineering Program at the University of California when the internet was being built the way we know it today. I was teaching engineers who are working the next things that were going to happen. Every night, four nights a week, I would do this for two or three hours after work. I would sit down over dinner, and I would read the latest trade and tech magazines. I would have to assimilate the information, a lot of it in 45 minutes while eating a salad into a teachable class. I did this for five years.

Robert Greene: Wow.

Dave Asprey: To this day, I believe that that ability to assimilate information has helped me so much because people ask me questions. I'm like, "Oh," and in the memory structure, I know what it looks like. It's like a 3-D weird thing in my head. I don't want to hold myself out as an example of excellence there, but I seem to be able to think about hacking the human body in a way that's different than most people. They often think that that is just like drinking from a fire hose until it hurt. Then, doing it over and over probably helped me in my career.

Robert Greene: Oh, I'm sure. I'm sure it has. Yes.

Dave Asprey: All right. There's another law from 48 Laws of Power I'd like to ask you about. It's one that says, and this is only what I remember off the top of my head, which was, "To create loyalty, make an enemy." I might have paraphrased it wrong. Does that sound like one that makes sense?

Robert Greene: Well, law number two is never put too much trust in friends, and I think it's, "Learn to use enemies." Something to that effect.

Dave Asprey: This is one where the gist of it was if you want to get someone close to you, you alienate them. Then, you ask them for help, and because they help you-

Robert Greene: Yes, that's law number two.

Dave Asprey: Okay, cool.

Robert Greene: Yes.

Dave Asprey: I had a guy in my career who perceived that I slighted him, but he wanted my knowledge on his [team 00:30:15]. He sat me down in his office and basically said, "I can't fire you because you don't work for me, but I'm going to drive you into the ground." Essentially, "It was nice working with you. You're persona non grata." This guy was two levels up in the org from me, so it's basically like a death threat from a CEO level executive. I'm shaking a little bit, but I have a good boss. I do good work, so I'm just not going to worry about this. Literally, for six weeks, he would walk passed me in the hallway and look the other way. I didn't know what to do with this.

Then, six weeks later, to a tee, he comes and asks me for help. Without 48 Laws of Power, I felt that really, he was totally playing me. It was like working to bring me into his sphere, right? It was applied brilliantly, and this is one of the Machiavellian guys that I ever met. Actually, we're still friends. There's mutual respect, and I come to his house and all that, but that sticks out. If that rule hadn't been written, I'm telling you, I would have walked into a chainsaw.

Robert Greene: Well, it's basic human psychology.

Dave Asprey: Yes.

Robert Greene: You can understand I even on a seduction level. If someone is too friendly with you and too outgoing and wants to please you, you initially have a level of not much respect for them. They seem to be trying too hard. They're too accessible to you. There's an insecurity that you sense, but if the opposite happens, and they're playing hard to get, and they seem to not like you, and they seem to be distant. I think it's chimpanzee brain taking over, but there's an element of, "Wow. Maybe something's wrong with me. Maybe I have to try and please that person."

Anyway, whatever is going on in your brain, the moment that person turns it around and comes to you, you respect him. There's a little bit of awe. You're completely moved by the reversal that they're suddenly now interested in you. You're ready to eat out of their hand. If you could just apply that like this man applied to you, think of the power that you have in an office or a situation, at

least to not make yourself such a person-pleaser, which actually turns a lot of people off. It's just based on elemental psychology that I think 300 years ago, people mostly understood.

Dave Asprey: Something shifted. Maybe it has to do with just likes on Facebook and retweets or something, but it seems like that's a little bit harder to do on social. Do you think social media changed the 48 Laws of Power?

Robert Greene: No. Nothing changes the 48 Laws of Power.

Dave Asprey: Well-said.

Robert Greene: In my new book, I try and say, "Look, human nature has been in place," well, you can't really say the beginning. I could go maybe a million years ago. I could go further, but let's just say 20,000 years ago. There's a lot of history there, a lot of generations of things going on where this human nature is biological, and it's cultural. The cultural aspect is not just the present cultural moment you live in. It goes back thousands of years. When you take human nature, and you create the internet, what happens is in the beginning, people are going, "Wow, you've revolutionized the world. Everything has changed. Everything's going to be communication, creativity, freedom of expression, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah." What happens? After three, four, five, ten years, human nature transforms the internet into what? Anything human has always been. Making money, power moves, trolls, yelling and arguing, irrationality. It becomes a garden full of all of the weeds of human nature that were there in the time of the bible. Social media has not changed that, and you're asking about the aspect of creating friends and enemy-type dynamic. That would still work on social media.

Dave Asprey: It still works. What does the 48 Laws of Power predict one could do with trolls?

Robert Greene: Well, trolls exist in real life.

Dave Asprey: They do, absolutely. They're bullied in high school. Now, they're another boost upon the world, right?

Robert Greene: Yes, and I call the equivalent of a troll in a boss situation is what I call the psychotic boss. It's not me who made it up. It's a well-known mean, but the psychotic boss is basically somebody that anything you do is going to piss them off. You try and please them, they don't like you. You try and push away from them, they don't like you. They've got issues, and it's all about power and torture, and they're so sadistic. What you need with a psychotic boss is you need emotional distance. You need to not take things personally. If you're trapped in this, okay, you've got to deal with it, but if you can get out, quit your job. Is life worth getting enmeshed in this problem? When you're dealing with a troll on the internet, walk away. It's not worth it. You know the old bible saying. "Arguing with a fool will make you a fool." You become a fool by trying to argue

with them and get them to change your mind. Walk away from trolls. Don't feed the trolls, as we say.

If you can't, if you're enmeshed in them, then, you need that zen samurai ability to emotionally distance yourself. Release all of the emotions and the drama. Look at them in a subjective a manner as possible. See that they're irrational. They've got deep problems. They're very unhappy, et cetera. If you get that distance from it, then, you can torture them back. You can give the-

Dave Asprey: That's dark.

Robert Greene: Oh, I don't care. Well, they deserve it. They deserve it. You can give the perfect comeback that will really get into their skin. I don't do it as much as I used to, but on Facebook or whatever. I don't do much Twitter, but Facebook, you get those trolls. I just love saying something that I know will irritate the fuck out of them. You can only do that if you're not emotionally invested in the argument.

Dave Asprey: Yes. I used to get great pleasure from pushing troll buttons like you. There's an art to it that is mean, but I found that even though I have emotional distance from it, eventually, my ego liked it too much, so I [crosstalk 00:36:58].

Robert Greene: Of course, it's better. It's better to disengage and not deal with them. I deal with them.

Dave Asprey: You have the pleasure in just one little sentence causing fountains of ...

Robert Greene: Oh, you can't. Why deny that pleasure to you? Life is short. That's fine.

Dave Asprey: It's like, "You can have cheesecake, or you could bait the trolls." It might be more fun to bait the trolls.

Robert Greene: Yes, yes. I agree.

Dave Asprey: All right. That's hilarious. Now, you do talk about mastering your emotions. One of the things I work on if a troll actually does push my buttons is I work on feeling compassion towards them. It's like, "Okay, this person actually was abused. That's why they believe that everyone is out to scam them. Everyone's out to harm them or steal from them." Basically, that's why they're mean because their mom probably beat them or something similar. It may not have been domestic abuse, but something bad happened to that person. They're carrying the scars of it and their trauma. That allows me to disengage and see both sides of this and realize what they're saying has nothing to do with me.

Robert Greene: Well, that's right.

Dave Asprey: Yes. Okay, I have the rare and great fortune to run a neuroscience lab and to be able to glue stuff to my head. I've traveled to Tibet. I've meditated in Cambodia.

I've done Ayahuasca in South ... Okay, I've done my work, right? Most people don't have the time and effort, or maybe they didn't need as much work as I did because I used to be an angry weird guy. Now, I'm just weird, not angry. What's an average person listening to this is going to go, "How the hell do you disengage from the abusive boss, from the people who are trolling you over and over?" Do you have a recipe, a mastery perspective on getting control over your own emotions when someone's pushing your buttons?

Robert Greene:

Yes, I do. I mean we could spend three hours on that subject alone. The thing is I try and tell you in *Mastery*, and it has to do with how the human brain works. You can master anything if you're patient, and you go through a process. You take basic steps. If you want to learn the bicycle, and you're four years, you know you're going to have to do training wheels, a tricycle. You'll get there. You'll fall a few times, but you'll get there. Mastering your emotions is no different from learning to ride a bicycle or swimming or any kind of skill. It's going to require patience, which of course, is hard to develop in the beginning. It's going to require going through a process and not getting so ahead of yourself. You have to say, "You have to take baby steps." I have ideas in many of my books, including *Mastery* and in my new book about how you can take these baby steps, so that you learn. "Oh, I did this today. I was able to distance myself. I got a reward for it. Wow. Okay, I can do more."

What that will mean is in just a simple scenario, in a seduction-like scenario, you're just starting to date a girl. You're all anxious and insecure. Your first thing is to call her right away or text her. Okay, train yourself to wait 24 hours before you call. Calm yourself down, and see what happens to you. A similar process, which happens to me all the time. It happens to a lot of other people. It's the angry e-mail or the angry whatever it is. You're so pissed off. You're in the moment. You have no perspective. You're blowing something small into something large. Okay. Wait 24 hours and what happens? You wake up the next day and you go, "Wow, man. It wasn't such a big deal. What was I thinking?" You'll learn that with time, you gain a perspective that you didn't have in the moment. You can go through these exercises in all sorts of ways.

In one of my books, I believe in the War book, I talk about Joseph Stalin. You think you have a bad boss. Well, you try working for Joseph Stalin where one wrong word, and you're dead, okay? I talk in the book about a famous composer named Dmitri Shostakovich, a great composer, a music who had to pay court to Stalin and please him and was constantly running afoul. If you ran two afoul, he'd be sent to the labor camps, and he would die. He went through a mental strategy of, "When I'm in front of Joseph Stalin, I think of him as a child. This is a four-year-old in front of me who had to sit on the toilet. His mother had to help him wipe himself," et cetera. Pardon my language. He was potty-trained. I don't know if he was going through this process, but basically, he demythologized him.

He brought him down to the level of, "He's just a human being. He's not this scary, intimidating man. He was a child once." He's very insecure, and allowed him to not embroiled. Of course, he realized the danger that if he showed disrespect, he would also end up dead. He couldn't go too far with that, but it allowed him to not get emotional in the moment. Now, we can take many ways, gimmicks to do that for the particular scenario that you're in, but you want to be taking baby steps and getting little rewards everyday to see the power that you can have on a daily basis, by learning to detach yourself. You don't want to do it from everything. You have your family. You have your children, your loved ones. You also have to learn when is the moment to attach yourself? It's a skill like anything else.

Dave Asprey: It's one of the primary skills that I've trained neurologically on myself. It's something we call the neurofeedback augmented reset process where you sit there, and you look at your brain waves. You see which things cause them to basically stop being functional. Then, you go, "Oh, that's what it feels like." Then, there's a reset practice you go through to actually cut that off. I could learn to be non-reactive in the face of ... I had a board meeting once, and the board room was like, "I should be seeing anxiety in you right now." I looked at him and said, "This is anxiety." I'm like, "Okay. We'll just deal with whatever the situation is, but we don't have to deal with it with an emotional response if things will work, or they won't work. Either way, no one's going to die.

Robert Greene: Well, I find that this is applicable in every situation, but this ability to give yourself 12 hours or 24 hours is so simple.

Dave Asprey: Yes.

Robert Greene: You will see immediately the change within you over time when you don't react. You can get other people to help you do that. You can get other people to not have you send that e-mail. I will do that with people that I consult with. It's so simple, and it starts you on the path to doing, to mastery.

Dave Asprey: For people listening to this who are maybe earlier in their career, if I had known what Robert Greene just said right there about, "Don't send the angry e-mail," I have lost, and I mean this, hundreds of thousands of dollars because of angry e-mails. I wouldn't have lost that job, or I would have gotten promoted. During the lay-off, I wouldn't have been the one laid off. That was 800,000 in that one. What happens there, for me, was I would stay up late at night because that's the time I'm ... (Michael Bruce 00:44:38] calls it a wolf. I get my real productive, creative stuff later at night when no one bothers you. By the way, for people who are like, "Oh, my God. He doesn't wake up early." The early bird works for the late bird, just so we get that right there, but that's not always true either. I would stay up late, and I would write these e-mails, and because like you, feeding trolls is good. I maybe use a little inflammatory language. My ego is engaged. I was angrier and thought they didn't respect me. Whoever the heck messages those are playing in my head.

Then, the next morning, by the time I wake up and go to work, there's fires burning everywhere. It was because of my angry e-mails. "I guess I shouldn't have done that," and my mentors are like, "Dave, you got to stop." Then, you don't know it. Just like you said. I finally learned it in my mid-30's. It's like, "I'm just not going to send angry e-mails." You just pick up the phone, and you tell them. Then, all of a sudden, it's not an angry e-mail anymore, but gods, the advice you just offered, there's half a million people who are going to hear this. Don't send angry e-mails. Whatever you do.

Robert Greene: Right, right. I have been doing this for a long time. I still have to go through that. I still write angry e-mails, and one out of 10 times, I will actually send it. I will regret it, so it's an ongoing process you never completely mastered because you're a human, because you've got that reptilian part of the brainstem or whatever it is. We're emotional creatures. You're never going to completely master it, but getting partway there is a lot.

Dave Asprey: They say the price of freedom is eternal vigilance.

Robert Greene: Yes.

Dave Asprey: That goes doubly for when you're watching that ego inside of you to when it said in your e-mails. Here's another question for you because you studied both Mastery and 48 Laws of Power. I believe, and I want to know if you believe this as well, and I'm really curious. I believe that at our core, we are wired to be kind to each other. When you remove all the bad programming, all the bad programming, all of the trauma, you satisfy basic needs like food, shelter, water, that people's core motivations actually help. Do you share that perspective? Do you think that there's some layer of people who are like, "No, I just want stuff?"

Robert Greene: Well, it's a great essential question that tells you a lot about a person. It's undeniable that we're social animals, that we became who we are, sitting today on a Skype phone call, having evolved beyond other primates by virtue of being social animals that know how to cooperate. This goes back millions of years. At the same time though, as somebody who's writing a book about human nature, there is another element. There's something double of the human [psyche 00:47:38]. There is an aggressive side. There is a side, I call it in my new book, I just used this. I have symbols when I'm writing chapters, and this chapter is called, "Take" because it just epitomizes to me this aspect of human nature where we never feel like we have enough. We have to take more. We have stories of very primitive cultures arriving on the island of New Zealand and destroying all of the large [atemfona 00:48:08] there and eating their way through the environment, and basically creating ecological catastrophe 10,000 years ago.

There's something about the human. I feel like it has to do with our weakness, physically, compared to other animals where we are insecure, where we never feel like we have enough. An aggressive, violent edge to us that can make us

antisocial. At the same time that we are the masters at cooperating, there is something that was put into the machinery, a bug, that has the opposite potential. It's the source for who we are today, and why we're on the verge, perhaps, of destroying life on the planet. I don't feel like you can ignore that destructive side of human nature, and you cannot ignore the empathetic side of human nature and the conscious side of human nature and the ability to overcome some of these irrational animalistic-type desires that we have. I think it's just that we're complex, so I would put those two elements side-by-side, and depending on which prevails, you have a different kind of human being or a different kind of social group.

Dave Asprey: Very, very learned answer. How does that work when you apply that thinking to the different mentalities of power, which okay, people are necessarily power-seeking or power-sharing versus mastery? You talk about mastery and power as different things. You have different books about them. Explain the difference between the two. Do you think that either of those are core human natures?

Robert Greene: Well, the power is definitely a core human nature. People have written books about chimpanzees and how Machiavellian they are. You could probably take six of the 48 laws and show that chimpanzees actually use these laws of power. I'm remember the [series 00:50:14] of it. They never outshine the master.

Dave Asprey: Yes, I believe you, yes.

Robert Greene: It's definitely wired into us. We are a Machiavellian animal, and our primate ancestors, particularly chimpanzees are very Machiavellian. We are also the creature that knows how to master things. They're just different sides of the [psyche 00:50:37]. I just try to tell people, "We live in a complex world where you have to know how to be social and political." Now, I interviewed Paul Graham for Mastery. I know you're probably familiar with Paul Graham. He is someone who's obviously become very powerful, and he-

Dave Asprey: Explain for our listeners who may not know who Paul Graham is. I just want to be polite to them, in case someone doesn't know.

Robert Greene: Well, originally, in the 90's, he invented the first place to shop on the internet, which he sold to Yahoo and made quite a lot of money. Then, he retired and became one of the first really popular bloggers in Silicon Valley and writes a lot about power and wealth and other interesting issues. Then, he started Y Combinator about, what? 10 years ago?

Dave Asprey: Yes.

Robert Greene: I don't know how long ago.

Dave Asprey: That's about right.

Robert Greene: He sold and is no longer involved. I don't know what his latest venture is. I interviewed him for Mastery about five years ago. Y Combinator is this ultimate incubator school, school for entrepreneurs, in which he teaches you how to make a brilliant start-up. In return, if it works, he gets a share of whatever you create. It's worth billions of dollars, and he sold it to, I think, Sam Altman is now the new CEO.

Dave Asprey: Yes.

Robert Greene: Anyway, so he's a brilliant guy. He was originally a hacker, studied Computer Programming, artificial intelligence, brilliant, brilliant hacker, computer programming guy. Anyway, Paul Graham is terrible at the political side of stuff. He admits it. He hates it. He read the 48 Laws of Power, but he says he just hated it. He hated politics. It was why he couldn't be an academia. It was ruining his career. He just wanted to be by himself, and he knows it. He knows that it's a weakness of his, and you can't survive even in Silicon Valley, even with just your computing skills if you can't get along with people. What does he do? Well, his hack is he depends on his wife.

Dave Asprey: Exactly.

Robert Greene: His wife is actually brilliant in dealing with people. She's very sympathetic, very empathetic person, and he lets her handle it all. The interesting thing is he knows that that's his weakness, and he covered for his weakness. You cannot escape the social element. You need the 48 Laws of Power. On the other hand, if that's the only thing you read or follow, you're going to be a con artist because all you deal in life is illusion. It's creating the illusion of power. You know how to make yourself look big and greater. You use unpredictability, law 17 or so, which is Donald Trump's law. The power of being unpredictable and how it intimidates people. You can be good at all these things, but it's an all-illusion, really. If it's not based on anything real, you have to skill. You have no talent. You have no creative energy. It won't get you, ultimately, very far.

Mastery, I created that because I feel like a lot of young people have lost connection to the wisdom that the brain actually grounds you in the brain himself. How we learn, how we develop skills, and the power that you get once you reach a level of 10,000, 15,000, 20,000 hours is very, very real. The power of a Bobby Fischer compared to someone who's just starting out playing chess is unbelievable. Think of the potential of the human brain when you get to that 20,000-hour point. I wanted to cover that subject, so people didn't get the impression that me, Robert Greene, I believe it's all about power and politics and bullshit. No. You really do need to master whatever it is that you do.

Dave Asprey: That said, if you want to become a master of your craft, if you don't know the 48 Laws of Power, it will take you a lot longer to become a master because people will keep throwing stuff in front of you, speed bumps that appear for no reason you perceive. I never consciously used the 48 Laws of Power. I'm sure I might

have accidentally done it, but I don't use those. As an awareness tool to know when you're being played, oh my god, this was like a firewall for me, sociologically. Like Paul Graham there, I didn't natively have the social skills. I was 300 pounds. I had cognitive fatigue during some of these. That's like hacking the human body thing. Losing 100 pounds was cool. Then, raising my IQ and all that stuff, but I've got a lot more social skills. I actually make eye contact, all that stuff now. I used to be Asperger's directional stuff. Even to this day, there are some social skills that I'm just not going to think about. I have a really good Executive admin, and I have a socially aware wife.

Robert Greene: Right, right, right.

Dave Asprey: What I've learned as an entrepreneur is look, if there's stuff that doesn't come natively to you, you need very basic proficiency, and you can hire the skills. If you receive a gift from me, and you may or may not have, it's actually not from me. I'm sorry. Anyone who's received a gift from me, I probably signed the book, but I didn't think to send it because gift-giving isn't my love language, to quote the Five Love Languages. I didn't even think about that, but I know I'm supposed to do it. I have someone who thinks about it for you.

Robert Greene: I see.

Dave Asprey: That's not a weakness, right? That's actually a strength, but if we're going back to our conversation about ego and all, a lot of people, especially as they're working to become masters, they spend so much energy focusing on their weaknesses, instead of their strengths. What does your take on mastery have to do with how to achieve balance between not being a total idiot in this perspective versus being a rockstar in this perspective?

Robert Greene: Well, so I have six chapters in Mastery. Chapter four is on social intelligence. I'm telling the reader that social intelligence is a skill that you must develop, or you're going to be in trouble. There are a couple other skills such as your apprenticeship and your ability to work with a mentor. It is one among three things that you must absolutely learn to be proficient at. Also, knowing your career. What is the-

Dave Asprey: Can I pause you for a second there to just double-down on that one for listeners? There's a guy some people have heard of, Marc Andreessen. If you're our age, you all know who Marc is.

Robert Greene: Sure.

Dave Asprey: Marc wrote the very first web browser, okay?

Robert Greene: Yes.

Dave Asprey: I was the first guy to sell anything over the internet, and I did that before Marc wrote the first web browser, and I was a tech journalist. I reviewed his browser versus the Netscape 1.0, okay? Marc Andreessen is worth a cabillion dollars. I am not very economically successful by comparison. In fact, I've lost my fortune when I was that age and have worked for a paycheck ever since. I still have a paycheck because I have investors, right? The difference between Marc Andreessen and me back then is that I was arrogant and stupid. There was no way I would have listened to a mentor, or I wouldn't have apprenticed anywhere because I already knew everything.

Marc walked over to Jim Clark in Silicon Valley, the guy who ran Sun Microsystems, one of the big computing companies that's now defunct because Oracle bought them, and was like, "Hey, Jim. Can you tell me how to do this?" Marc, in his great wisdom, created all these stuff because he would take advice from the masters, and because I was an arrogant punk with too much ego, I wouldn't. The difference is hundreds of times difference in economic output, so just learn from the lessons that Robert is talking about right here. Learn from the mistakes I've made. That rule matters. Anyway, keep going. I just wanted to make sure that's really clear.

Robert Greene: Well, yes, yes, so I'm trying to tell you hopefully, you'll read the whole book before you go out and do whatever you're going to be doing in your career.

Dave Asprey: This is Mastery, right, the book you're talking about?

Robert Greene: Mastery, yes.

Dave Asprey: Okay.

Robert Greene: I wrote a whole chapter on social intelligence within Mastery, saying that the brain is an entire organ. Although it's a controversial subject, but there aren't separate components for mastering computer programming and mastering how to deal with people. In fact, they're all intertwined, interconnected. Your ability to be social, to get along with people, to have empathy actually has a profound impact on your ability to solve everyday problems. The process of getting inside another person and thinking, "Wow," what is going on in their mind is almost a similar process to, "Hmm, there's something in the atmosphere, a particular chemical compound that I want to solve." Whatever it is, it's a very similar mental process of putting yourself inside a phenomenon and thinking through it. The brain is an interconnected organ. You need to be able to have basic social skills and social intelligence, no matter what level you're at.

Some people, it comes naturally to. Jessica Livingston, Paul Graham's wife, your wife, they don't really need to be bothering about social intelligence. A lot of women are like this. They're good at it. They know it. It's in their blood, so they can skip chapter four. Other people are brilliant hackers and can learn the hell out of something, have zero social skills. They need to spend a lot more time on

chapter four. The great polymaths that I was fascinated with, people like Da Vinci. I think you'd have to consider Benjamin Franklin, one of the great polymaths were brilliant at the social game. Da Vinci was the most charming man anyone ever met. Benjamin Franklin was master at human psychology. He had to learn it. He didn't start out brilliant at it. He realized he was actually quite weak, and he trained himself to be an incredible observer of people and to just basically study and witness and observe people in action.

It's a skill. You learn the skill by practicing it. To ignore the social or political game is extremely dangerous, as you discovered in your life. If you're someone starting out, you're 22 years old, and you're about to enter a career or a job, you have to practice both of them. Even if you're naturally gifted at the social game, you still have to practice them. When you're starting your career, you're spending a lot of time working on your skills, whatever those skills are, and you're observing the people around you. You're observing the social dynamic. You're observing the power dynamic. You look at the boss, and you say, "Why did this man or woman get to that place? What's their characteristics? What is the culture of the place where I'm working at? Do they value assertiveness, or do they value cooperation? What is the psychology of the people involved, as they interconnect with each other?" You want to be alive and sensitive to that, as sensitive as you are to the actual skills that you're having to learn, whether it's writing copy or hacking or whatever. That's how I basically structured Mastery.

Beware, woe to you if you ignore social intelligence.

Dave Asprey:

There's a hack for that, at least the way I picked up a lot of that, in addition to just personal development stuff. I had picked up on the importance of this after getting my ass handed to me a few times in my career and in my 20's. I started going to a business networking meet-up that happened every Thursday night on the Stanford campus. We have this thing called the Stanford Barn. This was for early ... I don't they had invented the word e-commerce yet. We still called ourselves the Web Guild. This was before web masters were a thing, now that they're mostly gone. We get together every Thursday, and there were these business people. I show up. I'm this fat engineering guy, don't know how to dress like, "Are you sure it's okay?" Don't understand any of these stuff, and I did this for two years every Thursday night, give or take, just because it was like a cultural anthropologist. I was watching these people. I had no clue. Finally, I learned how to interact and not just enter and eat all the grapes.

Robert Greene:

Right, right.

Dave Asprey:

It didn't come, at all, naturally, but if I hadn't done that, I don't think I can function the way I do today because for me, that was remedial learning, just to get up to kindergarten level. I think a lot of people listening who don't understand or even look down on shmoozing or networking or things like that

know. It's like the way bees dance. They wiggle their butts, and they signal through each other. Humans have some of that. It's just harder to see.

Robert Greene: Well, you bring up a very good point. I should have said that earlier. It is almost like a basic skill that you must develop. It's almost like when we were talking about waiting before you send that angry e-mail. Simple exposure to social situations is how you're going to start developing the skill. If you spend a lot of time alone, that skill atrophies. The virtual version of it isn't good enough. Eye contact isn't the same on a computer, as it is in flesh and blood. You need to be out there, doing what you did. Your intuitive wisdom there is simply interacting with people, going to more social situations, observing people, absorbing their energy, forcing yourself to interact. If you're in an office, that's how you practice the skill as an actual real interactions, not on the computer, not on Facebook, et cetera. You bring up a very good point. Probably the most essential thing that you can do is actually, the more social interactions you have, the more the skill will start naturally developing.

Dave Asprey: What are your other top techniques for developing mastery?

Robert Greene: Well, Mastery begins chapter one with one very simple thing. If you don't do chapter one, there's no hope for you, I'm afraid. Well, it's true. That is choosing the right path, the right career, what I call your life's task. I call it your life's task, and it's one moment where I might wax a little poetic, but you're a very unique person. Your set of molecules, your DNA, there's nobody else like you ever, will ever exist or has ever existed. There's something unique about what you're interested in. What I call your primal inclinations, the subjects that you're inclined to when you were three, four, five years old. You want to be able to work within that basic strength that you have. The brain learns at a much higher rate when you're emotionally engaged, when you want to learn, when it's something that excites you. If it's something that you have to learn, you absorb one-tenth of the information that you have when you are alive and tense. "Man, I really want to learn this because I love this subject."

If you choose a career, the typical scenario is you listen to your parents and your friends. You got to law school because you know that's going to make a lot of money, but it's not what you love. You can get pretty far, but you're never going to get to mastery. You're never going to learn at the rate that an Einstein learned when he realized at a very early age that he was obsessed with Physics and obsessed with the question of relativity and spend day and night and day and night, thinking about one particular problem. You're never going to learn at that optimum rate by choosing something that you don't love. Mastery begins and ends with that because if you find what it is, and the problem with a lot of people is they don't know what that is. Finding what that is and creating the perfect niche for yourself makes all the other things, will happen in an organic way. It will help you to learn some of the things I discuss in the book, such as the importance of the apprenticeship phase, the importance of working with a mentor, et cetera.

If you don't know who you are, you don't know what you love, you don't know what you're good at, you're never going to get there. I give many, many examples on how to find it and of people in history who found it in a strange way. It's not like you wake up and go, "Oh, I meant to write the 48 Laws of Power." Life doesn't work like that. It's a process. You're discovering what you hate. You're discovering the jobs you don't want to do. You're discovering the writing that doesn't appeal to you. Then, eventually, if you're alert and self-aware, you'll discover it. That's like the gist of it. You don't find ... It can happen later in life. It doesn't necessarily have to happen in your 20's. It's better if it happens in your 20's because when you're younger, you're more creative and more energetic. It can happen in your 30's or 40's. I didn't start writing the 48 Laws of Power until I was 37, so it took me a while to figure out what my life's task was.

Dave Asprey: Well, I'm grateful that you decided to do that because that was a really impactful book. You sold one and a half or 1.2 million copies or something.

Robert Greene: Oh, we're getting closer to two million now.

Dave Asprey: Oh, to two? There you go. That's well-deserved. For people listening, you guys have heard me interview 350 experts. Maverick scientists, crazy geniuses, authors, teachers, celebrities, a few of them. Of all of them, if there's only a few books you're going to read, I'm telling you. Pick a couple of Robert's books. Robert, this is not just on the show. This is actually my genuine belief there. You really want to change the trajectory of what's going to happen in your life over the next hundred years. Yes, if you're young, you have a pretty good chance of living a hundred years from how ever how old you are today. Thank you, technology. Do this. Read Mastery. Read the 48 Laws of Power. Know when you're being played. It's just priceless. Biohacking is cool. Having cells that work is really important, so you have the will power to apply the skills for mastery and all that stuff, but if you're just walking into invisible walls all the time, you don't know it, it sucks. I only say that from personal experience. You really helped me see some of those walls, so I'm actually just full of gratitude that I get to interview you because how cool is that? I have one more question for you.

Robert Greene: Thank you.

Dave Asprey: Oh, you're so welcome.

Robert Greene: Sure.

Dave Asprey: Final question I've asked every guest on the show. If someone came to you tomorrow, and they said, "Look, I want to be better at everything I do. I want to kick-ass at life," what are the three most important pieces of advice you have for me? What would you do? How would you distill all of this knowledge you have?

Robert Greene: I would say lower your expectations a little bit. Don't try for that.

Dave Asprey: Just a little better, come on.

Robert Greene: That's the 20-year-old who thinks that he or she can just be great at everything. You can't because it's not how we're wired. I want you to scale down. I'm writing a chapter in my new book. It's the Laws of Human Nature, and each chapter deals with a slightly negative quality in human nature. The chapter I'm finishing now is on grandiosity. At the end of the chapter, I talk about practical grandiosity. How to be grandiose, but in a practical way. The practical way is to focus on something simple. Develop, concentrate your energies. When the mind is concentrated and focused, it has immense powers. When it's diffused and distracted, and things that can accomplish 80 things, it's useless. You neutralize all of the powers of the brain that you were born with.

Dave Asprey: You're saying focus on some things?

Robert Greene: Yes. I want you when you're 20, 22, that great wonderful age, to say, "I'm going to be absolutely brilliant at this one thing. I'm going to master this one thing." In mastering this one thing, it will open up like the lotus flower image in Buddhism. It will open up to five or 10 or 20 other things. Paul Graham, all he mastered when we was 21, 22 was programming. He was just an absolute great programmer. He also studied painting. I don't know why he was interested in art. It was a second thing. Then, years went by. He didn't know what he wanted to do, and he let time go by. He was a little bit lost. Then, he heard an ad on the radio. He was painting in a loft in New York when he thought he was going to be a painter. He heard an ad on the radio for Netscape and how Netscape was going to be the new frontier. People were going to buy things on the internet. He goes, "Shit, man. I'm sitting here, barely making a living, painting. I can make a fortune."

All of that programming skills that he developed in his 20's, now, he could shift and do something that he never thought of when he was 23. He had the skill to exploit this new frontier. You want to have a basic skill that you can now exploit for whatever it is that's going to come upon you in five years, where you can suddenly seize some great opportunity. Once you learn that basic skill, okay, learn a second one if you want. Learn a third one, but don't go on until you've actually first mastered that first one. Learn to control your impatience. Master yourself.

I'm going to give you an advice. It's master yourself. Yourself without any help is someone who's impatient, insecure. You're like a four-year-old that's led out into the world of adults. You don't have what is necessary to succeed because you have no control over yourself. You think you're great, and you're not great. You have no skill. You have no experience. You have no knowledge. Get over it, okay? You-

Dave Asprey: No, I love this, man.

Robert Greene: Someone had to say it. This is cool. You need to master yourself. You need to overcome all of these things that you think you're so great at, and you're not. If you're going to learn one thing, it's going to be you're going to control your impatience. You're going to control your grandiosity. You're going to control all the other things. Your emotions that tend to reek havoc in the office or wherever. All the other things that you want, you'll get in your 30's or 40's. If you start off when you're 21 and say, "I'm going to get everything, man. I'm going to conquer the world. I'm going to bust whatever it is." You probably won't get very far.

If you start focusing on one thing, and you're patient, and you love it, and you're excited, when you're in your 30's, that organically will happen to you. Believe me. In fact, I have story after story of people in history and people I interviewed for Mastery. It's the path that will lead you to something. I know it's not what you want to hear. You want to hear some formula for getting everything you want and being happy, but it doesn't exist. It takes work. It takes work.

Dave Asprey: Very well-said. Did we get three in there? I think that was three.

Robert Greene: I don't know. I'm sorry.

Dave Asprey: I'm trying to count, but that was at least three, and it was all great wisdom. Do you mind if I ask how old you are?

Robert Greene: I'm 57.

Dave Asprey: 57. Actually, I'm 44, so you've got more than a decade on me.

Robert Greene: I do.

Dave Asprey: Actually, you've lived more, and one of the things that I didn't appreciate when I was young is the wisdom of elders. I think you talk about that a lot in Mastery.

Robert Greene: Yes.

Dave Asprey: I actually learned that because I started running an anti-aging non-profit group in Palo Alto called the Silicon Valley Health Institute. People in my board of directors were 88 years old.

Robert Greene: Oh, wow, wow, yes.

Dave Asprey: You're like, "These people are so much better than I am in almost everything." It's the value of experience. Like you said, falling down and exposure and things like that. What profound advice, Robert. Even better than I hoped that you'd [give us 01:16:37].

Robert Greene: Oh, well, that's good. That's good to hear.

Dave Asprey: Thanks so much for being on Bulletproof Radio.

Robert Greene: Oh, my pleasure, my pleasure.

Dave Asprey: For listeners, you might not know this. If you go to the Bulletproof website blog.bulletproof.com, there's transcripts for all of Bulletproof radio. You can actually download this, and what I'm going to do is I'm going to list all of Robert's books on there as links. What I want you to do is just close your eyes and click one of the links.

Robert Greene: That's good.

Dave Asprey: It will take you to Amazon and read that book if you haven't read any of them. I would say maybe the Art of Seduction is either more or less interesting to you. If you're married with kids like I am, trust me. The Art of Seduction might be more important to you than it is when you're 22 and dating. I'm just saying. You guys have Tinder, all right? I don't.

Robert Greene: Yes, that's right. The Art of Seduction is also about social seduction.

Dave Asprey: It is, it is.

Robert Greene: And political seduction and marketing seduction. It's all the same.

Dave Asprey: Very well-said. All right. When your next book comes out, I hope to have you back on Bulletproof Radio.

Robert Greene: I would love that. I would love that.

Dave Asprey: The week of launch, we'll make sure everyone listening hears about the book because honestly, you were one of ... This might sound like I'm kissing your ass, but I'm not. In my experience of reading a lot of personal growth, which isn't really your category, but a lot of other stuff. You have provided more wisdom with more rigor than most other authors I've come across.

Robert Greene: Oh, that's very nice. Thank you.

Dave Asprey: Yes, so a full endorsement from Bulletproof on Robert Greene's writing. You guys should read all of it.

Robert Greene: Wow, thank you.

Dave Asprey: Robert, I look forward to our next conversation.

Robert Greene: Oh, me too, Dave. Thank you. That was great. It was great. I really enjoyed it.