

Speaker 1: Bulletproof Radio, a state of high performance.

Dave Asprey: You're listening to Bulletproof Radio with Dave Asprey. Today's cool fact of the day is that a child has new skin, thanks to genetically modified stem cells. There's a young boy with a rare illness, whose name I'm not even going to try and pronounce, epidermolysis bullosa, which means that 80% of his skin has been damaged. Doctors treated all this 80% of skin damage using transplants from genetically modified stem cells.

They got the cells from the kid. They processed them, and put the entactogen back into the stem cells, put them back on the kid. Two years later, he has no scars in the areas that are transplanted. The little kid is back in school again, which is totally cool because, right now, I take my stem cells. I have them taken out, and amplified, and cleaned, and made stronger, and then re-injected into all sorts of crazy areas. If you were at the Bulletproof Conference, you would have seen a video of one of those crazy areas. I've had it in my brain and all these places. Right now, I just put my own stem cells back in. What if I could take my stem cells out? I could upgrade them, and put them back in? That'd be cool.

What if you could do the same thing both for disease or just because you wanted to look like you are 25 when you are 85? This is what's coming. It's awesome. This has never happened in recorded history, which is really, really cool.

All right. Before we get into the rest of the show, did you know that Bulletproof makes three different roasts of our lab-tested coffee? The big innovation in coffee that kicked this all off wasn't just putting butter and brain octane in coffee. It was making coffee without the jittering crash. We changed coffee processing in Central America, and worked with a guy who trains the coffee judges for the Cup of Excellence, which is the world series of coffee tasting, and we worked on three different roasts.

There's a dark roast that doesn't taste like burnt crap. It actually tastes really good. I told them it wasn't possible, and they proved me wrong. There's the mentalist, which is a medium dark roast, which I absolutely love on my espresso machine. There's the original, which is a medium roast. You can get a three pack that lets you try all three of these. They're all Rainforest Alliance-certified, and they're all lab-tested. Then, I'll use our custom process with equipment that we installed in Colombia and Guatemala in order to make coffee that is super clean that makes you feel amazing. Try all three when you order from bulletproof.com. You'll find the one that's best for you, or you can just use different ones on different days depending on how dark you're feeling.

All right. Today's guest has an amazing name because his name is Jamie Smart. How could I not have him on the show? He's a Sunday Times bestselling author of books like Results: Think Less, Achieve More, and another one called Clarity: Clear Mind, Better Performance, Bigger Results. Since one of the biggest things you can do to increase your performance is actually have a brain that works, have mental clarity, that's why I want to have him on the show to talk about this. Jamie, welcome to the show.

Jamie Smart: Hey, it's great to be here. Thanks for inviting me, Dave.

Dave Asprey: All right. Let's talk about your background. You've been a coach for big companies for over a decade talking about mental clarity. You're paying your employees a lot of money and all this. If they're walking around in a fog, you're not getting your money's worth, and they're probably not happy either. What led you to work with organizations on that specific problem?

Jamie Smart: Well, my own background was working in organizations as an employee, as a project manager running a lot of projects. I got really, really fascinated because we had an old saying, which is, "It's never a technology problem. It's always a people problem." Even when it looks like a technology problem, it's still a people problem.

Dave Asprey: Hold on. Hold on a second, Jamie. I come from technology. I've done project management. I've used Microsoft Project. You are still telling me it's never a technology problem.

Jamie Smart: Well, I'm not saying there are never bugs in software and that sort of thing, but you know what I mean in that. It was interesting because I became fascinated with that, with the mind, and how does the mind work, and what makes that difference. As a project manager, I went on a personal development course. This is back in 1998. It's really funny, Dave. My whole life, I was clever and everything, but I didn't know anything about beliefs, limiting beliefs, anything like that. I just thought I'm an employment guy, and I had friends who were running their own businesses, and stuff. It sounds really silly now, but I just thought it was they had run-your-own-business DNA, and I had employee DNA.

Anyway, I went on this course, quit my job within two weeks, and started contracting, and that sort of thing, and learning about the mind. I became fascinated with it. I started out exploring NLP, neurolinguistics programming. I became an NLP trainer, built an NLP training company, and a product development company, and all that sort of stuff.

Then, in 2007, I read Tim Ferriss' book, 4-Hour Workweek. I was like, "That's where I've been going wrong. I got to get my business running on autopilot, so I can go around the world, and have adventures." We did that, got the business. I went for my first mini retirement in 2008. I went for a three months ski holiday. After six weeks, I was miserable. I was like, "What the hell? I'm supposed to

have white light shining out of all my orifice. I'm supposed to be beyond happy. What's wrong with this picture?"

The problem I had, Dave, was as far as I was concerned, I had the best psychological technology going. What was going on here? I went back to the drawing board. I hired a coach for a year. He started pointing me in the direction of a deeper understanding of how the mind works. At first, I was like, "Yeah, this is just another belief system," and that sort of thing.

I started having a couple of insights. By insight, I mean realization, and waking up to something that's already true. We've all had those. The first insight I had was that everything that I've been looking for outside of myself was already there within me. I mean, we know this from spiritual traditions and that sort of thing, but I knew it intellectually, but I didn't know it. Right away, that did something for me. That changed my perspective.

The second insight I had a couple of months later because I let go of work a lot, coaching people, and training coaches and therapists, and that sort of thing, I realized that the fact that someone can even see, or hear, or perceive means that they have a source of clarity, and wellbeing, and mental health within them. Now, that was an absolute game changer for me as a coach right there because if you stop and think about it for a minute, it's obvious. Little babies aren't born needing therapy. They already work really well psychologically. It's, obviously, something that we're adding in over time that's getting in the way of that, getting in the way of the mind self-correcting nature. That was the second insight.

The third one, and this was the game changer for me, came about six months in because up until then, I thought this stuff I was exploring was interesting in a new approach or belief system, but I suddenly realized, "This is principles." You see, the field of psychology at the moment, it's in a pre-principle state like medicine before germ theory, or physics before Newton, and thermodynamics, and all that stuff. There's no broad agreement on how the mind works across the field of psychology. You've got 700 different schools of talk therapy with theories, and heuristics, and all that sort of stuff. It's a field that it's still in its infancy.

What I suddenly realized was this understanding of the mind is to psychology, whether discovery of germs was to medicine, or the discovery of the link between germs and infection. Right there, I literally called up my business partner that day and said, "We're moving away from the field of NLP. There's principles behind psychology," because when I had that insight, what I saw was that it's very, very relevant actually to the world we're living at the moment with the amazing technology we got with social media, and phones, and everything like this.

If we look back 200 years to the germ revolution, there was a humanitarian crisis because the Industrial Revolution, which brought such amazing stuff,

meant tons of people were moving to cities. They had these huge hospitals. All of a sudden, the misunderstanding of germs led to a humanitarian crisis. Well, it looks to me like we're in the same situation today. We've got these amazing technologies, which make incredible things possible. Because we have a lack of understanding of how the mind works, we're facing increasing levels of stress, anxiety, depression.

The reports here in the UK came out just a week ago saying mental health issues are costing the economy £99 billion a year. That's over \$100 billion. Anyway, it's a tipping point. That realization that these are principles for psychology, that's what led me to do this work.

Dave Asprey: Now, you talked about principles of psychology, and there's 700 schools of talk therapy. All these different perspectives, and we probably read a lot of similar books. I've ended up with some principles that I use in my work. What are the core principles that you're using in your work that people listening would want to hear about?

Jamie Smart: I'm glad you've asked that question because when I'm talking about principles, I'm not talking about principles in the sense of good ideas. For instance, in NLP, we had a bunch of presuppositions like think of people in a certain way, and no failure on a feedback, and those sorts of things, which were really good ideas to operate by.

When I'm talking about principles, I'm talking about preexisting facts of life. When Newton discovered universal gravitation, it was already there; or when Copernicus figured out that the Earth goes around the sun, and not the other way around, it was an observation of what was already true about the world; or when Ignaz Semmelweis discovered that there was a link between germs and infection, he suddenly saw it. He was like, "Oh my god. This is how it already works." Then, it took another 60 years before the field of medicine caught up with that.

What I'm talking about is something that's already true about life. It's going to sound deceptively simple, but let me lay it out for you. I'll do it as quick as I can. The way that our perceptions work is it's less like looking out through a window or through a camera. It's more like wearing a pair of virtual reality goggles. Data pores in through all our senses. Then, our minds take a guess of what we think is out there. So far, for all of us, it's a pretty good guess because we're still alive. It's, at least, good enough. That guess is, at least, good enough to navigate in the world.

Even if you look around the room you're in or wherever you are, everything you can see here and feel, that perception is internally generated based, to some degree, on data, but it's internally generated. It doesn't look like it's internally generated. It just looks like I'm sitting in my room, but our experience is internally generated. This is old neuroscience. They figured this out in the 1850s.

Here's the thing. What I'm pointing to is that that power to create an internally generated perceptual reality and experience it as an actual reality, that's a power that we have, and that's a principle. I'm going to call that the principle of thought. Here's where the rubber meets the road. We're always living in the felt experience, in the feeling of thought in the moment. It genuinely seems to us, Dave, like we're feeling our email inbox, or our bank accounts, or our girlfriend, or our boyfriend, or what happened last week, or what we're going to do next month, it seems like we're experiencing that stuff. Actually, what we're always experiencing is that moment-to-moment perceptual process.

I'll give you a really simple example. Little kids, we give them teddy bears when they're little as transitional objects for when they're going to sleep at night. If the child bonds with the teddy bear, or the blanket, or whatever, they get feelings of comfort, and peace, and security when they hold on to it. If you forget the teddy bear sometime, then they freak out. It genuinely seems the child, the feelings of comfort are coming from the bear. If they're feeling anxious because they forgot it in a hotel, they're feeling the absence of the bear. Actually, all of that is coming from within them. 100% of it is coming from within the psychology of the child. 0% of it is coming from the bear. There's no feeling emitter in the bear. The child is experiencing their own psychology.

Now, we get that. That's noncontroversial. It looks different when we look at adult teddy bears, like jobs, or companies, or partners, or our physical body, our health, or our personality, or our future, or our past. It can genuinely seem like our experience or our feelings are coming from that stuff. It can't possibly work that way. 100% of it is coming from your psychology, moment-to-moment-to moment. None of it is coming from anywhere else.

That's what I'm suggesting is the core, the psychological equivalent of the difference between the idea that the sun goes around the earth versus the earth goes around the sun, it only works one way. It's not a 50/50 deal. It works one way all the time. My assertion is we're living in the feeling of the principle of thought moment-to-moment. 100% of the time, it often seems like there's more to it than that, but there never is. That's the thing.

Dave Asprey: You talked about feelings, and you talked about thoughts. You said we're living in a field of thought, but most of what that kid was feeling, most of what someone is feeling about a fight with their spouse or whatever else, those are all not thoughts. Those are all feelings. What's the difference between the two?

Jamie Smart: When I talk about the principle of thought, I'm talking about that ability we each have to create a perceptual experience. To even see what we're calling the world, that's internally generated. That power to create a reality or an experiential reality, that's what I'm calling the power of thoughts. I'm not talking about the thoughts that are running through your head. I'm talking about your moment-to-moment perceptual experience.

Because that's made up, if you stop and think about it for a moment, one day, you can now look at your car, and think, "Oh man, that's a fine automobile." The next day, you look at it, and you're like, "Oh man, what a piece of crap." Our felt experience isn't telling us about the car because the car doesn't change that much. It's telling you about your mood. Another way of thinking about it is your mood is like a pair of glasses that you're wearing. Your feeling is telling you about the glasses, not about what you're looking at. It's a trick of the mind.

Dave Asprey: Sorry. I would buy that. How does this tie back to mental clarity for people?

Jamie Smart: Great question. Clarity is our natural state. That's our default setting, you can say. That's what we're built to revert back to. Clarity, peace of mind, connection, basics like that, resilience. The thing that gets in the way of that more reliably than anything else is believing our felt experience is coming from something other than the moment.

A simple example. I, sometimes, work with people on fear of public speaking. It's the same whether it's fear of public speaking, fear of flying, any of those things. I had someone talk to me. She said, "I'm doing a Ted Talk in three weeks. I'm just all jittery about it." She's all anxious, anxious. The closer she got to it, the more anxious she got.

I told her, "Well, where does it seem to you like your experience is coming from? What are those feelings letting you know about you?" She's like, "Well, the talk." I'm like, "Well, that's not possible. How are the feelings getting from the talk in three weeks from there into you? That's not possible. That would take time machines and stuff. You're feeling your own psychology in this moment. None of it has got to do anything with the talk."

Now, she's like, "Well, no. I know that it's my thinking, but it's got something to do with the talk." No, that's what gets in the way of the mental clarity. As soon as we believe we're feeling something other than our moment-to-moment experience, as soon as we believe we're feeling the future, the past, other people, whatever, that gets in the way of our mental clarity.

I used the example of little kids. It happens to them all the time, but they trend back to clarity very, very quickly because little kids haven't yet built a model of the world or a game plan for living that has all these ideas about like that it's possible to feel the future. Little kids don't even know the difference between three weeks from now. It's through building that model of the world, that model of time, that model of how the world works, though we start innocently interfering with our own mental clarity.

Dave Asprey: This woman is feeling anxiety that's clearly self-generated. It's not intentionally generated about a talk in three weeks. When she goes on stage, when she feels the fear or walking out, that is in the moment. How does the mental clarity apply there?

Jamie Smart:

Well, it's great example because what you'll often find is the person who's terrified of something, whether it's public speaking or anything else, before the event. Many people, once they do it, they're fine, or they get two minutes in, and then their head clears. The person who gets up on stage and totally freezes, they got so much on their minds.

If you ask someone who's a really comfortable and natural public speaker, what are you thinking about when you're on stage, they'll be like, "Not much. I'm paying attention to the audience. I might check in on where I want to next, or listen to something someone's just asked." They're not thinking about much.

You ask someone who's freaked out about public speaking, they're thinking about everything. They're thinking about, "How's this going to work? What if I forget what to say? Do you look stupid in this?" They're very attentive to how they're feeling. The person who's freaked out when they're on stage is someone whose head is clouded with what I call contaminated thinking. Contaminated thinking is just thinking that arises from believing the world works in a way that it doesn't work. It's not possible for them to be feeling the audience or the future when they forget about what to say or anything like that. They're just feeling their psychology in the moment.

The cool thing is the moment you glimpse. We all lose sight of this. Me too. I've been teaching it for a long time. We all lose sight of it, but the moment you wake up to it, instantly, you're back in the present moment. This is what happens for a lot of people who freak about public speaking, or flights, or whatever. Then, their head clears once they start because that self-correcting nature of the mind is a built-in capacity that we all have.

Dave Asprey:

How do people listening to the show today take this and make it actionable? Let's say a listener has stage fright or they're afraid of flying, or these other examples, something like going on a date, whatever it is that feels like, "What if I do something wrong? I'll die." What do you do to get clarity beforehand? Is it just a matter of understanding, "I'm generating all this, it's not real," even though you're feeling it? How do you use this?

Jamie Smart:

Yeah. My answer to that question is yes and no when you said is it just a matter of understanding it. There's understanding it, and then there's understanding it. There's getting it in the muscle. There's understanding it intellectually, which is like saying, "I don't really understand it," but there's actually seeing it for yourself.

I've got good news and bad news. The good news is someone listening to this broadcast could hear something in this interview that clears their head, and it does something for them on go-forward basis. They just see the truth of it. It's like, "Oh, I get it. That's how it works." The only thing that's going to action it for you in a go-forward way is your own insight, your own realization of what's already true. That's a capacity that we all have. Every human being has this capacity for realization because that's how we've learned to do almost

everything we've already learned. That's the good news is that we have that capacity built in.

The not-so-encouraging news is you can give me a group of people, and I can't predict who's going to glimpse this, see this quicker than the next person. I'll give you an example. I just make these little two-minute videos I've been experimenting with on Facebook, and send them out. I get this email. I did one on anxiety and stress in the workplace. I get an email from this guy called Lloyd who I never met. He said, "Jamie, I want to thank you for that two-minute video about anxiety we make." He said, "I had a heart attack six months ago. I've been suffering with depression, and anxiety, and stress ever since." He said, "I watched your two-minute video. I saw something. It's made a positive shift in my life." He's talking more from even six months of therapy.

The actionable thing is if what I'm saying, even if you're like, "Well, I don't really get what he's saying, but it sounds like he's on to something," look in this direction. If I was going to give someone a question they could ask themselves, it would be really simple, "Where does it seem to you your experience is coming from?"

With the guy who's freaking out about going on a date, or the person who's freaking out about going on stage next week, or whatever, you ask them, "Where do you believe your felt experience is coming from?" Because in those situations, the thing that gets in people's way, it's all the feelings. It's all the kinesthetic. It's like they feel anxious, or their heart is beating too much, or whatever. You ask them, where do you believe your experience is coming from?

I guarantee you, it's going to seem to them like it's coming from the future, or the consequences of date going badly, or "What if I don't know what to say?", or "What if I screw up on stage?" It's going to seem to them like their experience is getting them information about something other than this moment. That's something to get curious about because if it's the future, that's so not possible. I know what looks possible, but not a thing. No way that that can be happening. It's to get humbly curious about that.

Dave Asprey:

There's a guy named Paul Sinoff who's done a lot of work on actual physical chronic pain in the body who has a similar perspective. I know, in fact, a former guest on Bulletproof Radio, Steve Omohundro, who's working on artificial intelligence and global brains, told me about Sinoff's work maybe 10 years ago. He said, "Dave, this chronic pain, I read the book, and it went away, and it stayed away forever." I've met dozens of people with that same sort of thing where it was about changing your internal story, your framing, your reference about the stuff.

You're saying it sounds like there's a similar thing. The pain or the fear that you're feeling about some upcoming event, it is internally generated. Just getting that understanding, so it's not a cognitive understanding, but it's more

visceral, layered down deep in the subconscious is a way to gain mental clarity. Am I saying that right?

Jamie Smart: Yeah, absolutely. I'll go one step further, Dave. What I'm going to suggest is mental clarity is already your default setting. You've got this mental self-correcting system built in. It's funny. Culturally, we get it with the body. If I go and eat some lunch, I'm not going, "Okay. Now, I've got to sit down and really digest this food, and I'm going to work at that," or if you run up a flight of stairs, and your heart is beating, and your lungs are pumping and stuff, you get to the top, as your heart settles down, you know that your body got that handle.

When it comes to our physical body, we trust the self-correcting nature of our immune system; whereas, when it comes to our psychology, it would be better if we got involved. What I say to a lot of my client is keep your fingers out of the machinery. You have this self-correcting system. In fact, a lot of times, it's our efforts to correct our mind, to make ourselves feel better, or feel different, calm down, and all that. Often, it's those very efforts that are getting in the way of the mind's naturally self-correcting system doing what it does automatically.

Dave Asprey: You've got some interesting perspectives on this. You seemed dismissive of meditation, mindfulness, and medication, which are the three big technologies that a lot of people use to deal with anxiety, or fear, or any of these lacks of clarity. Let's start with meditation and mindfulness. What's your take on those?

Jamie Smart: Well, how it looks to me, I wouldn't say that I'm dismissive of them. I would say that meditation, I want to draw distinction between the practice of meditation and the state of meditation. Now, it seems to me that the state of meditation is incredibly valuable. That's one of the most highly valued states for human beings. It's a source of rest bite from mental turmoil. It's a source of insights and realizations. Throughout the ages, the state of meditation has been very highly valued for good reason. I highly value it too.

The practice of meditating, the purpose of meditating is to enter the state of meditation. It's an approach, or you could call it a ritual, or a technique, or a practice with the purpose of entering the state of meditation. Right on, if someone is listening, and they find that the practice of meditating works for them, fantastic. Fill your boots.

I've asked literally thousands of people, audiences all over the world, asked them, "When do you get your best ideas?" Always, the answers are the same. In the shower, when I'm out for a walk, when I'm going on holiday, when I'm driving to work, when I'm having a bath, just before I drop off to sleep. Now, some people say, "When I'm meditating." Those are the people who are experienced meditators who really valued that practice.

For anyone who values it or anyone who wants to give it a try, go for it. If it works for you, if you have time and space in your life for it, go for it. What I'm

pointing to is that the power and the value is in the state of meditation rather than the practice of meditation. The state of meditation is naturally occurring for human beings. You get to experience it more and more reliably, spontaneously, and effortlessly when you've got less on your mind because you're awake to the fact that you're feeling thought in a moment rather than all the stuff you're thinking about.

In fact, it's interesting. There's a wonderful book called Anti-fragile by Nassim Taleb. He made a distinction, which really landed for me. He talked about the difference between additive approaches, where he would say, "The idea of an added ..." Can I tell you a story?

Dave Asprey: Sure, absolutely.

Jamie Smart: I was working with this client called Ian. Ian run a very successful business, but he had hired me. I do these three-day CEO intensives. We get together in a meeting room in a resort for three days. I, basically, help them understand this at a deep visceral level, to use your terms.

Ian hired me because he was stuck. He was stuck in his relationships, and with his business, and just lacking a sense of purpose, and that sort of thing. We get together for our first session of the intensive. We made a list of what would be a dream result from the intensive for him. We had problems he wanted to solve, changes he wanted to make, goals he wanted to achieve.

About 45 minutes into the intensive, he gets anxious. He goes, "Jaime, we're going to need a formula for how this is going to work. I am not loving this." Then, I get anxious. I'm like, "Oh, man. I haven't brought a formula. This is going to be a disaster." I'm getting all wind up fast though. It suddenly occurs to me. Where do you think your experience is coming from? I woke up to it in that moment. I saw I was feeling thought, and not my lack of a formula.

I fall back into the present, fall out of all that thinking. It came to me right away. I said, "Okay, here's your formula. You, plus a missed understanding, equals stop." He's like, "Whoa, I get it. Yeah, because I didn't used to be stuck, so something has happened." I said, "You're going to like the second bit even more."

You see, Ian, when he had been young, he was fun, carefree, spontaneous, creative, funny, enjoyed life, loving, and connected. By the time, I met him, he was really serious, frowns in his brow, and intense, and stressed. I said, "You're going to love the second." Then, I said, "You, minus a misunderstanding, equals clarity, spontaneity, peace, resilience, love, and connection." He's like, "Well, I get it."

That's what I saw, Dave, was that the clarity model is ruthlessly subtractive. What I see is that most of the mind models we see in the world, they're

additive. They work on the basis that you, plus these habits, or routines, or tactics, or mental interventions, equals super you. That's the basic model. A plus B, equals C. You, plus interventions, equals super you.

What I'm suggesting is a subtractive model, which is you, minus misunderstanding, equals super you because I guarantee, for everyone listening, you have place in your life where you just hit it. You can't put a foot wrong. Everything falls into place. You know what you're doing. Maybe it's as simple as driving your car. You have such a good embodied understanding of the road, and the vehicle, and the nature of driving, though you don't even have to think about it. Then, there are other areas in your life where you got a head full of nonsense. It really gets in the way. Anywhere in life where we're close to reality, we do well. Anywhere where we're at drift from reality, we struggle.

Dave, once again, I got no issue with meditation. The state of meditation is incredibly valuable. Anyone who enjoys or is drawn towards it should go for it. Fill your boots. Mindfulness and other approaches that involve what I call getting your fingers in the machinery, again, if they work for you, if you get good results with them, fill your boots.

What I found when I was using those approaches was I had a lot on my mind. There was a lot for me to be paying attention to. It made me hypervigilant. What I find is a lot of the people that I worked with who have been through many, what I would call additive approaches, when they find the benefits of a subtractive approach ... This is why I called it subtractive psychology. When they find the benefits of subtractive approach, it takes stuff off your mind without you having to do anything about it.

The thing is what we find again and again, and this is going to be no surprise to you, when people have nothing on their mind, that's when they give their best performances. When they're present and connected in the flow as Csikszentmihalyi would say, well, that's an absence of something, rather than the presence of something. It's an absence of the things that get in the way of clarity, get in the way of connection, get in the way of flow.

Dave Asprey:

A lot of people ask me, "Dave, how often do you meditate? Do you do it every day?" I used to have daily meditation practice. I did this for many years. Also, two different ones. Eventually I got to the point, mostly because of neuro feedback. I ran 40 years of Zen where you're spending five days figuring out what's going on in there. You are in the moment. I feel like a jerk when I say, "Well, I'm meditating right now." I'm in that state. It turns out it's a trainable state. It's a measurable state, but it's one that most of us aren't in.

My experience has been that, usually, the anxiety comes from old traumas. We have stuff that taught our body that something is a threat that's not a threat. Giving a talk at Ted or in a couple of days, I'm going to give a Google talk, I'm not at all worried about Google talk. I certainly could be. If I have a voice message that said, "If I fail, no one will love me. They'll think I'm dumb," or whatever they

told me in seventh grade, or wherever an old trauma would come from, I already edited that thing.

I spent hundreds of thousands of dollars, and in 20 years getting into that state where everything that I do is easier now at scale than it was when I was having a much smaller impact. It's also a lot less painful. Part of my mission is to help people get there without spending shocking amounts of money or even maybe more wasteful, shocking amounts of time. If you have to spend 40 years of your life meditating for an hour a day to get to this point, well, that's 40 years of your life sucks because you didn't do all the things you wanted to do.

If someone is listening to this going, "All right. I've heard some things from Jamie that I'm interested in," how do they go about feeling some clarity or some extra focus right now?

Jamie Smart: This is sub-counterintuitive because I love what you said that you said, "I'm going to sound like a jerk, but I'm meditating right now." I experienced some of my deepest states of meditation when I'm listening to clients and when I'm speaking to groups. One of the simplest ways you can experience your mind's natural self-correcting state is to really listen to someone, really listen. I'll often do when I'm doing workshops because, Dave, if you ask anyone, "How good a listener are you?", everyone rates themselves, at least, 8 out of 10, right?

Dave Asprey: Right. what were you saying?

Jamie Smart: If you ask-

Dave Asprey: I'm just kidding. Sorry, I just ...

Jamie Smart: Everyone rates themselves highly. Actually, you're going around the business world, most people are horrible listeners. I get it. I remember, actually, when I was first exploring this stuff, one of my coaches said, he goes, "I don't get the impression your listening skills could do with an upgrade." At the time, I've done all the NLP stuff. I could unpack people's language patterns real time, and track all their eye movements, and all that sort of stuff.

I was like, "Yeah, hit me. I'm a ninja listener. I can repeat the last 30 seconds of what you said with all the same gestures and stuff." I'm like, "Tell me more about how I'm not a good listener." He goes, "It seems like when you're listening, you've got a lot in your mind."

He was right. I had a lot on my mind. I find that when I'm first working with clients, they have a lot on their mind. They're thinking about what they're going to say next, or trying to figure out what the person they're listening to, what they're saying fits into what they think. There's something really, really powerful when you get people just to listen to someone else without having to think about it, without having to evaluate what they're saying.

Deliberately listening to be influenced or listening to connect with them. If someone sitting here going, "Okay. What can I do right now to get a sense of this?", I would say, "Just listen. Listen, but without having to ..." It's paradoxical. Listen without having to get anything from it because that thing I said earlier, Dave, that people regularly report, that they get their best ideas when they're out for a walk, or having a bath, or on a plane, or whatever, that's because your capacity for insight, and realization, and clarity is built in. You already have it. You already have that clarity within you.

Listening to another person, not just talking about, not just talking about me or you, anyone listening to someone who you meet at the coffee shop, do you really listen to them without having to analyze, or without having to make sense, or without having to action it? It's one of the quickest and easiest ways I found of helping people find their way to that space of clarity and connection that we all have within us.

That's real, quick, easy, actionable. By the way, if you're out on a date, if you're freaked out about going on dates, that is the best advice ever. Just really listen. Every woman, giving advice to guys, women will always say, "Listen. Be yourself." That turns out to be real true. Listening is a powerful way of pointing you back to the truth of who you really are because we were all born listeners. Before we learned to walk and talk, before we learned what words even meant, we were listening without an analytical perspective on it.

Dave Asprey:

The idea there is that if you listen to someone without thinking about what they're saying consciously, and without thinking of what you're going to say next, then it puts it in an altered state basically. That is a clarity state. That makes sense.

You also described a couple of things where you're in your most clear state where you are working with clients, or you're on stage. Both of those are flow of states because anytime you're performing an active service, that's a way to get into a flow of state without having to take drugs, or do extreme skiing, or something like that. I think that's one of the most under talked about ways of being in a flow state that has the lowest risk of all sorts of things going wrong.

This is something that we've been taught not to do in school. You're supposed to really focus and pay a lot of attention. If the teacher is talking, you got to think, think, think. The idea that you can get a felt sense from listening, that's different than a cognitive sense. It's easy to say words like that, but to develop a skill of not doing what you've been socialized and taught to do in academics since your entire life is not always that easy for people.

Is there a hack for that? Is there a way to tell somebody who's sitting down, "All right, I'm going to listen to someone without thinking about what I'm going to say next or what they're going to say next," to listen in the present moment, how do you go about doing that? Are there steps to it?

Jamie Smart: Yeah, there's a really easy way. If you just buddy up with someone, and ask them what we might call a deep question like, "What do you want?", or "What's important to you?", or "What really matters in life?", or "What do you love doing?" or "What would you love to explore?", any of those expansive, reflective questions. Explain to them, "I'm going to ask you this question. I just want to listen to what you say without talking. I'm just going to listen. We'll see what happens. It's just an experiment. Maybe I'll listen for five minutes while you talk."

Just to give yourself permission with a friend or a colleague, give yourself permission just to listen to another person without feeling any obligation to reply, to remember what they've said, any of that stuff because the cool thing is that, often, when people are first doing it, they're like, "Well, what if I don't remember what they've said?" You do. You remember the important bits. That would be an easy hack. That's the hack I do at workshops all the time. I just get people to literally listen to another person without having to speak.

For some people, actually, that's the difficult bit is not talking, not asking questions, not saying when they've had that experience. That's okay too because what you find is, like you said, it's just a habit. It's just a habit that we've been conditioned into. We weren't born doing that. It's just a habit. It's amazing how quickly you can break that habit.

Dave Asprey: Beautiful. If someone came to you tomorrow, Jamie, and said, "Look, I want to perform better at everything I do as a human being," what are the three most important pieces of advice you'd have for them?

Jamie Smart: I was listening to some of your other podcasts. I knew you were going to ask this question.

Dave Asprey: Absolutely.

Jamie Smart: I was reflecting on that. The first one ...

Dave Asprey: Hold on. I got to stop you right there. Are you telling me that you are really looking at the future, and worrying about what you're going to say, and planning it ahead?

Jamie Smart: I wasn't worrying about it.

Dave Asprey: I'm just kidding you.

Jamie Smart: It's a really good point actually because, a lot of times today, people hear what I'm saying, and they go, "I shouldn't think about the future?" No. It's totally impractical not to think about the future. There's no point we'd be doing this if we didn't think about the future. Believing that our feelings are telling us about the future, that gets in so many people. Just like you said with traumas,

believing that our feelings are telling us about the past, not a thing, not possible, but if we believe that it gets in our way.

The first one, and this is going to be no surprise to you, it's like if we could get in a time machine, and go back 200 years, the most valuable thing we could do for the health of humanity is teach them about a fact of germs and the link with infection. That would be more valuable than teaching them to wash their hands or sterilize medical instruments. Just getting them to understand how that already works, that's the number one thing.

Now, you said, if someone wanted to kick ass in every area of life, well, if you stop and think about it for a moment, your mind is involved in every single thing you do. There isn't a thing you do your whole life that isn't being processed through your mind. The ultimate leverage is to get your understanding of how your mind works, more closely aligned to how it already works.

Gregory Bateson once said, "The biggest problems in the world are the result of the difference between how nature already works, and the way people believe it works, the way people think." Well, it looks to me like the biggest challenges in our individual lives are the gap between how our minds already work and the way we believe they work.

Everybody is a folk psychologist. Everyone thinks they know how the mind works. Everyone's got their theories. No one is a folk marine biologist, or a folk mass spectrometer, but everyone is a folk psychologist. There's a way that your psychology works, and there are million ways that it doesn't work. If you can get a more principled understanding, a more aligned-with-reality understanding of how your mind already works, you're going to better in every aspect of your life.

Dave Asprey:

The number one is understand how your mind works. Okay.

Jamie Smart:

Yeah. Specifically, the 100% nature of the thought feeling connection, that's a game changer. Second one, I really had to think about this a lot because, for me, number one is such a big one that all the rest of them are a subset compared to it because you see that, and that's going to change everything. If someone really needs a second one, then the second one would be, discover what your authentic desires are. Discover what you really like because so many of us have been conditioned to think we want this or we want that.

I heard at one of the podcasts you did a while back. You were talking about money. So many people are shooting for, "I'll be happy when I get the money." There's no truth to that. I mean, money is useful for buying stuff, but it can't give you a feeling. There's not enough money in the world to give you a feeling. We know that. We see the unhappy lives of celebrities, and that sort of thing. Not all of them. It's just the money is neutral. It can't give you a feeling one way or another.

The second thing I'd say is discover what you really care about, what really matters to you. That can start with really simple things like finding out what you want to do today, or what you want to have for breakfast, or what you want to read, rather than just running the whole day on routine, and that sort of thing. Really, just ask yourself, get curious, "What do I like?" because the better you understand yourself of what you like, and what you don't like, or what matters to you, and what's important to you, the easier it is to make great decisions about your life. Decisions that are informed by who you are, where each one of us is unique.

We all have our own reasons for being here. The more aligned you can get with who you really are, put on this, who you really are is amazing. I'm saying that not because like, "Go team. I believe in you." I'm saying that because it's true of everyone where we have this source of clarity, and creativity, and resilience, and beauty, and love, and joy within us. I would love everyone to discover that for themselves.

Dave Asprey: Beautiful.

Jamie Smart: I got to tell you, the moment that I saw that this is principles for psychology, it unfolded in front of me. I had a vision of just like you and I were born into a world where the adults already understood the facts of germs. They already knew it. We grew up in that world. My vision is of a world where all the adults already understand the principles behind how our minds work because the first generation of children born into that world is going to be a game-changing generation. It's going to be up to solving the incredible challenges we've got facing us. We've got this incredible technology. It's truly amazing. It's always good news, bad news. I'm betting the future on a generation of children who can solve that.

Then, the third one would be experiment. Try stuff out. There's so many people who have so many things that they would love to do, but they're not doing it because they're afraid of making a mistake, or afraid of being criticized, or afraid of getting rejected, or afraid of failure. You're capable of so much more than you think. There are things you can discover when you take action and try it out that you're never going to figure out in the privacy of your own head.

When you take action, when you do stuff, you get feedback from the real world. We're built for that. We're built for reality. We've evolved over millions of years. We're beautifully adapted to life on this freak show of the planet. We're built for this world. We're not built for what I call la-la land. We're not built for worlds of some. We're built for this one. When you try stuff out, when you experiment, you get real world feedback. Man, that stuff is good. Real world feedback feeds your soul and gives you really useful basis for decision making. That would be number three.

Dave Asprey: Jamie, thanks for being on Bulletproof Radio. Where can people find out more about your work?

Jamie Smart: You can go over to jamiesmart.com. You can find me in all the usual social places, Snapchat, Instagram, YouTube, Facebook at jamiesmartcom. That's Jamie Smart dot com without the dot. I'm on LinkedIn at Jamie Smart Clarity. I got a recording called Instant Clarity for listeners of this show. If you go over to jamiesmart.com/bulletproof, you can download. It's a 20-minute audio, like a meditation audio for activating clarity, and first two chapters of my book, The Little Book of Clarity. All of those are places where you can find me.

Dave Asprey: Beautiful. Thanks, Jamie. Have an awesome day.

Jamie Smart: You too, Dave. Thanks.