

Announcer: Bulletproof Radio, a state of high performance.

Dave Asprey: You're going to love today's show and you'll want to listen to the whole thing because you're going to hear from a very successful CEO who basically conquered his inner voice and became a very aware, very successful person along the way. The whole story of how he got there and the science and the tips and tricks and tools that he used are scattered throughout the episode, so listen to the whole thing and enjoy.

You're listening to Bulletproof Radio with Dave Asprey. Today's cool fact of the day is that that saying that you can't teach an old dog new tricks may actually have some truth to it because they just looked at a new study of 54 human brains and they said, "Maybe adult brains are not capable of forming new memories." The study showed that adults stopped making neurons in the hippocampus, which is known as the memory center of the brain, and in the samples they tested, in young brains, there were lots of new new neurons, but as people age, the numbers decline, even starting at age 13. The good news, though, is that this isn't the last word on that study since it's just about impossible to study the brains of living people this way. The researchers behind this study, they want to understand other explanations for the results since other studies show neurogenesis varies amongst people and animals.

My take on this is that it would make sense if you don't have the right levels of a compound called brain-derived neurotrophic factor. If you can't build new neurons because you don't have the juice your brain needs to do it, then you're going to have that problem. You can raise BDNF through almost every technique that increases mitochondrial function that are in my book *Headstrong*, including cold exposure, high intensity interval training, intermittent fasting, and exercise. Exercise raises BDNF meaningfully and there's a supplement called *NeuroMaster*, yeah, it's one that I make, that raises BDNF four times more than exercise. I just turned 45. My hippocampal volume is in the 88th percentile for my age group, which makes me think maybe I'm doing something right by supporting my BDNF levels. Maybe you should, too. In the meantime, I'm going to sort of say I am an old dog, sort of, and you can teach me new tricks. If you don't really think that's possible, then you should play me in ping pong because I'll kick your ass. All right. There we go. I just learned to play ping pong. I'm kind of good. Not that good.

On that note, let's talk about today's guest. Today's guest is Eric Langshur. Eric is a bestselling author, in fact, his book I'm holding up right now. It's called *Start Here*. The reason I wanted to have him on the show today is that he talks a lot on mastering your own wellbeing. Eric had a very successful career in corporate America, left the rat race, and started an investment company to focus on improving the human condition. He started something called *CarePages*, which is one of the very first social networks way back in the day. His book called *Start Here: Master the Lifelong Habit of Wellness* is something that I really enjoyed. I got to speak with Eric on stage at something called YPO. It's a Young Presidents Organization event a while back, got to know each other, and this guy's really

studied how to be happy, both as a corporate executive and just as a human being. I think he's got something to offer for you guys, so Eric, welcome to the show.

Eric Langshur: Thanks, Dave, happy to be with you.

Dave Asprey: Tell me a little bit about what you did as a corporate executive. How successful were you? Why should we listen to you?

Eric Langshur: Well, maybe the place to drop in is to begin with a confession and let you and your listeners know that my career was mostly an accident. I took the first job that was offered to me out of undergrad, worked for a company called Pratt & Whitney, the jet engine manufacturer, and ended up spending 13 years with them and their parent company, United Technologies, then went to work for another Canadian company at Bombardier Aerospace. I had a great ride of it and loved the industry and loved what I was doing, but then had the calling-

Dave Asprey: Come on. You didn't just work for them. You were president of a large aerospace company.

Eric Langshur: Yeah, at a young age. It was just a great ride. Again, all kind of accidental. I was just putting one foot in front of the other, but the change for me really came in 2000, when I got the bug to become an entrepreneur and walked away from the corporate America world to start my first company, CarePages, which really came out of a personal experience associated with the birth of my first son Matthew, who is about turn 20. Matthew was born with a congenital heart defect and had to have a series of open heart surgeries in the first few years of his life.

It was one of those incredibly stressful moments in our lives, but also, wonderful in so many ways. Obviously, being a first-time parent is a remarkable thing. Then to go from hoping that Matthew is being born with all the gifts to be smart and athletic and good looking and have all the social skills to quickly transition into boy, we just want this kid to live and to know what it is to be happy and lead a good life turned out to be a blessing and really set a new course of our lives on a very different trajectory.

Dave Asprey: You're president of a big aerospace company and then you had a child with some serious health conditions. Did you just quit one day? How did you go about doing that?

Eric Langshur: Matthew was born in 1998 and at the time of his first surgery, when he was a week old, we created an HTML webpage, a care page, really a social network to keep family and friends informed how Matthew was doing and how we were doing. It's hard to even think back. It's not even 20 years ago now, but the internet was really in its infancy. Facebook didn't exist. Myspace was not around. We used this tool, this care page, to keep family and friends informed

how we were doing and how Matthew was doing. It turned out to be just a tremendous, tremendous support mechanism and really, a communication aid in our world. By the time Matthew had had his third surgery, we were receiving thousands of hits a day on the site. There was a message board where people could leave notes of support. Had a huge, huge impact on our emotional wellbeing and emotional support that our family and friends and colleagues were able to bring to us.

My wife, who's a pediatrician, and I was in the airplane business, we thought let's make this service available to patients and families everywhere. We quit our jobs. We said, "What's the worst thing that can happen?" It wouldn't work. We'll go back and get another job and then here we are now 17 years later and still working in technology and entrepreneurship and loving it.

Dave Asprey: It's funny because when CarePages first came out, one of my good friends had, at the time, like the youngest surviving preemie born and actually used CarePages right around the time that you guys launched it because that was how he stayed in touch with family and friends when his child was in the ICU almost all the time. It really was one of the first social networks and really an impactful thing that helped a lot of people at their time of need. I don't think a lot of people understood that that was started by president of big aerospace company.

Since then, you've been on this path where you say look, corporate America's getting sicker and sicker and you've studied this wellbeing thing through the lens of both being a substantially accomplished executive, as well as being the father of a child with meaningful health problems and looking at what's the impact on humans for that and then put it into a book about it. Let's start with why corporate America is so sick and then let's get into your recommendations for what to do about it. What's going on? Why is America so screwed up? Well, not America. Why is America and even European, doesn't really matter, but why is the corporate world so sick?

Eric Langshur: Well, I think there's two reasons. One is externally focused. The other is really internally focused. If we look at what's just going on externally, the pace of play just continues to accelerate. Technology, which has improved our lives in so many ways, is also making us sicker. Kleiner Perkins did a study a couple years ago to measure how many times we check our cellphones every day. It's 150 times. It's absolutely remarkable.

Dave Asprey: Yeah, that's it? That's it? I could do better.

Eric Langshur: Exactly. All right. The pace of play is just accelerating and 75% of Americans now report that they're stressed. Since 1999, the percentage of Americans that are on antidepressants has increased from just under 17% to over 13%. We have somewhere between 50 and 70 million Americans who are suffering from sleep disorders. 4% of Americans take sleeping pills to sleep at night. We are just

increasingly living at the effect of these external forces in our lives and the thing about it, though, and we write about this in Start Here, is really an inside game.

This was also very much linked to my own experience. Somewhere around my 40th birthday I remember waking up one morning and realizing as I was making my way to brush my teeth that I was living at the effect of a hyperactive mind and was very, very anxious. It never occurred to me that that feeling of stomachache feeling that I lived with pretty much every day of my life was truly anxiety. I decided I wanted to do something about it, so this is really what got me on the path of research and what can we do about it and how do we bring a level of sanity and calmness to our own existence, starting with my own.

Dave Asprey: How did you learn that that feeling in your stomach was anxiety? I went through the same experience. I'd love to share my story with you, as well, but for people listening, maybe you have some anxiety that you don't know is anxiety. Just tell me the story of that.

Eric Langshur: Yeah, well, I began to read, so I said my whole thing is I'm always looking for the most efficient way to go from A to B. In this case, what I was looking for the most efficient way to start to feel better, just start to feel happier and more calm and more peaceful. I began to read and started picking up self-help books and started reading philosophy. I had the view that there's a lot that I could learn from people who've come before, including the greatest thinkers throughout the ages from the ancient Greeks, the ancient Romans, the modern American transcendentalists and modern European existentialists and just began to study the great philosophical thought of the ages.

Two things happened, so the first thing that happened was I realized that in fact, this ever-present stomachache was, in fact, anxiety and it started to grow. As I became aware of it and started to put a label on it as anxiety, I became acutely sensitive to the fact that I was really massively stressed. That was thing one. Then thing two is when we do anything frequently enough, I began to see the patterns in all of this ancient wisdom and all of the knowledge that has come before about a life well-lived and started to apply some of the thinkings and decode the patterns, and start to experiment with different practices in my own life. That set me out on this path of Start Here and Life Cross Training.

Dave Asprey: There wasn't like a religious wake-up call one day, like oh, my god, that's anxiety in my stomach. It just it was a dawning awareness as you studied personal development and the wisdom of the masters, basically.

Eric Langshur: Right. Lived, by the way, because of the growing feeling of anxiety as I started to label it. Literally, my body was screaming stop doing what you're doing because this just doesn't feel good.

Dave Asprey: I went through this time where at the dawn of the internet as we know it, there were only 10 webpages. I was the first guy to sell anything over the internet.

There was a time where I knew everything on the internet. As it started to grow exponentially, I started sleeping less and less because I'm like there's so much good stuff here. I'm just going to absorb it all. I look back, I'm like wow, I'm barely sleeping and I'm completely wiggling out if my email goes down, which was a standard thing in the early days of the internet. You can't check messages for a day because someone misconfigured something and I would just feel like I was going to die. After a couple, maybe a year of this during the first hypergrowth of the internet, I'm like I am completely wiggled out by this information overload and a fear of not knowing something that I could know that was interesting that I wanted to know, but I didn't label it as anxiety. I'm just like I'm going to have to accept defeat or failure. I'm going to fail to know everything on the internet because it was growing faster than my ability to absorb it. That was one wake-up call.

Then the one real one for me, [inaudible 00:12:34] it's not fear. I'm just like I wanted to know. It's more like I'm failing. I don't like to fail. I went to this personal development retreat and there was all sorts of crazy stuff going on. There was one exercise people were doing in full disclosure. They were hitting pillows with bats. It was a very high tech personal development retreat. Anyway, some people were really getting into this. I'm like these people are completely nuts, but I couldn't stand to be in the room with them when they were doing that. It was like I have to go.

The facilitator, who was this incredibly wise woman who was about 80, she said, "Now, you have to come sit in here." I'm like, "I can't do it." Keep in mind I'm a successful entrepreneur. I'm like, I don't know, 30 years old or something like that. I'm master of my own universe in my own head, anyway, and I can't sit in a room with a bunch of people hitting pillows with bats. She said, "Well, why can't you sit here?" I said, "I don't know. There's a feeling." She goes, "What is it?" I go, "I'm pissed off." She goes, "That's not the feeling."

What triggered me to tell you this, Eric, is you said the feeling in your stomach. She said, "Well, do you feel anything in your body?" I said, "Yeah. I feel this weird feeling in my gut." She looks at me right in the face and she goes, "That's called fear." I'm like, "Really? There's a name for that?" That actually unlocked a lot for me, like oh, so I am feeling fear, but I had told myself there's nothing to be afraid of. There's nothing to be anxious about. Therefore, I'm not feeling anxiety. Since then, I've met thousands of people who have anxiety, but don't label it as anxiety, so they don't know it's hackable and so your path is interesting because you just one day sort of after studying for a while, going, well, I know I'm not happy, what is it? You came to the point all right, I'm anxious about something. What were you anxious about?

Eric Langshur:

Everything. My pattern was I'd wake up in the morning and my eyes would open. My brain would turn on and then just the torrent of thoughts, uncontrolled thoughts would just start, just what do I got to do in the day? What's going on with the kids about this thing, the conversation that I had the day before, the conversation they do have later that day. It's the litany of to-

dos. It all just would just pile on, pile on, and I had no control. The irony is I had learned how to manage large businesses and I had learned how to manage thousands of people, but I didn't really know how to manage my own mind. That was an incredible awakening.

Dave Asprey: Thanks for being vulnerable enough to say that. When someone looks at the president of a big company, you're like that's a guy who has his shit together and what I think we're finding out is that no matter what degree of success you have in whatever you do, whether you're an executive or an artist or a teacher it doesn't really matter, a parent, you can still have anxiety and still be phenomenally successful. That's not something that they teach, but it's something that you discovered, right?

Eric Langshur: Right. Well, a lot of us use it to make us productive. We just forget the fact it does work. We forget two facts. One is it makes us sick and two is there are just better ways and that's actually what I discovered is thing one that wellbeing is a skill that can be trained. The way to do it is to train the skill of attention, really get control of the mind. Then all of that can be done in a way that's deeply integrated into the living of our lives, one, two, and three.

Dave Asprey: What are you like today? Describe your anxiety process or what goes on in your brain now versus 20 years ago.

Eric Langshur: Yeah, I was just completely different. My experience in being alive is completely different. I share this with people. We've trained now thousands and thousands of people in this methodology. Just part of that is that our experience of being alive can just be fantastic. Imagine living with spaciousness. Imagine living with peace. I know, David, you're a practitioner of these arts in the biggest of ways, right? Then to be around that is just attractive for people. The irony, too, in the business world because I run a significant investment entity, I'm so much more successful than I ever was because I just bring a different energy to it and I work really hard, but it doesn't feel like work, a lot of energy and I think of myself as being in the energy management business.

Dave Asprey: It's that last statement that I hope listeners really resonate with. It's that when you work on the stuff that you worked on, this lifelong habit of wellbeing, it's easier. All the work that you're doing out of fear of failure, which was a big motivator for me, all the energy that goes into that fear goes into the business instead so that it's much easier to do the things that you wanted to do. That perspective is reason also that when we first met, I'm like, "Oh, let's have dinner. We're both sharing a stage." It was one of those things like this guy's not tweaking all the time and there were a lot of people who are successful who are really not that happy and not that comfortable to be around. It's that feeling that you carry with you even though you're now running a big investment company.

It's hard to put words on it. I'm hoping that people listening get a little sense of that, just because of the scope of your success and your willingness to talk

about the inner process that happens where a lot of executives just don't go there because part of being a corporate executive is that invincible kind of chest thumping I can manage this. I'll hop on my jet. Of course, the jet you manufacture in this case. Fly across the world and do my thing and run an ironman marathon and all that. That's not actually what's going on in your head anymore. Okay. You have a big investment and it just completely goes sideways. You're going to lose a bunch of money and someone's yelling at you. What goes on in your head?

Eric Langshur: That's a big question and it happens. Every day stuff goes sideways every day. It's not always an investment, but it's a conversation. It's a deal. It's this. It's that. It's just it's all part of the juice of life and understanding that. This is one of the practices we write about in the book, of which there are nine, but this idea of inquiry, of questioning, of questioning our fundamental beliefs. Is it true, so is this good? Is it bad and bringing up a degree of equanimity to it. It's just so much more interesting and, I think, productive in the business world to say okay, something's gone wrong. What can we learn from this and what we can do to right over something's gone wrong. Who do we blame? Who are we going to fire? It's just a whole different energetic. It's a different perspective. What it does is it helps foster and create an environment where people can truly out problems really early where there's not a cover your butt kind of orientation to coming to work and, and, and, and it's just remarkable what the spirit of all this stuff can amount to in the corporate world.

Dave Asprey: It happens and then instead of going oh, I'm going to die or oh, this is terrible and telling yourself a story that makes it more painful, like what can I learn, but is there still the chest tightness, the teeth gnashing, the I'm not going to sleep well tonight or does that just not happen to you anymore?

Eric Langshur: No, not over here. It doesn't. I don't experience that. Yeah. Listen, it took time. Part of the journey for me, especially in the early days, and again, this is what led us to writing the book, is when I started to explore these ideas, I was overwhelmed by the volume of things to pay attention to. Call it the noise. There's the internal stuff. There's the external stuff, the diet and nutrition. I always mostly focused on the external, so I had intense exercise program and run a marathon every year and controlled my diet and certainly was one of the early Bulletproof seekers and explorers and was open to great experimentation and with a view to how does it feel? What is my experience of this as that being the ultimate proof point for me.

When I started to enter into this other domain of looking inside, this is of the great, one of the early quotes I remember reading from Jung, which just absolutely resonated. "He who looks outside dreams. He who looks inside awakens." I really did awaken. What I discovered was I needed to find this signal through all of the noise of all of the different ideas that are out there. That's what Start Here really does is we distilled this ancient wisdom into a set of practices and programs.

Then we went to the neuroscience community and the positive psychologists and said, "What about these ancient ideas really work? Let's get into the science behind it and let's prove that this is an efficient path from going from A to B and let's see if we can measure it because that's, again, for me, an important on ramp is the science of it, but also to know that there's some empirical data here to support, some evidence to support these big ideas. That's what we did in the book. My coauthor Nate Klemp was really remarkable to distill these ideas into practices and ideas that we can actually integrate into the living of our lives in a really efficient way, that moves the needle on wellbeing. To your question, how do I feel today, it's just it's measurably different.

Dave Asprey: Now, I'm happy you said measurable because how do we measure wellbeing?

Eric Langshur: Well, it turns out we actually can measure wellbeing.

Dave Asprey: How?

Eric Langshur: There's lots of different ways we've developed. We worked with University of Chicago scientists and we developed an instrument that let's us measure productivity, emotional health, resilience to stress, focus, 13 different measures that roll up into aggregate measures that actually give us a score on where is our setpoint, setpoint of happiness, and we can track changes in that setpoint over time. It's just it's really pretty cool.

Dave Asprey: How long does it take to do the assessment?

Eric Langshur: 10 minutes.

Dave Asprey: Is this something you do every day?

Eric Langshur: No. No, I do it every quarter.

Dave Asprey: Every quarter. Okay.

Eric Langshur: We don't recommend that people do it every day. It's a wonderful, empirical piece of evidence to underscore what you're feeling, but check in. Check in with how you feel. That's really one of the really big drivers for us here. What we're able to use it for in the business world is we formed a company around this like Cross Training is we're really able to use it to demonstrate to employers that it's absolutely worth investing in your people because this very simple equation of so goes human performance, so goes business performance. Where we dropped into this conversation are people are impaired. It's really quite remarkable and we can measure an improvement in people performance and then correlate that to improvement in business performance. That's super cool.

Dave Asprey: I've been lecturing to entrepreneurs over the last year or so and one of the big messages is that especially for younger companies, the company is a direct

reflection of your energy. If you're off, your company will be off. When companies hit the scale of we'll call it small, midsize companies like Bulletproof and countless other companies out there, it becomes not just a measure of the founder or CEO's or executive team's energy, although those are heavily weighted. It's everyone's energy in the company. If half your employees are unhappy for whatever reason, whether it's because of their home life or their corporate life or whatever else because they're drinking diet soda all the time, it'll affect company performance and certainly wellbeing of people there. They didn't teach me that at Wharton. They haven't taught that kind of anywhere because it's very hard for us to measure the state of our wellbeing. Your idea there that says well, here's a repeatable, quantitative metric that you can use yourself if you're running a company or if you're just running a family. It doesn't really matter. I find huge value in that. It's something I have not rolled out with the team at Bulletproof, although we use a bunch of other metrics like everyone has their love language visible so if you're going to acknowledge ...

Eric Langshur: Right. Oh, that's great.

Dave Asprey: ... them, stuff like that matters. If one employee wants a pat on the back literally, another one doesn't want you anywhere near them, but they like a gift, hey, if you know that, then get them a pencil that says thanks. It's easy, but only if you have the data. I'm intrigued. I'm not promising that I'm going to do this, but I'll chat with my team about potentially rolling this tool out to do at least a beta because it'd be kind of fun.

Eric Langshur: Well, and it matters. The data at a national level was just incredible. This year, we'll lose 370 billion in productivity due to just people not being engaged at work, something that's preventable. We lose our healthcare spent. What is the cost of stress-related disease in this country? It's just it's almost immeasurable because it's so significant. Think about the cost of turnover, unwanted turnover, and the cost to replace someone that you've just lost for whatever reason. Just it's big bucks.

Dave Asprey: It completely changes everything and just the disruption and it slows things down.

Eric Langshur: Right.

Dave Asprey: Then now we've got a tool that people ... I didn't ask in terms of giving access to the tool, is there an online version of it? I know that you write about it in the book, but just in terms of listeners saying, "I want to know how I'm doing right now." Is this accessible or do you have to be a company to do it? I haven't taken old tool.

Eric Langshur: You can write us at info@life-xt.com and we'll send you a link.

Dave Asprey: Okay. That's cool. By the way, obviously, we didn't plan that, so there's no affiliate or anything like that. No, we're just like oh, this is kind of cool.

Eric Langshur: I want to go back to something that you said, which is just I'll put an exclamation mark about it. Think of the energy that you bring to your work and your company and then having everybody that works across the growing Bulletproof empire bring that same energy and the things that you can build in, the tools and the rituals and the support that you can build into just the course of a day that just make it not just a great place to work, but that invest in people's wellbeing, which then helps them invest in their wellness because we know the science of habit change and so we can teach the science around wellbeing. Then they just start to make better life choices and everybody wins and just everyone's easier to be around.

Dave Asprey: You write about a bunch of tools for training that skill of wellbeing in your book, but you also talk about this secondary thing, which is training this skill of attention. What's the difference between training attention and training wellbeing?

Eric Langshur: Well, we think that attention is the key here. We've developed what we call the master practice of notice, shift, rewire. That does two things. It really leverages the science of habit change or on training the skill of attention. I'll unpack that in just a second. Really, it leverages what the scientists know to be true about the fact that our brains are neuroplastic, so our brains literally change. If we can use our brain to develop attention to change our brain, this starts the upward spiral of goodness around this, so notice, shift, rewire is just a very simple practice that helps people do it, so notice. Just notice that we're lost in thought. Matthew Killingsworth's seminal piece of research that came out of Harvard a few years ago, Killingsworth and Gilbert, determined that our minds are wandering 47% of the time, so half the time. Most importantly, when our minds are wandering, we're less happy.

If we can start to notice that our minds are wandering and then shift, which is this idea just bringing our attention back to what is here now and in the present moment and then rewire by just spending 10 seconds, 15 seconds, 20 seconds with a thought, with the new thoughts which we're choosing to attend to then we stand a chance of being able to control our minds. We're learning how to control our minds and we can start to unpack all sorts of amazing practices, gratitude, relationships, contribution, compassion, on and on and on that lead to incredible wellbeing and then downstream, great wellness.

Dave Asprey: It reminds me of that cliché story about the Native American who tells his son there's wolves. Which one are you going to feed, the wolf or the whatever. I forget the full story, but which one wins? The one you feed. You feed those things with your attention, right?

Eric Langshur: It's the whole game. William James, psychologist, "My experience is what I agree to attend to." We choose where we place our thoughts.

Dave Asprey: As long as you're aware that you're placing them somewhere and that's skill of attention that you write about in your book.

Eric Langshur: Exactly right.

Dave Asprey: Do you have advice for people listening who might want to learn how to integrate training or just how to train the skill of attention into their life? How do you do this?

Eric Langshur: Sure. That's what the book is is just full of tips to help people do that. First is let's just unpack a little bit about the science of habit change. We've distilled the science in just three easy to remember things to do, so the three Cs we call them, so commence small. We want to start a new habit, which is, for example, training the skill of attention. This is work that comes out of BJ Fogg at Stanford, tiny habits just start small. This is where my coauthor Nate Klemp and I completely blew it. We said, "Okay. We're going to notice, shift, rewire all day, every day, which is impossible. We were bound to fail with such a sort of impossible to achieve goal. With a tiny habit, you stand a chance, so BJ Fogg gives the example of I'm going to do one pushup. Everybody can do one pushup. Chances are if you're doing one, you'll do more than one.

For us, we decided to set cues, which is the second C. This is the work of Charles Duhigg, just set up a cue so you can remember to do it. Then thing three is commit, so commence small, set a cue, and then commit. Commit is to make 100% commitment, so not a 99% commitment, which as they say is a bitch, but 100% commitment, which is really a breeze because it removes the possibility of even negotiating in your head. A great example is I'm going to make a ... January 1st, I'm going to go to the gym every single day at 6 a.m. Now, that's not a tiny habit. That's a big one. Then what happens is we wake up and we begin the conversation in our head and we start negotiating with ourselves. Well, I'll go after work. Well, I'll go tomorrow. I'll just skip today. Then the parade of horrors really starts. If we start really small and we determine a cue and then we make 100% commitment, it really just makes building in any habit that we want really easy, so we begin with that.

Then, as we lay out in the book, we have three foundational habits in what we call the train section. These are meditation, movement, and inquiry. These are things that Dave, you write about and talk about all the time, the power of training the mind through meditation. That's a foundational habit. We recommend that people do it for five minutes day, 3 minutes if you have to start a habit really tiny, but you can build. There's lots of fantastic tools and support aids out there.

Movement, you're the pied piper. You're going to diet and exercise and how to build in biohacks in a way that are just incredibly efficient. Then inquiry, which is a form of meditation, of questioning our stressful thoughts, asking is it true. Again, that is this learning to notice, shift, rewire. Learning, what are we thinking about and identifying those stressful thoughts. Then we have six more

practices in the book that fall into what we call the balancing of being and doing, which is being, being a human being and being engaged in the world and being present and showing gratitude and compassion. Then doing, focusing on relationships, focusing on engagement, really productivity, and then contributing to the world.

You can take any one of these habits, you think about the science of habit change that we talked about, break it down, and then build it into where we literally don't have to stop and go and sit on a cushion for an hour a day or go live in a cave and meditate for three weeks. A good example is building the habit of presence, just learning the science of what it is to engage the parasympathetic nervous system with a four-by-four breath. Then using a stop sign when you're driving, just to notice I'm going to come to a full stop. I'm going to take a four-by-four breath as I'm pulling away. Very straightforward.

Dave Asprey: Very simple habits to just continuously throughout the day reset the nervous system.

Eric Langshur: Exactly right.

Dave Asprey: I ended up going down the path of using lots of feedback for that, things like heart rate variability training and learning oh, this is what it feels like when my body is kicking out of that calm, attentive state into something else because it's not a signal that I learned to pay attention to, I don't think most of us do, and going oh, now that I know that, I know how to go back, but until I learned to sense it and then to do something about it, it was all noise, like, oh, wait, there's a signal in the noise. Then that became just a habit, so anytime you feel yourself becoming over sympathetic, maybe anytime, most of the time anyway, you catch it and then you can do something about it, but only if the attention is there in the first place, which is why I think it's kind of cool the way you talk about attention and then building that in.

Eric Langshur: Right. No, exactly right. Then once it's build in, you don't even have to pay attention because it's just there. It's subconscious and it's serving you.

Dave Asprey: Yeah, it becomes a habit, right?

Eric Langshur: Becomes a habit, which incredibly efficient.

Dave Asprey: Yeah, and that's why I wanted to have you on the show partly because you've had this incredible career and you see a lot of meditation teachers who focus their life on meditation and do spend two-and-a-half hours a day meditating, which is an incredible luxury in order to be able to do that. I've found I have two kids and more than one job as CEO and a husband and writing books and all that stuff. I don't really have two-and-a-half hours a day to meditate. It'd be kind of cool, but if I did, I wouldn't. I still have other things I'd rather do. I'd at least hook electrodes up to myself while I did it and accelerate it. There has to be a

way and so you've found a way without spending two-and-a-half hours a day meditating. How many hours a day do you meditate?

Eric Langshur: Well, I have a profound meditation practice. I spend about an hour a day in formal practice on the cushion.

Dave Asprey: You do?

Eric Langshur: That said, I'm meditating all day long and so this idea and I love where you're going with this because the idea of integrating these habits in our lives is really what I started is I didn't start with an hour a day meditation practice. I started with five minutes, but I also started with ... I have a really intense Starbucks habit, so I'm at Starbucks a few times a day. When I'm in line at Starbucks, I'm keeping my phone in my pocket and I'm just using it as an opportunity to practice the skill of presence. Completely integrated, easy to do, and now when I walk into a Starbucks, I actually just habitually go into a complete kind of mode of presence because it's just my way of being now.

Similarly, with the practice of gratitude, I needed a cue, in the spirit of Duhigg. I needed a cue to remember to practice gratitude, so I built in two cues. One is when I wake up, I won't get out of bed without just literally taking one minute to engage the mind and all the things. There's just so many of them to feel grateful for. The other is meals. As I sit down with our family, I've got three kids, as well, and they tease me mercilessly that I say, "Hey, guys, let's do gratitudes." It's gotten to the point where I don't even say that anymore. I just do it. They just look at me and it's just it's great fun. In order to develop that habit, I had to put a sticker by my place at our dinner table at home just to remember to notice, shift, rewire, so notice here's an opportunity, shift to gratitude, and then rewire. Just stay with it for 20 seconds and let it sink in. That's the neurofeedback. We can build these habits into the living of our lives in incredibly efficient ways.

Dave Asprey: Very cool, an hour a day. What kind of meditation are you doing for an hour a day?

Eric Langshur: Well, it varies and it depends really on what's happening. This morning, for example, just pure dzogchen, eyes open, everything open, just sort of an open awareness practice of watching what is here now and what is. It's just a fantastic practice.

Dave Asprey: Now, your kids are what ages?

Eric Langshur: 19, 18, and 15.

Dave Asprey: That's why you get an hour in the morning without interruptions.

Eric Langshur: Oh, it's different, and I get up at 4:00, so that's another secret.

Dave Asprey: I am not a morning person. It's not my chronotype. I woke up at 5 a.m. every morning for two years and I meditated for one to two hours a morning. It was beneficial. I found you could replace two hours of sleep with an hour of good meditation, but once I had kids, they have Spidey senses and they know when you wake up, so they'll wake up, too.

Eric Langshur: I've heard you say that. The first time I heard you say that I just laughed because it was exactly it. I've always gotten up early and our eldest son would always be up early with me and think well, what's that about? Of course, it's exactly that.

Dave Asprey: It's like I was going to meditate, but now, let's not. That definitely changed my practice. I do more in the evenings and I frankly do more with computer stuck to my head because that's very focused time and I get a higher return on that investment. I'm abnormal that way, just.

Eric Langshur: I'm really excited to do 40 Years of Zen, so that's in my future.

Dave Asprey: Whenever you're ready, it'll be there for you. Now, I think we've talked a lot about meditation and just the idea that you're a phenomenally successful guy who's built this into your life, not by going off to some monastery somewhere and jumping in with both feet, but in an incremental path of just growing awareness, studying, making small changes in habits, and then ultimately quantifying it so you can see that it works, which is the cool recipe for hacking anything, which is figure out that you want to work on it, figure out a measure, do stuff until either measure changes, and then you know the stuff works. Then the next step of science is okay, why did it work? What are the underlying mechanisms? Can you walk our listeners through some of the mechanisms of why the body will change when you grow awareness, when you grow attention?

Eric Langshur: Well, the big idea here I touched on a few minutes ago is that of neuroplasticity. The brain is neuroplastic. We know this now. We didn't know this 50 years ago, but now we know it. Donald Hebb was really the father of this research, first coined the expression, "Neurons that fire together wire together." We know that and that's the underlying science that drives the habit formation and all of the work here. Now, as we double click on any one of these practices and you were talking about memories and the hippocampus and you double click around the brain and we think what happens with compassion? Helen Lang and Richie Davis' lab in Wisconsin who's really the preeminent neuroscientist who's done work on the brain and meditation did a seminal piece of work on compassion meditation and found that just a 30 minute dose over two weeks, 30 minute dose a day for two weeks, literally changes the brain, shrinks the amygdala, drives much more activation in the left prefrontal cortex, increases feelings of altruism, on and on and on.

It's really interesting. The different practices ignite different regions of the brain and different mechanisms. I'm speaking to a great expert here, but it's exciting stuff. It's an exciting time because the other piece that is especially encouraging is the volume of research now that is being done and funded and being released

on all of this is incredible. We're going to look back at today and say, "God, we were living in the Stone Ages. What were we doing?"

Dave Asprey: I think so. It's also necessary because we've got a lot of people on the planet and if you have a lot of people walking around full of anxiety and fear, they generally don't take care of the place. When we have a little bit more attention and awareness, we might like the world we live in more than we do now.

Eric Langshur: Right. No, that's right. This is the Dalai Lama's big thing, just compassion is really the only thing that we need. It starts here. It starts at home.

Dave Asprey: If you don't have compassion for yourself, it's hard to have it for something else.

Eric Langshur: Right.

Dave Asprey: Right.

Eric Langshur: How much better is it to be around that energy?

Dave Asprey: It's a lot more pleasant, a lot more fun, and my experience has been that the more I can cultivate that stuff in myself, the more I like it, but also, then I end up meeting just really cool people and have the opportunity to make friends that I might not have made friends with before. It's definitely enriched my life, but it does require having that arm wrestling inside your head for a while.

Eric Langshur: Right.

Dave Asprey: Now, I definitely enjoyed Start Here and I thank you for sharing all of your knowledge and wisdom on the show. I have one more question for you. If someone came to you tomorrow, Eric, and they 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? What would you offer them?

Eric Langshur: Well, I'll answer that question this way and I'll key in on the word advice, as opposed to three specific practices. I'll drop in with just this, again, the core idea that wellbeing is a skill that can be trained. It is about training the skill of attention and we can do it in a really efficient, integrated way in living of our lives. Thing one is build a foundation. What that means is develop some form of meditation practice whether it's formal on the cushion or presencing practice or the Socratic practice of inquiry, but is just foundational for looking inward. It could be five minutes a day is a clinically effective dose. It's a good place to start.

Thing two and we talked about it is develop attention through the skill of notice, shift, rewire, which is I know you just had Sean on the podcast. It's kind of like Insanity or P90X and Crossfit for your brain. That's what notice, shift, rewire is. It's just an internal workout that let's you cross train anywhere, anytime. Carry it

around in your pocket. No one knows. You're just constantly changing your brain and literally leveraging the biology of neuroplasticity to your advantage.

Then thing three is I'd say engage, read, listen to podcasts, so plug into the community. There is so much content now being produced and it's fantastic. Just literally Bulletproof podcast alone, the range and the variety of topics that you cover is really it's very cool. It's also inspirational and I think for people to not lose the thread of encouragement, of inspiration, to know that there's people out there who can help and can encourage you think is just it's important.

Dave Asprey: Well, thanks for the plug. I love that advice, which is learn from others who've done the work for you.

Eric Langshur: Learn from others, yeah.

Dave Asprey: It's okay to be lazy that way.

Eric Langshur: And keep learning, though. That's the thing, keep learning. There's this notion of effort and courage and all of this and it becomes habit, right? It becomes easier and easier and easier. You can choose to spend 20 minutes zoning out on Facebook or sitting on the couch, flip on the TV, or engage in a practice that you know is actually going to lead to different conditions down the road and fundamentally make you happier.

Dave Asprey: Very well put. If I'm keeping track, that's two. Was there a third?

Eric Langshur: One is build a foundation, two, engage in training the skill of attention with notice, shift, rewire as a master practice, and three is learn from others.

Dave Asprey: Oh, learn from others. Okay. Cool. Got it. That was good summary. Thank you. I had merged the first two together. You got one more for me, man but all right. That was three. Eric, people can find your book online. It's called Start Here. Where else can they go to learn more about the ability to measure their stuff? You gave an email address earlier. Let's repeat that again.

Eric Langshur: Sure, it's www.life-xt.com. It stands for Life Cross Training. Of course, you can buy the book through the site, which will link you to any bookseller, Barnes & Noble, Amazon, you name it.

Dave Asprey: Beautiful. Well, thanks for being on Bulletproof Radio. Thanks for being willing to talk about what goes on between the ears and even further down in the heart and gut and everywhere else in a successful CEO and investor and just generally good human beings. Thank you.

Eric Langshur: Oh, thank you, Dave. Great fun for me.

Dave Asprey:

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