

GET MOVING! ALIGN YOUR BODY, ALIGN YOUR LIFE – AARON ALEXANDER – #891

Dave Asprey:

You're listening to The Human Upgrade with Dave Asprey, formally known as Bulletproof Radio, I mean the podcast not me. I was formally known as Hey that jerk, but I did enough brain hacking that I'm at least less of a jerk. Now, today we're not going to talk about brain hacking except we are, because at least in my world the brain extends far beyond the skull. We have this weird thing called a nervous system and it's all technically a part of the brain. It's all connected to the brain and there's lots of local parts, lots of processing nodules that happen both inside cells and in inside functional groups within the body. And this is why functional movement has been such a core part of what I've talked about since the very beginning of Bulletproof Radio. Since the very first few blog posts saying, "If you don't know how to move then you don't how to activate muscles, right, you're wasting huge amount of energy."

And another big part of my recommendations are be super lazy, which means efficiency in everything you do. So waste less energy, be better at making it and be better at not wasting it and magically you'll have a lot more left at the end of the day. And today we're going to talk about something called The Align Method with my friend Aaron Alexander. He's been on a bunch of podcasts with guys who've been on here as well who have shown, Kelly Starrett who actually coined the term disaster pants on an early interview in the first 100 wrote the forward for the book. If you don't know what disaster pants is, because you're a new listener, disaster pants is what happens when you have cheap MCT oil that is a gastric irritant. Even though MCT oil is a high performance thing, it should not be high performance rocket fuel in the disaster pants sort of way. It should just be for your brain and your body, not to get too graphic but that was what Kelly did.

So Aaron, I think we first in... well, 2021 just recently you presented at my Biohacking Conference and years ago I know you treated me at my conference. I think you might have presented then as well, were you presenting way back in like 2014 or something?

Aaron Alexander:

Not that long ago, I think the first one was maybe four years ago or so but-

Dave:

Okay, good to hear. So anyway we've known each other for a while, he's got very solid knowledge of functional movement and just doing a practice with you. I know a few people who can look at someone walk in the door and it's like Neil from the matrix. And he sees all zeros and ones instead of reality, and you walk in the door and he was looking at me like Dave, so your left whatever... penis joint. I have no idea what you called it, is dysfunctional hyperactive-

Aaron:

It was flaccid penis joint actually, thankfully.

Dave:

Yeah, thank god, right? Yeah, we don't want that kind of a hotel room treatment. But you can see stuff that no one who is normal in the way they view the world would do it. Same way I look at a bottle of supplements and I'm like I know exactly where they cut corners and why it's going to work and what's going to do, because I know because I've lived it for so long. So you look at the way everyone around you moves and it's really impressive, and also your knowledge of what to do about it. So having your

Align Method book is cool because it's like... all right, we are setting, we acknowledge that we're setting, what are we going to do about it? I think is really important and valuable for listeners, and that's why I wanted to have you on today.

Aaron:

Great. There's so many amazing angles to go from everything that you just said. I think we could pretty much just... you essentially just outlined a perfect podcast of every point that you hit at, so thanks for that. So the first thing in relation to people communicating via body language for example would be an interesting place to go and how some people have these neo powers to be able to perceive what's happening with someone's [inaudible 00:05:24] or what's happening in their... whatever part of the body name specific polysyllabic term of anatomical structure, but we're always communicating with our body language.

So there's a psychologist from the '60s called Albert Mehrabian, you might have heard of, previously came up with a principle called the 55-38-7 principle. And what it denoted essentially was 55% of our communication comes from body language and then 38% of our communication comes from the tone of our language, And then there's that last remaining 7% that's actually the words that we're using with each other. And if there's any incongruence between what we say with our tone and also pacing of our language, and our postural patterns and our facial gestures with... 93% of the time we're going to trust what we hear, and see and perceive with the body. And so if you're a person that's just been successful in any capacity in your life with relationships or with business you can just walk down the street and not get robbed with regularity, then you're gathering millions of bits or billions of bits of information based off of the way that people move through the room.

And so that's a big part of what The Align Method represents and what... I think a lot of people in the health wellness space are digging into whether they put that language on it or not, the way that we breathe is indicative of our mental, emotional, physiological state, the way that we walk, the way that we use our eyes, so we're always communicating and it's just such a rich conversation, I'm so excited to write a book about it.

Dave:

It's true, in fact I think we use more than our eyes more often than we think. So we see stuff but we're also feeling stuff that we integrate in, we're even feeling people's magnetic fields.

Aaron:

Sure.

Dave:

And you could say-

Aaron:

Yeah.

Dave:

Seriously Dave, that's pretty hippy. I'm like, "Hey, I've got the data I've an advisor to the HeartMath Institute for a while."

Aaron:

Yeah, the HeartMath Institute.

Dave:

So that's real-

Aaron:

Yeah.

Dave:

So do people change... or when people change, how they sit or how they stand or their posture, does it affect how people treat them?

Aaron:

Yeah, yeah, exactly. So we actually referenced that in the book. There was a study... I think it was, I believe it was UCLA, they came up with a study where they went to prisons and they questioned different inmates that were in there for violent crimes. And they presented them with different images and videos of various different people walking down the street. And they said like, "Who would be prey here for you? Which person would you go after?" And it wouldn't be the sex of the person or the race of the person. It was the level of integration or organization with the way that they moved. So a person that feels stable, feels their oriented, they know where they're going, you don't want to mess with that person. Whereas a person that's kind of disoriented or dysregulated just like in nature, that would be an easier prey

And so that's something that I think we're subtly doing in relationships all the time, maybe a person plays like the victim mentality and they just keep on rehearsing that and they're like, "Gosh, dang it. I don't know why I keep going back to that mental, emotional expression or pattern," but they're not necessarily looking at how are we communicating in our relationships with our body language. And so if you can start to kind of do a self-audit of like, "How do I feel in my body when I communicate with somebody else?" And with very high accuracy, high percentage of the time, if you were to be able to take an image of yourself or a video of yourself, you might see yourself just like in that study within prisons where you're like, "Oh my God, I'm expressing as a victim."

And that could look maybe like I'm cowering my shoulders forward, I'm doing that... all the anatomical terms, I'm going hyper kyphosis of my spine, or maybe upper cross syndrome with my neck or forward head posture. Maybe my hips are kind of tilted towards the door, my feet are going to the direction of the door it's like I want to get out of the room. And so all of those, those are the messages that we're really conveying to each other. And then, a lot of the words can almost be like minutia in a way.

Dave:

So having full awareness of where your body is just proper function, that's the unconscious part of that and there's the conscious part of that, that you can use actually to make people know what you want them to know with what you're saying. In other words, they can know you're serious.

Aaron:

Yeah.

Dave:

Part of my practice is I believe it's really important to know how to be dangerous. And being dangerous doesn't mean, you're trained into martial art to kill everyone in the room. It means having a ton of energy so that you can think for yourself, but it also means knowing how to up and be grounded so that someone can look at you and be like, "That's not a good target."

Aaron:

Correct.

Dave:

Right? And I have an unfair advantage that I'm six four, I'm carrying a lot of muscle right now. So I'm generally not that guy anyway because there's going to be someone who's easier to rob. But I've been in situations in impoverished countries where I'm all by myself in the middle of nowhere and... I don't know what's going to happen but there's a vibe that you carry when you walk the right way in all that. And what I don't think we acknowledge in the world is the connection between proper structural integration of your fascia.

Aaron:

Yeah.

Dave:

And all of the things, your posture we with having that vibe automatically versus walking into a room with like the, "I'm going to kill everyone here who needs killing," kind of vibe.

Aaron:

Yeah.

Dave:

Which you can turn on. So it's just more work to turn on and in the interest of being lazy, I like the idea of having my body automatically look like something that works so well, you shouldn't mess with it. And then being able to turn on don't mess with me energy and when you need to.

Aaron:

Yeah, absolutely. Yeah.

Dave:

All right, how do we do that?

Aaron:

Well, so where it gets interesting is to make that be something that's automatic as opposed to a thing that you do, a thing that you are, you need to look at the 90% of your day where you're probably... if you're grow up in Western culture, there's a good chance... or outside of Western culture at this point, there's a good chance that you're spending a massive chunk of that day probably on a chair.

Well, so where it gets interesting is to make that be something that's automatic as opposed to a thing that you do, a thing that you are. You need to look at the 90% of your day where you're probably, if you're grow up in Western culture, there's a good chance... or outside of Western culture at this point, there's a good chance that you're spending a massive chunk of that day probably on a chair. So you're sitting down on a chair, your ankles, your hips, your knees everything's just at that static 90 degree angle, doesn't really go beyond that and you're probably maybe a little hunched forward, your pelvis is probably wrapped underneath in that posterior tilted position which if there was a dog that was in trouble, for example, say you're going to like... I would never hit a dog with a newspaper but you might see in comic book or something.

Dave:

Not even the Washington post? Oh no, that's for cleaning up the dog's mess. I'm sorry. [crosstalk 00:12:43].

Aaron:

But so if a dog feels like it's in trouble, immediately you'll see it's ears go down, you'll see it's pelvis kind of rap under in that posterior til position, the tail goes underneath the legs. The dog knows what's going on and then the physiology of the dog, the musculoskeletal system that deeper intelligence of the dog knows what's going on. And so when you look at people in modernity, depression is becoming the number one leading cause of disability worldwide and antidepressant medications, and anti-anxiety medications and like self-harm, people cutting themselves.

That's something that's not just an innate human quality to want to self-harm and I'm not saying that this is just exclusively a postural thing, there's so many different layers to it but one of the layers is the way that we inhabit our physical bodies. And so if you were to look around the modern mold and what's the movement environment that we exist in, typically it's kind of... it pulls us into a collapsed, depressed... depressed in the literal sense of the meaning being pulled down, disoriented or disorganized position. And then when you want to get up and go and be an athlete, or be confident, or be any of those things be a good father, present in a boardroom and you want people to feel what the heck you're talking about, you've been preparing yourself to a collapsed position which ultimately people aren't going to trust.

So something that you can start to do is start to integrate just a little bit more awareness into your daily life and the big thing is changing the shape of your environment. So Bruce Lipton is a guy that I'm grateful to call a friend, I did a podcast with him just like a year ago or so and we were talking...

Dave:

Yeah, we're friends as well. Great guy, right?

Aaron:

He's sweet, yes. I went up to his place and we spent the day hanging out and one of the things he was talking to me on the podcast was about working with cells and Petri dishes. And if you want to change the orientation or the structure, that you want to change what's happening at a biochemical level with the cell, you don't go in and do stuff to the cell, you go into the culture that the cell exists within. And so if you want to do something with your own biology, it would make sense to maybe start to adjust the culture that you exist within.

Dave:

The very definition of Biohacking is to change the environment around you and inside of you so you have full control of your own biology, and it was directly inspired by Bruce Lipton's work. I reference it a lot my very first book.

Aaron:

Cool.

Dave:

But the story you're talking about, your change what's around you. So all of the stuff that I've taught, ultimately, as you change what's around you or what's inside of you, but around you is the most leveraged thing because you have to think about it.

Aaron:

Right.

Dave:

If it's inside of you, have to do a lot of thinking and personal development work or whatever.

Aaron:

Yeah.

Dave:

It's just the laziest way to do it is, change how you're sitting because it's less work than digging deep and dealing with the trauma, although you probably should do both.

Aaron:

Yeah.

Dave:

But the ROI on changing how you say is very high.

Aaron:

Yeah, yeah. And then even it relates to, this is a little bit of a jump but it ties back in, to athletics. If we put our focus externally, which Gabrielle Wolf would be one of the primary thought leaders in this conversation, "If we put our focus externally, it's going to be more effective at hitting the golf ball than putting our focused internally." So if you're out there, you like Caddyshack, you want to become the ball, so you put your mind into the environment but you're doing that anyway. Your body self organizes around that perceived goal whereas if you put all your energy internally, it's beautiful and it's such an important practice to do. But if you're having a conversation with somebody and you're thinking about yourself, you're not having a conversation with somebody. And so it's just even with that attention, you're going to be so much more effective by just bringing your awareness of like, "Okay, what is the shape of this room right now?" This is kind of a little bit of a jump back, but if we can just... an example right now is that we're having this conversation, I'm on the ground it's like crazy.

Dave:

How are you sitting right now? I see you're on the ground.

Aaron:

So right now I'm cross-legged, I was just in a straddle position a second ago. And you would never realize it technically like we're at work in quotations, thankfully call us work, but you'd never realize it. I don't have to be some heretic some crazy person, my house looks normal, I have a couch, I've got like a TV on the wall. I've got like... you walk in, it looks pretty like a normal place but I have a really comfortable rug that I'm on. And I have [crosstalk 00:17:42] I'm sitting on the floor. So I have, I have floor cushions down, I have like Moroccan Poufs and stuff around. And so when you come into that room, it invites your body to say, "Oh, cool, let's get all the way down to the ground because it's available.

And I'll just say one more thing. There was recently some research from university of Southern California, where the researchers went out to Northern Tanzania and spent time with [inaudible 00:18:11] people and [inaudible 00:18:12] seems like they... like everybody's studying the [inaudible 00:18:14] and what they found with the tribe there was that the people spent about similar amount of time in resting positions as industrialized cultures would. So the number they came up with like highly precise, ridiculous average number, it was 9.82 hours per day that they were in resting positions. But the difference it's not the resting position, it's how are you resting? So it's totally fine for you to sit throughout the day. It would be totally... it would be very strange if you were just always climbing trees and squatting and up and down.

And so resting positions are completely fine, it's the manner in which you do it and so what they were doing is they were in kneeling positions for a good chunk of the day. They were in a deep squat or a [inaudible 00:19:02] to use yoga terms for a good chunk of the day. They're in a sukhasana position like this and so then those people end having a lot healthier outcomes.

Dave:

It makes so much sense when you think about it and I've been trying to figure out how do I explain exactly what you're doing, some of the upgrade collective or live audience before you came here and I was saying what was your chiropractor or whatever? And it's just like, "No, but there's Western stuff, there's Eastern stuff, there's coaching." How do you describe a functional movement coach? What are the things that go into that?

Aaron:

Yeah. So my background, raw thing, would be the main thing. So structural integration is the thing that you'd already mentioned and before that it was training clients. So previously, it was fitness, exercise, getting gains and goals, and losing fat and all that and then that turned into manual therapy in the form of [Rolfing 00:20:01] and then visceral manipulation, cranial psychotherapy, various different modalities of hands-on body work.

Dave:

Let me ask you something about Rolfing, some of our audience probably doesn't know about it. So Ida Rolf, back in the seventies, or maybe late sixties, invented this crazy thing where it's like the world's most aggressive military massage where you lay there, you're kind of rolling your eyes but you have to save it. I did some Rolfing thing with one of the nine living people who trained directly with Ida, and man... actually with two of them and they go in like stick their hand underneath the muscle where no hand has ever been before and they're lifting and grinding. And it's something that, when that happens to me, I just go to sleep and then they just they're done and like what just happened? That doesn't

happen... I don't know why that happens but most people who Rolf describe... or have been Rolfed especially when they're new to it, jumping up and getting off the table, it's pretty rough but I know it's evolved since the 70s and I only did it with the old school Rolfers.

Aaron:

Yeah.

Dave:

So what is Rolfing now versus is what it used to be?

Aaron:

It really just depends on the person with anything. It's like if you have Chinese food in one restaurant, it's not like you've had all of Chinese food and all of the planet.

Dave:

So it's like chiropractic there're many flavors then.

Aaron:

Oh yeah, absolutely. So structural integration, the defining factor of structural integration is which is what Ida referred to it previously, would be you're looking to assist the body along in aligning the foot in relation to the knee, in relation to the hips and the spine, the whole system. So that when the body gets up off of the table and they walk, and they breathe and they go live their lives, they're in a better position to self-organize essentially. So that's kind of similar conversation before of becoming the ball. If you can get the body in enough alignment, and get tissues that may have been maybe impinged or dehydrated or a conglomerated bound together and you can kind of free them up that when the body does go out and live its life, it's like literally every step that a person takes, is one of restoration. But if there's so much friction and grinding and imbalance, then the steps that we're taking could be kind of more attrition. And so then if people have heard of fascia, or connective tissue, which has become really over the last decade or so, structural integration or Rolfing would be, I would say, the most... like the leading influence in popularizing that conversation.

Dave:

The data that I've seen, and it comes from Rolfing others comes from acupuncture [inaudible 00:22:46] and even Neigong, which is a lesser-known kind of relative of that is that the fascia carries information around, so I mentioned earlier these systems in the body. So when a certain number of cells, sends a certain number of things, some of the electrical signaling comes along the fascial plane and the chemical signaling is slower and comes out through various tissues.

Aaron:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dave:

Like blood flow and-

Aaron:

Yeah.

Dave:

Inter and intracellular stuff. So the fascia's... as an electrical signaling thing, is that a part of how you see it in the aligned method or is it more just a physical holding of the tissues?

Aaron:

Well, it's both.

Dave:

You're listening to The Human Upgrade with Dave Asprey. The fascia's... as an electrical signaling thing, is that a part of how you see it in the aligned method or is it more just a physical holding of the tissues?

Aaron:

Well, it's both. And so in the book, we keep it pretty simple so that people... it's more an action plan or a manual for, you call it, physical inhabitation. So it's teaching a person how to... instead of fitness being a thing that a person does, how do we get to a person to a point where fitness is who you are? And so by going in there, it's thinking it's like, "The baseline is the mechanics, understanding how to drive the body more effectively." And so a simple aspect of that would be maybe understanding how to hinge from the hips when lift something up off of the ground. And so how do we make it so that we can get derive leverage from our hips and those super robust gluteal muscles, how do we put that energy back into the [BadonkadonkAnd 00:24:37]?

And so that's like when you see a girl or a guy with a healthy butt, like a Brazilian butt, I think that there's some ancestral wisdom to us being attracted to a person with a healthy butt because it's an indication that, "Oh, the mechanics of that, that person functions well. There's longevity in that system." And so the baseline-

Dave:

You're right.

Aaron:

The baseline is teaching people like, "Cool, how do I drive this thing?" I never got... I started off before age four or so, I was naturally going through my developmental patterns and I was cross crawling, and I was squatting, and I was putting things into my mouth, and developing my microbiome, and I was looking out into the distance and I was looking up and I was taking in the Panorama and I was crying if I was scared, and I was expressing. That's the body before going into the institution, nothing wrong within the institution, it's not right, wrong, it's not a moralistic thing, it just is what it is. It forms the body into it, it's like a new press or a new mold.

Suddenly, we need to put certain types of shoes on, oh we got to get the Air Jordans or we got to get the new Nikes. And it's like, "Okay, now we're adding this new arbitrary, obscure lift in the heel and now we're going to be in this chair for a ridiculous amount of time and we're going to start to retrain what... I previously I had these really strong, effective, efficient, native spinal patterns. I start to kind of take myself out of those native ranges and put myself more into this collapsed type postural position. And so throughout that time, we're learning how to be effective, to go to work, or maybe kind of be gears or cogs in a broader system.

But physical autonomy, isn't really something that's broadly educated unless you go to some special school or you have really amazing parents. So the baseline of The Align Method is really putting like in like the heuristics or really simplistic terms of how do we just the baseline principles of how to effectively drive the body. And then from there, that's the purely kind of musculoskeletal mechanical perspective and we can get into that. But then also getting into all of these amazing toggles that we have in our body called our senses that affect the way that we think and that we way that we feel and the way that we perceive the world and the way that the world perceives us. So the way that the book was written was essentially like a user's manual on how to drive your body effectively.

Dave:

You mentioned that having a dump truck makes you more attractive.

Aaron:

Badonkadok [crosstalk 00:27:18]. that's correct.

Dave:

Lots of terms, I think a dumb truck is a little... it's the funniest term that I can think of for that.

Aaron:

Yeah.

Dave:

That is the [inaudible 00:27:29] you could say on a podcast.

Aaron:

Yeah.

Dave:

But the three reasons are, and you just added one so I only had two reasons before this, but-

Aaron:

Sure.

Dave:

One of them is because it's a signal that the person is grounded and has a functional body.

Aaron:

Yeah, I mean your whole body is that and you can think of your muscles like endocrine organs and each of your joints, they're tuning the symphony of your neurology, the way that you produce yourself at a neurochemical level. So a similar concept with ankle range of motion is tied into the dopaminergic system in your brain. So when you're out taking a walk, it's like you are literally playing symphony of your physiology. Walking is one of the healthiest things that a person can do, is just going out and getting yourself into that contralateral motion, contralateral being just like walking pattern. As you're

doing that, you're stimulating your brain function, you're also stimulating things like peristalsis and digest gin and organ function.

So as you're going through that range of motion, you're twisting yourself out. You think of that as almost like you're twisting a rag out. If you've got some [gank 00:28:34] in a rag, you might want to put some water on the rag and then you might twist the rag out. And then if there's still a little bit more gank in there, you might put a little more water in there and then you twist the rag out again. So to be a healthy whole human being, I think is so much less complicated than what the vision of what I've had at least in my own mind, or many of us might have, it's you need to be outside, you need to allow your eyes... going back to the eye stuff. Your eyes are continuous with your or central nervous system.

Dave:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Aaron:

So if you are myopically focusing in and there's a... we have a Vision Chapter in The Align Method book as well, that I was... I'm very grateful for Dr. Andrew Huberman to have gone through and revised and been just-

Dave:

I love that part of it.

Aaron:

Yeah, have just been immensely supportive. So you need to... well, you don't need to do anything. I mean first define a goal. [crosstalk 00:29:28] Yeah, where do you want to arrive?

Dave:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Aaron:

From there, me personally, I'd like to feel adaptable, I'd like longevity, I'd like strength and flexibility and dexterity, creativity. So from there defining the goal and then after that, I think most people probably would align with most of those things, nature will do most of that for us. But since we've been domesticated, you could say, with the institution, not to sound too like tinfoil hat, but since our domestication, if you take a dog, which all dogs originally came from the gray wolf and suddenly you have a Pomeranian and you want to put that Pomeranian back into the nature, there might be some training wheels to reeducate the dog on how to really be able to thrive in those situations. And in a baseline would be standing basic fundamental mechanics. So the hip hinge is one that we get into the book that's a relevant thing to pay attention to, another really simple, easy tool for people to be able to play with would be just getting your arms up over your head. And so that's something that most of us, if we're really honest-

Dave:

You mean holding them up or just-

Aaron:

Hanging.

Dave:

Connectivity.

Aaron:

Hanging.

Dave:

Oh hanging, okay.

Aaron:

Yeah.

Dave:

I do that most mornings.

Aaron:

But arms up over your head in general is going to be really supportive. So by doing that... so the eyes allowing the eyes to go through a full range of motion, utilizing the panoramic view, utilizing the myopic focusing in. So acknowledging that there's a range of motion, there's a fitness to the way that we use our visual muscles, right?

There's a fitness to the way that we derive leverage from our bodies when we're picking something up off of the ground. With the arms going up over the head, there's an interesting book called *Shoulder Pain?* by a guy called Dr. John Kirsch and he was an orthopedic surgeon that... he found that by just taking people through a really simple hanging protocol, which I essentially outlined and modify in *The Align Method*, he found that 99% of the people that he was going to treat for shoulder impingement syndrome and was actually going to conduct a surgery with them, he found that he could treat them just by bringing them back into their arboreal tendencies bringing them back into the place of just getting the arms up over the head, spending some time hanging and decompressing, and starting to rearrange the structure of that shoulder girdle.

And within that, it's not just a shoulder go thing and this gets into the structural integration stuff, everything relates to everything else. If you pull on... if you're wearing a sweater and you pull on one thread in the sweater, the whole sweater orients around that pool so it's a similar concept when you're treating something like, "Oh, I have a shoulder thing, or I have a back thing, or I have a knee thing or an ankle thing, or neck thing." You don't have a neck thing, you have a full body thing.

And so by just spending that time, the hanging position's such a beautiful, effective shotgun to start to clear up so many issues throughout the body. One would be opening up space around the lungs, so as you're going in that hanging position, you're opening up space and those intercostal muscles start to open up, the muscles in between the ribs. Each of your ribs, when you're breathing, they should hinge in up and down like handles of a bucket. So they go up and they go down, inspiration, expiration, inspiration, expiration. If those get impinged or stuck bound, then you're going to be limiting your respiratory capacity and you're limiting your potential output as a human being.

And then that gets into, "Okay, well, what's happening with your diaphragm?" Oh man, all the diaphragms related to the vagus nerve and all of these different psycho emotional situations where if

we pull in any of these physiological or musculoskeletal strings, it will trickle not just into the way that we show up mechanically but those are also tied into our endocrine system and our nerve old chemical system and the way that we express. So that would be another really simple thing that people could play with, you just get a pull up bar in your house and just put in a place that you commonly go through, changing the environment, and just hang for 15 seconds, 20 seconds and just introduce that into your day and make it who you are as opposed to a thing you do at the gym twice a week.

Dave:

If you guys think that that is a BS, when I built the labs where I'm recording this now, I had a pull up bar made out of like a threaded pipe for plumbing with cool industrial looking fittings. Now, when you walk down the stairs, it's right there. And my kids when they go downstairs, they always grab onto it and swing until they can kick their feet up.

Aaron:

Yeah.

Dave:

And actually hang from the thing and so I do that probably two or three times a day but just because it's there. And I have a pull up bar that's built in that's over there and I do that most mornings, although I've got a rotator cuff thing right now that I haven't done that in a little while, but it's something that I actually do. So I want you guys to know, I believe in this, I can't say I've done the full align method properly but I do appreciate the treatment work with you, the philosophy is very strong. What I want to know though is if I was going to say, "I'm going to go all in, I'm going to follow all the principles in The Align Method, I'm going to do whatever I should do every day for maximum results." How much time would it take me to do that?

Aaron:

I mean you'll notice changes immediately. So the thing is understanding coming back to the analogy we have all these physiological toggles that we can pull on, we just haven't ever been really granted the instructions on how to effectively utilize them. One of the obvious ones would be understanding how to utilize your breath effectively. So Wim Hof recently popularized the kind of like the holotropic style of breathing or tumor meditation or the [inaudible 00:35:33].

Dave:

Yeah.

Aaron:

That's replicating what would happen if you're in the fifth gear of your respiration, you're up at the top of a mountain or maybe you're having sex with someone or you're doing something where you're really exasperated. That's replicating fitness, that's replicating... it's putting your body in that space where it's saying, "Oh okay, cool. We're either under attack, or we're running from something or we're on the move here." Right? And so when you put yourself into that place, it puts you... increases epinephrine and kind of sets your... it cues your body up for sympathetic activation, it cues your body up to be ready to go. The opposite of that would be getting into like oxygen advantage and Patrick McEwen and Buteyko Method be a long exhalation and emphasizing breath holds perhaps, right?

Dave:

They've both been on the show throughout history, mouth taping, I assume fan of mouth taping?

Aaron:

I tape my mouth at every night.

Dave:

Okay, me too.

Aaron:

Yeah, very important for me. And if you-

Dave:

You have a beard, how do you do it? I've had lots of guys with beards ask me that.

Aaron:

So I just use the tape... the surgical [crosstalk 00:36:50]. Yeah, the little stuff and I just put it a little James Nester strips with like the Hitler mustache. I just do a little thing to cover the lip.

Dave:

Just on the lips but not over-

Aaron:

No, no, not the whole thing. [inaudible 00:37:04]

Dave:

Everyone can do it. Even your mother-in-law who may have her own mustache, it'll work just fine.

Aaron:

Yeah, right. Yeah, exactly incredibly effective. And so within that it's like, "okay." Sympathetic, parasympathetic, there's no right, wrong ones or worse than the other. They're both invaluable tools for us to be able to access and-

Dave:

Yes.

Aaron:

The real value is being able to oscillate between those spaces in your nervous system and also be able to choose how do I want to feel in this moment? So if you're... maybe say you're about to do something that makes you anxious or nervous and you're like, "Man, this is a little bit too much sympathetic overdrive right now. I'm freaking out. Oh, okay, let's use our toggles. We have toggles, we have tools." So you come in and say, "Okay, I'm going to go a little more Buteyko," and I go a little more to like long exhalation. Maybe I'll even add a little bit of humming in there as well and I'm going to increase nitric

oxide and I'm going to stimulate the vagus nerve and I'm going to do all of these. It's very simple if you can follow these basic principles.

So a long exhalation is going to put you in a more calm, restful state. It's also going to be helpful with causing your body to be able to produce oxygen from your red blood cells more effectively. So if you're always over breathing, you're going to be kind of like a... your physiology will be more slobbish, it'll be more wasteful. So if you're in a place where it's like, "Man, I'm just really... I'm out of it man. And I got to show up, I got this thing. I've got this athletic event." Whatever I like and I'm tired and don't feel good. You're like, "Oh, okay, cool. Let's up-regulate, so let's simulate that effect that you have.

If you were in that fifth gear and let's maybe do a little Wim Hof stuff or maybe do a little holotropic stuff. And within that, it understands like, "Okay, great. So I can really kind of choose my state." And then a similar thing from a visual conversation is say, "Okay, I'm stressed out. My go-to is, when I'm stressed out, is I just check out my notifications on Instagram, or I check my emails," or something kind of disassociate and do is connect and just like, "I bury myself into my phone." You're perpetuating that stress cycle by myopically focusing in on a point. So the option for you in that scenario, if you want to just calm down, take a breath, decompress, I got to gather myself, is to ideally take your eyeballs outside, expose yourself to full spectrum light. If you are inside, maybe ideally open a window so you can actually get that light in and take in the entirety of the Panorama. And when you're in that position with your eyes, it literally sends a signal into your physiology. It's like, "Okay, if I'm taking in the Panorama, it's an indication that I'm probably not under attack." If suddenly there's a threat in a room, all of my attention goes to that point.

So I can oscillate, I can go back and forth between a stress state, a good stress state and a calm, restful, digesting, restorative state just by toggling the way that I breathe, the way that I use my eyes and there're other toggles as well.

Dave:

It's interesting. I have a game that my son wanted me to check out that requires you to kind of focus on the screen of a cell phone for a while like five or 10 you're looking at a little crap movement around and poking this and that.

Aaron:

Well.

Dave:

But if I play that for more than about 20 minutes, my vision is crap for the rest of the day and sometimes the next day. My ability to focus at very noticeable shifts and vision so it's at myopia but where I'm looking at you now, you're about five feet away from me on the screen. So my main screen is a 55 inch high resolution TV that's very far back from the camera and my main monitor for the computer is about three feet away from me. So I'm always looking further away versus looking right here or here.

Aaron:

Yeah.

Dave:

And the difference in breathing and changes, those are those subtle environmental variables that a lot of people don't talk about. Even in functional movement, I like how you package it all together in The

Align Method, it's a cool way of looking at it. But I still don't feel like I've got a good answer on how long is it going to take?

Aaron:

Sure.

Dave:

What's my investment? Let's say, I'm, I'm just going to become a devotee, I'm going to grow a beard and look all tall and muscular like you, right? So I'm a mini you.

Aaron:

Yeah.

Dave:

I don't know if you wear white robes or anything but I wear white robes too. [crosstalk 00:41:49] It's like I'm all in, what's my daily investment of time?

Aaron:

So daily investment of time. Okay, so let's say let's just put it together. So hanging, let's get a pull up bar in a common doorway that you go through. I would suggest you hang in total each day for an aggregate of say 90 seconds.

Dave:

So that's right set up hanging? What about inversion? Is that included-

Aaron:

Inversion's fine, I'm not like mad at inversion. I think it's a great thing to have around but I'm just saying, pull up bar something to hang off. It could be a tree branch outside, that would be for bonus points.

Dave:

Okay.

Aaron:

Yeah. Most of the actual practices in the book, the other one would be spending time on the floor, on the ground and it doesn't need to be this strangest aesthetic thing where you are on a concrete floor and your knees are getting bruised and it's like, "I'm doing The Align Method." No, make it comfortable, make it a really nice pleasurable experience, make it a vibe to use the previous language. And within that, it's not adding...you're not adding anything. You're just changing the structure of the environment so that just you being there, it makes you more effective. I was going to say better but again that's a relative word. So that's... I would say in no time, but if you needed to put a timing on spending time on the ground each day, I would say 30 minutes at least. So for the duration of this conversation, I'll be on the ground for whatever an hour or so I'm already PID my suggestion.

Dave:

And you don't really care how you're setting, you can move around, you don't have to be in Lotus Pose.

Aaron:

No, see that's the beautiful thing. You change the shape of the environment and allow the body to organize around it. And so a really fundamental principle that people can take away here and say, "Okay, that's great But I feel uncomfortable when I sit on the ground." What you need to do is you need to raise your hips up above the height of your knees. So that sets your pelvis and your lower backup to be stable. So the bottom vertebra, the L five and S1 vertebra they're kind of more in the shape of a wedge. So I don't know if you're familiar with Esther Gokhale, I feel like you might have conversated with her at some point.

Dave:

No, she sounds interesting just by name but I don't know her.

Aaron:

Yeah, she's interesting. She gets into this topic as well, but the bottom vertebra on the shape of a wedge and so that native pattern of your spine to be able to just sit comfortably. If you've ever spent time around a baby, they'll kind of tilt forward ever so slightly in the front of their hips and they just perfectly balance up through their skeletal structure. What a beautiful thing to get your body to the point where organically, that's just how you are, you don't have to hold yourself together all the time. You don't have to like do movement. You can just naturally, organically be the thing if you set yourself up for success and the way to do that would be just make sure that your hips are up above the height of your knees period, not complicated.

So if you are on a chair, then it's the same concept. So when you're sitting on a chair, which there's nothing wrong with a chair, a chair is just a tool it's how you use it. Just like there's nothing wrong with the resting position it's just how you use it. Just make sure that your hips are up above a high with your knees and you're slightly hinged ever so slightly forward and then you could even have a friend push your shoulders down behind you, and this is something I'll do when I'm teaching workshops and things of the sort or working with clients, and just push weight down through the shoulders. And you can feel yourself almost like growing up into that weight and if you can feel yourself, stack and orient and it feels like easy and balanced down to your hips, then you're doing it well. So time consumption, there wouldn't be a lot of time consumption there.

Other chapters are around how to reorient your home, and your office and your travel so again, that's not a time thing. It's more of a philosophy, it's the way that you engage with being in your body in day to day processes as opposed to this is this program that you are doing all the time and the revised version that comes out January 11th, we do add about a 45 minute long movement sequence or series that I recommend people doing three to four times a week, but that's optional. That's just a helpful way to start to integrate all the parts. So if you would add the movement series at the end, 45 minutes a week, times three, so now we're looking at whatever, three and change hours but the main thing is just a philosophy of the way that you would exist in your body and day-to-day. It's not adding anything in new, it's just a subtle reorientation.

Dave:

That's fantastic. And I'm kind of curious, I have this habit going back 800 episodes, I'm always looking to find people who are masters of their field and they of curating and curating and boiling it down and kind of putting it all together. On your podcast, it's called The Align Podcast.

Aaron:

Yeah.

Dave:

You've had pretty much a huge number of greats and functional movement there.

Aaron:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dave:

And how much of the emergence of Align method came from studying with masters versus working with clients?

Aaron:

Oh man. Oh, it's so much from teachers. I think anytime a person writes a book, at least when I write a book, it's the organization of a tribe and I just happened to have my name on the cover but in the acknowledgements, Brian McKenzie, Patrick McEwen, Andrew Huberman, Jill Miller, Kelly Starrett, I mean there's... the list would go on of people that I reached out to for insights on specific chapters. But also driving information during podcasts and asking specific questions that were kind of scratching my own niche. And then times however many, probably thousands of hours of working one on one with clients and seeing what's working and what's not working.

Dave:

I wanted to summarize the five main movements from your book.

Aaron:

Sure.

Dave:

And I've got them as floor sitting, nasal breathing, hip hinging, hanging and walking. And you've talked about all of those but that list is kind of the cliffs notes, at least my cliffs notes from the book.

Aaron:

Sure.

Dave:

Did I miss anything that would be on your top list?

Aaron:

Well, so the last part of the book would be The Moving Your Senses part. [crosstalk 00:48:29] Yeah. So we talked on all of the five movement principles. So with the five movement principles, it was really just something that's like if this baseline... if you engage with these activities in your life, you'll see tremendous change and it's so simple and accessible. That was the real intention with that. So we touched on nose breathing, we touched on hinging from your hips, we touched on hanging, so we kind

of went over those guys. And then in the environmental section of the book, that was how to align your home and your office and your travel, so subtle things I was just talking before with your community. With your work station, I think that's such a major thing, it's like we spend so much time working and so one of the things, I have a red light near far infrared light here-

Dave:

Shocking.

Aaron:

Sitting beside me right now, my computer is facing in the direction of a window, very intentionally so I can get natural, full spectrum light to come through. I'm able to relax my eyes and look out into the distance as I'm doing that.

Dave:

Okay.

Aaron:

Yeah.

Dave:

So I'm so digging your focus on vision.

Aaron:

Great.

Dave:

But I have a serious philosophical question and you may have a good answer for it.

Aaron:

Okay.

Dave:

Yeah. Part of me, so I can look out... and this is set up intentionally. I can look out, I can look at trees 20 feet away, 80 feet away, 200 feet away and I can look two miles away at trees on the top of Salt Spring Island. So I have all these focal depths and I'll go out there, I'll exercise my eyes at different distances.

Aaron:

Yep.

Dave:

But that's over there to my right where I'm looking is I have screens. And the reason I do it that way, is that if you have a bright light behind your monitor, it creates a ton of eye strain because you're now trying to see a dark monitor against a bright background. So I've had a bunch of vision people say, "You don't want to do that, it's going to give you headaches and cause eye strain."

Aaron:

Yeah.

Dave:

So I open the windows, I'm getting bright light from the side. Now, benefits of having a window behind your monitor versus having no bright light behind your monitor. Do you have any information on that?

Aaron:

That will probably just be a toss-up at that point. All of this stuff, I think oftentimes we can get so confined in these real like linear, "Okay, this is step A, step B." Your body is so darn adaptable that if it's just a matter of you need to give it a baseline of the raw components to be healthy. You So if for a moment you're slouching over a chair, I love that. There's no problem with that, it's the repetition of that. If for a movement you're looking into a wall or into a blue light or whatever, you're not going to just explode or develop Badonkadonk cancer.

Dave:

You mean if you touch a 5G device, you won't die instantly?

Aaron:

Right. So within that it's like, "Okay, how can we buff for this?" And the way that we can buffer that in relation to like a radiation conversation is like, "Okay, maybe I'll hang around some trees." Especially if the trees go nice and deep down to the ground maybe I'll go walk along a river. Maybe I'll take my shoes off every now and again, I don't need to prove any point or make some new age primal statement and be bare foot guy. Just setting my life up so that I have these natural buffering mechanisms instilled throughout my entire day and it doesn't need to be this strange, heretical thing where you're proving a point, that's... I try to avoid that as much as I can.

Dave:

What did you learn when you read your book that you didn't know when you wrote the book?

Aaron:

Well, that's an interesting question. What did I learn when I read the book that I didn't know when I wrote the book? I think what I learnt is before I write another book, speak the book before I send it in for the final edit. I think when you speak a book, there's something really reason that comes out when it's that oration, the story is different when it's spoken than when it's read. And for me, from an editing perspective, I think it would be so fantastic to be able to do the audio book and then save those edits and then send the final, final into the publishers. Which I don't know if that was what you're... you're probably looking for something a little more philosophical, but that was something I was like, "oh man, when you speak it, it's different."

Dave:

Learning a best practice as an author is always valuable, there's a lot of people listening to the show who are also authors.

Aaron:

Sure, yeah.

Dave:

And there's... I found when I read Fast This Way and there were a few times, I'm like, "Oh, I forgot that I said that." And that was a really good example. So I feel like it locked the content into my brain-

Aaron:

Sure.

Dave:

In a better way so that I can have more fluid conversations about it. So there's something about memory repetition, even for words you wrote.

Aaron:

Oh yeah.

Dave:

And then I went through, recently for the upgrade collective, I created a course on every one of the books I've written. So I'm like, "Okay, if it's worth my time to write the book, I should put it in a format where people can absorb it." And the courses are part of the upgrade collective so members are getting those, but that meant I had to reread a book that I might have written two years, or four years or six years ago, and then reabsorb that and the chance to review your work like that. It's pretty cool. So I think everyone out here who has written a book, or even if you write blog posts and all, read them out loud sometimes and you'll learn all sorts of cool stuff.

Aaron:

Also writing it freehand, that's something that's kind of a lost practice.

Dave:

You don't write your books freehands, seriously?

Aaron:

No, no, just writing something freehand.

Dave:

Oh okay.

Aaron:

And also having a journal or things that I care about, I have like... I actually have my notebook right here. I always... not always but I often have a notebook nearby and so within that-

Dave:

Guys, all of my notes-

Aaron:

All freehand.

Dave:

I write all 90% are freehand because you remember better and then I type what I need to remember, I take a picture.

Aaron:

And so this gets into another interesting conversation that kind of comes back to the whole physical embodiment stuff. Embodied cognition is a fancy term for the way that we move the way that it, again, it informs the way that we think, and the way that we feel, and the way that we perceive when you are... you've probably seen the research around writing incursive, being supportive for like creativity and things with the sort.

Dave:

Yeah.

Aaron:

And so when you're writing and expressing yourself through the hand, it literally... it's like we were talking about before with the gluteal bust and the hinging of the ankles, all that's it's not just localized to your fingertips or to your hand, you're literally turning the gears in your neurology. And so the research that I remember with the cursive writing, it's a little blurry but I believe going through those flowy patterns was for people's creativity. I think if I remember it correctly.

Dave:

I've got one more question for you.

Aaron:

Hit me.

Dave:

I've gone back and forth on this over the years and people by now have probably heard me talk about the sleep challenge, where I just teach how to do everything I know to improve sleep for free and sleepwithdave.com is you access that.

Aaron:

Nice.

Dave:

I can't remember that love that crazy, but I talk about sleep position and I've covered this in a couple different books, and you have a morning practice in The Align Method and you have an evening practice. And in the evening practice, you said sleep on your side or your back and the sleep on your side the best in a stack position. Now I've gone back and forth on those two, tell me the argument for sleeping on your side versus your back.

Aaron:

So the argument one, you can sleep on your back that you just want to make sure that your spine isn't in an overly extended position. So if you're going to be sleeping on your side, naturally, you're going to go slightly into that elongated kind of flex position throughout the spine. So you can elongate through the neck, and the lower back and the one potential argument is that it's supportive for the lymphatic system, which most of the research has been done with rats for that. But it's supposed to be helpful with elongating... essentially like that line from the spinal cord up into the brain, the dura mater and all that... the stuff wrapping through there, it puts the... it relieves the tension from that system. And so one of the arguments is it's helpful with circulation of the amyloid beta plaque and all of things which that would be contentious because there hasn't been human research that I've gathered from that.

Dave:

Left or right side, does it matter?

Aaron:

Left is the one that's suggested, as far as if there was like the king of the sleeping sides and that has to do with the positioning of the heart and the lymphatic system. And so it's the specific details of that, I actually I'm blurry on the exact the exact details of it but the suggestion is it's supportive for the movement of limb and it's supportive for the return of venous flow back to the heart based off of the positioning of the heart.

Dave:

It's so interesting. My data was that if you sleep on your right side, it's better because the heart is up higher versus down low and that had less stress on it and there was some data that supported that along with the lymphatic thing for side sleeping. But then you talk to the cosmetic people and they say, "Oh, that smashes your face and you'll get all sorts of weird wrinkles and you should sleep on your back."

Aaron:

Yeah.

Dave:

But then you sleep on your back, your jaw falls back and you're more likely to snore which hurts sleep.

Aaron:

Yeah.

Dave:

So I right now and I'm like, "If you can tape your mouth and you don't snore too much and you can now monitor snoring with apps, that's probably superior."

Aaron:

Yeah.

Dave:

But I don't know for.

Aaron:

Do you know the book, Shut Your Mouth and Save Your Life by George Catlin? You heard of that?

Dave:

Yeah.

Aaron:

That was written a couple hundred years ago.

Dave:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Aaron:

He was a lawyer originally and he was also an artist and he ended up going out and spending time with native Americans and he would paint them and he was studying them and he made this whole book about how they had better teeth, and they were healthier, and they were more vibrant, and their jaw line was prominent and strong, and they didn't have all this malocclusion, all these issues. And in his book and the pictures that he had, he had native Americans kind of sleeping on like his pretty hard surface and their heads were raised up and they were sleeping [inaudible 00:59:08] on their back.

There's other research that suggests primates tend to sleep on their side so humans are going to do the same thing because we're practically primates. I'm spacing the name of the guy that did that, he's got a whole thing about it.

Dave:

Yeah. [crosstalk 00:59:22]

Aaron:

It's back and forth, I think ultimately I don't mess with people's sleep. I say, "Make the place dark, make sure your mouth is shut, make sure your spine is pretty darn close to you neutral so you don't have a big kink anywhere throughout the spine." Think of your spine like a fishing pole. So a fishing pole, you want to distribute that stress through the entirety of the pole. So when you're sleeping, you don't want to put one single kink or just doing life in general, you don't want to put a kink in an acute location.

Typically it's going to be like up around the cervical spine in the neck, that's going to be a stressed spine. So when you're in that sleeping position, it's okay to kind of go curl up into like little fetal type position, just make sure you're elongating through the entirety of the spine. And outside of that, I don't try to mess with people's sleep because I care most that you sleep. If you're not sleeping, then we have a whole another issue in our hands.

Dave:

Got it. I like to play with people's sleep because I'm like, "You can't do more and less time come."

Aaron:

From a postal perspective.

Dave:

Oh yeah.

Aaron:

I don't like working with clients and such because when I work with clients I kind of go through kind of a whole lifestyle upgrade to use your language.

Dave:

Yeah.

Aaron:

So we go in and we look at sleep, and we go and we kind of like audit their house and their office and the way that they move throughout their daily life. And the one place... if a person is like, "This is the position. It's the position. That's my sweet spot for me to fall asleep." I'm like, "As long as you're sleeping." Well, that's the thing that I don't want to change your position and sacrifice a person's sleep but I'd be open to my mind being changed on that too.

Dave:

It's an area of tons of research that I'm pretty sure no big pharma companies ever going to go after. But I did also, years ago, I said, "All right, what happens if I on the floor?" And I read probably a book by that same guy whose name we can't remember.

Aaron:

Yeah.

Dave:

And he said if primates always slept on the floor, so I slept on a hard, like an Oak floor for about two or three months. So I got used to it just on a blanket.

Aaron:

Yep.

Dave:

And you know what, it did take me a little while feeling like shit and it was without a pillow too because you didn't have pillows back then.

Aaron:

Yeah.

Dave:

And I realized, I actually like pillows I'm okay with that.

Aaron:
I'm a fan.

Dave:
But I did gain a preference or a very firm sleeping surface that I never had before.

Aaron:
There there's value in putting yourself in situations that causes your body to naturally move. So if a person that has congenital analgesia where they don't feel stuff, they're going to have problems, they're going to bite their tongue off, and they're going to burn themselves and they're not move enough because they're never uncomfortable. So now if all you're not moving enough, you're never uncomfortable, then you're not moving your lymphatic system and you're not circulating, right? You're not able to heal and restore your tissues. So there is a [Goldilocks 01:02:18] range for every person to be in just nudging into the realm of discomfort for adaptation.

Dave:
Right.

Aaron:
And hermetic adaptation, hermetic stress but not going to the point where it's so much that you're like, "Okay, I'm over it. I'm out." And so that Goldilocks point is really the important thing and that Goldilocks point is something that's always fluctuating. And as you nudge into it, suddenly your boundaries become broader and I think that that's really like the key to anything, skill, acquisition, success, happiness, all of the things that are most people probably be inclined towards would be being respectful of that Goldilocks point and just respectfully nudging your boundaries with regularity and also, acknowledging, rest and restoration and loving yourself.

Dave:
Exactly. I so resonate with all that stuff, we're very aligned.

Aaron:
Yeah, yeah, I get that.

Dave:
Or I recommend for few people because if you study with enough historical lineages of all these different things or enough people with way more experience than you or I have you start realizing there's some common themes and when you experiment, you realize there's common themes. And I think we're both going down that path and saying, "All right, how do we share that with people in a way that means they don't have to do as much research on it and in as much experimenting as your idea? So I think you've got a great body of work in The Aligned Method-

Aaron:
Thank you.

Dave:

That if people take a look at it and try the five things we talked about before the main movements, are really, really important.

Aaron:

I appreciate that.

Dave:

I want to thank you for being on the show. Thanks for your new book, *The Align Method*. It's good stuff and thanks for your cool podcast.

Aaron:

Thank you man, I appreciate you.

Dave:

If you guys liked today's episode, you know what to do, you could share it with a friend or you could look at ourupgradecollective.com because you could have been in the live audience. And if you saw the comment thread this time, you would be laughing your off. I'll see you on the next episode