

Rob Mack | The Art of Positive Psychology & the Science of Well-Being - Art of Charm Ep.#745

Thank you for joining us today Rob You have an amazing story that we're going to dig a little bit into And first I just want to talk about the journey you've had in your pursuit of happiness before where you arrived today Obviously there's been some ups and downs and as a happiness expert we're so excited to hear your journey into your own personal happiness Yeah I appreciate you guys having me Uh First off I definitely took the hard route to happiness Um I feel like I was born unhappy more than that I felt like I was born depressed almost and it just got worse as I got older And despite achieving things like academically athletically and even professionally I mean work for a management consulting firm for a while I was deeply depressed to the point of contemplating and then actively like pursuing suicide Like I wanted to kill myself And um I still have the suicide test marks on my wrist It's unbelievable man I was uh beyond depressed you know what I'm saying And I'm actually surprised as I look back now that I was even functional you know something about that you know we were talking earlier and it turns out that we're from the same area Right Pittsburgh And this was something that I didn't learn until later that I when looking back I could see how it affected me which is statistically uh Pittsburgh has just as many overcast days as Seattle And that is something that you wouldn't think about because you don't think of it as a very rainy place But that overcast And certainly when you know my birthday is in October late October but soon after that hit you'd be staring at a very long cold dark gray winter and that's certainly gonna do it That's not gonna help you out at all That played an immense role in my depression There's no question about it I had sad I had seasonal affective disorder without question And I know that because at a later point in my life when I moved to Miami I was surprised at how much improved my subjective well-being was I felt so much better Like wow life is great You know had the same feeling in moving to North Carolina and being in Chapel Hill uh Carolina Blue and it was always sunny and even in winter he had sunglasses on it just it was night and day Yeah it's unbelievable Yeah Now obviously from the outside being successful it's hard to reckon where you're feeling depressed internally but everyone else is seeing you as this Uber successful happy guy And it's almost like living a dual life Oh my gosh Totally It was like I had a little bit of

schizophrenia or something It was a very split kind of experience Um and I did a good job not a great job of not letting anybody in on this quote unquote secret that I had Um it wasn't that I was trying to hide it but people weren't interested you know and when you tried to start the conversation with them about this thing called life and thing called death that like we never talk about and how odd this whole life the proposition of life itself is like we spent our entire lives trying to acquire achieve or accomplish certain things and we find these people that we can love and we love them hard and fast and then we lose it all like and we lose them all And that just that I just never really made sense to me It was deeply disturbing So I had this existential angst that just spread throughout everything in my life And how are your relationships at this point My relationships were still um good for the most part My friends were good My family was good You know I never felt that I was connecting with anyone on a truly deep level Like I didn't know or feel like I was known you know And um so that was pretty good I had a girlfriend at the time She was wonderful but we didn't get along I mean you know it was hard She was depressed in her own Right Right And then you kind of take that on as well Yeah So you're both matching each other's emotional states and and all of a sudden you're on a downward spiral That's right The most contagious thing on earth is emotion literally emotional contagion Right And so I had a lot of those kinds of experiences Um And so I just decided one day after doing a whole lot of research about how I was going to kill myself that I was just gonna slip my wrist you know and um strangely enough leading up to that moment and I kind of contemplated the idea of all right a suicide note and then you're like what do you say I mean what do you say You know it's just I didn't have anything that I felt like I could say that anybody would really resonate with because I had tried to have the conversation in bite size pieces with people But that day that I started to dig the knife into my wrist the strangest thing happened man like totally unpredictable I just experienced more peace and joy than it ever experienced before Nothing objectively had changed but something subjectively something on the emotional level certainly felt like it did when you look back upon that Now what do you suppose that was my mind was completely quiet as I contemplated my own death It was also also the contemplation of the end of all my problems So it wasn't death I was seeking as much as the death of my problems Right And stopping that voice in your head It's that over analytical obsessively compulsive rethinking mind That is the very root and cause of all unhappiness Well we spend most of our time I

think you mentioned it of looking at other people of who can I find that I can dump all of this on to take this off of me and you're gonna continue to play that game until until you get to any whatever point that needs to be where you decide I need to take care of that within my myself Because that that pattern if you are able to bring a lot of people in that you're gonna see that pattern over and over and over again of people leaving your life because of that Oh hey man brother you can reach out all day right there man I'm telling you and you're absolutely right about that And it was a real sort of realization recognition I had around that later you know because I was always frustrated Why doesn't anybody understand me You know that kind of feel And later I came to the realization that a much greater disservice than them not listening to me and not taking on my problems would have been them taking on my problems and therefore coaching and training me away from the very source of happiness within myself It's mind blowing It's like they didn't know it but unwittingly they did the very thing I most needed to be led back to myself to the source of happiness itself Now as the author of happiness from the inside out Are you happy every day Dude I gotta say I've never been happier in my life never been happier And it's hard to describe I've been you know sometimes you know I do some TV stuff and every now and then I get called in to do a TV show like a chemistry test You know it's a panel of experts you get together and they see what's you know what will the report be like if these folks end up with the show together and they always end up asking me Rob are you always this happy And they don't believe me But I'm like listen it's for me this happiness thing is life or death man Like you don't realize life is so short and it's so long and if you're not enjoying it you are wasting it Like there is nothing more valuable or precious on the planet than time It's more precious than money By far you can't save time and invest it and earn compound interest off of it Later time time wasted today is time gone forever So you know for me every moment truly deeply matters man And I've spent my entire life only working on this one thing so I can't help you guys out with anything else in the whole world It is it is it And do you find that it's been contagious for those that are around you Yeah for sure man Like for sure And it's even more contagious when um you in the beginning I was trying to share tips with people and stuff like that and I do it when it's asked of me But it's so much better to just teach through your living Shining example You know what I'm saying People don't need me to tell them to do XY or Z just be it just be the change right when you're acting it out instead of telling someone hey do this do that they're more likely to follow your lead

Yeah It's like the first time I ever discovered what confidence truly was It was a guy in my life and we went to college together and he was confident on the on the border of being arrogant but he was confident he would include me in his confidence He'd be like man so much of who we are It's wasted It's wasted on these people out here man It's wasted because we've just got so much to offer And I remember thinking like I don't think I have anything to offer you know but the more time I spent around him the more I just began to embody that confidence without effort Now positive psychology is a relatively new field of psychology and in a few words how would you describe its core teachings Yeah Um So it's the study in science of what makes life worth living It's the study in science of happiness and success So essentially where happiness and success intersects right So it was founded by a guy named Martin Seligman and he mostly studied learned helplessness and depression But he found that if you remove the learned helplessness or the depression from people you still don't get a happy individual you just get like a flat lining one right So he said we gotta really focus and figure out what's going on here How can we make people not just normal and well adjusted let's make them really happy And so we began studying happy people and the happiest people on the planet And he basically discovered in so many words that happiness leads to success So happiness isn't only the greatest success meaning that you know the point and purpose of human life and the whole meaning and end of human existence anything you wanna achieve acquire or accomplish you want because you think you'll feel better in having it right So that's why it's the greatest success but also leads to success in so many phenomenal and dramatic ways And in your mind this striving towards happiness obviously there's going to be ups and downs along the way What are you telling yourself through those downs now obviously having come out of the ultimate down Yeah Well great question man This is why you do what you do Huh I I would say um the difference for me is identification So in the very beginning um of this journey I was really identified with my job and I was identified with the money and I was I was definitely identified with the women whatever it was I was identified with that like when that wasn't going well I'd feel a certain kind of hit you know to my ego to my happiness And over time I've dropped more and more identification with those things and then it became really about sort of my physical well being and body and all that And then you begin dropping that and then you drop the identification with the mind and your thoughts And so now the difference is I just don't believe my thoughts man like when they're

negative I just don't believe them and I don't believe the positive ones necessarily either It's just all thoughts It's like a movie on a movie screen You take a step back and you remember you're watching a movie and it's fun It can be interesting It can be sad but it's all play acting and you don't need to take any of it seriously You can take it sincerely but not seriously And we've all had those moments where we felt this emotion strongly and we held on to it for dear life and we're like that's exactly how that event unfolded And then we run into someone else who was there and they give us a totally different perspective and like whoa what are you talking about Like that is not how it went and you're kind of shaking you're like wait a second this is how I felt emotionally This is how I should believe that event went And all of a sudden you start questioning OK wait a second here These are just thoughts These are just emotions and there have been times where I've been sad when I have no reason to be sad I've achieved something great and there are times when I'm happy and I have no reason to be happy because there are emotions that flow you just nailed it That's that's everything I mean you said so much there that it is just so powerful and a lot of empirical data to support that So you spoke about cognitive agility ability to choose your thoughts talk about emotional regulation at the end of the day it's our inability to self soothe ourselves and to regulate emotion that leads to most of the problems in the world including addiction Um You know so those two things in particular um the other thing you talked about which is just as important as anything is the ability to entertain competing narratives right Like right now I'm sitting here saying the best thing that ever happened in my life was the day I thought about and started to pursue suicide like literally feel that way Like there there's never been anything that's ever happened that's been better than my contemplation of suicide And now the way I see death is completely different than then then it was the worst thing Now it's the best i that moment when you realize that there's compete that you can choose that narrative is it's it's life changing We've all been able to share that And my favorite is when we're able to expose that to our clients who sit on the couch and when I repeat what they've just said to me and then I offer other conclusions or uh narratives that it could be and they're like wait wait what what And I'm like well yeah the one that you choose how is it different than the other ones that I've laid out And they're like well it's sort of like what you just said better or or or what I came up with is better what you just said Exactly And and and I'm like ok well why didn't you could choose this one You're like but that's not the way I thought it right But it doesn't mean that that's the way it is And

the minute that clicks their eyes light up and and then all of a sudden you can see them start to play with Ok Well if that's able to be changed then they start looking at other times in their life where that narrative wasn't well or was well and they're like wait wait a minute So like I just I just made all this up Yeah Boom boom And then it's how do we now choose and build this to our benefit every day that we go outside rather than taking what we're given Boom That's literally everything I mean it really is one of my favorite quotes from a course of miracles is you know miracles is a shift in perception That's the real miracle You don't realize that everything follows that But the shift in perception is absolutely everything And the greatest shift in perception that I've ever experienced Um you know in addition to what you said which was just the recognition that I could have different perceptions of the same experience um is the perception of who I am I think ultimately at the end of the day it's like who are you And if you really dive deep you're like well I'm not a body I'm certainly not the mind because that's always changing And I must be something non-physical that for me that realization and then the experience of that makes everything else very movie like and very surreal It's fun or it's sad or it's whatnot and you play your role but you don't take any of it seriously because it's like we all got the same fate which is a fate that isn't you know they they energy If we're just energy can't be created isn't destroyed can't be destroyed It just changes form And ultimately that's what I most deeply fully identify with If you do that nothing else is all that material Now we would be remiss This is the relationship month last month we talked about happiness and the relationship of happiness to relationships And I think a lot of us get caught up on allowing relationships to complete us and just looking for happiness through other people If I just have the perfect friend group and the perfect spouse and the perfect coworkers and the perfect boss Well then my life is going to be complete and you're you're smiling every Jerry Maguire because you write about this misconception in your book like this is a fallacy So what do you think is a better mindset to have when it comes to relationships and the happiness we're looking for man You guys really do your research Um So I'll say this in advance of this So the one thing that we've discovered through lots of science and research is that happiness leads to all these other forms of success including relational relational success So success in all your relationships and what they found was happy people get married earlier they stay married longer and they're happy in their relationships whether they're married or not also happy people are rated as more attractive than unhappy people So if you remember those

two things it helps you to remember and realize that if you could just find a way to get happy which is often really about learning to love yourself in spite of not having a partner a boyfriend or girlfriend Whoever if you can do that very thing you increase your attractiveness to whoever it is that you want to attract and you also increase the likelihood of finding success in your relationships And in in that way like attracting like right That's exactly the brighter our happiness light is the more happy people will be welcomed into our life Absolutely When we talk about unhappiness is unattractive Well and part of that is because we're gonna start attracting the wrong people That compound that that's right And I think the one thing that Johnny and I talk about a lot is this victimization and victimhood that's going on where at this point everyone is trying to be the biggest victim and everyone has a chip on their shoulder and something bad happening to them And I feel like it's difficult to move beyond that victimhood to find the happiness that we're looking for What do you say to those people who are identifying as victims and feeling helpless in this moment in their pursuit of happiness Yeah boy we've all been there Huh I was there for a very long time So I got the test marks here on the wrist To prove that um I would say that um you know there's nothing to worry about in time these things always of themselves And the truth is that um you know if you are blaming anybody or anything else in the world for your unhappiness despite how valid it is it might be very valid Somebody may have done something very legitimately upsetting disturbing violent but to the extent that you continue to blame anybody or anything for your unhappiness you disempower yourself to access the solution right So you're essentially saying they're the cause If they're the cause then they're the cause of both your unhappiness and happiness and you've disempowered yourself And so really the way I see it you know if you wanna be happy and if you wanna be successful um in any respect it's about taking back your power but taking back your power isn't something that you get from somebody else It's something you access within it's not me against anybody else It's me accessing that which exists within me It's a choice It's a total choice It's just a choice that you make But you don't um you don't find happiness in the world by focusing on unhappy conditions and circumstances and people So as a victim you're really identifying with this victimhood and by doing so and you're you're focusing on the unhappiest parts of your life and your existence in the world and you will never find happiness that way right When you're putting the flashlight on the wrong things you can't see everything else that's in darkness That's right You just become an expert in

problems by focusing on problems not an expert in solutions Yeah And I I think all of us in our pursuit of happiness and in our pursuit of better relationships look at it as a zero sum game and they hear the advice and we even give this advice You're the sum of the five closest people You want to find positive people and attract positive people But let's be honest even the most positive people are gonna have some negative moments They're gonna have some times where they slip up and they're going through some turmoil and they may even be on the verge of suicide and depression How can we be better friends to those people who are going through their struggles Oh beautiful question Just by being the change it sounds so spiritual platitude I and it is But cliches are cliches for a reason right So just by being that change like whatever it is that you want somebody else to feel or experience or be you need to always be that first and you need to trust that your living shining example will teach them much better than your words ever could And the only thing sort of freely given and never received is unsolicited advice So do not give advice like I could tell you right now and I'm the guy that gives advice but I'm very careful about when and where I get advice Yeah we had a guest on previously Michael Sorensen last year who talked just about that exact thing that when we're just going around giving people advice unsolicited advice It is not only falling on deaf ears it actually turns the other person against us They build resentment when it's completely unsolicited I love the question How can I help I think it cuts right to the point And if they say no I don't need anything I don't need your help right now At least you're clear Instead of being like oh you should do this you should do that Hey you know what you gotta change this about yourself and then you'll be happy Love that question And that is a question I consistently ask myself That's just beautiful because it's so honest and so direct and it doesn't come with any judgment The one thing we know about the most effective therapies in the world So the things that heal the most is that the actual therapy that you use the coaching approach you use or the way in which you ask people doesn't matter as much as the unconditional regard or unconditional love that accompanies that approach So essentially the most healing element in the world is unconditional regard and unconditional love So my job when I wanna help someone the most is to completely drop all judgment and that judgment includes that I know better What's best for them than them It's unreal that I should think that I know better What's right for them than either life or than they do for themselves Even if it looks like they're headed down a path to hell I do I I am very certain and clear about that because I look at my

own life and if any of us look at our own lives you say my goodness the worst thing that happened to me turned out to be the best thing Everybody was discouraging me from contemplating not saying that anybody should be killing themselves by God No but it's just a good reminder that at the end of the day um we don't know what's best for anyone right And and as a good friend in in our month of relationships here the best tool we could bring to the job is to just listen A lot of times people are not looking for answers they're just looking to be heard And a lot of these dark emotions you're feeling the lack of happiness the the lack of gratitude in your life is simply because you haven't been heard You haven't been able to connect on a deeper level And a lot of times we go in and we're like OK I'm gonna fix this person up and I'm gonna just put a smile on it I gotta get them laughing They just want to share freely and openly and to your point and be unconditionally loved for that sharing That's powerful man When I entered this positive psychology business and the business of coaching um I was convinced I was in the behavior change business I got that one wrong you know So over time you realize and recognize your job isn't behavioral change your job is to listen in an active way And for me that means non judgment non interruption mentally or verbally you know and it means just holding a quiet cool calm collected safe space for people to share and to be heard and to be seen And that in and of itself is unconditional regard and unconditional love and that in itself is healing Well the biggest enemy of being able to be to listen is not being present and you're not present when you're being overly analytical And you even mentioned that trying to figure this out and and overanalyzing everything only drives you farther down the road that you do not wanna be going And the question we get all the time from guys who want to be in uh to have better conversations connect better What do I say What do I say What do I say What do I say The answers are always in the other person and forget trying to figure out what to say be present the answers in the other person They're gonna tell you what to say That's beautiful man That's why I like the first premise of really um coaching or great help is a recognition that all of the wisdom the other person is looking for is within them not you You don't want to train them to think and believe that the answer is within you or then that you set up a codependent relationship So you've swapped one problem for the other Presence is absolutely everything You just crushed it I mean with presence it's unbelievable The change that happens without your effort just being fully deeply truly authentically present And that means having a quiet mind It doesn't and it means not fixing believe it or not which

is very difficult especially for men We're trained and wired in some ways to be fixers and compensate and compensate Absolutely right A lot of our salary and earnings depends on our ability to solve problems That's exactly right So it's the first tool we always reach for That's exactly right And that's often why men suffer more when they experience job loss or they don't have money or any of those things because our understanding and appreciation of ourselves is tied to performance So we have experienced this kind of performative type of love that's very conditional Um And that in of itself compromises your happiness um especially for men almost more than anything else Now we started today's conversation around this voice in your head being on 11 and just leading you down a very dark path to obviously attempting suicide And today you sit here fully present fully engaged being an active listener seemingly have quieted that that voice in your head or at least got it under control How did you get there What was the process like for you man Oh man It was a process I started with Ok So there was a partner at the consulting firm Good friend of mine now uh probably the first weekend of the job he had no good reason to talk to me And you know if you're an analyst and a partner comes and talks to you you've probably done something really wrong So I was sure I was gonna get fired And he said uh Rob um he did two things that were phenomenal He the first thing he said is Rob you're fantastic with clients I don't know if anybody's ever told you that but you're fantastic Now listen I sucked with clients I was hiding in my cubicle all day every day but because he said it I believed him And before long I started doing it So I learned something from him the power of expectation Um But the other thing he did was he introduced me to what I thought was a children's book and I was really insulted I was like I didn't say it to him of course but I was like why is he recommending this book There's a it was like Sarah and the forever of friends of a feather and it was like in real large print bro I was like are you are you kidding right now Because like this ain't gonna So anyway I was like he's a partner I better read the book He might quiz me Who knows So I read the book it turned out to be Abraham Hicks And they were basically they basically wrote wrote a bunch of like children's books that were meant for adults though There's little stories kids can read them too But it got me on the right path because I grew up very fire and brimstone Christian So I kind of had a knee jerk reaction in that respect too So when I found Abraham Hicks I was like oh this is something I can digest It's all about positivity So I started on this path where I just continued to find or be led to more and more teachers Well at first it was Abraham

Hicks and then I was like I'm gonna go to the science world because I need data I need hard data man I don't know that number I need numbers bro Like are you kidding Yeah And then you know I kept I started practicing everything I would read I would try it like I didn't do the exercise in the back of the book and stuff like that I was like I'm gonna apply it to like real life because I want to see real life results Not like what I can do in my bedroom So like I applied and if it worked for me I would give it enough time If it worked for me I'd like track it and write it down And if it didn't work I just forgot about it And I kept doing this forever and it was like life or death for me it became my career Like before it was my real career where I got paid you know based on it it was my number one life priority and activity So I just kept doing it I tracked it and then that that sort of journal of happiness tips and tricks that worked for me became happiness from from the inside out of the book And when we talk about happiness we we would be remiss without talking about the comparisons to others A lot of us are unhappy because the person on social media is happier the person next door is got a nicer car they have more accomplishments they have more than us So how do we deal with that constant comparison And now than ever with social media I mean in the past you compared yourself to your neighbors maybe the guy at the bar Now I can compare myself to someone in Australia I can compare myself to someone in the Alps who's skiing right now because I picked up my phone So how do we deal with that man I love that question Um For me it was beginning to redefine success You gotta really dig into the success the success thing because it's it's such a trap So I was like I gotta to redefine this whole thing in a way that I can win you know because if you're competitive you want to win So it's like how can I redefine you know and change the role so that I can win So I was like OK I will define success as happiness for me That was the goal I was like I can I can't be richer than all these people and I certainly can't have more awards and I can't have prettier girls or whatever it was I was like but I can I'm gonna make this my thing This is gonna be the thing I succeed succeed at So that's where I started and then I kept dialing that back and kind of you know over time it just organically began to like shift a little and then it became not about being the happiest person but being the person that was most committed to doing the work like the happiest work you know what I'm saying So then that became the thing and then over time I just dropped the whole comparison thing all together And um it was actually great spiritual teachers and books like um oh I don't know if you've ever heard of name but I started reading more of his

stuff but I just started to drop it more and more It was easier to drop the comparison and the competition when you're coming at life from a perspective of happiness instead of success You know if beauty means a whole lot to you and you have to be more beautiful than other people then you're always gonna be in a bit of a conundrum But if happiness is your thing and you recognize that empirically happiness leads to success and all those other areas that you want you know it leads to more money it leads to a longer life it leads to a healthier life it leads to better relationships then you can make happiness your top goal then you can kind of drop or like go off the comparison in the competition I think what's been so enlightening for me especially the last 10 years living in L A is having amazing opportunities to meet people that others look up to and have all those success boxes checked and and meet them on a personal level and and feel the pain that they're going through internally and the struggle and the unhappiness that they have Although they're projecting outwardly on social media et cetera this I have it all together Look at me mindset and I think that has been a big awakening of like wait a second just checking all those boxes externally for everyone else is not making that person happy So why why am I chasing those things Beautiful That is a great point And it's something that um you're reminding me of Now when I started practicing as a positive psychology expert and coach I began having more and more of those experiences too When I first started you know I had a good couple of friends I was working actually in the entertainment business while I was going to school and a couple of celebrity friends basically referred me out And as a result of that I had people in my practice that were very wealthy very successful very famous and freaking miserable like hearts Absolutely You know empty of any happiness at all You know their pockets full of money and their hearts were just full of misery And I remember thinking this is wild You know is it really success if you don't have fulfillment like you know like Tony Robbins says all the time fulfill it without or I'm sorry success without fulfillment this failure Yeah And when you look around and you feel that you're there but you're not there because you don't have the relationships in your life You can count on you distrust everyone and all you're doing is chasing likes and comments It's a very dark place to be now Is there a time that it is advisable to compare ourselves to others Obviously you talk about competition So I think it could be helpful Um It depends on what your goals are like if you look at somebody like Michael Jordan right Or any really great athlete you know they find themselves inspired and motivated by the comparison and the

competition right And it can often serve um desirable ends right But you know if you're it depends on what your goals are if your goals are to win a race or to be the greatest athlete um it can be very very helpful um that being said um I think that in terms of overall subjective well-being and life satisfaction it's gonna do nothing but compromise your ability to be truly deeply happy You know I meet lots of great incredible athletes Um but I wouldn't describe most of them as happy and fulfilled as much as um you know maybe they're in the psychological flow a lot and that's probably the happiest state But yeah I wouldn't that wouldn't be my model for how I describe happiness fulfillment And there are tons of exceptions to that of course to go along with that Obviously those guys need to find that fire to to get moving in to inspire them to get on the track or wherever it's going to be where they're gonna find that competition or in the corporate world on that ladder Um You know and that that fire if not managed can consume them And so what do you tell those clients of yours who seem to use that fire as motivation so that they're able to see and be careful of of that very thing man I love that question Um a couple of things The first thing is um you know use it if it's serving you ok And you'll get to a point where you know it's not serving you anymore You have to feel it Don't worry about that You know it's the great thing about life when you're honest with yourself Yeah Yeah And even if you're not honest with yourself life will be honest with you You have to worry about that Um Life will take care of that Um That's the first thing The second thing I I try to encourage them is to and I point them back to some of the science like what they're really wanting to do if they want to be extraordinarily successful in any um you know performance um area is they're wanting to access that state of psychological flow What Mike Cheek sent me high talks about all the time right And that state um can you know you can kind of get there a little bit through the comparison Competition can push you in that direction But if you want to really be in that state that's a state where you're not nearly as self conscious as you'd usually be or time conscious or any of these other things And so that's a state where really your mind is quieter than all that and you're not being consumed by the competition and the comparison and I encourage them to move in that direction And so there are little tips and tricks we have to help them get in that state of flow or in the zone Um And yes they're competing at an all time high and they're more focused than ever and they're no longer distracted at all by the comparison and competition And that how you become a Michael Jordan you know he he uses a lot of that stuff But you got

to realize Michael Jordan at the end of the day is able to tap into the zone of the floor or Kobe Bryant for instant And let's be honest they have off nights they they don't always achieve that flow I think a lot of us we pursue perfection We see other people outwardly as perfect We look at the greats of all time and even with Sugar Ray here like he talked about moments where he didn't feel worthy So we all go through that It is a bit of self acceptance and compassion along the way too That's gonna help in that journey instead of just looking at it outwardly of like I have to be in flow state 100% of the time where I'm doing something wrong totally That that that's why it's so important and helpful to optimize um just for the peace and equanimity really And the and the subjective well-being I like using that word sometimes because happiness can get a little funny but it it is happiness Um And there's some interesting research actually um which makes a lot of sense which has found that you know look this happiness thing is kind of like a bell curve You know the happier you are the more successful you are the more money you make the longer you live all these good things And then you get to a certain place where you're so happy that you don't care about so much money anymore You don't care about winning as much anymore and you need a little drop off So sometimes you see the the most extraordinary or successful people a particular sport or industry are miserable right And it makes a lot of sense and that's why they that's how they become billionaires are so successful is they just continue to use that fire in that comparison and competition to motivate them But if your life is really about that you know and you didn't enjoy most of the journey it was just mostly about the fire Is that a life well lived You know if you spent even if you've accomplished these great things people forget about those great things Tomorrow the next person comes along and they beat those records and you're forgotten now this idea of flow state right We're we're turning down our analytical mind right To to be in that zone you mentioned you have some tips or tricks I I'd love for you to share them with our audience as well What are some tips Because I know flow state gets thrown around a lot and it's something that has become this hot new trend of I I need to get in flow to be better performing at work et cetera How do we get there What are some of these tips So it's a great great question So from a scientific perspective first of all your level of competence in the activity has to be pretty high You gotta practice OK like the the more you've practiced the more the easier it will be to access that flow state because you can let your subconscious take over right So that's the really important thing that people sometimes want to into

the flow state like first day And that can be a little tough you can do it but it's a little tough So ideally when it comes to flow site the challenge is just barely above your ability to reach to reach or exceed that challenge right So that's a huge piece of it But one of the things I encourage people in a more simplistic way is just notice the people and places and things that allow you to eat and effortlessly and Enjoyably enter a flow state Often you're unaware of it Most people actually in their job even if they don't particularly like the job are in a flow state at work without recognizing it they don't even know it you know we put beeper on people and send them out into the world and say and then we beat them and say hey you know tell us whether or not you're in a flow state And most people say oh yeah I was in flow state They don't even know it So notice those activities people or places that allow you to enter the flow state easily It might be the beach playing with the puppy playing with the kids who knows everybody for everybody it might be something different Music by the way very very helpful for people Um So and then if you can try to create circumstances and conditions that include these environmental cues or factors as much as possible So if you're going to the gym and you notice that certain songs put you in the flow state use those songs if you notice that seeing beautiful men and beautiful women helps you get in this um that flow state you know make sure you go to a gym that's like that or if it's clean whatever but try to find and use whatever is working already but just increase it Does that make sense So it's replicating the signals from past flow state that we can That's right You can sort of do a close study of your own life and just begin to more to sort of increasingly incorporate all of those things into your you know current activities I remember being able to see for myself recognizing flow state for the first time And as a musician seeing performances as a as a kid on television or whatnot and and and seeing it and wanting that so bad because what I knew what was being performed was difficult But when seeing it it seems very simple And then also that person who was in that moment and in that state as if they're transcended from being a they're almost immortal and they can live in that place for eternity And not only that they sort of do in other people's minds and that in that that state for themselves uh they spend the rest of their lives continually looking for opportunities to get back there such an addictive thing And it's wonderful You just identified two things two additional tips and tricks I just want to highlight what you said because it was so profound Um One is watching or observing other people in flow state can help you get in flow state So that's really important to remember you know and even mimicking them right So

as Johnny was talking about oh some episodes ago looking up to his idols and then picturing himself being his idol When he's practicing guitar we heard the same from Kobe Bryant He would imagine himself having that left dribble Exactly having that baby hook so that flow state when we recognize it in others and then we can mimic it and put ourselves in their shoes we can work to get towards it Beautiful beautiful and you just you just highlight another one which is the visualization right Or guided imagery It's and especially with that you're really wanting to focus on sort of assuming the state of the desire wish fulfilled You really want to you know focus on the state of being there you know and sometimes actually imagining the challenges that would present themselves um is very helpful in that imagined state because you could see yourself overcoming them and it allows you to stay in that flow state when the experience happens So very very helpful There's certain images I think that are burned in all of our minds from sports heroes that are just those moments are so iconic being from Pittsburgh I think both of us can see a Lyn Swan's Super Bowl the the juggling catch coming down with it knowing that that was him in flow maybe Franco Harris uh the macular reception being at the right place right time Why did that happen And those images are burnt and and those we we look for those in our own lives Absolutely And it's interesting I love that you um use that example and you say it in that way because I think you know these days too lots of people talk about being in flow or in alignment with life itself with just the day to day not necessarily a particular activity maybe they're not an athlete maybe they're not a peak performer but they want to be in alignment and flow with life so that things work more work out for them more organically or sort of effortlessly And I think that there are some common elements there but the one is just a quiet mind You know you can go about your life today even if you're not a performer And if you can learn to quiet your mind you will find that life seems to cooperate with you in ways that it didn't before but it's not that life is cooperating with you You're cooperating with life in a way Um All of a sudden relationships work out or if they're not meant you know for your greatest good then they just dissolve the things happen Now let's talk about that that unquiet mind because some of our listeners and I've struggled with it too are quote unquote pessimists So you talked earlier you know we want to strive towards happiness and happiness attracts people into our lives But I'm a pessimist How do I become that optimist Yeah So the first thing is lots of scientific study um which you guys are I know voracious readers But like so the one thing we know is that

optimism can predict success in almost any individual or team sport Um It's predicted uh every single presidential election so we can analyze the speeches It's kind of just kind of crazy when you think about it really because you're like how could this particular candidate that particular candidate be more optimistic Um And they're at four of one but optimism predicts success success in almost every life arena There are a couple of exceptions I think county might be one but there are a few right Um Literally so um that's the first thing is to realize that um you know the other thing you know when it comes to uh both optimism and quieting the mind what I found helpful is um first of all leaning into the science and then trusting that if you lean into the optimism or better you lean into the no mind which is dropping thought altogether that there's a deeper life intelligence infinite intelligence that same intelligence or life or an energy that keeps the planet on its axis you know sort of rotating on its axis revolve around the sun the sun shining your heart beating your lungs breathing your mind or brain orchestrating it all that same infinite intelligence is within you And that the best thing you can often do is get out of the way And the more you you know if you try to control any of these involuntary functions you would actually just mess it up You try breathing on purpose or like making your heart beat at a certain it's ridiculously complicated and senseless And so to the extent that you can trust I think for most people it's trusting that in my quieter mind I'll think more creatively efficiently effectively and productively and Enjoyably It's really trusting that and then playing with it and practicing it We've got all kinds of little tips and tricks we do there too And obviously we talk about pessimism A lot of that is tied to fear and fear is a perception You know we can conquer fears we can one day be afraid of heights and the next day we could perceive heights as just another challenge And I know Johnny in in class today I was hanging out getting ready to to prep for the show And one of the things you talk about is is asking yourself the question is are there other possibilities to what I'm thinking and feeling right now So if I'm a pessimist and I'm feeling really negative and I'm feeling like the world is ending and it's all coming crashing down on me asking yourself Are there other things at play here Are there other potential outcomes that I'm not thinking about that I'm I'm too hung up on this one negative outcome could start to challenge that pessimism Well and to go along with that I mean how often do we do that in our own lives in business At at the art of charm where something will happen We have an immediate reaction to what we think it is and then we challenge that and we have this debate all the time Coming here

we'll throw a bunch of ideas out on something and then we have a laugh about it at these exercises once learned once ingrained and and that they're your go to of going through this process I mean just the process itself is enjoyable You nailed it you nailed it right there because so two things one is you're absolutely right Um doesn't matter how good or how logical your idea is about the success of your business relationship or your life you could very well be wrong and life has its own logic Ok If you if you live long enough you quickly realize that sometimes the best idea goes viral and the worst idea is you know or you know the worst idea goes viral The best idea you never hear of again And so that's the first thing I'm always clear about is like huh I think I'm so sure about this and I've been so sure about these other things that I've prayed for in my life and often a lot of them I've gotten and I've been unhappy for it or it's turned out in the worst way humanly possible like in a way I couldn't script So that's the first piece The other thing is just practicing it and optimizing for the happiness itself If if you don't if see this is the thing about the happiness thing If you if that's not your goal it's impossible to really convince anyone to be optimistic It's like why should I be optimistic because it might not turn out well And then I wouldn't have managed my downside or my risk And it's like I get it But if you're optimizing for happiness and for peace and for equanimity then you suddenly begin telling the better feeling story based in truth because it's only gonna be a better feeling story not a fantasy No it is not about it No job But as you begin to tell the better feeling story about everything in your life you realize that while you cannot guarantee the future you can guarantee the present and why you cannot control so many of the conditions and circumstances in your life It's even more important to control the one thing you can which is how you feel right now Who knows You could die in five minutes five days So control that and then trust that the science and the scientists aren't crazy that if you do that if you tell the better feeling story and you cultivate this optimistic explanatory style you're actually going to increase your odds of success in the world right And this is why we often see with great leaders the most there's a study that was replicated just recently that the the most competent leaders are not the most successful which is kind of disturbing And in fact often it's the most incompetent leaders that are most successful that rise to the top of the fastest And they said why is that They said one word confidence and and that's exactly that's exactly what it's called That's right Favorite one thing I wanna talk about with pessimist too and and pessimism in general is it is this need to turn the impersonal to personal the temporary

to permanent and the local to pervasive So it we don't allow for any other explanation We tie everything personally This is me we take everything that could be temporary and make it now permanent And that's where the pessimism sprouts and then oh could this just happen a one off or is this just always going to be a constant now Right We make it pervasive When you start to question these things you start to tease away and realize that hey you know what I'm just I'm taking this personally I don't need to take this personally or you know this is just temporary the sun's gonna rise tomorrow and you know what this has not been pervasive I've also lived on this planet 36 other years where this was not the case When we start to tease it apart We can actually find that place of optimism even if we are this pessimistic and prone to this pessimism The other thing that I find so fascinating about the science is it's not a personality trait that you're born with It's a way of thinking And when we realize that we can make these choices and change the way we think Then we don't have to identify as the pessimist We don't have to hold on to it and cling to it as if it's some security blanket Oh my goodness Absolutely I mean I think one of the most fascinating fields of study right now is epi genetics Right And um you know you literally turn on and off hormones and DNA simply by the thoughts you choose Like that is wild to me right And I used to think and for a long time scientists did too that there was just a baseline level of happiness or optimism and you were just stuck there That was your ceiling And now they realize that's crazy That's silly You can think different thoughts and therefore rewire your brain in such a way that you make thinking those thoughts easy but you also increase your optimism happiness and therefore success It's fascinating to go along with that I mean all the work that you have done to get yourself in this position so that you could challenge these narratives and and and live a happy life I certainly know the road that AJ and I have been on uh with this ourselves and and why we love shouting it from the literal rooftops Um But but also you know when you've done this work and you hear it from people around you you start OK I can't be around this because I've done all this work and we uh we were laughing because we have done such a great job of walling off Um and making sure that anyone is in our inner circle has these ideas has these attitudes And yesterday I had found myself at a dinner with an old friend from childhood and he had a guest with them and and it was my first time in a long time being exposed to that horrible bitter chip on shoulder negativity Talk about it He's from Beaver Falls He's from I know Yeah And you know now when I'm when I'm around him it's in a it's in the

capacity that we're teaching and it's the they're they're willing to learn and wanna wanna hear how to fix these things But when you I was it was mind and not only it's been so long that I I just couldn't believe just how deep it ran And even if I was to say anything or challenging the narratives that was coming out of this person's mouth that it's not No nothing's gonna change And in fact they're going to double down because well then that means that what they believe could be faulty And now we have a um a reality and then people get really crazy Now this is a great example because you talk about happiness regulators and energy vampires And we talk about value vampires which is this exact thing toxic people people who are going to stay where they are in that scarcity mindset and compete with you in ways that look to tear you down How do we deal with them Johnny had dinner with one and was struggling We all encounter it How do we deal with them um that it can be a real challenge and a real opportunity right An incredible opportunity Um because for me the way I see it is um everything and everybody in my life is a personal trainer for my own unconditional happiness And I will consider unconditional success would have in the same vein And so the first thing is realizing that that it's not about them it's about me And then I'm the one with the problem if I'm the one feeling uncomfortable not them right So as soon as I take back my power um then from that place I do a couple of things One is I double down on my commitment to be perfectly peaceful And for you know I'm it's all that's that's where I'm at I sit there in that space and I stay there and I remain there And then I if I need to or want to communicate I communicate from that from that place from that peaceful place And usually um I used to say things in a sort of declarative manner and now I'm better off asking questions ask questions there's no judgment in the questions but the questions they're leading questions often I'll be honest right You know and um so I ask questions and just like oh that's interesting you know tell me a little bit more How's that You know how's that working for you Is it serving you Do you feel like it's serving you Does it feel good You know just genuine questions And I want to know maybe I'm wrong about that So I wanna so yeah And um so I do that and then um as I'm doing that though the most important thing that I'm doing the entire time is just staying emotionally regulated You know I'm just abiding in what I'm abiding in the self which is that place of perfect piece Well I think that's the challenge for a lot of us is we don't realize that we when we encounter this we tend to reward their bad behavior We feed the trolls we feed into it They get a rise out of us where we react and when we react that just emboldens them more

and we're in this vicious cycle downward and then we leave beat up our self esteem takes the hit and they're gloating and they're enjoying themselves in their negative space I think a huge challenge and we get this question a lot which is why next month's theme is all dedicated to dealing with toxic people in your life What do we do about those relationships with family and coworkers where you know we can't just walk away from the situation We gotta be in it We are living with these members in our family We are going to work with them every day and listen you know career changes don't just happen overnight They don't fall into your lap So a lot of people are are stuck in a job market that has some scarcity tied to it They don't want to leave How do we deal with these people that we can't quite remove Yeah it's great Great point So I keep interactions short and sweet It's important So I'd rather have more frequent but shorter and sweeter interactions Right We have five minute conversations or maybe it's 30 seconds but just just checking in dad How you doing Hey mom just checking in and you know they're gonna get off on the rant and oh my goodness mom I'm gonna call you back in just a little bit I love you so much You you stay in that place of peace you and the second you start to become reactive or judgmental you have you gotta check out and you gotta check out in the most diplomatic and kind way that you can because you won't by checking out with anything less than kindness in diplomacy isn't they're gonna feel Yeah that's right Exactly So that's number one Well number one is the peace and equity on the inside First Number two is keeping interactions short and sweet by far Um Sometimes it comes to the point where you actually have to have a conversation and just to say and um I use an acronym so before I speak I think and think stands for true helpful inspiring necessary and kind So whatever it is I want to say I try to say in a way that is as true as possible that is helpful that is inspiring that is necessary I leave out all unnecessary information that means using the past or the future and kind And so I'll do what I can to then tell them I love you very much and I love the idea of seeing you happy and I love the idea of me being happy too and I know it's both possible for both of us And so you know for that reason I'm just gonna take a little time to to you know just collect my thoughts and be with myself for a little while and if you want to do the same that's great Or if you wanna do something else that's great But I trust you'll be happy either way and then you know so then I just leave just leave that relationship for a little while Um I still love them but I can love them better from a distance Um But I just find the words to share with them They might not understand but I'm not attached to them understanding They don't need to

understand and there's implicitly is not judgment in that there's no judgment there's no judgment It's saying this is what I want for both of us and I hope we can find it Yeah that's it That's exactly it So I think that's but but at the end of the day again it really is about because the what's so seductive about the whole experience is you get drawn back in just like you said where into thinking that somehow through your attention even if it's negative attention that you're going to extinguish this undesirable behavior but no undesirable behavior is ever extinguished Yeah I mean we go on youtube comments and you'll you'll find Yeah Right Exactly That what we're talking about here and dealing with toxic people is difficult It is adversity right Especially when we're working with these people when we're living with them as family members And what's so interesting is that positive psychology says adversity is not a bad thing It's not something we need to run away from In fact building some resiliency and ability to regulate emotions is a great thing for us in long term Yes So most of us think of or know about post traumatic stress disorder and we assume that when something really bad happens when you face a lot of adversity you experience post traumatic stress disorder But the truth is is that we mostly experience post traumatic growth as a result of adversity So believe it or not even when you're not trying you often most frequently grow from the bad times And so it's important to remember that and that's also the way in which you build resilience So the more bad things that happen the stronger you get the stronger you get the more the better you are at handling those bad situations in the future Um That being said part of that resilience is also hopefully building a more optimistic explanatory style and therefore you experience less you know adversity over time at least not the same kind of adversity Um So yeah it's a great great um reminder for folks um that when you're facing the worst in life it often brings out the best in you Yeah it makes us the strongest in this idea of David Goggins right These mental calluses right Just like getting ready for the tough mutter We're building calluses on our hands from all these pull ups It's the same thing You can't run away from that adversity Actually building the resilience to it allows you to get closer to the happiness that you're pursuing Absolutely Um I remember Abraham Hicks I mentioned a little earlier because it's the first children's book I've ever read and uh turned out to be an adult book and uh and uh they would always say you know it's the contrast that makes life so beautiful and it is like the Suite wouldn't be nearly as sweet without the bitter and look at my own life And not that I would wish bitter experiences on anyone But it's been the bitter experiences of my life that have made me who

I am And without the unhappiness I experienced for decades I could not be in this position today And with every bit of confidence say to you I've never been happier ever before Thank God for the bad times And I well I think that a lot of people forget that advertising is built and exploiting you feeling uncomfortable so that you won't go through that adversity and you'll turn to whatever product they'd like to sell you to get you through that When in actuality going through through that uncomfortableness is what you actually need home run right there Yeah Yeah And I struggle with that actually it's funny because being in the helping profession and being a happiness coach all the marketing and advertising experts would say Rob you've got to advertise the problem and push on that pain And I'm like I'm so sorry That's so out of alignment with who and what I am that I guess I'll just have to be broke That's cool That's cool man Because I got the ultimate treasure inside anyway So happiness a success It is It is It's the ultimate and greatest success Thank you for joining us today Where can our audience find your book And where can we watch you on TV Do your thing I love it Um First of all thank you guys so much You have no idea how much I appreciate not just this conversation but who you guys are I mean that I've been listening to your podcast for a long time now really really um deserve commended for the job you guys do You all can check me out at coach Rob Mack dot com and also on all social media platforms at Rob Mac official You can also check me out Monday through Friday 9 to 10 a.m. pacific time on Good morning Let land that is live streamed across all social media platforms Thank you so much for joining us It's been a pleasure Thanks for having me