

How Sweden's Herd-Immunity Approach Defied the World – Johan Anderberg – #958

Dave Asprey:

You're listening to The Human Upgrade with Dave Asprey. Today is going to be an episode that you are either going to love, or maybe hate, depending on whether you like to tell yourself that you're always right, or whether you are a curious person. Way back in, oh, the second or third week of the pandemic. I posted something on Instagram and I said, "Two years from now, I'll bet you that Sweden comes out ahead," or maybe three years, whatever it was. I was soundly told that I was a bad person and probably shadow band for it, but I like to check and see if I'm wrong, because if I'm wrong, I will stand corrected. So what I've put together for you today is an episode where we're going to talk about what Sweden did during COVID-19 that was really different from the rest of the world. You can call it "the Swedish experiment." It's been either praised or held up as a cautionary tale, depending on who you listen to.

Also, I'm going to dig deep on why did Sweden do this? What's different about Swedish culture? Are they more dangerous than other people, maybe because they're Vikings or is it mostly because they're jealous of Norway? We just don't know, but our guest today, who's now angry that I said that is going to tell us the answer. He is a Swedish journalist named Johan Anderberg, who decided he was going to capture this rare moment in history in 2020. His book is called The Herd: How Sweden Chose Its Own Path Through the Worst Pandemic in 100 years. He talks about this time and I'm going to argue whether or not this was the worst pandemic in 100 years, but that's a different question. So that's what we're going to talk about is the differences in how humans behaved in different countries? Is it cultural? Is it government style? Is it how nationalized healthcare is? Why was it different in Sweden and what did it account for? What did it cause? Johan, welcome.

Johan Anderberg:

Thank you.

Dave:

All right. A lot of people may not know what Sweden did during the pandemic, because people got lost in a cloud of depression and loneliness because of some government policies globally. But let's assume that if they don't remember, what happened during the pandemic in the early days with Sweden?

Johan:

Well, during the first year, Sweden did very, very little when it came to restrictions. The schools were mainly open except for the very oldest children in high school. We never had any face mask mandates and people generally didn't use masks at all. I have used a mask three times in my life, and on two of those occasions were when I was abroad. So pretty much in every aspect, Sweden did the complete opposite of what, say, a very harsh state like New York or California did.

Dave:

So you only wore a mask three times. Did you have to stay at home? I thought after a while, masks did become required in Sweden. So you only wore a mask three times. Did you have to stay at home? I thought after a while masks did become required in Sweden.

Johan:

No, but they were recommended as the subway during two hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon, but pretty much no one abided those recommendations. So it was for show a little bit, because there was so much pressure from the outside of the world and from critics within Sweden to do something. When I talk to these people now two-and-a-half years afterwards, they acknowledge that the stuff they did put in place can for show. Like for instance, here in Stockholm, they just decided to melt down all the ice hockey rinks for some reason, and they kept like everything else open. So it was just like some people freaking out and we had to do something, so there were all these strange things that some people did to show that they were doing something, but overall, very little changed. I think I could say that my life changed very little and my kids' lives didn't change at all, I think.

Dave:

I'm still struck by is how Sweden just stood up as the only country in the world and said, "You know what? We're just looking at data and we're not acting emotionally, and eventually someone has to do something," which, as far as I can tell hotel rooms are still saying, "We're extra sanitized, even though everybody knows that this is an airborne virus and rubbing everything with hand sanitizer doesn't improve safety for coronavirus at all. But we did something, even if it was meaningless, at least you did something and it feels like that psychological need to do something, even if it doesn't work far trumped thinking, but in Sweden, it didn't. You've written your whole book on this. Do you have a hypothesis? Is it cultural? Why did Sweden pick a different path?

Johan:

I think it has mostly to do with the scientists in charge and-

Dave:

Okay. It was leadership then.

Johan:

Yeah. It was their leadership, and the fact that they were really stubborn old people who weren't going to get bullied into do something else, but then-

Dave:

The value of having elders. Okay.

Johan:

Yeah.

Dave:

I got it.

Johan:

But the interesting thing is that in Denmark and Norway, the scientists were really skeptical of all of these lockdowns as well. But what happened there was that the politicians overrode them, so to speak, but we had a pretty weak government at the time and they weren't really keen on stepping in and showing off at all. So they were pretty happy with these old doctors taking charge. Also, there is this quirk in the Swedish constitution that gives government agencies a lot of autonomy, and that's very

unique for Sweden. I don't know any other country that forbids government ministers from meddling in the agencies at all.

Dave:

Something though, happened in Sweden though over time, according to the story I heard from relatives there and all, is that over time, the Swedish population began demanding that something be done, even though the numbers were no better or worse than the countries around. I'd see things in the news going, "Oh, Sweden was wrong. The numbers are bad," but you look at the numbers, they actually were about normal.

Johan:

Actually, according to the latest stats from the WHO, Sweden is at the bottom of the excess death list in Europe. There are only a couple countries that have a lower excess death rate during the pandemic.

Dave:

So you had one of the lowest excess deaths rates of all.

Johan:

Yeah.

Dave:

Funny, that was my prediction that the overall mortality when you look at all of it over time that you guys would come out ahead because of your approach there. It looks like I was pretty close. Who beat you?

Johan:

Denmark, Norway, Finland, Iceland, countries like that.

Dave:

These are countries with very low obesity rates.

Johan:

Yes. The general health is very good in those countries.

Dave:

Yeah. So epidemiologists in Sweden, they were just more empowered than in the rest of the world, because the government via the constitution isn't allowed to mess with them. Do you think that was a core thing here, or-

Johan:

Yeah. Yeah. I think that is the main reason, actually. Also, the constitution forbade some things, but there were all that kind of writing in other countries' constitution as well. I'm really surprised how so many American states were allowed to do the stuff they did. I thought that the American Constitution protected citizens from-

Dave:

Oh, it turns out we just ignore the Constitution as a fact-based person, very, very many core tenants of the Constitution are not practiced anymore. So by telling ourselves that it's practiced when it's not, we're doing ourselves harm. Maybe it's time that we either follow it or make a new one, but to pretend that we're doing it doesn't work.

Johan:

Or maybe educate people so that they realize that these liberties are a good thing, that they make everyone freer and safer in the long run, because I think we had this problem in Sweden too, that we think that there are so many dangers so we have to be protected from all kinds of things that we can't really protect ourselves against.

Dave:

You're saying that's a Swedish thing that's come into society there as well?

Johan:

Yeah. I think it's a human thing, actually, because I think this whole episode reminds me so much of the war on terror, because during the run up to the Iraq War, the media was really not doing their job for a couple of years just [inaudible 00:10:17]

Dave:

Oh, the weapons of mass destruction story?

Johan:

Yeah. I think even The New York Times apologized for their reporting after a while. To be honest, I'm an optimistic person, so I think this will happen with COVID too in the end.

Dave:

What used to happen with both reporters and with doctors, and even academic scientists is that there is a belief. Then as the old ones retire, the new ones come in and then it changes and it's like a 25-year cycle.

Johan:

Yeah.

Dave:

Right? As the new young upstarts come in, the ones who are exiting yell at them, there's a bit of fighting and it cycles, but it felt for a while like the internet was taking that down to about 10 years, because there was so much discourse and belief systems that weren't well-rooted couldn't survive. Then with COVID, definitely Sweden's approach stood out there as an example. But the debate got quashed in a way that the internet hasn't really done before, which is scary from a free speech and just from a scientific discourse perspective. I'm totally willing to have been wrong, but when all of the people I know and trust, including doctors who are speaking, not in public forums are saying, "I can't tell exactly which data to trust. I've never seen that before." But the fact that we learned from the last things like the war

in Iraq that sometimes the data's wrong and this time it was so blatantly suppressed. Was data suppression in Sweden the same?

Johan:

No-

Dave:

... or-

Johan:

That's-

Dave:

... no?

Johan:

That's really funny, because there's really funny story about that in the book how-

Dave:

Tell me the story. I'd love to hear that.

(singing)

Johan:

There's a really funny story about that in the book how-

Dave:

Tell me the story. I'd love to hear that.

Johan:

There's this old epidemiologist who's a patriarch of Swedish like epidemiological society. He was the one who hired Anders Tegnell, who was the man in charge during COVID because he thought he was so politically insensitive, but he didn't care at all about what people thought of him. So he goes on YouTube talking about how natural immunity works and all that. Then he sends all these links to Anders Tegnell, and all those links, when I looked at them, they were gone from the internet, so-

Dave:

Wow. So yeah, there was deletion of scientific papers all over the place.

Johan:

Yeah. That's way about my pay rate to say whether they were really right or wrong scientifically in the end, but it's interesting how this, which is part of really high science debate in Sweden. It's just removed from YouTube, as if the people at YouTube will know better than these people who have worked all over the world with all kinds of diseases like, Ebola, HIV, like everything, it's insane.

Dave:

Was there ever a call from Swedish government to regulate big text behavior in Sweden?

Johan:

Yeah, but from the other end, actually, because a couple of years ago, lots of newspapers saw that there was a lot of right wing propaganda on YouTube. So they wanted to make YouTube more liable for the content. That is also ironic because that anti-Semitic and right wing stuff is still on YouTube, but not like some epidemiological debate. For the record, I think the government in general should stay out of moderating stuff. I think it's better to get it out in the open, but it's weird that you shut down one thing and let the other thing, which is definitely much worse, stay on.

Dave:

Well, now that YouTube and Google and Facebook and all of those guys have said that they are taking responsibility for the content, they should be liable for it, globally. If governments, even one government like Sweden or maybe France would just stand up, maybe Ireland stand up and just say, "All right, guys. If you choose what to delete, then you're responsible for it financially." That would solve the free speech problem once and for all. But right now, the government's enjoying being able to tell big tech what to do as far as I can tell, or maybe advertisers.

It's such a bizarre world I don't know what to think of it, but the fact that we had one bright shining variance in Sweden, the fact that you were able to write a book about this and like, "Oh, it's because we had well-trained epidemiologists and we had autonomy from politicians." So maybe the lesson here for the world is, we need to make sure that, and Constitution at the very base operating system level of governments, make sure that scientists cannot be pushed on by either government or Pfizer investments. If we could just do that, maybe we'd have some real science.

Johan:

Yeah. I think also already at the ground level at the university, you should encourage people to get educated and to be open to debate. Right now, it feels like the trend is in the other direction that young students are very sensitive to open debates. I don't know if you agree on that, but-

Dave:

Well, cancel culture is everywhere and it's not a woke left in the U.S. I don't know. Every country has different names for liberals or the socialist side versus the conservative fascist side, whether it's left, right, or colors or whatever-

Johan:

But the right is just as bad, I think.

Dave:

That's what I'm saying, they're both just as bad. In the U.S. right now, the right is blaming the left for being cancel culture, but you see right cancel culture all the time. Unfollow you because you said something I disagree with? I'm like, "What kind of an idiot does that?" Like I'm going to follow you because you said something that I disagree with because you might be right.

Johan:

Yeah. Traditionally, it's been the right who's been trying to rid Hollywood of communists and is trying to ban flag burning and all that kind of stuff. So it's interesting that the left has picked up this very unsuccessful strategy.

Dave:

Is that happening in Sweden and in Europe as well as in the U.S.?

Johan:

It's not nearly as bad in Sweden and in Scandinavia from what I heard, it's not as bad in continental Europe as well as it is in the U.S. I've read something, I think Niall Ferguson wrote something that it was liberating to come to a European university. I think it was him that wrote it, otherwise, I'm sorry. I don't know why that is, but maybe it's because there are so many different cultures that it's more difficult to [inaudible 00:17:59]

Dave:

Maybe that's why, because I think it's odd that you'd say, "This person can't come and speak at the university because I don't like them. I'm like, "Well, maybe someone else likes him and it's an institute of learning and you can vehemently disagree, but [inaudible 00:18:14]

Johan:

Yeah. Make him change his mind maybe even.

Dave:

Yeah, but I'm completely confused by the whole situation, but maybe that's because I'm only biologically under 30; chronologically, I'm older than that. So talk to me about epidemiology, because that's one thing I like about your book is you talk about what happens with moral and ethical and political problems came about because of our ability to look at big populations of people in a way we couldn't do before. Walk me through your thinking about those kinds of moral and ethical problems.

Johan:

Yeah. The way I see it, these kinds of problems have always been inherent in epidemiology. It started already with smallpox inoculation. It wasn't even vaccination back then. It's just a way to immunize people and it's extremely dangerous to do, but it was also very beneficial if you were inoculated. So you had to bring in mathematicians to figure out whether it was right or wrong to expose people to this. There were some really famous mathematicians who argued for mass inoculation, but then some other philosophers settled it. Yeah. But it doesn't really work like that, because for the government has a million lives and for the government, it's a pretty easy calculation. But if you're just one person, you only have one life, so the risk on the downside is completely different for one person. I thought those philosophical debates from the 17th and 18th century were really interesting and it was the same thing surfacing over and over again. This was maybe the first time, but we didn't have this debate, but there were just some people who said, "This is the right way to do it. You should just follow."

Dave:

What concerns me is that when there's full disclosure of risks and all that stuff, you can match a risk to a person. So an epidemiologist could have and should have said, "It looks like the highest risk population

is, of course, older people who will have other comorbidities, so let's apply one set of risk reward equations there versus the other one for kids and the whole thing in the middle. Also, if you have a condition that has been tested, then don't do it," and that is how I always thought this worked.

The fact that we now had politicians coming in globally and just saying, "You're going to do it, Even if you're in a high-risk situation." I know one person very well who nearly died from getting a set of vaccines, and that can happen. It's documented. It's not common. So this is a person who, by all doctors' opinions, shouldn't be re-vaccinated, yet wasn't allowed to basically participate in society because of it, even though I thought that's why we were doing it. Something happened in the global consciousness to not take care of people in that situation to almost look at them as pariahs. Was that a Swedish thing as well, or you guys just didn't worry about it?

Johan:

We didn't have a vaccine mandate, but we had a vaccine passport, so to speak, for for just a couple of weeks where if you wanted to go to a concert with more than 100 people, you had to be vaccinated. If you wanted to go a big theater, you had to be a vaccinated, but just for a brief period of time. A lot of public health profiles were really skeptical of this, because it really broke with the Swedish tradition when it came to vaccinations, because vaccinations have always been voluntary for 100 years in Sweden. It's been working pretty well, because I think it's a really important principle that you should be able to take care of your own body, and it doesn't matter if you make a really bad decision because at least that decision is yours.

Dave:

This is Sweden, and there's just one word that says that, it's called vodka. Right?

Johan:

Yeah. People do all kinds of stupid things [inaudible 00:22:44]

Dave:

... not to drink vodka-

Johan:

I know

Dave:

... then you're in charge of yourself, right?

Johan:

Yeah, but the really interesting thing is that Denmark had all these restrictions, because they've always had a very libertarian culture when it comes to alcohol and all accounts, they haven't really believed in alcohol regulation or anything like that. I posted this thing on Twitter a year ago in a Danish newspaper, I think it was on the same day even, that a politician said that it was immoral to not let 15-year-olds drink alcohol and at the same time, they have these really harsh restrictions against people who don't do the right thing when it came to COVID. I actually have a really interesting story about I have this friend who just like you, she has an American husband and she took two shots in Sweden and then went to the U.S., but they didn't count her shots from Sweden, so she had to do it all over again.

So then they had this system to make sure that you're vaccinated, but you could also have had a system where you just trusted people to do the right thing, because she wanted to do the right thing for herself and what she thought was the right thing for society. To be honest, I don't really care if other people are vaccinated or not. It's such a personal decision, and I don't care what medicines anyone else is on. It's none of my business. I think it's really strange that suddenly it was everyone's business what medicine you took and what medicine I took. I think something really strange happened.

Dave:

It's very weird because there was this intellectual bypass, and some people listening to this will probably still get mad that I say this, but let's assume that the vaccine provides protection. There's timelines and curves and all sorts of stuff, but let's just make that a given. At that point, you don't need to worry about whether someone else did it or not, right?

Johan:

Yeah. But what people are admitting is, "Well, it doesn't provide very good protection or something," so I finally just, I decided I'm just going to divorce myself from that whole debate because there's no winning because this isn't about logic. It's about pure emotion. Tell listeners the story of what happened in 2010 with swine flu. A lot of Americans don't know about that.

Well, there was this really big scare in the media about the new pandemic coming pretty much like the early weeks of COVID, but just after a couple of weeks, most people understand that this isn't going to be as bad. But then through all these contracts that Sweden had signed up just because there was another scare three years earlier, Sweden had to buy all these vaccines. Then, these calculations that turned out to be a little bit wrong, they showed that it was beneficial to have this vaccine administered to everyone. But then it turned out that lots of people, especially young kids got narcolepsy from the vaccine and there's still so much we don't know about how prevalent it is, but there have been people who have gotten money paid out and everything from the government, so it's a pretty big scare in Swedish society. A lot of things have been written about this and it's a scandal that Sweden is still living with, I think.

Dave:

There's a really interesting perspective on that. I think a lot of Americans are saying it has to be, because some portion of the Swedish population is like, "Screw you. I'm not going to do that." But the reality is, it's a different government system that enabled a different decision from the rest of the world. When things flipped over, at least externally, we were all told, "Oh, now people are asking for masks in Sweden, they're mad at the government," was that real or was that mostly American newspapers?

Johan:

I think it was mostly American newspapers. It was mostly the press corps that flipped a little bit and started asking much more critical questions. But when it came to restrictions, there wasn't really a big difference. I think the biggest restriction was that large gatherings were banned after three or four months, so there were no soccer games with spectators and no concerts. But when you think about it, it totally killed some industries, but when it comes to society, it's not really a big thing, especially compared to school closures, all those kinds of things. When it came to concerts, no bands were touring anyway, so it didn't really matter that much, but it was that for some small theaters around Stockholm and all that, so they took a big hit for sure.

Dave:

It destroyed a bunch of businesses, but far less economic damage in Sweden from what I saw from some numbers. It was half as much devastation for companies in the economy compared to neighboring countries that had bigger shutdowns.

Johan:

Yeah. The really interesting thing is that we live with the benefits now as well, because in Germany, they're still talking about whether or not to stop wearing masks and how to test kids in school in the fall and we are completely done with it. There was this evaluation of the measures that was published in Germany two weeks ago, and it basically said that there was pretty much no evidence for these restrictions, and so they have started this debate just now.

Dave:

I was just in the Netherlands and there you'd see no one's wearing masks other than maybe a few people who are worried or something, but there's still signs everywhere and people just ignore them. They ignore them in the airports. They ignore them everywhere. Like, "Oh, those are old, but it seems like the signs don't come down." Are there still signs everywhere in Sweden saying mask and distance and all that crap, or have they come down?

Johan:

No, they have all come down. Actually, they even declassified the disease, so there's no legal basis for instituting any restrictions.

Dave:

So basically, it's a cold.

Johan:

Yeah. If they would want to do restrictions again, they will have to start this whole legislation work again, so that's a protection against new measures.

Dave:

Very interesting. Let's hope the rest of the world is listening to this and does that too, because it's hard to argue at this point that just the trauma that came about from our response was worth it. The reason that we can argue that is because in Sweden where you didn't subject yourself so that you actually had better than average results, in fact, substantially better than average. People can argue all kinds of reasons all day long, but the bottom line is that if the restrictions were really necessary even with the healthy population, you should have faced at least three or four times the death rate of other countries who did all these crazy things, and you didn't.

Johan:

Yeah. You can also compare it to, there was this really influential report that was the driving force behind the UK and the U.S. really instituting lockdowns on a larger scale, and that had a prediction for Sweden. It said that 96,000 people, or 84,000, depending on which column you use in their spreadsheets said we're going to perish within just three months. The actual result was 6,000, so I don't know, what is 96 through six? Well, basically, it was 15 fold.

I think the problem is that the world hasn't really gotten the message, because if you compare the level of interest that's Sweden garnered compared to now, there were all these stories in The New York Times calling it the pariah state and all that. You would assume that they would come back, and this is Sweden two years after, three years after and see what actually happened because it was all guesswork back then, and now you have the result, so I don't really understand, or I know why they don't do it, but it sounds like people won't subscribe to The New York Times because they're saying it wrong. I think it would just be an honest thing to do.

Dave:

It would be remarkably honest if any news organization did that. I've seen New York Times retract things before, but usually the retractions are on page seven and the headline was on page one, and corrections oftentimes happen there. Not to pick on them specifically, it's actually probably much worse at The Washington Post. All newspapers have processes and things like that, but they're different than scientific journals for sure, and then you go to somewhere like Facebook and when are they ever going to retract a shadow ban on someone? I experienced about a 90% reduction in new accounts, seeing my content during the pandemic. Who knows, for saying this, I may re-experience that in which case, that's what it is. If you follow me, make sure you put me on whatever notify because maybe you'll see it, maybe you won't.

Johan:

But just to go back to this unwillingness to change your mind, I think maybe this is a little bit different, because it's such a big burden to carry that you were advocating for shutting down schools. You even managed to shut down schools for a year, even in the U.S. and it was for no reason at all. That's a pretty big burden to carry. It's much worse than being wrong about, say, whether Amazon stock price will be \$2,000 more. You can live with that kind of error, but it's really difficult to live with this error shutting down schools for no reason.

Dave:

Yeah. It's a really big thing. What about traveling into Sweden? Can someone without a vaccine get into Sweden?

Johan:

Yeah, I believe it's all open for everyone that would be allowed to come here anyway, like in three years ago.

Dave:

If Sweden were to join NATO, would that change anything, do you think? You're already in the EU and you have different policies in other EU states for vaccination entry. Do you think that that kind of Alliance would have any effect on epidemiology?

Johan:

No. As far as I know, neither is just like a military alliance. I'm not totally sure exactly what's in the treaties.

Dave:

Okay. Got it. I'm not an expert on that, but what I do know is that in the U.S., we oftentimes use treaties to bypass the Constitution. "Oh, we have to do it. Because we signed a treaty even though the treaty made us do something that the Constitution doesn't allow," so I'm wondering if there's [inaudible 00:35:39]

Johan:

I think you were onto something because the head of the EU Commission, she called for mandatory vaccinations and also the German Chancellor also called for that for a while. So I think a lot of people are scared about this homogenous public health regime throughout the EU. I think it would be unfortunate for a number of reasons, but mostly because I think we have to value the fact that different countries do different things. I know some American constitutionalists are a little pissed off with Louis Brandeis' concept of laboratories of democracy. But I think it's a pretty beautiful concept that different states do different things and maybe one state fails completely, and then the other states know that this is not something to try, or maybe they try out something that's really successful and the other states can copy it. So it's like a really good thing to find, to come up with new ideas or to even not, not use new ideas.

Dave:

There's some lessons from spending much of my career designing fault-tolerant, highly- scalable systems and technology. Some fault tolerance means you can handle anything the world brings your way. In fact, I would also say my job now as a biohacker is building fault-tolerant humans, so you can handle anything. Part of that is if everyone is identical, it's like mono cropping potatoes. One virus comes up and it kills everything. But if you have 2000 species of potatoes, some of them will die and some of them will win, and this works both for governments and it also works for cultures.

Johan:

Yeah. Right.

Dave:

I would hope that we never have a monoculture on the planet, because it'll probably blow itself up. I hope that we never have only one form of government on the planet, because it'll probably devolve into authoritarianism, because all governments throughout history have done that in less than 250 years. That's the record for as long as there's been one single free thing, basically that state falls and another one pops up. So if we were to have one culture and one government across the entire planet, it'll probably fail because of a lack of diversity, and that's why we have different operating systems. We have different companies and I don't know, maybe I have a narrow mindset. If Elon Musk succeeds and we get a different planet going, then we can have two different planets competing on culture and government, but until then, I think we might want to be cautious on that front.

Johan:

Yeah. That brings us back to this whole malady of diversity. The stuff you talked about with potatoes, that's why the Irish starved because they had just one kind of potato.

Dave:

That's exactly why. Of course, you would know that more than most Americans who aren't Irish, because it's more present in your European consciousness and it's also affecting McDonald's right now too, because they're mono cropping. So you see these mistakes repeated throughout history if you

study history, and that's one of the differences between Sweden and the U.S. and just between most European countries in the U.S. is that if you study European history, there's all kinds of stuff that's happened. If you study U.S. history, being that it's an isolated continent with two borders that haven't required defending in hundreds of years, it's just a different story.

So I find that you can actually have a conversation about history in Europe and there's so much knowledge about different ways of things that in a typical American, there's corn in Kansas, but you might not really have gone deep on it. So maybe it's an educational superiority in Europe or just an environmental difference. My final question for you is from your perspective, Johan, is Sweden somehow a pariah either in Europe or in the world's eyes? If you walk around and you flash your Swedish passport, you could say, "Oh, you're the guys who were rebels during the pandemic," or do people just not care?

Johan:

In general, people don't really care. I've only been abroad twice since the pandemic started actually, not counting Scandinavia and some people are really interested in what went down and, but maybe they're a little bit more open minded, so there could be some selection bias going on. But I think average people, they have no vested interest in whether to use face masks or vaccine mandates. This is something that politicians and epidemiologists and Twitter people argued about. I think most normal people with normal jobs are just curious pretty much.

Dave:

Okay. So mostly curious, I still like to think that most people are good people and that all people are subject to emotions, especially fear, which is the strongest one and that maybe some of our decisions were driven by that, but that we have the ability to calm down, set that aside and be curious instead of just be angry all the time. So I'm going to stick with that view of reality and hope it's the correct one.

Johan:

Yeah. We can make it the correct one, we can.

Dave:

So thank you, Johan, for sharing some information just how the decision to go a different path came down in Sweden and what the outcomes were, which is really cool.

Johan:

Thanks for having me.

Dave:

If you like today's episode, I would love it if you let me know about it. One thing you could do, if you really want to go deep is you could read Johan's book called *The Herd*, where he goes through the decision making about this. I want you to tell me whether this *How Did We Get Here* episode is of use to you, whether it satisfied your curiosity, what was interesting, or what you want to know more about. Go to daveasprey.com/podcast or podcasts, something like that, it's easy to find and tell me, or hit me up with a DM.

I just want to know, do you like this stuff, because I'm curious, I'm curious about everything? But I want to know what you're curious about so we can have that overlap of curiosity and I can have fun

and learn and so can you, and so can our guests. As you can tell, Johan is curious, he's a journalist, a writer. Seriously, if you're tweaked by the pandemic and our response to it, maybe reading the herd will be a dose of logic and understanding for you and you can take those lessons and put them to work in your government wherever you are. I'll see you on the next episode.