

[Announcer:](#) Bulletproof Radio. The state of high performance.

[Dave:](#) You're listening to Bulletproof Radio with Dave Asprey. Today's guest is a psychology professor from Northeastern University who did an amazing TEDX talk called The Secret Of Becoming Mentally Strong that is one of the most popular talks of all time with nine million views to date. Her name is Amy Morin. In addition to being a psych professor, she's a licensed clinical social worker, a psychotherapist, and has written three best-selling books translated into 33 languages. That's at least 10 more languages than all the Bulletproof has been translated into. So, she's a very successful author.

[Dave:](#) Her books are all called *13 Things Mentally Strong People Don't Do*. She's joining the show today to talk about, well, 13 things you don't want to do. Because if you listen to Bulletproof Radio, you care about being mentally strong, among other things.

[Dave:](#) Amy, welcome to the show.

[Amy:](#) Thanks so much for having me.

[Dave:](#) How did it feel when *The Guardian* called you the self-help guru of the moment?

[Amy:](#) It was a really surreal time, I think, to look and think, wow, here's this newspaper on the other side of the pond, over there, talking about me, No. 1. And No. 2, they're calling me the self-help guru of the moment. It was really interesting.

[Dave:](#) It's pretty odd. Last month, *Men's Health* ran a major piece on me where I had the ... Well, I guess it wasn't embarrassing, but it felt embarrassing at the time, a moment of taking my shirt off for *Men's Health* magazine as a former 300-pound guy. And they called me, I think they called the article The Guru's Dilemma. So being labeled a guru is kind of like, ew.

[Amy:](#) Right. Right.

[Dave:](#) But, on the other hand, if you're sharing good advice, you're at least a source of knowledge. But, who needs a guru show?

[Amy:](#) Right. That was my response, too. I think it was, ew, guru, I didn't really want to be called a guru of anything. But to be called this self-help guru, maybe that's not the worst thing in the world.

[Dave:](#) Yeah. It's odd. And I guess there's people who really, oh, I wanted to be a guru. But in fact, I just wanted to help.

[Amy:](#) Right.

[Dave:](#) That's a different animal. Before we get into the way you got into this *13 Things That Mentally Strong People Don't Do* list, I want to know why are you a psychology professor? Because most psychologists I know, and I have many who are dear friends,

most of them kind of had crap childhoods or they had some reason they wanted to study psychology. They were called to it for a reason. Are you one of those?

[Amy:](#) No. I was a pre-med major and I thought, oh, I'm going to help people talk about their bodies and fix problems. And it was actually my first day of college. We were dissecting cats. And everybody else in the room was super excited and I wasn't. And it dawned on me, I don't actually be a doctor. I just wanted ... I liked the idea of being a doctor. So I called my sister and said, okay, quick, I need a new major. I don't want to do this tomorrow. What do you think?

[Amy:](#) She was a psychology major and she said ... I was like, I think I'll just do psychology as well and I'll change it later on. And she said, why don't you go with social work, at least, because then you can have a social work license when you're done? And I thought, all right, that sounds good.

[Amy:](#) So I switched it, fully intending that down the road, I would switch to something else. But then, I sort of fell in love with it.

[Dave:](#) If you heard some cool sounds in the background there, Amy actually lives on a boat, which a lot of people's ... Well, it's one of the 13 things mentally strong people do, apparently. But anyway, you may hear the cool boat sounds in the background. This will be the second podcast I've ever recorded on a boat. So there you go, Amy.

[Dave:](#) So you decided you didn't want to be a doctor. Well, the good news is that maybe you dodged a bullet. My wife is a doctor. And, having dissected her share of cats and human cadavers, she developed a sensitivity to formaldehyde, which is what they use to pickle them all. And that's something that, even to this day, she notices formaldehyde air, oh headache. So, maybe you avoided that.

[Amy:](#) Yeah. I think it was probably good I figured out early that was not the career for me.

[Dave:](#) All right. Following your path. That's one of the rules in *Game Changers*, in doing the thing that you're here to do, not what you're supposed to do, is something that's powerful.

[Amy:](#) Right.

[Dave:](#) You got there because it wasn't med. All right. I get you.

[Dave:](#) Now, a lot of people don't frame what they do in terms of here's what not to do. And, I'm really attracted to your work because the No. 1 thing in the ... how to become bulletproof is to stop doing the things that make you weak. Because it's real easy to go lift more stuff, but maybe lifting more stuff isn't the highest return on investment. How do you frame your work and your learnings in this weird, negative way? As in what not to do?

[Amy:](#) I was working as a psychotherapist. It's early on in my career. And they really taught me, "build on people's strengths." Find out what people are doing well and encourage them to keep doing that. And so I did, at first. And at some point along the way, I thought I'm doing people a disservice. If I wanted to become physically strong and I was going to see a trainer, and they said go lift weights, great. But if they didn't tell me to quit eating so many donuts, I wouldn't see the results that I wanted. I'd rather give up eating all those donuts than spend another hour on the treadmill. It's sort of my personal journey that led me on this interesting mental strength on a deeper level.

[Amy:](#) Shortly after I became a therapist, my mom passed away suddenly. And, I thought, okay, now it's not just about teaching other people how to be mentally strong. I really want to know for my own purposes how come some people go through tough times and they're sort of reduced by it? But other people go through hard times and they find strength in it and they come out on the other side stronger than ever?

[Amy:](#) So I started studying the people in my therapy office with this new sense of passion. And I started looking at them. And I realized that people who were stronger than others, there were certain things that they just didn't do, so that no matter what they went through, no matter what sort of practices they were doing, as long as they didn't do certain things, they came out mentally stronger.

[Amy:](#) And, in my personal journey, I went through all sorts of more stuff in the coming years. My husband passed away when he and I were both 26. He passed away unexpectedly. And, through my grief, I really wanted to know, how do I not do these certain things that I've identified in my therapy office? How do I make sure I don't stay stuck?

[Amy:](#) It took years to get better, to start to feel like, okay, there's light on the other side. But, after, it was about four years later, I got remarried and life was starting to finally look good. And then my father-in-law was diagnosed with terminal cancer. I thought, oh, now I'm going to lose another loved one. I lost my mother, I lost my husband, now I'm going to lose my father-in-law. So I wrote myself this list of what not to do. When I was done, I happened to have a list of 13 things. I didn't mean to sit down and write the 13 things mentally strong people don't do. It was really just a letter to myself.

[Amy:](#) I would read over that letter as often as I needed to stay strong. And then I thought, well, if this is helpful to me, maybe it would help somebody else. So I published it online, sort of on a whim. And, it went viral. It got read by 50 million people, and, therefore, changed the course of my career. But I thought it was just really important to talk to people about, if you want to get better, if you want to go through tough times, it's about working smarter and not just harder. Don't do these certain things. And then, all of your good habits will be much more effective.

[Dave:](#) You've demonstrated an amazing amount of resilience because most people don't lose their parents, their spouse, and a bunch of other loved ones until they're late 40s, 50s. The normal course of human progress is, you spend your 20s and early 30s going to a wedding every weekend. And then, after that, it calms down. Then it's baby showers for the next 10, 15 years, and school events and all that sort of stuff. Then, there's a few divorce parties scattered around there. And then, it's the 50, 55, 60 plus you start

realizing oh my God, I've lost my parents, I've lost, potentially, a loved one. But then it comes down to, now I'm 70 and I've seen several funerals at this point and you kind of get good at it.

[Dave:](#) But, you did all that before you were 30. So, you basically did your older person stuff. Because I had most of the diseases of aging before I was 30 that I had the pleasure of overcoming. But, you learn so much wisdom there. What you did that was different is you said, here's these 13 things. And, because you had to practice three times, got to, not being a very positive way of putting it.

[Amy:](#) Right.

[Dave:](#) Let's say that that was the position you were in. What are those 13 things? Give me a couple of those things. I'm sure half the people listening saw the blog post when it first came out. But just kind of walk me through what is it?

[Amy:](#) No. 1 on the list is that mentally strong people don't feel sorry for themselves. That's because that's where I was when I was writing this letter. I was in the midst of hosting a pity party. So that ended up as number one on the list. Don't feel sorry for yourself.

[Amy:](#) Another one is don't give away your power, which is really about when you say things like, my boss makes me work late, or my mother-in-law makes me feel bad about myself. Nobody makes you do those things. So taking back your power is about acknowledging that you're in control of your time, you're in control of how you think, how you feel, how you behave.

[Amy:](#) Another one's about not resenting other people's success. In today's world, it's so easy to look around and think other people are doing better or that somehow other people are taking away things from you, whether it's money or that they have more fame or fortune, more good luck, and that somehow they're robbing you.

[Amy:](#) So, really, the whole list is sort of these things that we all do sometimes. It's not a list of yeah, I do that or no I don't. I guarantee we've all done these things at least a few times in our life. But it's also things that we can choose to give up and that once you recognize them, you can't unsee them and you start to recognize points in your life where you do them. And then you make a conscious decision of "how do I stop doing that?"

[Dave:](#) Feelings are not generally subject to logic. We don't really, "oh, I had a thought and then I had a feeling about it." Usually, you have a feeling and then you make up the I'm feeling sorry for myself sort of thing. How would someone, and I'm asking you not just as the author of The 13 Things Mentally Strong X, Y, Zs don't do. But just as a psychology professor, someone whose studied this a lot and someone whose lived through it, how do you do that little mental trick of saying, okay, I'm feeling sorrow but no, I'm not feeling sorry for myself? Because a lot of people get stuck there.

[Amy:](#) Yeah. I think it's super important to recognize feeling bad can be healing. If you're grieving, you're going through tough times and you feel sad, absolutely healthy. But it

crosses over that line when you start to think my life is worse than everybody else's. Nobody understanding my problems. When you start to fall into the category of hopeless and helpless. And for every solution that you try to elicit from other people, then you find 101 problems, 101 reasons why it won't work. That's when you get stuck in that trap of thinking nothing's going to help, there's nothing I can do about this. And sometimes, it becomes an excuse. I'm going to sit around this weekend and not go anywhere. I'm not going to do anything. I'm just going to sit here and wallow in my misery. That's when it becomes a problem.

[Dave:](#) Okay. That makes sense. And it's a lifelong skill. And one that you practice early. Do you find that the best way to know when you're having a pity party? Because you probably know it, at least when you start it, it feels real. Is it friends? Is it family? Is it a therapist? What's the early warning system for the fact that you've fallen into self-pity and you didn't notice?

[Amy:](#) I think when you start to recognize there's absolutely nothing I can do to make myself feel better, there's nothing I can do to make my situation better, there's nothing I can do to contribute to the world, to make the world better. Because some problems can't be solved. If you have a loved one with a terminal illness, you can't fix it. But you can say, well, what are my options? What can I do to make myself feel better? How can I take care of myself? How can I help my loved ones during this time?

[Amy:](#) When you're hosting a pity party is when you think oh, there's nothing I can do. This is terrible, horrible, and awful and my life is ruined. And sometimes, your friends and family are the ones who can point it out. Maybe they're trying to offer you solutions. Maybe they're trying to say, what if you tried this? And for every time they offer that, you come up with a reason why it won't work, you start thinking nobody understands, nobody cares. I think a lot of that terminal thinking when start that thinking are always horrible, things are never going to get better, always and never are some pretty good clues. Or when you're thinking, nobody understands or nobody else has ever experienced this. Those are all red flags that you're sort of exaggerating how bad your misfortune is.

[Dave:](#) Byron Katie's book, *The Work*, she was on the show recently. She has a practice where you ask yourself is this true?

[Amy:](#) Yeah.

[Dave:](#) Like, okay, a lot of your self-pity probably isn't true. Any of those things you just said, all of those are just a simple, fact-based thing. When they're not true, they sure feel true, which is the challenge of just overcoming how do we solve that.

[Dave:](#) You also talk about how people who are mentally strong, they don't fear taking calculated risks. So, how do you know that you calculated your risk right? I say this as someone who just did the world's first six-hands, total-body stem cell makeover with four hours of having needles put everywhere, etc., etc. I know I thought I calculated that

risk pretty well. It seems like it turned out. But, I don't know if I did it right. So, how do mentally strong people know they did it right?

[Amy:](#) I think part of it is just being more aware. We take risks every day and we don't even think about it. And when we look at how we handle risk, it's kind of crazy.

[Amy:](#) If we take the same risk every day, after a while, it doesn't seem risky. Take driving a car, for example. Most of us get behind the wheel and drive a car. You probably even speed, sometimes, and don't really think about it. Yet, the things that scare us are bizarre. It's scary to maybe take the stage in front of a group of people or some people are terrified of flying. A lot of our risks aren't based on any type of logic. It's just based on how we feel. So, just recognizing how do your emotions affect your decisions? Well, when you're really excited about something, you'll overlook the risks, you'll underestimate how rough things could be. So, if you're super excited about an opportunity to make money, you might think, well, nothing bad will happen and you jump in and just take it and you become on the impulsive end of the spectrum. That's why some people fall for get rich quick schemes, because they're so excited about the possibility of getting all this money.

[Amy:](#) But on the other end, sometimes when we're already anxious about something else, maybe you're nervous about something that happened at home. And you go to work and you have an opportunity to take a risk, your anxiety will spill over from home into work. And you'll think, no, I can't possibly take this risk at work, whether it's applying for a promotion or volunteering to be on a committee. So, part of it's just becoming more aware of your emotions, recognizing how do my emotions effect this? And then, say, well, what's the logic of this risk? And did you really look at the potential benefits, the pros, the cons, and did you evaluate it? Or did you just sort of go with your gut and think, I'll just do this without really putting any thought into it?

[Dave:](#) All right. That's strong advice. I like that. You went on from talking about what mentally strong people don't do, and you got into parenting. Do you have kids?

[Amy:](#) I was a foster parent for most of my adult life. It was one of the ... From the time I was a little kid, I was like someday I'm going to be a foster parent. So as soon as I was in graduate school, my first husband and I became foster parents. And, I had kids between the ages of 4 all the way up until 17. And after I was widowed, I decided not to do this as a single woman. Then when I got remarried, my second husband was onboard. So, for most of my life, I had therapeutic foster kids. I like the ones who were sort of been kicked out of every place they'd ever been, the ones that were considered somewhat unadoptable. My goal was to say, how do I make it so that these kids can be adopted before they 18? It's something I'm super passionate about. I'm taking a break now that I live on a boat and I'm not home very often.

[Amy:](#) So, to answer your question, I don't have biological kids, but for most of my adult life, I've had foster kids.

[Dave:](#) Wow. Well, thank you for that. You're changing some lives in a really profound way just on an individual basis with doing something that requires that level of energy and care.

And that probably would be the best possible background to write a book on what 13 mentally strong parents ... wait. What was it? *13 Things Mentally Strong Parents Don't Do*. Because you actually had a sample size of kids saying, okay, what happened here? What didn't happen? Abandonment, all that stuff. So, you dug in on that. And your list is really strong there.

[Dave:](#) As a parent of two kids, who's never been a foster parent, I've got to say this is a fantastic list. And I wanted to call out a couple of things from *13 Things Mentally Strong Parents Don't Do*. One of them is you talk about making their children the center of the universe. Why did that make the list?

[Amy:](#) It's one that I've seen a lot in my therapy office. I hear a lot about it, too. People will say, your kids should be your everything. Your kids should ... Your entire world should revolve around your kids. But we're seeing the consequences of that. Kids who think, kids who grow up with their parents entire universe was revolving around them, grow up to think the entire world revolves around them. That doesn't mean that your kid shouldn't be a top priority in your life. But it means that you can set limits, you can say no, you don't have to do the things your kids want to do.

[Amy:](#) I would see it in my therapy office all the time. Parents would come in and they have this kid and the child just has never really dealt with a lot of things in life because the parents were willing to do whatever the child wanted to do 24/7, whether they were traveling the country to go to sporting events just for their child, or they were spoiling them with everything they could afford. They had the best of intentions. But at the same time, they were raising this child who just wasn't going to have the skills that they needed to deal with the fact that their future boss or future mate, their future friends that they were going to have just weren't going to be able to meet these kind of demands.

[Dave:](#) I had one employee, the first time having a job out of school, and this person said, I'm going to show up to this thing. And it was a thing that had been planned for a long time. It was an important attendee. And then, the evening before, it's like, oh, I'm not going to show up. I'm like, okay. That's out of integrity. It's one of those things where, at this company, we do what we say we're going to do. And it's not okay to flake unless we're talking about a family emergency. And, oh, the emergency was a hot date, as far as I can tell. When I said it's out of integrity, they looked at me and said, it's out of integrity for you, but it's not out of integrity for me.

[Amy:](#) Interesting.

[Dave:](#) Like, what do you do with that? I don't even know. I was asking myself, all right, is this that being the center of the universe? Because integrity isn't about you or me. It's about do people do what they say they're going to do? And, it was ... that's what actually made that rule pop out or that piece of advice pop out.

[Dave:](#) What are some other things that you're seeing parents do today that maybe they didn't do 25 years ago?

[Amy:](#) Certainly, that's one of them. 25 years ago, nobody was making their kid the center of their universe, or very few parents. But, another one is parents are taking responsibility for the way that their kids feel. When kids are bored, we cheer them up or we entertain them. When they're bored ... when they're sad, we cheer them up. When they get overstimulated, we calm them down. When they're upset, we do whatever we can to make things right. And I think for a lot of parents, they have guilt about being working parents, or they have guilt or they worry that if their child isn't happy all the time, that somehow they're doing something wrong. And, we're not giving kids the skills that they need.

[Amy:](#) And, as a college professor, I see this firsthand. But there are studies that, when they surveyed college students and said, were you ready for college? Most of them said academically, I was a hundred percent ready for life after high school. But then, when they say, what about emotionally? Almost all of them say no, I don't have the skills to be lonely, to be sad, to be upset. I don't know how to deal with those things on my own. In fact, that was the one skill that college students say that they wish that their parents and teachers had spent more time working on with them.

[Dave:](#) Actually being alone?

[Amy:](#) Well, just having emotional skills so that you can handle being alone. And, so, I think it's super important that, as parents, we give kids the coping skills that they need. And I think part of its electronics, too.

[Amy:](#) When I was a kid, if I was in the back seat of the car and it was boring, I just had to look out the window. Now you see kids, and they've got these hand-held devices, and they don't know what it's like to be bored or when they're kind of lonely, they just turn on their smartphones and they're chatting with people. So, it really takes away a lot of opportunities to deal with real life emotions when they're constantly on their digital devices.

[Dave:](#) Oh, so they just need to feel their emotions. It's funny, I sat down with my daughter once, she was probably four or something, it was a while back. And she was like, I don't know what's going on. There's ... and finally, we talked about it. It was like, oh, you're feeling an emotion. She's like really? And I'm like, yeah. And it was angst or I don't remember exactly what it was. But, finally, she just started wailing and it was like, oh, I feel much better. So, oh, can you draw a picture of it? And she draws this red ball or something. Like, great. And she went off and played.

[Dave:](#) And it was so weird because I wasn't necessarily raised that way. But she was puzzled by this weird thing that was happening to her, because whatever that was, she'd never felt it or never noticed it before. But it would have been pretty easy to, like, hey, let's have some ice cream and I'm grateful I didn't do that.

[Dave:](#) If your parents didn't let you feel your emotions, let's say, okay, so now you're an adult, or young adult or even an old adult, and like, oh, there's emotions in there. Is there any

remedial action that you should do to be more functional that way? I mean, is that going back to the 13 things mentally resilient people do?

[Amy:](#) I think a lot of us weren't. In my house, we didn't really sit around and talk about our feelings or emotion words or anything like that. I think it's something we're becoming more aware of. But, people just never dealt with that. So I think when you become an adult, a lot of those people end up in my therapy office. It's because now they're like, what do I do with this? But, it's never too late. Part of it, I think, the very first thing is just label it. And when I talk to adults I'll say name as many emotions as you can. They usually come up with about four. We have happy, sad, mad, angry, maybe. And after that, you think, gosh, we talk so much about emotional intelligence, yet I've got a vocabulary of about four feeling words.

[Amy:](#) And so, I think sometimes just to Google a list of emotions and maybe you hang it up on your wall and just look at it and sometimes say, gosh, how am I feeling today? And put a name to it. That takes a lot of the sting out of it. It helps you become better at understanding how do I feel today and how might my emotions be clouding my judgment or affecting my decisions or fueling my behavior? And it just really helps you to become more aware.

[Amy:](#) So that's just one super easy thing you can do to just start becoming more aware of how you feel.

[Dave:](#) That is actually really good advice. I work with a list of emotions at 40 Years of Zen, the neuroscience thing that I do for personal development. But, I've never thought of printing that list out and putting it on the walls. So, I'll do a blog post for people with a list of emotions. And, it's actually a really cool idea. I'm going to do it with my kids. Like, which one of those do you have? What a cool idea. Thank you for that.

[Amy:](#) Sure.

[Dave:](#) Let's talk about women. One of my favorite topics. Your latest book was *13 Things Mentally Strong Women Don't Do*. What made you decide to write a book targeted specifically for women versus a book about people?

[Amy:](#) Well, you know, my books have really been out of the first book. I got so many questions from parents about how do I raise mentally strong kids, so the parenting book was born. And when the parenting book came out, I had a lot of questions from moms, in particular, saying, okay, but how do I raise a strong daughter? Or how do I, as a working mom, how do I go ahead and be a ... What's it look like to be strong? And I thought, you know, we have so many examples of strength and mentally strong people out there. But a lot of them tend to be men. We look at Navy Seals, we look at a lot of male elite athletes. But we need examples of what does it look like to be a mentally strong woman. And does it look different than men? And how might we have those role models for girls who are growing up to say, this is what it looks like. This is how it feels to be a mentally strong woman. This is what you can do.

[Amy:](#) So I just really wanted to. And I think in looking back, probably a lot of the examples in my people book are men. And it was something when I wrote the book, I probably ... I know there are plenty of women in there. But I suspect, I haven't done the math on how many men compared to women, but I thought, I just think there probably aren't nearly as many examples that we're talking about out there, but a lot of the men get the limelight because when you think about strength, we talk so much about physical strength and these physical challenges and men who can submit themselves to all the rigors of becoming a Navy Seal that we talk about that rather than what does it look like to be a woman whose mentally strong?

[Dave:](#) All I know is if you want to see how mentally strong women are, just look at the amount of sleep deprivation that happens after you have a baby.

[Amy:](#) Exactly.

[Dave:](#) If you can wake up in the morning after that, that's mentally strong.

[Amy:](#) Right.

[Dave:](#) And even today, women still do somewhere around 70% of the housework. Which is lower than it was historically, but it's still not anywhere close to parity. So, also, we have more women working than ever before. So, let's see, more work and a greater share of what goes on operating a household. That takes mental strength. That's not even counting if you have kids. Just the idea of not having mental strength, it flies in the face of the facts, but we don't oftentimes recognize that.

[Amy:](#) Right.

[Dave:](#) So, I buy your perspective there.

[Dave:](#) A question about your list of 13 things for women, specifically. Is this based on gender-based social constructs? Or is this more around research and science say this is what women do? Is this built in or is this what we learned?

[Amy:](#) You know, I think a lot of it has to do with what we have learned, as women. But I think it's so ... A lot of the things are just so, have just become so common in society that we don't even necessarily recognize them. The more that I was researching, the more I was thinking about it, the more I would find just from the way that we start raising girls a little bit differently when they're born, from how teachers treat girls in the classroom as compared to boys. And a lot of it's just become so ingrained that I think we've sort of accepted it and we don't necessarily even notice it. But I wanted to bring those to light and talk about, as women, how do you ... how does that affect you? How do you get caught up in these bad habits? And, then, how do you give them up?

[Dave:](#) So I guess that up as we're not sure, but a lot of it is learned. I'll put it that way.

[Amy:](#) I think so. I think so.

[Dave:](#) Okay. What's your favorite one of the 13 things that you wrote for women?

[Amy:](#) That mentally strong women don't downplay their success. Because I find that, not to say that men are right and women are wrong. But we know when it comes to, say, talking about our skills, about our achievements, men tend to go to one end of the spectrum. They are much more boisterous, they talk about all their skills, even when they have the same amount of experience as women do, men tend to brag a lot more.

[Amy:](#) Women, on the other hand, downplay ...

[Dave:](#) I'm feeling stereotyped right now.

[Amy:](#) So there's a study on LinkedIn where they looked at men versus women. And once you have the exact member views of experience. And they'd ask them about their skills. And, the list for men was so much longer than the list that women would have. And I think, as women, we don't want to sound arrogant. We don't want to be impolite. We don't want to look narcissistic. But it's to our own detriment, sometimes, that we will minimize our success because we don't want anybody else to feel bad.

[Amy:](#) And, one of the ways that ... Just a simple way to look at it is, how do women respond to compliments? I know a lot of men do this, too. But, women in particular, when they're complimented, they often will minimize it and say, oh, it's no big deal. Or we give a compliment back and say, no, you're amazing. Or we tend to sort of shrug off and we think, oh, this old shirt? I bought it for \$10 or something like that.

[Dave:](#) Do you mean, like being a guru?

[Amy:](#) Right. Right.

[Dave:](#) Got you.

[Amy:](#) Well, you know, how do we say, my lists, I come by them all honestly, including this one. But to just say thank you when somebody compliments me is uncomfortable. But I practice it and after a while, I get more used to it. But just in looking at how women tend to respond to compliments, the statistics are something like, especially when women are complimented by other women, 80% of the time, they'll deflect it, they'll minimize it, they'll do something because it's just so uncomfortable. But it's okay to acknowledge your success. It doesn't mean that you're bragging if you just simply say thank you when somebody else acknowledges you. And it's okay to talk about your achievements. And it's okay to say, gosh, I'm proud that I put in a lot of hard work and here's what came of it.

[Dave:](#) It's funny that saying thank you didn't come naturally to me, either. I work with a variety of advisors, mentors, people way older than me who, therefore, have more arrows in their backs than I do. Energy workers and anyone else I find who has unusual skills that they'd like to share with me. And, one of them was like, Dave, when people compliment you or say thanks or whatever, you've got to say thanks. I'm like, okay, I can do that. But

they're like, but you're not saying it right. What do you mean? There's something that you're supposed to do when you say thank you for a compliment. You have to actually energetically receive the compliment.

[Dave:](#) So it's one thing to have like a fake smile and go thank you, can I go next. Another thing thank you and actually feeling the thanks. And I've never talked about this on the air, but I actually went through a six-month practice of reminding myself every time people say thanks, oh, it's actually hear it and then feel the sensation of thanks, if there's even a word for that. And it was great advice, but it doesn't really make a lot of rational sense. But when people tell you thanks or they compliment you, and you do that, they can feel that their compliment had an impact. And then, they feel better about it.

[Amy:](#) Yes.

[Dave:](#) And you probably get this all the time, you walk somewhere and people recognize you. Like, oh thank you for your book, it changed my life. And then, you go, oh, thanks, and you have to receive that. And I have a similar experience, quite a lot, which I'm really grateful for. But it was actually work to learn how to do that right. So, I love that you put this in your book because receiving a compliment, there's a skill to that. And your parents don't teach you that. No one teaches you that.

[Amy:](#) Right. Right. And, I think there's so much focus on humility. I love that you said that about receiving it and to help yourself try to at least feel it on the inside, too. Because there is a big difference in just saying thanks and you keep walking versus, hey, thank you for acknowledging that and then to take a moment and really feel it and think, okay. And it's uncomfortable. It's so bizarre ...

[Dave:](#) It is.

[Amy:](#) ... the words that are supposed to make you feel good feel so cringe worthy sometimes. But, I think after a while you get more used to it and it becomes more comfortable just being able to say thank you.

[Dave:](#) Yeah. You're making me question, or ask myself how can I teach my kids that skill? That's a tough one. Do you have any ideas?

[Amy:](#) Yeah. So, you know that line between you want to raise humble kids, but on the other hand, you want them to be polite and to receive a compliment. And so, I think just practicing receiving it when they get a gift. If you write a thank you note, not just to go through the motions of thanks for that gift, but to really say, how do you ... That person took time, they were shopping for you, what do you want to say? Or when somebody compliments them on how they played in the game or how they scored on a test or for being a nice kid? How do you just take a moment and say thank you for saying that to me, and I think you can have a conversation with them afterward. How did you feel when that person said that? And how did you really feel? Because kids might say good. Well, did you really feel good? Does it ever make you uncomfortable?

[Amy:](#) So, I think just about starting those conversations and noticing how they respond to compliments. And then, for you to be a good role model and say, this is how I'm going to respond when people say nice things to me, too.

[Dave:](#) All right. I'll work on that with my kids.

[Dave:](#) You have something else in here that stands out in your book for emotionally strong women. And you say they don't fear breaking the rules. Now, I've got a son and a daughter. And my son breaks rules. And I'm completely cool with that. My daughter does sometimes, but quite often the conversation becomes, well, that's not allowed at school. And we have this conversation, it's like, well, you know, there are lots of rules. More rules than you could ever really follow. And you've got to decide is it worth breaking that rule? Because there will be consequences if you get caught. But, are the consequences worth it?

[Dave:](#) And one example, at their school, they have this ridiculous rule. You're not allowed to make snowballs. I'm like, come on, it barely ever snows. How could you not have snowballs at school? That's just sick and wrong. And if you're listening, Waldorf School people, come on, lighten up. They should say you're not allowed to be a rock bigger than so amount in the snowball and throw it at somebody you don't like. Okay, that's at least where I grew up. But, that idea of breaking it, it just seems like it's harder for her to break rules. And trust me, I think I was like, I'm going to live longer than I'm supposed to, I'll break a few rules. I live that and I probably break more rules than I should. At least I have, historically, especially as a child.

[Dave:](#) But I see a difference in my kids. And I've got to wonder, is she getting it from her friends? She's not getting it at home. Or is this one of those gender things? Do you have any perspective on that? How do women learn? Or how do we teach young women or children it's okay to break the rules?

[Amy:](#) So when they have done studies on this in schools, they found that American teachers are much more lenient when it comes to boys who break the rules because we have this sort of "boys will be boys" mentality. Other cultures that don't have that, boys and girls tend to act the same. The boys are better behaved, more in line with what we see from the girls.

[Amy:](#) But it seems to be something, I think, a lot of kids pick up in school because teachers have that idea of boys are going to be more hyperactive, that they're going to break more rules, they're going to be more impulsive, which isn't necessarily true. If we raise them the same, according to other cultures, kids will act the same.

[Amy:](#) So I think that we're giving them just really subtle messages in society that girls need to be polite. You should be well-behaved, you should be well-mannered. We praise girls more for using their manners, that sort of thing, and then look the other way when the boys are breaking their table manners. Burping at the table or something, and we laugh at it versus when little girls do that stuff, we tell them that's impolite. I think even if

they're not getting that message at home, I'm not surprised that there's other places that they probably are picking up on that.

[Dave:](#) So, how do adult women who read your book become comfortable breaking rules?

[Amy:](#) I think it's sort of like the question you said you ask your kids, is recognizing what rules are okay to break.

[Dave:](#) Like speeding.

[Amy:](#) Right. Maybe you go five miles over the limit. But ...

[Dave:](#) Not that I ever have. But I know some people do.

[Amy:](#) Of course. But, you know, when I was looking at this, too, I was thinking about women in history who've broken the rules and they've sort of become trail blazers. At first, we don't like them, but then, after a while, we think, oh, yeah. One of my examples in this chapter was Catherine Switzer, who was the first woman to run a marathon. This was back in the late '60s. We thought women physically couldn't run a marathon. And so she just happened to sign up. She ran the marathon and a lot of people weren't happy with her. But she didn't ask permission, she just went out and did it.

[Amy:](#) And I think there's all kinds of things in our society that we think women can't do and probably someday a woman will break the rule and we think, oh, we could, and we just were tolerant of this for too long. So, I think for women to just recognize "are there rules that I follow?" Maybe it's an official, unwritten rule, sort of these societal things, these gender norms that we do. Could I do things differently? Why do I do this? Why do a lot of women say, let their husbands drive the car? Why do the women do the dishes? As you say, so women do the housework. That kind of stuff. So I think it's just about recognizing what you do, why you do it, and think is this a rule that's worth breaking? What are the consequences? And, how might I do things differently?

[Dave:](#) If you were to turn this around and write a book for men about those things that were specific for men, you may be thinking about doing that, are there rules that you would change of this list of 13?

[Amy:](#) Yeah. So, some of the men that have read this book have said, gosh, this all applies to me. And I'm glad that men find value in it, too. But I tried to find things that specifically spoke about women and that I could back up with research that affect women more. But when it comes to men, whenever I have this conversation, of course, the subject of toxic masculinity comes up, where men feel like they can't talk to their friends about their emotions, that there are certain things that men have to do. So, I think it would be a different list, but I think it would be similar in terms of vulnerability and emotions and the way that men think that they have to act in public and different gender norms that men deal with that women don't necessarily have to experience.

[Dave:](#) The third rule in your book for women is they don't see vulnerability as a weakness. And Lewis Howes is a good friend who has written about *The Mask of Masculinity*. And about five days ago, I had Nick Foles, the Superbowl MVP Champion, onstage with me at a talk I was giving. And, he was talking about what happens in the locker room. He's Superbowl MVP and just a really great, humble human being. He said, no one talks about this, but a lot of the guys, before they go out on the field, they're literally throwing up. Like, they have panic attacks. They're so worried and so worked up. But, of course, no one's ever going to talk about or going to show up saying this is how I manage my stress. Because every time you go out there, you just don't know and there's a hundred thousand people watching you and all this stuff.

[Dave:](#) And so, I was just kind of amazed to hear that because you hear this maybe from SWAT team people, and I've had some people on who've talked about that, just the innate stress responses. But, the fact that they don't talk about it. I kind of feel like women are allowed, in today's culture, just to be more vulnerable than men. But you're saying, even so, women don't see that vulnerability as a weakness. And it seems like that is an area where guys probably have more of an issue with that. And it's certainly something that I worked through in my early 30s, around just being comfortable being vulnerable. Because that was certainly not something that was ever acceptable where I went to school, anyway. They'd beat if you up if you were vulnerable.

[Amy:](#) Right. And I find for women, when I was really writing that chapter, a lot of it had to do with work. If women are emotional as a leader, then often they get to be crazy, where if a man expresses emotions sometimes, we'll think, wow, he's a really good leader or he's passionate about this. And so, I think for women, there's a game face that they have to put on, but it's in a different way. Whereas women, behind closed doors with their female friends, they can talk about, gosh, I'm really anxious, I'm nervous, I'm sad. And then, a lot of men say I don't have that opportunity, I don't have anybody in the world that I could really express my feelings to and feel like it's okay to do that.

[Dave:](#) So that's something that I think is shifting. And sometimes, it's just having really healthy friendships is really part of that. And there are a lot of guys, going back to your book on kids, where you have kids and you end up for only 18 years, not really putting time into friendships because you're putting so much energy making your kids the center of the universe. And that was for men and women.

[Amy:](#) Yes.

[Dave:](#) But, at least the studies that I've seen, probably not nearly as many as you as a professor of psychology. But that women tend to have better friendships during that time than guys do, because guys are quite often just really career focused and women, especially when you have young kids, you tend to spend time with other people who have kids. So you get some mommy social time.

[Amy:](#) Right.

[Dave:](#) Whereas, guys oftentimes don't. So, maybe that's one that would be in there.

[Dave:](#) All right. I think that you've done a pretty profound job of breaking down this huge number of things into very digestible bites in all three of your books that really stand out. And, I've got to ask you now, if you had only one thing that would apply to all of those audiences, the single most important thing that mentally strong people don't do, what would it be?

[Amy:](#) I would say that mentally strong people don't expect immediate results. I think in today's world of instant gratification, we want things so fast, but yet, change. Like, you're going yourself, you're going to change your life, it takes time and know that progress doesn't always come in straight lines. Sometimes things get a little worse before they tend to get better. But that doesn't mean you should quit. You don't give up. You just keep going and know that it's going to happen overnight.

[Dave:](#) It comes down to patience and resilience and just continuing to push as long as you're not following that one other rule you have, which is they don't keep doing the same thing over and over that doesn't work.

[Amy:](#) Right. Exactly.

[Dave:](#) That's the problem with advice. It's always easy to generalize, except that it's not easy to generalize the way you have, where you've made some really clear rules with good stories. So, I think you've done a fantastic job of summarizing learnings that life brought your way early on. And that you've studied professionally and put it into something that's digestible and noteworthy and worth sharing. So, thank you for writing those three books. I think they're just worth people's time.

[Amy:](#) Oh, thank you.

[Dave:](#) I've got one more question for you that has nothing to do with your work. Throughout the history of Bulletproof Radio, the first about 600 or so episodes, I asked people this question and three pieces of advice for people who want to perform better at everything as human beings, which would include parenting and being a man or a woman or anything else. But, I published *Game Changers* based on that work that just came recently, the same publisher as you. And now I'm working on my next book, which is an anti-aging book. So, for the last 20 years, I've run an anti-aging nonprofit research group. And I'm out there in terms of rules I want to break around aging. And I started to ask everyone who comes on the show this question.

[Dave:](#) How long do you want to live?

[Amy:](#) I think, so I'm going to be 40 this year. So if I could live to be 140, if I had a hundred more good years left, I would be ecstatic.

[Dave:](#) All right. Look at you. I love that answer. Now, why do you think that might be possible?

[Amy:](#) My hope would be that between now, so if I'm going to be 40, and so I guess my average lifespan would be, what? Early 80s, typically? [crosstalk 00:44:00] which would

then say my life is half over. But, if I were to think about the medical advances we've made in the first 40 years of my life, my hope would be that in the next 40 years, we'll come up with something that will extend my life, things that we'll figure out, how do you cure certain things? How do you prevent certain illnesses? How do you deal with certain things?

[Amy:](#) I wouldn't want to live to be 140 if I get Alzheimer's at age 80 and I don't remember the last 60 years of my life. But I want to live to be healthy, so that would be my hope, is we learn some ways to keep us healthy and to help me to be ... have a better quality of life until 140 I think would be amazing.

[Dave:](#) I love it. And you actually followed some of your own knowledge there. You didn't let self-doubt stop you from reaching your goal. Well, you haven't made it to 140, but at least you can do it. And that thing about taking risks and looking at risk and reward, one of the other rules you have in there. You're also doing that, it's like, are you allowed to break the rules. And by the way, thank you for just saying I'm pretty sure medicine's going to do something in the next hundred years that's useful. I kind of agree with you there. But it drives me nuts when people have that picture of old age. Oh, when I'm 80, I'm going to be tubes and monitors and I won't know my own name.

[Dave:](#) It's like, no, that's not how it's supposed to be. So, I love it that you're almost 40. I just turned 46 last year. For me, I was celebrating my 25th-percent birthday. Because my goal is 180. I'm still young and I'm just going to keep it that way. So, I love hearing that.

[Dave:](#) And, if you're listening to this and you're thinking about what your picture of old age is, change it. It won't be that way when you're old. And if you're already old, it's already not that way if you know the right stuff. I'm pretty excited about that. And, by the way, if you're going to live for 140 years, like Amy here, or 180 or more, like me, you might want to look at these *13 Things That Mentally Strong People Do*. You might want to start doing that now, because if you do that for another hundred years, like Amy's going to, the return on investment and the reduction in suffering in your life from that is pretty big. So you're going to have to learn these things if you live that long. Just do it earlier because if someone had told me this when I was 20, it would have been so much easier.

[Amy:](#) Right.

[Dave:](#) All right, Amy. Thank you for your work. People can find your books all over the place. And, pretty much, you can just go out and you can Google for 13 Things Mentally Strong and you will find all three of your books. One for people, one for parents, and one for women. They're all different and they're all worth reading, even if you're not a woman, you're going to find some nuggets in there.

[Dave:](#) Thanks, Amy.

[Amy:](#) Thank you, Dave.

[Dave:](#)

If you like today's episode with Amy, you know what to do. Go out there and pick up a copy of one of her books and read it. And if you like it, take the time to leave a review. Because authors, like Amy, and like me, frankly, we appreciate the heck out of that. We actually see those things. And it lets us know whether our books are worth your time. Because one of the worst things you can do as an author is write a book that wasn't worth anyone's time. We track those things just to know "did we do it right?" so when our next book comes out, we can do it even better. It's a really good way for you to express gratitude and say thanks and it's a good way for Amy and me to practice our receivership of your thanks, like we talked about in the show today.

[Dave:](#)

So, do leave reviews for any book you read. Not just because it helps other people find the book, but because us authors, we care and we notice it. So *13 Things*, Google that, leave a review. And, *Game Changers*. Google that, leave a review. You'll become a better human being, it's guaranteed.

[Dave:](#)

Have an awesome day.

[Dave:](#)

There you go. How'd you like that?