

# dord

MENTAL HEALTH IS DONE BEING TABOO



**Marc E.  
Bassy**

Vol. 1 Issue 4 April 2021

# *Our Manifesto*

**Mental health is about living.**

**There is hope beyond mental illness. Nothing should be stigmatized.**

**You're not "MESSED UP" because of how your brain naturally reacts to stimulus.**

**We are all worthy of love, despite our state of mind, illnesses, or fears.**

**We believe in conversations lead by integrity, responsibility & knowledgeable reporting.**

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## *Editor's Desk*

There's something unique in the mind of a creator—even more an entrepreneur. They see the entire world as an act of art—crafting solutions, just as beethoven crafted notes. Entrepreneurs push through great discomfort, just for a chance to birth something that creates a permanent expansion of the world.

So many people talk about hustle culture—but now how it kills us. We talk about passion—what about fear? What about isolation? Perfectionism? Personal growth? And the drive that keeps us going built entirely on reverence?

Inside these pages, we discover the mind of an entrepreneur.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink.

**Diana Vilic**

Publisher, Founder, and Editor-in-Chief

# Entrepreneurship's Stress-Reducing Power

Nathan E. Yates

"You need to work less," the physician remarked as I was lying in the hospital bed. "You're actually lucky to be alive," she continued as a warning. What began with a pounding heart as I struggled to take notes during a Boeing earnings call ended in the emergency room with me unable to recognize my own parents. I was subsequently admitted to the ICU with CO<sub>2</sub> narcosis (a buildup of carbon dioxide in the blood) caused by underlying pneumonia and tachycardia, but pure exhaustion was the root of everything. I'd been working 16-hour weekdays and tacking on additional hours every weekend for my first job in investment research, and I was struggling after just six weeks in the role. But this type of position was a dream come true! So, I was back to work within days of almost dying because we were in the midst of a quarterly earnings season—the most intense time for investment analysts. I remember joining a business conference call with an oxygen cannula under my nose and still struggling to breathe. My stress level also remained extremely high, plus I felt relentless anxiety. I had the job I'd always wanted...and yet I felt miserable.

After just under a year of working as a research associate, I resigned following yet another earnings season. I had actually filled in for our director of research one week and remember staying up until 4 AM to cover a news event in Germany before awakening at 8 AM for an American earnings report. I submitted 250 pages of research and my two-week notice simultaneously. Needless to say, I was mentally and physically exhausted from the job. But what was my second act?

## Entrepreneurship.

As someone with a neurological disorder, spinal muscular atrophy, I needed to work remotely. I also realized that founding my own consulting firm would reduce my stress and anxiety by giving me maximum control over my schedule. The lack of flexibility in my previous job had become my biggest problem because I couldn't manage my health adequately. I sought to rectify the issue by becoming my own boss.

Financial services companies were, and still are, hesitant to grant employees much freedom. Even the COVID pandemic has only loosened the industry's culture slightly: The CEO of Goldman Sachs, an investment bank, recently referred to remote work as an "aberration." (Wall Street gonna Wall Street.)

While it was definitely stressful to launch my business, especially because I was just 25 at the time, it also felt liberating. I quickly discovered that project-based work suited my health and personality very well. Pruning my firm's initially broad range of services became much more important than adding new offerings, too. Depth of expertise matters much more than breadth for a startup and allows you to focus on your strengths. The more services I culled, the stronger my business became. It's counterintuitive, perhaps, but less is often more when it comes to deciding what your business should sell for the first two or three years of operation.

As my firm has grown into a full-fledged digital marketing agency (with a specialized focus on financial services clients), I've found a few elements to reduce the stress related to entrepreneurship:

- **Invest in quality technology that saves time and removes frustrating tasks from your day. Just don't waste your money on gimmicky tools that require you adapt to the software. A great tech stack adapts to you!**
- **Guard your inbox and your calendar jealousy. Your schedule and unread/unanswered emails can become major sources of anxiety, so it's best to keep saying no to pointless meetings and to cease email communication with people who waste your time.**
- **Outsource essential tasks that you find yourself avoiding or add to your team if possible. The best thing I've ever done as a marketing consultant was to bring a phenomenal graphic designer onto my team early on. I can't draw a stick figure myself!**
- **Keep great records and detailed accounting. Accurate books let you sleep well at night.**
- **Plan your business cash flow beyond next week. Look at your budget for months down the road, and then develop a cash cushion over time. I've never known any entrepreneur who regretted having a little extra liquidity.**
- **Bonus tip: Business insurance is inexpensive. Buy your policy (or policies) to mitigate key risks and breathe easier.**

Entrepreneurship is certainly an intimidating path, but owning your own business can actually reduce your stress levels over time. I think the benefits of independence are especially relevant for people with chronic illnesses, too. Honestly, I can't even imagine taking a corporate job now! Maybe it's time for you to leave the rat race and chart your own course, as well? ●



*A k i r a*

Emily

Durkin





# Creative Activity for Mental Health

Orana Velarde

## What do Art Therapy and Dance Therapy have in common?

They're both ways to express emotions and feelings that seem impossible to let go of with simple conversation. Deep-rooted fears, frustrations and trauma are difficult to share. Talking therapy helps some of the time, but other times it doesn't.

Art Therapy is a technique used with people that haven't found a way to transfer emotional energy out of their bodies and minds. It helps them channel sensations that they can't put into words. The same applies to Dance Therapy. Free creative physical movements loosen up the energy flow in their bodies to the point where they tend to yell at the top of their lungs or even cry. Yoga has this effect on some people as well.

But for some people, Art Therapy isn't a thing they're offered as a solution for something they can't let go of. For creative people, Art Therapy is their oxygen. The difference is that we don't call it Art Therapy. Art is simply a lifeline. Being creative is the only way we can maintain healthy mental wellbeing within our lives. It's the only way to not crack under the pressure of responsibilities and life itself.

I've learned over the years that there are two things that I can't stop doing if I want to feel relatively balanced emotionally:

- I can't ever forget to take my iron pills.
- I can't let more than a few days pass without filling a page in my sketchbook.

The last time I realized this, it had been a year that the sketchbooks and markers had been sitting collecting dust. I also felt constantly fatigued, my ears were ringing and nothing made any sense. My anemia was destroying my will to push through!

I can tell you here and now that I was not in a great place emotionally. This combination of low iron and dusty sketchbooks has happened a few times already and I've recently vowed to never let it happen again.

## Art Therapy

The term Art Therapy was coined in the 1940s when Adrian Hill used art to help fellow tuberculosis survivors pass the time in isolation. Edward Admonson then integrated the practice into mental hospitals in the 1960s when lobotomies were usual practice to cure mental illness.

If you're trying to picture this era in history, read the book "One flew over the cuckoo's nest" or watch the movie with Jack Nicholson. You can also get a glimpse of this dark era for mental illness in the Netflix series Ratched.

The 70s brought along a new style of Art Therapy. Psychotherapists incorporated creative output activities with psychedelics. LSD and Psilocybin Art Therapy sessions gave doctors a wider idea of how creativity can help the human brain to cope and assimilate.

The conversation about psychedelics and art is another huge topic I might tackle in another edition of *Epicly Creative*.

## Is The Link Between Mental Illness and Creativity a Myth?

I started off this piece by talking about how Art Therapy helps people with troubled minds and souls to heal through creative activity. But what I haven't mentioned yet is how it's ingrained into modern culture that mental illness and creativity are linked in the opposite direction.

Psychotherapists have tried to prove that the majority of artists or creative types are more likely to suffer from depression, anxiety, bipolar and dissociative disorders. It hasn't been definitively proven to be so. In doing some research for this piece I found an article in *The Scientific American* that had an interesting view on the subject. I'd suggest you go and read it if this topic interests you. It's too long to summarize here.

But what has definitely been proven to be 100% true, is that being creative helps humans find their own voices, their personal happiness and positive energy flow.

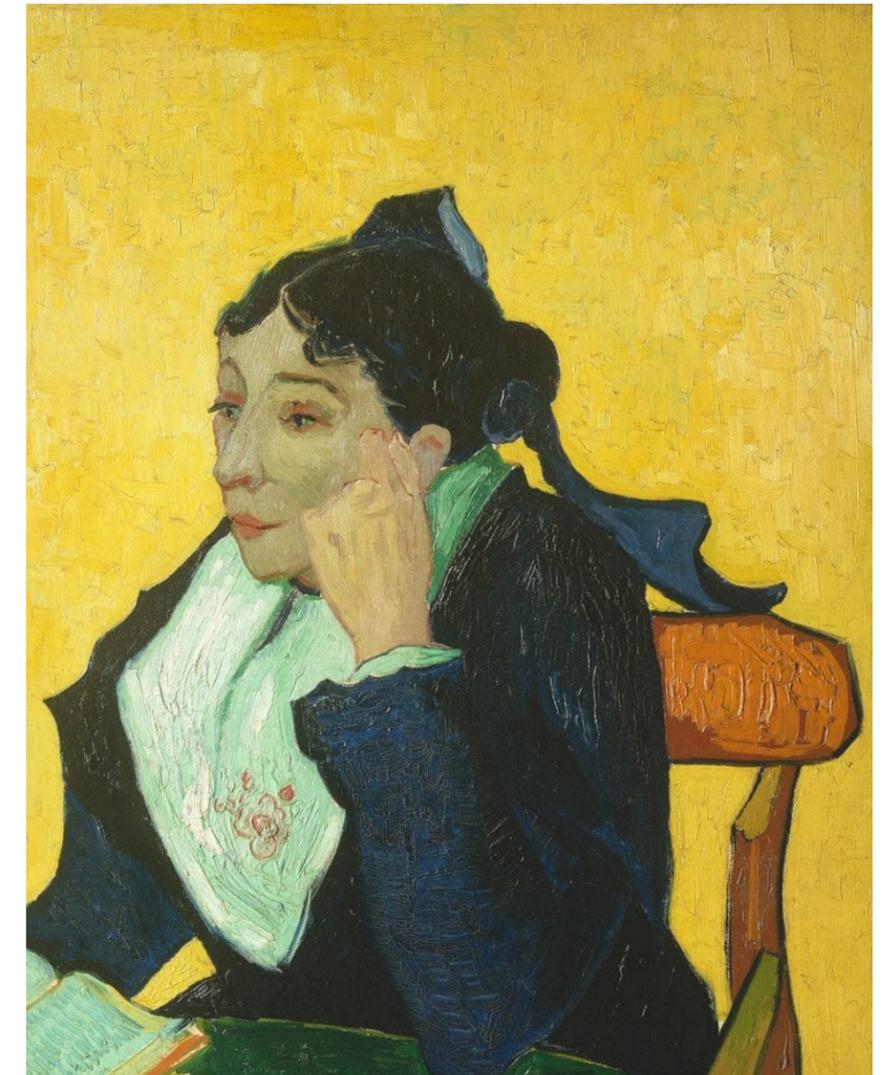
## Common Stories of Mentally Ill Artists

### Vincent Van Gogh

If you need one example of how art is therapy for a wounded soul, just take a look at the life and work of Vincent Van Gogh. It's not surprising that his art is a favorite with many creatives and non-creatives alike. You can feel the emotional stress in his paint strokes and colors.

It's believed Van Gogh suffered from some sort of bipolar disorder or even epilepsy. Most of the famous art pieces like *Starry Night* and *Sunflowers* were painted while he was in an asylum to treat his mental illness episodes. Painting incessantly helped him survive every day until finally his mental illness won the battle and he committed suicide.

If you want to learn more about Van Gogh and his life, read the letters he wrote to his brother Theo. The book, "A Life in Letters" is a must if you're interested in the connection between art and mental illness



### Edvard Munch

Another example of how art and mental illness collide is Edvard Munch. His most famous work, *The Scream*, is a clear indication of how art is capable of transmitting feelings. Even though he's well known for that one painting, his work is much more prolific and inspiring. He spent the last 27 years of his life in isolation, creating incessantly and finally died alone.

These are the two most famous "mentally ill artists" but there are many others, Mark Rothko transmitted his depression onto his full red color paintings. Paul Cezanne disliked his paintings so much he would destroy them after working on them for months. Jackson Pollock literally threw his mania onto his canvases.

It's notable how we remember these artists from their work through mental illness. But we can't forget all those that are also masters of creativity without having any mental illness. What I can tell you to be true though, is that every creative person uses creativity as a lifeline, anchor, and directional map to traverse life. ●

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# *Stress – The Road to Mental Illness*

**Don Busch**

Everybody can remember the first time they experienced stress. The range of reasons runs from good experiences like the first date with someone you like to the death of a parent or loss of a job. The unique thing about stress is that what causes it in one person is radically different from how it affects another person. There are innumerable times that I have listened to some beautiful young girl share her stress over being dumped by her boyfriend, a situation that would be considered trivial by someone else.

Stress is a life changing experience that moves us from the wonders of childhood to the pain of adulthood. It is a reward for growing up. The people that are the most admirable are those who face stress but do not feel its affects. Those of us who are consumed by stress want those fortunate souls to take their advantage and bottle it for the rest of us.

The thing that surprises me is someone with a calm exterior but is exploding on the inside from the pressure they are feeling. It is unclear whether this is good or bad. The old saying was that you need to let it out instead of holding it in. Yet, many successful people contain their stress, respond to difficult circumstances, and maintain a calm demeanor in the face of chaos.

The ability to face and confront stress is a practiced behavior that can take years to learn. For some, the skill is never learned, and they succumb to the negative affects of stress. In those cases, they are heading down the road to serious mental illness that can cripple them and change their lives.

A surprising detail from my study of psychology is the relevance of stress in relation to mental illness, which brings us back to mental control. There are occasions when stress can overwhelm a person and make it impossible for them to

function normally. This is especially true of someone who, as the saying goes, burns the candle at both ends. A perfect example of this is someone I knew in the early 90s.

Henry, fictitious name, was an elementary school teacher and the sole support of his family of a wife and three children. Early in his marriage, he and his wife decided that he would work two jobs so that she could stay at home with the kids. Though Henry worked seven days a week, five at school and three at his second job, the arrangement worked rather well, that is until Henry decided to take on two more jobs.

One of Henry's problems was, and may still be, a need to be involved, in everything. The school where he worked was making a transition into the exciting dynamic of computerized education. Henry saw the objective of the program as a perfect way to marry individualized education and electronic instruction. All of this was happening before the advent of online programs. It was before the development of the internet, which is an indication of how far reaching it was.

As admirable as Henry's dedication may have been, it forced him to be on the go close to twenty hours a day. In addition to his work on the new program, he became a leading figure in the development of the teacher's association's contract negotiations, a responsibility that he should have avoided. All of the pressure, demands, and meetings resulted in Henry coming home one day and going to bed but never getting up. He remained like that for four months, buried in his blankets.

The difference between Henry's stress and that of other people was the identification of a direct cause. Everyone can see that if you take on too much, something has to give. This does not explain people who are unable to decide what to

have for dinner or where to sit in a theater. These decisions are easy for most of us but create stress in certain people who have a propensity for mental illness.

As with Henry, most of us have faced stress, suffered from it, and got up and walked away, having learned a valuable lesson. There are a few people who do not have the strength, skill, or mental abilities required to make the leap from a stressful situation back to being normal. In those cases, they get absorbed and conquered by the stress and have difficulty finding their way back.

There has been the argument that how someone is parented, or their life experiences can determine how someone faces stress. To discuss that situation, let's look at two case studies of students with whom I have worked. For the sake of this article, we will refer to the two young ladies as one and two.

One lived with child abuse from a very early time in her life. The abuse began when she was about four or five and continued until she was close to twenty. Though it was obvious to many people that she was being mistreated, little was being done because no one actually witnessed what was happening. Eventually, the volume of evidence made it impossible to ignore the mistreatment and her abuser ended up in prison.

Two was in the same situation. Every day, when she arrived from school and went to her bedroom, she knew that her abuser would come after her. As with one, this happened for most of her life and was never reported, even when she told her teachers or counselor. The end of her troubles was the same as one, where the volume of evidence made it impossible to ignore and her abuser went to jail.

The cases of one and two are exactly the same. They suffered the same abuse for many years and were not believed when they pled their case. Regardless of the similarity of their circumstances, they took different paths in facing the stress. One felt that it was important to put the abuse in the past and strive to seek positive goals in life. She became a go getter, got two jobs, enrolled in college, and worked to have a social life. After graduation from college, she became engaged and got married. My knowledge of her ends there, but I assume she is having a happy married life.

The case of two went in a different direction. She was in and out of foster care, escaping several times, found it impossible to keep a job because of the stress. For several years, she attempted to find a stable relationship but was forever choosing partners who were unreliable. Eventually, she fell into deep depression and has been unable to integrate into society.

What is astounding in these two cases is the different ways they reacted to severe stress at an early age. One looked for hope and found positivity in the future, while two dwelled on her past and could not let it go resulting in severe and crippling depression. If we look at the surface of their experiences, we can say that a positive and bright attitude can conquer stress. Unfortunately, not everyone can reach that place.

In the case of Henry, and others like him, stress can be debilitating for a short period of time. Once the root elements are removed, the ability to move on becomes apparent and sought. Where one found the skill and stamina to develop a positive attitude and conquer the future, it is hard to say. Two never did.

In short, stress is how you view it and whether you feel you can overcome it. If you view it as an unclimbable mountain, your likelihood of overcoming it may be short lived. If you view it as another trough in life that will pass, you may have a chance.

A minister once told me that life is a set of hills and valleys. You endure the valleys and enjoy the hills. An understanding of that being the way life is can be instrumental in helping us face stress and wait to climb to the top of the hill. ●

# *Lessons in Entrepreneurship from Immigrant Parents*

**Manav P Thaker**

# *“The Struggle is where greatness comes from”*

*- Ben Horowitz*

Being a first-generation American is a rare opportunity to access the boldest generations of our time - immigrants.

As first-generation children, our parents' journeys of leaving their homeland to come to the “land of opportunity” are engrained in our identity. Their hardships are not just tales or stories. They never had to say “back in my day” because “back in the day” took place during our childhood. My parents came here with the promise of possibilities, going through hardship and sacrificing to break open their glass ceiling. The sky was now the limit with a path laid out for their children towards safety, success, and stability.

Unfortunately, that path was not for me.

I've taken risks throughout my life and my career. I traveled in the exact opposite direction of my parents by moving outside the US for opportunities. And even after returning to the US, I've taken risks by starting my own companies. If there ever was a “traditional” path, I've veered way off that road a long time ago. My heads-first attitude towards change and innovation was inspired by my parent's courage, sacrifice, and resilience in leaving their lives behind, starting from scratch by emigrating to this country to provide their children with more opportunities. Though my opportunities were vastly different than what my parents had imagined

for me, they were connected to my parents by an underlying thread: Risk-taking.

Turns out, it's more than a thread. Immigrants are the O.G. entrepreneurs. Just look at the numbers: 15% of the US workforce is made up of immigrants, but they're 25% of US entrepreneurs<sup>1</sup>. Immigrants start businesses at twice the rate of their native-born counterparts<sup>2</sup>. Immigrants are also accomplishing this without the traditional pathways to success: Immigrant business owners without college degrees brought in one in every nine dollars (\$43 billion) generated by the self-employed individuals in the US<sup>3</sup>.

The immigrant experience in the US should be a benchmark for startup founders. Every immigrant has a story about leaving their home country to start anew in an unfamiliar culture, with limited knowledge of the language, and in search of a better life for their children. And every founder has a story about leaving his previous job to pursue his dream of building a company, often in the face of steep odds. My parents knowingly took risks so that their children didn't have to take a longer route to success the way they did. But they didn't know that what I saw them do every day - continuing their education, raising kids, and working multiple jobs to save and build a foundation - was transforming the way that I internalized success.

**“I used to tell stories of the disillusionments of the golden land. We come to America expecting the streets to be paved with gold; then we found out that we were supposed to pave the streets.”**

*- Sam Levenson<sup>4</sup>*

Being an immigrant in this country isn't easy. Being a founder is just as hard.

We don't hear that word often enough: Hard. It's hard being a founder. If the word is ever mentioned, the message is always contradicted by success stories, stories of founders who hustled more than anyone else and succeeded against all odds. For the budding founder, these types of stories are aspirational. Maybe even necessary. The stories make it all seem doable, like success is within reach and if they just try a little harder - they too can make that dream possible. And why not? When every IG influencer is an “entrepreneur” and every Twitter bio is a “1x,” “2x,” or “3x entrepreneur,” you're thinking, “If they can do it, why can't I?” It can't be that hard, right? Even Squarespace proclaims it's “hustlin' time” and makes it seem that you can achieve peak entrepreneur if you put up a landing page and work after hours from “5 to 9.”<sup>5</sup>

This is startup Cibola, the founders' fabled land of opportunity. Founders are on their way to entrepreneurial Ellis Island. They're the “huddled masses yearning to breathe free” as they wait for the “golden door” to open in the form of a unicorn company. Our glorification of startup culture perpetuates an illusion, on its way to turning startup founders into the next Hollywood waiters. It reminds me of another illusion: The American Dream. Immigrants moved to this country with an idea of freedom - breaking free of their experience and achieving the American Dream of an endless, fruitful land. As a founder, you imagine what freedom you'll have when starting a business: Freedom in creating a product from scratch, having your own idea, and bringing it into fruition; Freedom of being out of a corporate office and not having a “boss;” Freedom of having control over your time, accountability, and ultimate vision for their startups.

Those freedoms are still an illusion. It's a trap door, hiding the fact that we forgo the freedom of health and financial stability. The lack of sleep, lack of a proper diet and exercise, and lack of focus mental health founders experience, consumed by their startups. We're not free from anxiety, pressure, and the need for validation. We tell ourselves it's all worth it because we believe we're building something meaningful, but there is cognitive dissonance in what we want to achieve long-term and what we need to do for ourselves today.



Lucas Gouvea on Unsplash

***“I get up every morning determined to both change the world and have one hell of a good time. Sometimes this makes planning my day difficult.”***

***- E.B. White***

Every startup is disruptive. Every founder is changing the world. In researching this article, I found that even Inc. Magazine’s missing was to “help entrepreneurs change the world.” A mix of hubris, delusion, and exploitation, the idea of founders having an exponential national or global impact is the distinction between immigrants and startup founders: Selflessness.

I know, it sounds counterintuitive. How can you be for-profit and be selfless at the same time? Prioritization. 95% of startups fail, and 42% of them fail because there is no market for the product or services<sup>6</sup> that they’ve created. Founders need to go into startup life selflessly, solve problems for others. “Changing the world” is not a destination. Immigrant parents’ goals were working to provide value for the next generation. It was a focus on the people (their kids) and not a place. The sacrifices they’re making in the present allow for opportunities in the future. As a founder, especially if you’re venture-backed, it’s very easy to get caught up in your hype.

In advising startups, I’ve seen that rush to relevance and the ease of creation combine to cause founders to skip over the essential steps in the process, mainly having a strong mission, solving an actual problem for a specific set of people. Startups are a long game, longer than you think and longer than you’re told they will be. You’ll need to get validation from the value you’re providing others. If you’re in for your glory and you don’t provide the value, you won’t be successful.

As with every dream, whether you’re an immigrant or a startup founder, there are hurdles along the way. Founders need to understand the sheer number of sacrifices that will have to be made. This journey isn’t for the faint of heart; you’ll lose a lot of sleep and financial success will be a roller coaster. This path is for those that are more than just risk-takers. It’s not only those who are willing and able to run towards the risk, but for those that understand they are working towards a better tomorrow, even if tomorrow doesn’t have an exact date. For me as a founder and the first generation of immigrant parents, it’s all about the journey; the ability to dream while also knowing that this will be nearly impossible. With the right business, the right problem to solve, and proper funding, just maybe I’ll have a chance to reach my version of the American dream that my parents worked so hard to provide.

Until then, the work continues. ●

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# How to Make Your Home A Texturous Nature Bomb

Spencer Miller

I've said before and I'll say it again, modern architecture is very possibly my favorite form of architecture. Let's take a look at interior design though. Unlike the structure itself, the interior design aspect of making a home is very fluid. I fancy organic modern interior design. It keeps the clean lines and muted tones but also adds the beauty of natural textures, raw materials and living edges. Why is it that nature feels so warm?

Some of my favorite moments that I think back on are times where I was swinging in a hammock, surrounded by trees. We are wired to be comforted by nature. So why not bring it into the home? Stone instead of brick, wood instead of metal.

On top of being good materials for grounding, a lot of these pieces are also one of a kind. Using organic materials brings a new level of exclusivity into your home. It imparts a natural stylistic approach to interior design that cannot be easily replicated. If you do some digging, you can find some of these materials to be sourced organically. If leather isn't your thing, there are a bunch of wonderful faux-leathers out there. You can upcycle wooden pallets at a very low cost. A bit of DIY can transform pallets into numerous other things. This not only gives your home a truly unique piece, it also gives you the satisfaction of creating it yourself. Pinterest is your friend, there are a bunch of wonderful uses for pallets inside and outside the home.

Nature doesn't have to mean stone and wood either- linens and woven textiles can reflect natural vibes. It's the feel-

ing of the textures that make us cozy. The shadows that the unevenness casts that give it more depth. You can start with a throw blanket, or a thrifted quilt. Imagine laying on your leather couch, sinking into it on a beautiful summer day. The breeze blowing your curtains slightly. You cling to your linen blanket resting gently over your body and you nuzzle into your thrifted pillow from Goodwill. You hear the rustling of your *real* plant by the window and stare at your shiplap accent wall, pretending you're in a cabin on the mountainside. One of the many grounding techniques that are used to help beat whatever may be burdening your mind is by focusing on texture. Having these unique, earthly textures around creates a nice change of pace. I find that these organic materials are fibrous, rough, and irregular. I think they're great to help with grounding because they're unique and easy to get lost in.

It's hard sometimes to pull myself off the couch and go for a walk in nature. Sometimes I don't have the time for it either. That's why I like to try and bring nature into the home as much as I can. It brings an inner peace for me and I hope it does for you as well. I love seeing my herb plants grow every day. I look forward to coming home to them after work. In the places that I create, I enjoy having some texture and soul in my room. Anyone can walk into most offices and see how void it is of character. In the days of working from home, it's up to us as the people living in the space to breathe life into. It doesn't just make us more productive workers, it makes us less stressed ones. Do yourself a favor and bring nature into your home. Don't do it just for your home's appeal either, do it for yourself. ●



# *The World is Ours*

Mathematically, it's stupid to be a founder. Your chance of failure is greater than success, and there are only so many Facebook's, Ubers, and Airbnb's in a world saturated with ideas. We have to wonder what makes someone push through hardships, improbable possibilities, and mental drainage? **So we asked.**



# *Striking a Rhythm*

## Inside Marc E Bassy's newest project

We could spend all day talking about Marc E. Bassy, and never quite run out of things to say. While most rappers and label executives are clamorous and ostentatious, Marc is soft-spoken, collected, and veritable. Bringing a unique sense of serenity and poetic aura to his music, while still being able to connect deeply with his listeners—something not often found in artists who take the leap to founder and executive.

Marc, sitting poolside in Miami, recording this second album under New Gold Medal Records, third for his solo career, is surprisingly eloquent and radiating. Despite being separated by a computer screen, Marc has a charming appeal and warmth that is subtly transmuted, even through pixels and weak internet connections.

“Creating a label was out of necessity—it wasn’t something I was intending on doing, it had to be done if I wanted to keep my career going.” He chuckles, “I’ve always been entrepreneurial and been excited about the idea of growing a business, working in collaboration with people I care about.”

If you’ve been anywhere near a radio, you’ve heard Marc, yet may not be aware of it. His career spans fourteen years and includes former vocalist of 2AM Club, collaborations with G-Eazy, Nic Nac, French Montana, and Kehlani, songwriting for CeeLo Green, Sean Kingston, Wiz Khalifa, and Ty Dolla Sign, a solo career under the name Marc E. Bassy, and founder of New Gold Medal (NGM), a record label devoted to releasing unadulterated and captivating work.

“Music is the universal language. I make music to heal myself; to express feelings of pain, joy, love, loss, and sometimes to articulate points of view.” He says, taking a moment to collect himself. Continuing, “I hope that my music makes people unafraid to be who they are.”

“When I was a kid, no one you ever met did music. When I realized that it could be involved in the process, it was that

eureka/lightning bolt moment that changes your life.” I can’t help but marvel at his passion.

They say writers, write, because to us, it’s the only way we breathe. It’s clear, to Marc, music isn’t just a route to building a name for himself, or a quick few bucks—it’s very much something innate in him. That type of passion is admirable.

The story of Marc isn’t an artist who had a nasty fall out with his record label, it’s sincerely an artist who respects his craft enough to create authentic content that’s unapologetic and dripped with reverence. When I ask about his why, he lights up “I think people forget about the community when they think too big—you have to keep your community close, and I get to do that through business.” We both laugh, understanding there’s a beauty that comes with this unique type of responsibility.” Naturally, I’m a storyteller. We’ve started releasing a weekly YouTube series about growing our independent label and this is the story of mine and my closest counterparts’ lives, and I think we have a positive message about creativity and entrepreneurship. I think people can learn from our way of doing business, which is community-focused and family-oriented.”

When I ask about what prepared him to take this leap, he gets very focused, slowly drawing his attention inward, smirking to himself, “I’ve just become more secure in myself and learned to not take things personally. Anything that I used to perceive as a slight dig on me would make me angry—I was angry a lot. When you’re the boss and the talent—even people who love you, will dig at you, either cause they’re a combination of jealousy, testing you, or whatever it may be.” Looking at him, I could almost see a part of myself, a common thread between us and the most successful founders

I know. “Now, when I hear slight digs, I kind of watch and just let people act how they want without reacting.” When I question how, knowing fully I am and most likely always will be a reactive person, he nods and discloses, “I got there through meditation. I do fully guided 30-minute meditation about building your future with Dr. Joe Dispenze, which is really interesting. Trying to get outside of your body and see yourself as part of the bigger vibrational world. Sometimes I’ll read from the Bodhisattva and reflect while sitting in peace with that.”

As we’re wrapping up, the topic drifts to our biggest failures, honestly not expecting answers to such personal questions. But he gives me one anyway. “I broke up with my band, my girlfriend, and lost all of my money in the same month. It completely set me up for future success—it made me depend on myself. Truly, made me a better decision maker. It cleared the ambiguity out of my life about what my priorities should be.” Pausing to reflect, “It was a pride thing at that time, which I guess isn’t that healthy. But I was so motivated because of my pride—it was natural to stand up for myself and push myself. I didn’t even notice it working while it was happening.”

Reflecting back, Marc’s sense of maturity and responsibility is restorative, especially for somebody in his position. We live in a world where there are no more gatekeepers to our crafts, for the first time in history, artists are allowed to fully own every ounce of their identity while still making a living. It’s clear Marc isn’t a credulous, but rather a seasoned artist ready to take on the next phase of his career while staying true to who he is and building a community that encourages growth and origination. ●

**Follow Marc:**  
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# Deborah Matthews, NCPT

Owner of InsideOut Body Therapies



Master Teacher, **Deborah Matthews**, founded InsideOut Body Therapies in 2003 and is a highly sought after Third Generation Pilates Teacher. IOBT offers Pilates, Yoga, Pilates Teacher Training, Pilates-Based Physical Therapy, Acupuncture, and Bodywork. We work with many different populations that include Duke University's elite athletes, clients seeking to improve fitness and general health, to those healing from surgery or illness.

[www.insideoutbodytherapies.com](http://www.insideoutbodytherapies.com)

## Where did your passions come from?

I grew up with many health challenges and was diagnosed with renal disease at age eight and had a kidney transplant at age twenty six. During that time, I had no choice but to pay close attention to my health. Diet, exercise, medications, and self-care keeps me alive (literally). Along the way I met many people that had a similar diagnosis or were living with a transplant. I witnessed the choices each of us made that affected our daily wellbeing and also the mental challenges of living with a disease.

I used my experience and listened to the stories of others to inspire me to make the best choices I could towards living the best life possible while knowing that some days are just going to suck. The practices of movement, meditation, eating well, sleeping as needed, and just accepting the situation for what it is, helped me meet the daily mental and physical challenges and the anxieties of life. I wanted to share this hope and try my best to help others find ways that can bring moments of relief and ease to their body and to their mind.

I feel free, focused, and at ease in movement. Some days, breathing is all the movement I can do and it is that action that brings courage, strength and ground to the moment.

## How has a failure or apparent failure set you up for later success? What's your favorite failure?

Oh goodness! Failure is crucial for success! Every failure can create clarity and opportunity about yourself, humanity, and your business. You will make mistakes and you will make people angry. Look at these moments, study them. Ask for feedback and don't take it personally (a BIG problem I see with many people). Accept responsibility and learn to pick your battles.

Also, being a woman in business it is fascinating to watch other women (not all) be uncomfortable with conflict. Sure it's not my favorite thing, but it is par for the course. You will get angry at situations and you will make people angry. Understand the dynamics of anger and what is behind anger (disappointment, fear, insecurity, a need, etc. ). Listen and take ownership when it is necessary. Stay curious and stand your ground with compassion and understanding for both parties.

## How do you overcome self-doubt?

I have a magnet on my refrigerator that I bought in 2001. It is a quote by Eleanor Roosevelt.

"Do one thing every day that scares you."

I read and listen to podcasts by people who inspire me. I listen to their journeys, mistakes, successes, and dreams. It takes courage to put yourself out there as the world is ready to criticize. Trying new things strengthens that courage muscle and helps quiet the critical voice or self-doubt that can spark. Even the smallest new thing counts such as using my left hand, trying a new yoga class, writing versus typing a letter, creating a new exercise.

## What's something you want people to take away from your story?

This quote speaks a thousand words. We get up, we try again.

## What does your victory look like?

Helping to ease pain for my clients and assisting an ease in their breath, mind, and nervous system. People work so hard and life can really beat you up. If I can be a resource for ease, that is victory. ●



# Paul Mabray

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**Paul Mabray** has been a powerful change agent in the wine industry for over twenty years. He has been at the forefront of all major digital trends for the wine industry, working with WineShopper.com and Wine.com when they entered the wine-digital space. He founded two companies that significantly changed the digital US wine landscape, first by introducing winery e-commerce with Inertia Beverage Group that transformed into WineDirect.com pioneering winery e-commerce and then again introducing social media and social customer relationship management with VinTank.com. He is considered the wine industry's foremost futurist and thought leader, harnessing the power and potential of digital tools and methodologies to move the industry into the future.

## Describe your current project/venture.

Pix is a wine discovery platform, we're here to help consumers discover the wine that they're looking for and ways to buy the wine. Wine is a really challenging category, there's so many products. In the United States this year, 160,000 new products come out, so it's hard to decide because there's so much of it and it's all so different.

Where did your passions come from?

I've always been a very creative person, I always enjoyed the creation of things. As it relates to my entrepreneurial passion--it's a tough town. Middle class in Napa is poor. For me early on, it was about the has and has-not environment, and even though we're middle class, we were pretty much has-nots. As I grew older, it became about the community I live in and building something with my colleagues. I just wanted to do something great, so it was a mix of reaching for the stars.

## How has a failure or apparent failure set you up for later success? What's your favorite failure?

I've had some pretty tough failures to be honest with you, on the outside they may look like successes, they gave me a better way to deal with the future of how I organize people and ideas. I'm a multi-entrepreneurial CEO, this is my third go at it. In the first two, I was a kid, I had no idea what I was doing or which way was up, every idea sounded great. But it took a massive toll on physical and mental health. I run a little hot, so I'm still not doing as good of a job taking care of myself as I should.

## What advice would you give to a younger you?

Slow down, one rock at a time. People aren't always interested in your interests or success, they're interested in their benefit. That was very true when I raised venture capital--I was naive, I thought they would support whatever I want. But that wasn't really their intent.

Also you're CEO until you're CEO. Don't let the board jerk you around and stand firm in your decisions. It's hard as a young CEO to understand why you're in position, and you need to make those judgment calls, while still understanding the board is in the position to remove you. But you're in charge and you should do the job.

## What's some bad advice you hear in your industry?

All the growth hacking baloney, raising capital advice, hustle culture--it's all terrible. You're a battery, you need to re-charge.

## What does your victory look like?

I don't think there's a sole victory, just an illusion people strive for. I think victory is a lot of things, but it's never destination, which is an illusion a lot of people have. It's just moving the ball forward. To be honest, I'm just looking for that peaceful contentment.

## How do you deal with perfectionism?

I'm okay with imperfection, I'm okay with everyone else's imperfections but I try to manage my parts to be as perfect as possible. In software, if you release something and you're not embarrassed by it, you waited too long. ●

# Amel Afzal

## Founder of Hey Tck

**Amel is a creative consultant and entrepreneur who started Hey Tck, A culture lab dedicated to exploring the unique perspectives of #thirdculturekids from around the world.**

### Describe your current project/venture.

Hey Tck is a culture lab exploring the lives and minds of the citizens of nowhere and everywhere— otherwise known as third culture kids.

Third culture kids are people who were raised in a culture other than their parents' or the culture of their country of nationality, and also live in a different environment during a significant part of their child development years. The "third culture" to which the term refers is the mixed identity a person assumes, influenced both by their parents' culture and the culture in which they are raised.

The Tck ethos is very underrepresented despite there being so many of us and our platform is centered around dialogue and unpacking some of these themes and ideas. We are a hub to connect, learn, explore and play and we're so excited to launch our website this summer. We feel incredibly grateful to be talking to TCK's from all over world and have been working on a video series called #TCKTV that I know will resonate with so many.

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### Where did your passions come from?

My mother and grandmother are two very creative women. Everything they did from a meal, to a flower arrangement was an experience and I watched fondly from a young age. As a little girl I gravitated towards the arts and crafts and as I got older, scrapbooking and collages. Today, I have appreciation for a well curated experience like no other. Whether it's a user experience, a meal, a vacation, a sign in the street – a stimulating experience that peeks more than one sense is just sublime to me. My passions have evolved to really connect the importance of community as part of any experience. As designers we're solving problems with creative solutions that make the world easier to flow through. Almost always, our work is for other people, easing some kind of a hitch – but done in the most harmonious and beautiful way.

Today, passion and inspiration can come to me in so many different forms. Usually when I'm least expecting it. People

often inspire me. Places inspire me. Objects. Music. Food. Sometimes just staring blankly at the sky can spark something. You never know where it can come from.

### In the past 5 years, what new belief, behavior, or habit has improved your life the most?

A belief that I've definitely grown into as an adult is that if I want something really badly, I will make it happen. No matter how big or how small it may be. No matter how realistic or unrealistic it is.

I definitely lacked confidence in several facets of my life growing up and something shifted – likely with age – and today, operating from a core belief of 'if I want it – I'll get it' is really a game changer. As far as a tangible habit that has improved my life: routine and discipline have been paramount. An understanding that making small chips at something (whatever it may be) has a compound effect and it's in our power to stay disciplined, follow a routine, stay grounded and eventually land at that finish line.

Oh and a freebie: I care much less about what people think these days, its freakin' liberating! Don't focus on the noise. - you're your biggest competition, critic and supporter – just focus on upping your own game every single day.

### How do you overcome self-doubt?

Trusting myself and being human enough to realize that even bad decisions and 'failures' have always led me to a great lesson or learning. Having that relationship with yourself – almost in the third person, gives you the ability to live and breathe a little easier – through success but also through mistakes. At the end of the day you weigh out your options, listen to your intuition and make the best choice in the moment. Most importantly, you have to know and believe the fire you bring to every table – you're your biggest supporter, remember?!



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### How do you deal with perfectionism?

You know what they say, "Perfect is the enemy of good"! This is a major work in progress for me. I think all creatives struggle with getting their work to be as close to perfect as possible however that concept is a fallacy. The truth is, nothing will ever be completely perfect. We're always going to want to make it better – and that's a good thing!. It's a learning process and it's better to commit yourself to improvement as you go along as opposed to preventing yourself from actually doing anything in order to get it "perfect".

### What does your victory look like?

Victory can look like a few different things to me but more often than not its along the lines of having a clear goal, working at it everyday and finally looking back and saying "I did that" or "I tried my best". Failure can be victory too, especially if you gave it your all and learned something from the process. Grit and tenacity is built through failure, and that my friends, is a victory.

### What's something you want people to take away from your story?

If there was one thing I'd want people to take away from my story, it would be to trust the process and believe in yourself. It sounds so cliché but if covid has taught me anything its that life is uncertain and extremely fleeting. Start that thing. Take that trip. Dye your hair! Whatever it is that you want to do, just do it. Most people live between the past (our memories) and the future (our imagination) and the only time we know with certainty is real is the present moment. Be here now – trust the process, believe in yourself and go out and live your best life. ●

**Max is the founder of smpl, a content initiative based on supporting mentally positive lifestyles. Throughout his life he's struggled with anxiety, self-doubt and bouts of depression. Starting the smpl brand gave him an outlet to be vulnerable, honest and authentic while encouraging others to do the same.**

**Describe your current project/venture.**

The mission is smpl - support mentally positive lifestyles. It's a content initiative served on social media, a podcast and a newsletter. I'm passionate about storytelling and believe that "the story" is the single most powerful tool in all of human history. That's why the pen is mightier than the sword.

When I learned about the concept of "The Hero's Journey" I knew there was something I had to explore. The hero's journey is used as a literary device to create compelling stories. But I thought that perhaps it could be more than that. What if it could be a roadmap for life? What if we could transform our lives through the lens and stages of the hero's journey. Maybe then instead of running away from challenges, we'd understand that we're the only ones who can solve them.

You're the hero, you always have been.

**Where did your passions come from?**

As a kid, I loved stories, (and still do!) especially mythology. Percy Jackson was the single greatest book series I read growing up. I loved mythology because it gave fantastical reasons for why things were the way they were in the world around us.

When I was starting my own mental health journey, there were two types of content that I saw - clinical and spiritual. The clinical content, while great for learning about the technical aspects of mental health and the science behind it introduced a lot of jargon that didn't really resonate. I eventually stumbled across a quotation from a famous Greek physician. He said, "If you are not your own doctor, you are a fool." Now Hippocrates might have lived from over 2000 years ago, but the wisdom has stood to test of time. I was curious about understanding the meaning behind what Hippocrates said which eventually brought me to content concerned with spirituality and self-healing.

But still, something was missing for me. At the beginning of the quarantine, I started reading mythology, fairy tales and fables again. Instead of seeing the stories as stories, I saw deep emotional lessons about the nature of human condition and the universe.

Stories may be built on lies but they illuminate undeniable truths. I want to bring these hidden truths to the forefront, and I believe the lessons can be used to better our own mental health.

**In the past 5 years, what new belief, behavior, or habit has improved your life the most?**

Without a doubt, meditation. It all began with Alan Watts. Just listening to his lectures on YouTube immersed me in a state of passive meditation. For the past five months I've been using Headspace for daily meditation and I've noticed an incredible amount of improvement on my mental health. It's less of a cure, more of a coping mechanism that's positively impacted every aspect of my life. Meditation isn't just sitting quietly for minutes on end. That's only the beginning. The goal is to tap into the meditative state whenever and wherever.

**How has a failure or apparent failure set you up for later success? What's your favorite failure?**

Failure builds resiliency, plain and simple. In high school I had some friends who were really strong software developers and had created a search engine: Harvix - By Students, For Students. It had some pretty cool features oriented at helping students with their research papers such as a generate citation button. I joined their team to help market the product and raise some awareness. We ended up getting a front-page article in the local newspaper, had some meetings with local libraries and even sat down with the director for the Sequoia Union School district but in the end it never really went anywhere.

I learned a lot about what it takes to start a business and I learned that it wasn't easy. It takes a lot of hard work and dedication. I think that start-up failure is my favorite because it was where my journey ultimately started.

**How do you overcome self-doubt?**

Self-belief. It's kind of a cheeky response so, I'll answer the real question - how do you cultivate self-belief. This is a two-part answer. It starts by analyzing and being aware of how you talk to yourself. The cliché "You're your own worst critic" is actually more insightful than I initially thought. Here's the thing, if you are in fact your own worst critic, then every single thing you do will be criticized, if not by someone else, by you. So, you're subsequently deflating your own confidence. Instead, you need to treat yourself as someone you love. Self-affirmations seem to be a great place to start but it's important you learn your own love language.

The second part of the answer is included in the response to the next question. ●

# Max Lieberman

## Founder of smpl

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# Umana Kibria

Co-Founder and CEO behind SweatPack,  
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**Umama Kibria** is the savvy startup Co-Founder and CEO behind SweatPack and the personal fitness brand, smallandstrong.co. With more than 100k members across Instagram, Youtube, Twitter, and LinkedIn channels, she's connected the health and wellness communities across the nation with Sweat With US. Umama is also the founder of SASS Brands, the digital marketing agency behind some of the nation's leading gyms, influencers, and startups in the health and fitness industry.

## Describe your current project/venture.

I'm the co-founder and CEO of SweatPack, a social fitness app that helps people sweat and socialize, consistently. After working out at over 400 gyms across the world, I recognized the problem within the industry and consumers was consistency. SweatPack's technology brings together my passions for fitness, sports, and community building on a weekly basis with our marketplace SaaS platform.

## Where did your passions come from?

Growing up as a first-generation Bengali Muslim American, I've learned the importance of bringing people together through shared culture and goals. My dad has been notorious for his annual family picnics and NYE game shows. I saw how activities bring out the best in people by working together to solve problems, releasing their inner child, and having compassion for others with a student mentality. I wanted that -- but I wanted it for my new generation.

Fitness was how I was able to trust myself through discipline and commitment. I wanted to share this gift with everyone.

## In the past 5 years, what new belief, behavior, or habit has improved your life the most?

Fitness -- Fitness is a form of meditation for me. It's evolved over the past five years from high-intensity strength training, gym hopping to walking. It's my time to be fully connected with my present. It reminds me that with discipline, consistency, and commitment to myself that my mindset is capable of conquering any new environment.

## How do you overcome self-doubt?

Self-doubt and imposter syndrome are a natural part of my daily routine. This was the initial reason I went to therapy. I knew I was holding myself back with my own doubts. After working with her I recognized how to sit in the suck.

I've learned to let the thoughts hit me directly so I can face the face of self-doubt. Then I start the questions, without judgment: Why do you feel this way? What triggered this thought? What aspect of this experience do you have control over? What's the hidden pain under the self-doubt?

In these moments I just imagine myself sitting next to myself as my own best friend. Sometimes this requires talking out loud to my brain to remind myself it's okay, friend. "You're here because you dream big, you have the skills, the passion, the work ethic, and people believe in you. You got here because you worked for it and your true belief in abundance. Just keep going." ●



# Michael Fulwiler

Founder of Fulwiler Media and publisher of Therapy Marketer

**Michael** is a sought out marketing consultant who partners with visionary mental health startup founders and CEOs to help them grow their businesses. Additionally, Michael is the founder of Fulwiler Media, a marketing agency for mental health brands, and publisher of Therapy Marketer, a weekly marketing newsletter for therapists. Prior to founding Fulwiler Media, he helped grow The Gottman Institute as Chief Marketing Officer.

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## Describe your current project/venture.

I run Fulwiler Media, a digital marketing agency for mental health brands. I also advise VC-backed mental health startups as a marketing consultant and write Therapy Marketer, a weekly newsletter for therapists.

## Where did your passions come from?

I've always been passionate about helping people, but I really fell in love with the work during my time at the Gottman Institute. Once you've experienced purpose-driven work, there's no going back.

## In the past 5 years, what new belief, behavior, or habit has improved your life the most?

Always bet on yourself.

## How has a failure or apparent failure set you up for later success? What's your favorite failure?

I was cut from my college baseball team because I was late for a morning workout. You can bet I'm punctual now.

## What's some bad advice you hear in your industry?

There's a ton of bad advice in the mental health industry. The most pervasive is around forced positivity, which Susan David talks about.

## How do you overcome self-doubt?

When self-doubt and imposter syndrome creeps in, I remind myself I'm learning and growing. If I'm doing something for the first time, it doesn't mean I can't do it. It just means I haven't done it before.

## How do you cultivate trust in your intuition or self, even when no one believes in you or your idea?

I've learned to trust my gut. It's usually right.

## What's something you want people to take away from your story?

A motto I live by is, "Commit and figure it out." Take calculated risks and trust everything will work out, even if it's not the path you imagined.

## What does your victory look like?

My victory looks like helping someone to realize their dreams.

## What is your why?

Accessible mental health care for all.

## How do you deal with perfectionism?

Done is better than perfect.

## How do you deal with irreversible decisions you can't change?

Self-compassion. We're all human and make mistakes.

**Rainie Howard** is an award-winning author, designer, and relationship and lifestyle strategist best known for her wildly popular books *Addicted To Pain* and *You Are Enough*, and *The Rainie Howard Show Podcast*.

**Describe your current projects and ventures.**

About 8 years ago I started blogging on social media and connecting with a small community of listeners through video messages on YouTube, Facebook and Instagram. This led to me publishing my first relationship book, “When God Sent My Husband.” My husband and I were so inspired to share our love story (of getting married at age 21) that’s when [www.RealLoveExist.com](http://www.RealLoveExist.com) launched.

Empowering women has led to the evolution of our books, webinars, *The Rainie Howard Show* and podcast and now the clothing collection at [www.RainieHoward.com](http://www.RainieHoward.com) designed to inspire women to dress with confidence.

**Where did your passions come from?**

My passions are a reflection of my life’s experiences. I’ve overcome many challenges in my life and journaling, listening to motivational messages were helpful in my healing process. Those things turned into passions that lead me to empowering others. Writing has always been therapeutic for me. I have been journaling since I was in middle school. I grew up in a single parent home, my dad had a drug addiction and he spent much of my childhood in and out of jail. After being bullied in 7th grade I began having low self-esteem. My environment taught me to be a people pleaser and those things had an impact on my relationships. My curiosity for spirituality and psychology led me to writing self-help books and creating video messages to inspire others. It was a natural progression of my growing as a person and my desire to inspire and connect with others.

**In the past 5 years, what new belief, behavior, or habit has improved your life the most?**

The belief that has improved my life in the past 5 years is me fully taking complete ownership of the health of my mind, body and spirit. Self-care is my #1 priority. It comes before everything. It is the foundation of a successful personal and professional life.

**How has a failure or apparent failure set you up for later success? What’s your favorite failure?**

My so-called failures aren’t failures to me that are lessons learned. As I see them as a lesson, I always grow from the experience. I’ve also learned the importance of removing any guilt or regret. I never dwell on what could’ve happened or “what I should’ve” done instead I accept it all as part of the process and I love on myself and acknowledge my endurance to grow.

**How do you overcome self-doubt?**

You overcome self-doubt by working on building your self-confidence and believing in yourself. Understanding your true value is a process of self-love. There was a time in my life when I forgot to stop and celebrate my milestones. I had to learn how to acknowledge myself and celebrate my life. Life is much more fun when you make time to celebrate.

**How do you cultivate trust in your intuition or self, even when no one believes in you or your idea?**

Trusting your intuition starts with a strong relationship with yourself. Intuition is the whisper of your soul. It’s knowing without knowing. Never apologize for trusting your intuition. People may try to make you feel bad for listening to your inner voice, you have to block them out and follow the voice within. The more you practice honoring your intuition the better you become at aligning with it. No matter how good something looks, if it doesn’t sit right with you and you just feel somethings are off...make your move.

**What’s something you want people to take away from your story?**

Life is responding to your vision,energy, and your feelings. I remember daydreaming and having thoughts about one day having my own studio, becoming an author and an entrepreneur. I didn’t realize how soon those thoughts would manifest into my reality. What I’ve learned about manifesting is that when you become grateful before the things come, that’s when they come.

**What does your victory look like?**

Enjoying my life fully and being grateful for every moment regardless of external conditions. That’s joy. ●



# Rainie Howard

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# Cal McAllister

Founder of Paper Crane Factory and  
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**Cal McAllister** is CEO and founder of Paper Crane Factory, and former CEO and co-founder of Wexley School for Girls, a Seattle-based advertising agency. Cali has been awarded a place on the Northwest's Top 40 under 40 list, as well as dubbed by Seattle Magazine one of Seattle's 25 most influential people. He is a sought after marketer who is known for his innovative creative ideas and problem solving skills.

## Describe your current project/venture.

The Paper Crane Factory is a venture firm whose capital is time. We're a full service branding and advertising agency that works exclusively with start-ups, or companies that behave like one. The agency name comes from the Japanese tradition of senbazuru, the folding of origami cranes for support and good luck on a new venture. In working with early stage companies, in a way, we're putting together paper cranes for them to wish them well on their journey

## Where did your passions come from?

My passions have always come from seeing other people execute or create something when they're at their best. When I was a little kid, it was sports and watching the Detroit Tigers go to the world series. As I got into High School, all my friends got better at music than me, it was inspirational to me. I discovered I was best at solving problems and using creativity to solve them.

## In the past 5 years, what new belief, behavior, or habit has improved your life the most?

My new years resolution three years ago, that I didn't tell anyone about, was to never turn down an invitation to go see live music. For me it was about putting myself through the practice of doing things I wouldn't normally do or seen things I wouldn't have seen otherwise.

## How has a failure or apparent failure set you up for later success? What's your favorite failure?

I've had some colossal ones. I don't agree that failure is the best teacher, afterall unprecedented success is also a great teacher. Failure is touching a hot stove, learning to never do it again. There's so many factors in execution that show that you may not fully understand why something failed.

What I learned from failure, I learned from Tracy Wong of WONGDOODY, who said that you need to have failure, but just so you get up and try harder again.

I take things away from failure, especially learning that I know less than I thought I did. If nothing else, I learn you just need to keep trying otherwise you'll never get to the finish line.

## What's some bad advice you hear in your industry?

That depends on the abilities of the people that are getting bad advice. I've been on the board for a few creative schools, I've taught a fair amount, and I often give the opposite ad-

vice as some of the other Professors. I think the worst advice is someone needs to stay a chameleon in their abilities. It's a skillset, but you can't stall there. You need to develop a style and a reason somebody would want to use you. Trying to be all things to all people is something we get a lot of in this industry, and it's terrible advice.

## How do you overcome self-doubt?

I tell this story a bit. When I was in school I was having pretty bad writer's block that I couldn't get past. My work wasn't particularly good or inspiring, and I went in talked to the head of the writing program. He told me, "I'm gonna tell you what someone told me when I was your age, you aren't good enough for writers block. Go back and work harder, and I'll let you know if you ever have writers block."

To me, it's always reminding myself that I'm not good enough for self doubt. We're always going to come up short, but you aren't good enough to think you didn't hit your own bar.

## How do you cultivate trust in your intuition or self, even when no one believes in you or your idea?

Trust your butterflies.

## What's something you want people to take away from your story?

The legacy I'm trying to build is that we exhausted creative opportunities and our team always used creativity to solve every problem. I want people to know that no matter what their industry, creativity solves everything.

## What does your victory look like?

The chance to recover and take a breath and get some sleep, while being able to celebrate what we're doing and being excited. We have a lot of victories, big and small, but it's hard to get to the next one if your body isn't physically and mentally isn't ready to compete for it.

Victory isn't a sign to finish, it's a sign to reward yourself.

## What is the best thing you learned from Wexley School For Girls?

The best thing I learned that I wasn't very good at from the start but I got better at in the end was how to take care of people who could take another job somewhere else and make more money somewhere else.

We wanted it to be the best place anyone worked no matter where they were in their career, and I learned how to try and make that possible, mostly through taking care of our people and setting them up to be successful. It was the best lesson in our 15 year run. ●

# Pigeon Meikle

Founder of Pigeon's Roller Skate Shop

Instagram: @PigeonSkate

Instagram: @PigeonsRollerSkateShop

www.pigeonskates.com



**Pigeon “Shayna” Meikle** is the owner of Pigeon's Roller Skate Shop (Formally known as the World Renowned, Moxi Roller Skate Shop) in Long Beach, California.

**How do you cultivate trust in your intuition or self, even when no one believes in you or your idea?**

It was instilled in me from a young age. I was always content and confident. My mom was very uplifting, she always told me how smart I was, even if I got a bad grade, or that I was so beautiful, even if I wasn't. That just gave me a lot of confidence and going through puberty wasn't a big deal to me. I felt like I got more confident and I got more beautiful, and I already felt that I was those things.

It gave me so much confidence to not care what anyone else thought, because I knew how I felt and what my parents felt about me. My parents were so encouraging of everything we did. They set me and my brother up this way.

**What's something you want people to take away from your story?**

You can create something through your passions. I don't have any background in retail, but I own the most popular shop for rollerskates in the world.

Because I'm so passionate about it, that's what drives all of this. I put a lot of work in, which is important. It pays to invest in passions, especially if they're small and no one pays attention yet.

**What does your victory look like?**

I feel like I've reached victory so many times, then I see the bigger picture again and again. First being a teacher, I was able to impact so many kids. That was so victorious to me. Then I was able to help so many adults through roller derby, and with the shop, I've been able to help so many adults through roller skating. So many people feel so much mentally better, and connect with their families because of roller skating, and it allowed me to do so much more.

Now with everything that happened in this past year, it made me realize a lot of Black people aren't safe when they skate outside, they need a safe place to skate. So really moving to the next level and creating that, would look like victory to me.

I want to do more for the community. We have more responsibility as we grow. ●

**Where did your passions come from?**

It stems from a lot of different angles, I grew up in South LA, which was pretty heavy in skateboarding and punk rock, and I grew up skateboarding. The other half of my passion was sports, I love team sports. By the time I got to college and there was no more of either of those things, I was only doing my third passion which is science. I always felt like something was missing so bad, something I didn't want to lose. When I was introduced to roller derby, it was everything I love and it was super fucking perfect. It sparked something in me. And my fourth passion was community. I've always been a leader and organized everything.

My first job was working on the ice cream truck in my neighborhood because I was out there in 5th grade organizing all the kids in line and handling the money. So she hired me. It's always been natural to me to be a community leader.

**How has a failure or apparent failure set you up for later success? What's your favorite failure?**

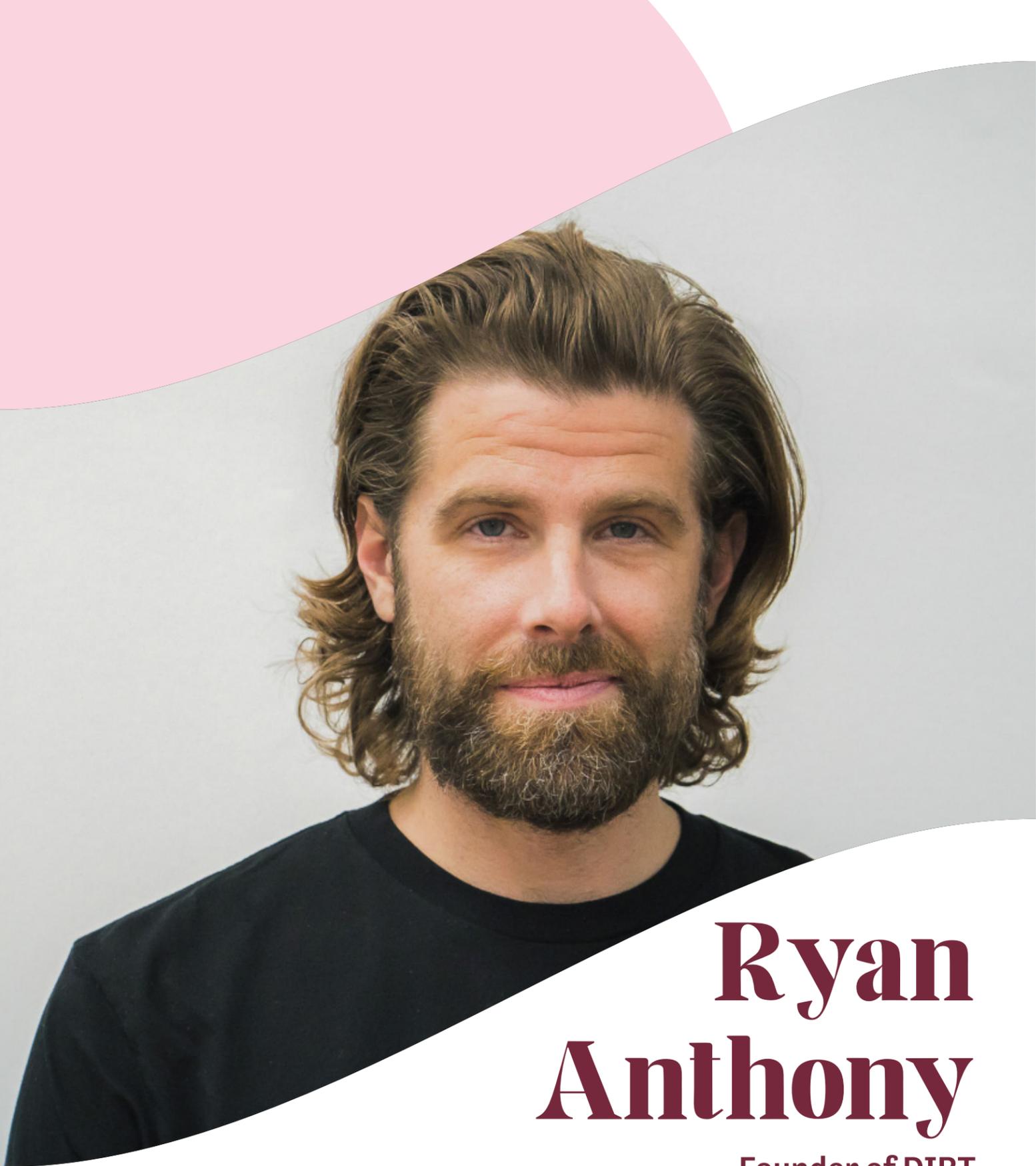
Something I always think about, I graduated college in 2009 during the recession, and I wanted to be a park ranger. They cut all the jobs, which left me working at a pizza place out of college. I was working in Santa Monica, loved the town very much. But I ended up getting fired and I was embarrassed because it felt discriminatory. But that's what made me have to look at other options and that's where I found this teaching program where they put fresh college graduates into underprivileged schools to teach math and science. That brought me back home to LA and changed my life in an entirely new direction.

It let me become more of a community leader.

**What's some bad advice you hear in your industry?**

The customer is always right.

Our thing, the customer is usually wrong, but let's let them leave happy.



# Ryan Anthony

Founder of DIRT

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**Ryan Anthony is the Founder and CEO of DIRT, Creative technology expert, and inventor of a patent-pending neuro/AI delivery system.**

## **Describe your current project/venture.**

If we look at all the content we consume -- the apps we use, the games we play, the shows we stream, really anything we use or interact with in our daily lives -- our emotions are omnipresent. But when we look at the technology behind these products or experiences, the measurement of emotion is largely absent in the design and development process. Traditionally, examining these has been incredibly complex, but recent innovations in wearable tech and sensor technology offer huge strides toward making emotion measurement tools accessible, cost-effective, and, most importantly, private and secure.

At DIRT, we measure the signals our bodies transmit that show how we respond physiologically to content. We're focused on the emotional aspect of what we're engaged with, and how our bodies and brains react to it. Why? We're producing and consuming more content now than ever and, just like a chef is always perfecting the exact ingredients she's using to help people love her food, creators want to understand how their work can best connect with their audiences.

## **Where did your passions come from?**

Growing up I wasn't what you would call an ideal student. I had a million questions that outpaced the answers I could get. We didn't have a search engine at our fingertips quite yet, and while that left me a little lost it also taught me to trust my sense of wonder and rely on my imagination. Ultimately, I learned that my inherent curiosity was not only okay, but also could steer my whole life.

## **In the past 5 years, what new belief, behavior, or habit has improved your life the most?**

I went through some pretty heavy times in my professional life that caused me to think deeply about my purpose. Brief bouts of depression pulled me into self-doubt and negativity because I wasn't being honest with myself about the circumstances I was in. I was giving a lot of my power to other people without realizing it, and that was taking a big toll.

After years of resisting, I started working with a therapist who specialized in mindfulness. I learned to fully embrace my curiosity and give myself the latitude to explore my challenges more fully, without judgment. That allowed me to believe in the power of taking risk and make some huge personal leaps. Which, of course, ported into my professional life. Once you allow positive change to take hold in one aspect of your life, it starts to come to bear in other places, too.

The amazing thing is that being open to change has this funny way of attracting people who are on the same wavelength; you find these tribes of incredible people, which leads to conversations that spawn even more new ideas. And you quickly learn that, while new thoughts can be scary, they challenge us to think deeply about why we're following all the old rules. Once you start to question convention, you realize there are so many new possibilities we can chase, so many better outcomes we're responsible to help uncover.

## **How has a failure or apparent failure set you up for later success? What's your favorite failure?**

That's great. So many people would ask: what's your biggest, or worst, or toughest failure. I love "favorite." Okay. When I moved to San Francisco from Michigan in 2011, I had no idea what I was going to do or where I wanted to go professionally and personally. I ended up working with a handful of early founders, advising on everything from branding and positioning to marketing, product design, distribution -- really anything I could help with. Very much a headfirst "Roll up our sleeves and let's go!" mentality. And I chose a very unorthodox approach in how I engaged with most of my clients: I didn't get paid until my involvement made them a clear return, essentially operating like a VC with no money, leveraging the work I did in previous endeavors to help them grow. In theory, the idea was great, but the business model was... lacking. As in, lots of great ideas, but not much pay and many meals of ramen and canned tuna.

What I didn't realize at the time was how much I was learning about a wide range of things that ended up proving to be helpful later in my career and very much ported into the work I'm doing today with DIRT. I got a first-hand look at the journeys of brilliant entrepreneurs like Peter Dehring from Peak Design, who built a company by aligning great people around a mission and purpose, simply putting the customer first, always. I learned the value of embracing the present -- the work, life and success we can aim to find in the moment -- instead of worrying about what happened in the past or over-indexing on what theoretically might take place someday.

## **What's some bad advice you hear in your industry?**

The concept of 'hustle culture' hurts my soul. We glamorize people that work themselves to the bone because that's what they think it takes to find success. I think we retrofit the narrative to show how that's worked for a very select few, without acknowledging how dangerous that path is for most of us.

We seem to be a society fixated on hyper-growth and hyper-scaling to maximize profit. And there's a current, potentially toxic set of rules that says there's a right and wrong way to grow. One of the things we're focusing on at DIRT is how to best align our company mission with our vision so we can forge our own path. Counter to a lot of the "advice" out there in the business world, and especially in social media, I'm not just focused on driving the bottom line. I'm also deeply accountable to how we scale, the intent of the work we take on, the growth of our employees and customers, and the opportunity for change we can help impact.

### **How do you overcome self-doubt?**

I grew up in a small town. I always saw that as a good thing, but when I moved away I realized the omnipresent feeling of judgment I felt hanging over me; that I wasn't good enough for the rooms I found myself in. True or not, it was always at the front of my mind. Eventually, confronting those feelings of self-doubt helped me understand where it was coming from: fear.

Now, through some of the research we've done, I know that fear is a constant in every decision we make. We like to think we optimize for happiness, the best outcome, but the truth is we're always trying to limit pain. Confronting my relationship with fear helped me understand that my self-doubt is entirely in my own head. Today, the thing I struggle with most isn't self-doubt, it's checking my perspective and testing my intuition.

### **How do you cultivate trust in your intuition or self, even when no one believes in you or your idea?**

One of the fascinating things about intuition is we tend to look back to reveal when it was right. But I think a better measure is, was it helpful? The goal for intuition -- for letting your talent or experience guide your instinct -- shouldn't be that it's always correct. The aim is that it leads you down a more informed path toward something new, unique, interesting. Through the kind of work we do at DIRT, the research and the data, I've learned the value of trusting in the process and detaching from the fear of failure or judgment and the dangerous stagnancy that so often accompanies it.

You may have an idea that seems batshit crazy. That's intuition talking. Now, how are you validating it with your talent, with your experience, with the input of others? That's opportunity knocking. If you can find ways to test your intuition so you can trust it, that's a path to delivering more of what you want to make in ways that are way more likely to connect.

### **What's something you want people to take away from your story?**

I think we're incredibly influenced by the environments we grow up in, like it or not. So the relationship between belief and meaning is an idea I think a lot about. If we're told at a young age that we aren't smart or good at something, if we hear that enough times, it becomes a belief. And these limiting beliefs



Ryan Anthony

hold us back from reaching our full potential. Let's not necessarily call it happiness, but belonging; the knowledge that we deserve to be here.

We all have permission to experience life and do amazing things. But first we have to confront our limiting beliefs, the walls that have been built around us and hold us back from becoming our full selves. All I want is for people to know they're not alone. That these walls aren't external, they're internal, and they're made of sheetrock; you can break them down.

### **What does your victory look like?**

It's simple: we all win. I want every child to be born with access to health, education, and a fighting chance to live a fulfilling life. I want everyone to be able to believe in themselves and be rewarded for having that faith.

### **What is your why?**

As they say on airplanes, put your mask on before helping others. Focus on getting you right, that's enough. You're of little value to the world if you don't know who you are and what you're here to do. That's the hard part. So I'm trying to chase my passion and be open and welcoming and, above all, kind.

### **How do you deal with perfectionism?**

That's not something I struggle with. Anyone who knows me knows it's the opposite: my process is an absolute mess. I'm more interested in why we're so fixated on delivering perfection. To me, it's a dangerous goal we've been taught to aim for and feel the need to chase. And we're setting ourselves up for failure from the start. When we aim for the pinnacle, even if and when we achieve it, okay, then what next? I'd rather acknowledge that there is and always will be a curved path between the poles of 'good' and 'bad.' And the journey is going to be this amazing tide we can ride, instead of swimming against it.

### **How do you deal with irreversible decisions you can't change?**

I'm fascinated by the illusion of control. We put so much weight on the outcomes of minute experiences, but they're actually rarely binary. Everything we do is part of a massive ecosystem. And the aggregate impact matters far more than any individual choice. Can we make unique mistakes? Of course. But the perception that single decisions have everlasting permanence is largely an illusion. If you lessen the impact of any one moment and allow yourself to have a longer view, you can be more objective and move forward without being sucked down by the gravity of screwing up. ●

# Dr. Daniel Crosby

## Psychologist, New York Times Best Seller, and Behavioral Finance Expert

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“Standing out a little bit is a powerful signal in a leadership context” he tells me, and I almost spilled my coffee all over the laptop that’s virtually connecting us. I can’t help but laugh. Daniel Crosby, New York Times Best Seller, Psychologist, and Behavioral Finance expert, is on the other side of the screen smirking. “Think about it,” he tells me, “Pragmatically, it works in the leadership context. We find that leaders are typically a little different. They may be a little taller, heavier, dress a little different. As a society, we like people who are 80% like us, but 20% different. Because the assumption ties to power. If you fall in line so directly to the mandates, you’re seen as a pawn. But if you’re onboard enough that you’re seen as a team player, but different enough that you stand out a bit, you’re actually seen as an authority and someone worth listening to.

I can’t help but ask him, “What about everyone else?” Was the magical ability to be weird and loved something unique to leaders, or did the rest of us have a chance. Daniel looks at me, his face turning serious, almost as if he was reflecting on a past lived life. “I’ve seen the damage done by seeing people try to become something that they aren’t. Back when I was a therapist, the most consistent source of melays and depression was emotional grey, people who were living in the grey and trying to live such unextraordinary lives—just so they didn’t get hurt. They’d try so hard not to fall in love or to go up for a job, because it may hurt. That was consistently a cancerous force in people’s lives that they couldn’t put their finger on. They did everything right, played by all the rules, and they were miserable. I couldn’t help but see how detrimental it was to peoples beings that they were stifling their individuality.” My gut started knotting as I reflected, it was impossible to not think of the past four years of my life. So many moments that ultimately lead to this project, and Daniel sitting in front of me.

Daniel Crosby is a unique character, an enigma almost. A former psychologist turned behavioral finance expert and author who helps organizations understand the intersection of mind and markets. Among his collaborations is “Personal Benchmark”, a system of embedded behavioral finance delivered by Brinker Capital. His book “The Laws of Wealth”, was named the best investment book of 2017 by the Axiom Business Book Awards, and he was named one of the “12 Thinkers to Watch” by Monster.com, a “Financial Blogger You Should Be Reading” by AARP and a member of InvestmentNews prestigious “40 Under 40”. It’s safe to say, Daniel doesn’t just understand human behavior, he very literally wrote four

books on it, and is seen as a renowned expert in his field. He’s also mirthful, considerate, sincere, and insightful—making him the perfect consult for our founders issue.

After a few sips of coffee and banter, he remarks “An entrepreneur should know themselves best of all,” I can’t help but question why, seeing the puzzle look on my face, he continues, “entrepreneurship is mathematically speaking a stupid idea. We know that a vast majority of entrepreneurial endeavors fail, and if you don’t want to be a statistic, I think you need to know yourself, and what it is about you and your product or service that differentiates you from the world, why it’s an acceptable risk, and most importantly, know why you’re different or if you even are.”

When the conversation turns to entrepreneurs we’ve seen, I almost knew word for word what he’d tell me, “The best entrepreneurs get good at failing fast and saying no to ideas very fast.” I can’t help but laugh, by the time Daniel and I had the chance to sit down, that exact advice was echoed to me by six other mentors. Daniel laughs and carries on, “I think overconfidence is the metabias, overconfidence that subsumes all other bias. It’s the American Idol effect where someone god awful would get up and sing, and it’s easy to wonder why no one told them that they’re terrible. A lot of the times they have been told, they just didn’t listen. Early on in a business, the whole world is against you and because people are overconfident, they often have trouble differentiating legitimate critical feedback they’re getting and an idea that is so innovative that it isn’t immediately recognized by the marketplace”

I get excited, knowing exactly where to take the conversation, I’m convinced Daniel saw me jumping up and down in my seat like an excited toddler. “Tell me why everyone needs to know behavioral finance,” I exclaim, perhaps a little too loudly. “There’s basically two things that determine the outcome of your life, one is luck and one is decisions. Luck is out of our control, it’s highly predictive of how you’ll do, but you can’t do anything about it. All that’s left is decisions. Behavioral finance at its core is the study of how we make decisions. At the risk of sounding grandiose, it’s the whole ball game.”

If you were to do a google search on behavioral finance, it’s daunting and doesn’t seem applicable to anyone other than financial analysts. But as Daniel mentions, behavioral finance is the study of decisions. Broken up into two pillars,

cognitive psychology, how people think, and the limits to arbitrage, when markets will be inefficient, behavioral finance is critical for anyone who wants to understand their behaviors and natural bias.

“One of my chapters in my first book is about how if you’re excited about an idea, it’s probably stupid. No one wants to hear that, but emotional extremes don’t lend themselves to good decision making. We know on one hand you can’t make a decision without emotion, it’s part of everything we do. And we know people who have trauma to the emotional processing centers of the brain can’t even make easy decisions about what kind of clothes to wear. There’s never going to be a time when emotions are divorced from the decision making process. But we can see to it that we aren’t making decisions at times of great emotional extremes. Great fear, excitement, paranoia, whatever it is, you need to wait to exit that state to do something big.”

Sinking down in my seat, feeling a little attacked, and knowing even though I study behavioral economics, I fall victim to my own tendencies. Trying to gain insight for myself, I ask how we regulate ourselves when we’re in emotional extremes. “The system I use to try and get out of periods of great emotion management system called RAIN.”

**R:** Recognize the feeling that you are experiencing. Someone going through emotional excess may not recognize that they are going through this period.

**A:** Allow the experience to be as it is. When we recongize an emotion in ourselves, we want to change it.

**I:** Investigate the feeling with kindness. How does it feel in your body? Where are you feeling it most strongly? What types of thoughts does this emotion cause you to think about? Is it making you tense up or feel badly at all?

**N:** Non-identification. It’s important to not tie your self worth too closely to whatever emotion we’re experiencing.

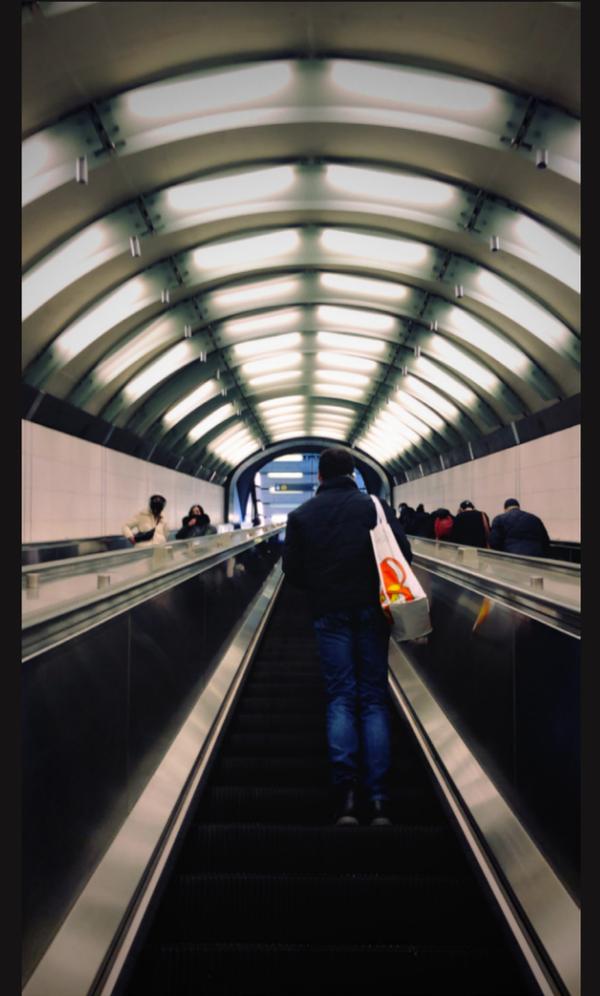
I can’t help but wonder why we’re like this—why do we naturally need to be perfect or get so worked up with emotions until we combust? Why is everyone trying to prove themselves? When asked, Daniel pauses, reflecting on his training and experiences, “I’ll take it back to the research and back to being a little weird. There’s something called the Pratfall Effect, again being a little fallible makes you likable. So many of us are trying to be inhuman and perfect, to convince ourselves and the world that we’re worth something, that we become obnoxious. When you meet flawless people, they’re annoying, as a general rule we don’t really like them. It’s about being competent, but human. If you can balance those two things, the world is yours.”

As I finish my second cup of coffee and wrap up our conversation, Daniel says “I’m a big believer that we all just want to mean the world to a handful of people. A lot of people stretch themselves too thin and try to be everything to everyone. But we’re all really looking to matter to a handful of people.” ●



*David*

*Resto*







# Shredded Crockpot BBQ Chicken

*This BBQ Chicken can be used to make salads, Gluten-Free BBQ Chicken Sloppy Joe's (healthier choice), and much more! It's an extremely versatile recipe that can stretch a long way. It's absolutely delicious with a good corn-bread too; whether it's paired with a health-conscious recipe or not.*

*This recipe can be served at larger gatherings or special occasions with a lot of guests too! Never be afraid to double or triple it. Just make sure you have a large enough crockpot for it and to check it as the time goes on. It's totally transportable too, which is another win! You really can't go wrong with this recipe*

## Ingredients

1 Lb. Organic Chicken Breast  
(Trim off all fat)

1 Bottles of Sugar Free, Gluten Free BBQ Sauce of Your Choice

1 tsp Minced Garlic

1 Bundle of Fresh, Finely Chopped Scallions

1 Tb Pink Himalayan Sea Salt

1 Tb Ground Black Pepper

## Preparation

1. Turn your crockpot on to the low setting, if you plan to let the chicken cook for a minimum of 8 hours. However, if you're looking to cook the chicken in 4 hours, turn your crockpot on to the high setting.
2. Now, place the chicken in the crockpot.
3. Then, add the chopped scallions, minced garlic, the salt, and the black pepper to the chicken. Toss these ingredients together until the chicken is thoroughly coated.
4. Once your chicken is coated, add in the BBQ sauce. Make sure that the chicken is almost fully covered by the BBQ sauce to make sure it doesn't dry out during the cooking process.
5. Now, place the lid on the crockpot and allow the chicken to cook for allotted time in Step 1.
6. Once the chicken is cooked, remove the breasts from the crockpot and shred the chicken on a cutting board. Forks, kitchen claws, etc. can be used to shred the chicken.
7. When the chicken is shredded, add it back into the crockpot; and allow it rest in the sauce.
8. Place the crockpot being used on the "Keep Warm" setting and allow the chicken to rest for 5-10 minutes before serving.



# Single-Serve Shredded Crockpot Chicken Salad

*This salad can be served as the main course for lunch or dinner! It is very filling and super delicious. It's an awesome lunch that can be prepped the night before though. Especially if you're using the Shredded Crockpot Chicken as leftovers.*

*This salad can be made on a larger scale to serve 3-4 people; and as a side to a dinner! It can be paired with another source of protein (I.e. fish or steak) for those who are looking to bulk up or follow a high protein diet; along with another side of steamed vegetables.*

## Ingredients

6 Oz. Shredded Crockpot Chicken

1 Cup Spinach

1/4 Large Avocado, Cubed

1/4 Cup Corn

1/4 Cup Black Beans

1/4 Fresh, Diced Tomatoes

1/4 C Red Onion

2 Tb of a Dressing of Your Choice (Ranch, Blu Cheese, Honey Mustard, etc.)

1 tsp Pink Himalayan Sea Salt

1 tsp Ground Black Pepper

## Preparation

1. Place the washed spinach in a bowl. Make sure to gently pat the spinach dry in a paper towel for the best results.
2. Now, place your BBQ chicken, avocado, corn, black beans, tomatoes, and onion on top of the spinach.
3. Then, sprinkle the salt and pepper over the assembled salad
4. When finished with the salt and pepper, drizzle the dressing of your choosing over the top of your salad.
5. Then, toss the salad until the ingredients are thoroughly combined.

**d o r d**

M E N T A L H E A L T H I S D O N E B E I N G T A B O O