

Groundedness With Brad Stulberg

Brad Stulberg: [00:00:00] I define success is knowing your core values and then having a life that allows you to live in alignment.

It's, it's as simple as in, is hard for some is, is that, so for me, like any climbing, any goal should work in service of your core values, not the other way around. So a lot of people say, well, you know, how can I use my core values or what goal can I go achieve? And if you have the privilege to, I think a much better way to think about it is what goals are gonna lend themselves to journeys or to processes that allow me to practice my core values. that was Brad Stulberg on psychologist off the clock

Diana Hill: We are four clinical psychologists here to bring you cutting edge and science-based ideas from psychology to help you flourish in your relationships, work and health.

Debbie Sorensen: I'm [00:01:00] Dr. Debbie Sorensn practicing in mile high Denver, Colorado, and coauthor of ACT Daily Journal

Diana Hill: I'm Dr. Diana Hill coauthor with Debbie on ACT Daily Journal, and practicing in seaside Santa Barbara, California.

Yael Schonbrun: From coast to coast, I'm Dr Yael Schonbrun a Boston- based clinical psychologist and assistant professor at Brown University.

Jill Stoddard: And from sunny San Diego, I'm Dr. Jill Stoddard author of Be Mighty and The Big Book of ACT Metaphors.

Debbie Sorensen: We hope you take what you learn here to build a rich and meaningful life.

Diana Hill: Thank you for listening to Psychologists Off the Clock!

Diana Hill: Hi everyone. This is Diana and it's with sort of mixed emotions that I am sharing some news with all of you, mixed emotions, being sadness and excitement, after five years on psychologists off the clock. I am ready to launch a new podcast called your life in process.

And my new podcast will offer you ideas from modern psychology and contemplative practice [00:02:00] and teach you how to take these principles out of the book off the cushion and apply them in your daily life. The way I'm going to do that is by having authentic and exposed conversations with thought leaders and scientists and spiritual teachers.

I have Judd brewer coming on as a regular contributor every month. You'll get to hear from him meditation teacher, Trudy Goodman, and my dear mentor neuropsychologist. Rick Hanson will also be on the show and I'll also be having some solo episodes for you where I take a deep dive into psychological flux.

The reason why I'm launching this podcast is because life is messy and unpredictable, and it's nice to have a partner with you as you learn new strategies to adapt and thrive. And that's what I'm hoping to be for you. Your psychological flexibility guy.

I even have a segment each week with bite sized skills that you get to try at home. So this podcast is not a self-improvement project. It's about. Your process, your ever-changing life, [00:03:00] and I'll be sharing more about mine. share more about my experiences in messy motherhood.

As a psychologist, a partner in human, you can subscribe today at yourlifeandprocess.com. And when you do, you'll get the first five episodes in your podcast player when it launches in the new year. And please help me out by sharing this exciting news with three friends or colleagues, go check out my trailer at your life and process.

Yael Schonbrun: We also have mixed emotions at psychologist off the clock, Diana, that you're leaving, but we're so excited to see you go on your new adventure and we know you're going to continue to make such a positive impact on the world through your work. Psychologists off the clock. We'll have one less co-host but Debbie Sorenson just started and I are going to do some reinvention while continuing to offer the same great in-depth interviews. And science-backed psychology content with leaders in the field.

Our new directions will involve opportunities to get more interactive, including with the.

Off the clock book club, we'll be launching as well as several other exciting developments. We have in store. So stay tuned for details from psychologists off The clock

Yael Schonbrun: [00:04:00] happy new years, everybody, this episode is a perfect entree into 2022. Because it's an episode about building paths towards success.

And I think what better time of year than to think about how to build healthy pathways towards success, , than, than right at the start of the year. So this is an interview with author. Brad Stulberg , about his recently released book called the practice of groundedness, a transformative path to success that feeds not crushes your soul.

And it was such a wonderful experience for me to get to talk to him. He has these principles for grounded success. That includes. Acceptance presence, patience, vulnerability, community, and movement. And I just gobbled up his book, but even as I was reading, and as I was talking with Brad,

I kept thinking about your work Diana, on healthy striving, and you actually came up through the interview. And so I'm just dying to hear what your thoughts were about my conversation with Brad.

Diana Hill: Well, it's [00:05:00] interesting you actually talk a lot about striving and I, it made me think about this relationship between grounded-ness and striving, and it's really something that I've been researching in my own life personally, but also writing about, um, I did a summit on from striving to thriving, where I had a number of.

Folks come in and talk about this topic and about it in their life. You know, people like Rick Hanson and, uh, Rhonda Magee, who talked about it in the arena of racial justice. So how do we, how do we stay, stay grounded while we strive? And one of the things that I actually thought of while you were talking was, and especially when you were talking about vulnerability was how, and I was recording the summit.

So it was video and audio on striving. After I recorded all those videos, I went back and I edited. All of that. And then the video of me. So Rick Hanson actually interviews me in the summit where I talk about my own history of an eating disorder and striving and how I've gotten, gotten caught. So many times I edited that one the most. [00:06:00] And I went and I watched the videos before

I was going to publish them. And they were so highly edited that it made me cringe and made me realize that I was doing the thing that I always do. Right. And what actually grounded-ness for me was going back and taking out all the edits and showing up more as myself, whether that's in the public realm or it's in my relationship with my kids or not editing myself in my intimacy with my spouse or not editing myself in my relationships and not being in this sort of facade that I think that a lot of us are caught in.

And I think social media, you talk about that. Like how. Caught by unwholesome purposes, but really like just being more what technical would say, like our true nature, letting our true nature shine through. And that's really what I'm about. Like, that's my mission right now [00:07:00] is to show up in a less edited way so that we can actually help people from a place of, um, stress, I guess, less unhealthy.

Yael Schonbrun: I love that that has become your mission to kind of show up in a very authentic way, because that is where connection grows, where creativity grows. Um, I do think that we live in this time and place in our culture where it's just, it's hard because it feels like there's so much judgment and there's so much pressure to kind of show up in these ways that are, , that we're going to get more likes and more response.

And it kind of, um, I, I shared with you, Diana. After I had this conversation with Brad Stulberg that I was watching YouTube videos of old music videos that I like with my kids right after. And we happened upon the counting crows, Mr. Jones and there's this line in it. That goes something to the effect of when everybody loves you.

That's just about as happy as you can be. And it really. For [00:08:00] me, the, one of the core themes of that interview, which is, you know, we want to be loved by the public, by all by everybody. And yet that doesn't quite do it. And in fact, that drive can lead to really unhealthy ways of striving towards success and that it is much more useful to , take a step back and we connect to your values as opposed to, , striving for, for love and acceptance and acknowledgement in the public sphere. , but it does require a vulnerable.

Diana Hill: And it requires looking at what is behind the striving. You know, Joseph's wrote, you talks about self as prize and self as shield. So a lot of times our striving can be to seek out that love, right? That's the prize or the achievement. As Brad talks about getting to the top of the mountain, but it also can be selfish shield where maybe we're shielding ourselves from our own

feelings of unworthiness or owned dealings of not good enough notice or, you know, whatever it is.

And I think that when we're driven by that type of experiential [00:09:00] avoidance, when our striving is driven by experiential avoidance, what will people think if they see this video of me on edited, where I just sort of talk in a raw way with Rick Hanson acting as my therapist, it's kind of. I called Meg afterwards.

I was like, Meg, I cannot believe I'm going to air this thing. And in some ways it's like dropping those and getting more rooted grounded in what is this? What is this about? And it is really about, at least for me being of service to people, helping people that maybe have similar struggles that I've had, um, or have ones that have a similar flavor.

So anyways, that's, I think this episode is great. I loved Brad and I can't wait to have him on the, your life in process because I have so many more things I want to dive in with him about, especially around his use of social media, because I think that was a really fascinating conversation. The two of you had.

Yael Schonbrun: So we really hope that you all enjoy this new year's episode with Brad Stulberg on the practice of grounded-ness.

Yael Schonbrun: I'm here with Brad. Stulberg an [00:10:00] expert on performance well-being and sustainable success. Brad's work has appeared in lots of impressive outlets and he's contributing editor to outside magazine. Brad is a co-creator of the growth equation and online platform dedicated to defining and attaining more fulfilling and lasting success.

And he's also co-host of the growth equation podcast, and we are here to discuss Brad's recently published book, the practice of groundedness, a transformative path to success that feeds not crushes your soul. Welcome, Brad.

Brad Stulberg: Hey Yael, it's so good to be here.

Yael Schonbrun: So I want it to sort of go right for the juggler and dive right into your history here, because I think it sets the context for your book. So if you're okay with that, I'm going to get personal. So, you write, and he talked pretty freely that while you were promoting your previous book peak performance, you had your first panic attack.

I mean, you were literally selling success when things kind of fell apart. So I was hoping that you would share with us, how that experience really led you to the ideas that you explore in this new [00:11:00] book.

Brad Stulberg: Yeah. So, um, my first book peak performance really explores if you're at the top of the mountain and everything is clicking how to try to stay there and how to try to maintain that level of performance. And, uh, I stand by everything in that book. It's highly researched and defensible. I hadn't yet had an experience in my own life where the whole foundation of the mountain started shifting in cracking, um, until I had that panic attack and what ultimately was an obsessive compulsive disorder diagnosis.

So, um, That led me on a path to trying to understand what it might look like to have a more sustainable foundation of the [00:12:00] mountain. Um, it is also born out of the fact that, well, let me step back. When I was in the thick of OCD, there was no intellectualizing, anything. It was just like suffering and trying to get out of suffering.

Once I started to see the light at the end of that tunnel, then I became fascinated with the overlap of modern science and ancient wisdom on what it means to have a solid foundation. Um, and that started this intellectual journey into trying to identify patterns that might underlie what I called grounded-ness.

Yael Schonbrun: Yeah, so. Applause of your book, because it is a very amazing integration of modern science, ancient wisdom, your knowledge about sports psychology and business success. And I think that makes a really compelling case for this concept of groundedness. So I wonder [00:13:00] if you can kind of define what is grounded-ness.

Brad Stulberg: Right. I love mountain. So I'm going to go back to using a, uh, a mountain as a metaphor, and it works on two levels. The first is, if you think about a mountain, most people will look up and admire its peak. And if it's a super steep mountain, perhaps they'll also take note of its slope or what in a climbing community would be called its prominence.

But very rarely do people look at a mountain and look down to its base. Yet it is the base of a mountain. That is what holds it to the ground. , for decades and centuries and midst all kinds of weather. So without a really solid foundation, there is no peak. There is no slope. , and we, humans are the same way, , when everything is going really well, as I alluded to it, you can spend a lot of time up on that metaphorical peak, but, , if you don't take care of the foundation, if you

don't cultivate a strong foundation, then when [00:14:00] rough weather comes, you'll be fragile.

So that's one metaphor. The second metaphor is that of a climber on a mountain. And you could envision two climbers that both really want to get to the top. And one climber is constantly obsessing about whether or not they'll make it to the top. They are telling themselves stories in their head of how, if they do make it to the top, they'll be able to take selfies and post it on Instagram.

And everyone will like them. And if they don't make it to the top, what will happen to their identity and who will they be? If they can not say that they didn't summit this mountain. So that's climber A. Climber B might equally want to get to the top of the mountain, but is very focused on the small steps that they're taking along the way, trying to be consistent.

They're present they're patient. And ideally they're even taking some time to enjoy the view from the side of the mountain. [00:15:00] Now, both climbers might get to the top. But what I argue in what the research literature continues to show is that that second climber will not only have a more enjoyable and fulfilling time, but also be more likely to sustain that level of climbing and performance, uh, because climbing in the way that the first climber does is really inks provoking in a pretty quick path to burnout.

So again, I'm using climbers, but you could replace climbers with business people with physician, with creatives, um, pretty much any role that we play in our lives, where there's some goal. So it's both about a solid foundation out of which striving can be a little bit more channeled. And it's also about the actual striving itself to be more focused on the process than any given outcome.

Yael Schonbrun: Right. So it's, it's a focus on the process instead of outcome, that leads to more sustained [00:16:00] success. And I mean, one thing that I think is an important piece of the conversation is how do we define success anyway? Is it getting to the top of the mountain or is it being able to stay at the top of the mountain and being able to go up to the top of a mountain repeatedly throughout life?

And I think when you, when you think about success as like a one-time thing, it's a pretty different picture. And I think that's where groundedness really helps in that more sustained lifelong kind of success. But I'm curious, just taking a step back, like how do you define success throughout your work?

Brad Stulberg: I define it in a very like Steven Hayes, acceptance and

Yael Schonbrun: Yes, I was working. You'd go there.

Brad Stulberg: So, I define success is knowing your core values and then having a life that allows you to live in alignment.

It's, it's as simple as in, is hard for some is, is that, so for me, like any climbing, any goal should work in service of your core [00:17:00] values, not the other way around. So a lot of people say, well, you know, how can I use my core values or what goal can I go achieve? And if you have the privilege to, I think a much better way to think about it is what goals are gonna lend themselves to journeys or to processes that allow me to practice my core values.

Yael Schonbrun: I love that. What, what are your core values? Just out of curiosity, how do you articulate those?

Brad Stulberg: Um, so there used to be a lot, and then there were a handful. And it's funny every year, every year, because I really try to practice what I preach with my own therapist and coach Brooke. I go through this exercise and we'll be doing it again. I think we do it in like March. It's not a January thing, but, um, last year it was as simple as life and love.

And , for me, life encompasses all of the doing and engagement in productive activity that I strive for and creativity. And [00:18:00] then love is about the being side or, presence in creating space and relationships. So that means a lot to me. I think if someone was just meeting me, I would probably, I would say that under life would fall.

, physical health creativity in under love would fall vulnerability, authenticity, and committee.

Yael Schonbrun: Yeah, which are, and many of those are principles of groundedness, which is fitting. And another example of how you practice, what you preach. I have to say that I really loved that. I always read acknowledgements. I'm always curious about the support in writing a book. Not only because I'm writing my own book, but I just think books are one of these, Ways to show up as heroic individualism.

Right? You talk about a lot about that, but the reality is that books take an enormous team of active participants. And I love that in your

acknowledgements, you credit your therapist, which I think is so terrific. And I'm curious, [00:19:00] is that how you came to know acceptance and commitment therapy? I'm always curious how people outside of scientifically oriented psychology discover act.

Brad Stulberg: Yeah. So my discovery of act was absolutely through my own being in therapy for OCD. What's interesting, is that even so by OCD experience, like it was very stark onset. , I was 31 and I had no prior history of therapy of anxiety of depression. , at least not that I was aware of. , but I had kind of already started down this path of trying to merge like art and science east and west.

So even prior to act a big part of my first book was about like trying to live in alignment with your core values. , so I think it was, it was there before that, but then act really solidified it for me. And like so many people that have OCD and that are fortunate enough to, , be working with skilled therapists that understand it, my own [00:20:00] recovery.

It was very much, , like from an exposure and response prevention, like kind of getting through. The initial, just paralyzing intrusive thoughts and feelings, and then more towards acceptance and commitment to, Hey, you're always going to live with some element of this, the best way to kind of have it go away is to stop trying to have it go away.

Yael Schonbrun: Yeah, and I love too that you, I can't remember if this was where I either heard it on a podcast interview with you, or I read it somewhere, but you talked about how even writing about your OCD brought up a lot. Highly OCD kinds of thoughts of something bad is going to happen to me. And that your therapist really encouraged you to follow your values and accept the discomfort of the thoughts and the feelings.

And that was such a great example of values and action, um, where you were really suffering, but really committed to acting in line with your values, which I just thought was really [00:21:00] admirable.

Brad Stulberg: Thank you. Yeah, that, it's funny how that works. And it took a lot of support from, from Brooke, my therapist, um, who like, you know, every percent of that acknowledgement is genuine and in earned, earns the wrong word, just they're like, she's been so incredible as a really like a coach and in all these things.

But, um, yeah, it's just so funny how that works. So I, the reason that I initially wrote about my experience with OCD was simply because there was so much cognitive dissonance that I was facing. I'd had this bestselling book titled peak performance. And like, you know, mental kind of cognitive performance, just as much as athletics, I'm young.

And I'm getting all these notes from people asking me like the secret to success. And meanwhile, I'm like scared to leave my apartment at that time of my life. Um, so I either was going to stop writing [00:22:00] or I was going to need to close this gap. Like there was no world in which I was going to be kind of performance expert to the outside and suffering within.

So the first thing I had to realize was that, Hey, I could still be a performance expert and be going through this. The second thing was then to share it in a lot of people when they open up about, mental illness, I think there's like some fear around what are people gonna think of me? And I didn't really have that.

, I'm very fortunate that like I've never really been in environments where mental illness was stigmatized. My fear was simply, as you said, that like, in, in, in the bizarre OCD brain, that if I were to write about it in a way it would be like exerting control over it, and then it would come back to get me and be like, no, you don't actually control me.

So yeah, writing about it became this like huge exposure, um, because it was a chance for OCD to tell me not to do something. And [00:23:00] then for me to do it anyways and live with the discomfort that that brought on.

Yael Schonbrun: Yeah. Yeah, that's amazing. And I know you and email, you wrote to me that it was like SSRI is an act that saved your life. And I just think it really is a Testament to the power, both of medication and of, , treatments that we know are effective,

Brad Stulberg: Yeah. And the funny thing is it's, it's, it's maybe SSRI is indefinitely act. You know, you're a professional, it's one of those things where like, they certainly didn't hurt me and perhaps their health.

Yael Schonbrun: And have one it's hard to know.

Brad Stulberg: Yeah.

Yael Schonbrun: , all right. So I want to segue into talking a little bit about ego, because there's a, you know, you talk a lot about this heroic individualism. So ego has a lot to do with our drive for success.

And so I guess my question is how do we associate with our ego in healthy ways?

Brad Stulberg: Um, this is such a big question. So this is like the question that not only acceptance and [00:24:00] commitment wrestles with, but also Buddhism, stoicism, um, some forms of Judeo-Christian identity. Uh, so this is like the million dollar question.

Yael Schonbrun: Brad, I put you on the spot to answer it.

Brad Stulberg: Well, I'm, I'm using my lifeline. I'm going to page the historical Buddha. Um, so I think that the first thing that is challenging for a lot of people, myself included is to take a non dual view to this. So ego isn't good or bad. It just is ego is both good and bad. It depends. so that kind of sets the stage for every everything else that I'll say here.

And I think that as long as you're striving is predominantly driven most of the time by something other than relevance, money, [00:25:00] ego, external, then it's probably going to be pretty healthy. So what I mean by that is. You can write a book for two reasons. One is because you want to sell a lot of copies and have people talk about the ideas in the book and be a bestseller and so on and so forth.

You can also write a book because you love writing. You love communicating. You love having conversations like this, that a book is a conduit to

Yael Schonbrun: Yeah.

Brad Stulberg: the former is very like ego success. The latter I would argue is more meaning success. And I think that so long as most of the time you're driven by the latter, then striving can be healthy.

Now what tends to happen particularly in today's world is we're swimming in like this enormous ocean of various things that feed the ego success. So we've got metrics for everything. We've got followers, we've got retweets, we've got

likes, even if you're in a more traditional [00:26:00] workplace, like there's dashboards for everything, all of these ways that we measure ourselves.

That very much feeds like ego. So I think a huge part of keeping passion harmonious or keeping ego in check is to have, um, some really strict boundaries around like what you take in. So I know myself, if I were to be on all the social media apps, and if I were to allow myself to check my sales rank of my books, whenever I felt like it, that would feed my ego.

And I wouldn't like how I feel. So I think that it's just as much about trying to create surroundings and whether those boundaries are like physical or mental boundaries that protect you from swimming in a sea of dopamine and in ego feeding behaviors.

Yael Schonbrun: Well, I have a few questions about that, but the first is just very practical. So what kind of boundaries do you set for yourself that are helpful on that?

Brad Stulberg: so it's a great question. Um, I only have one [00:27:00] social media account. Um, I do not it's Twitter. I never tweet anything about my family, my partner, Caitlin, my son, my physical practice. It's purely like a way to share my ideas and basically like market content marketing. So I don't let Twitter encroach upon other areas of my life that are parts of my ego that I don't want to have be like in the dopamine ocean, external validation world.

So I think that that's the biggest one. , and then the other one would be around just how often I check. I think like as an author, there's a propensity to want to check, check sales, rank, checkbook sales check reviews, and the week of book comes out. I just let myself. You know, binge on peanut M and M's I'm checking stuff all the time.

But after that first week, I only allow [00:28:00] myself to check, you know, once a week when like the weekly sales report comes in. And then with my first two books, I assume it'll happen with this book. Eventually you just kind of stop, um, because things like reach some, some sort of equilibrium. Um, and it's a moving target.

I mean, I could be, it could be much worse. I could be much better. Um, but I think just kind of being aware of like, what are the things that feed that ego striving and how can you try to minimize those things so that the striving can be

more out of like harmonious passion or love or productive activity or values driven.

Yael Schonbrun: Right. Yeah. So I love that way to kind of keep yourself in check, to not let the desire for a dopamine rush. Try that. The other question is how do you handle living in an environment where there's a tremendous amount of pressure to, to achieve those metrics of success? So, for example, I mean, if we're talking books, there is, there was just a piece that came out in the New York times yesterday, which stated very clearly that many publishers have [00:29:00] number of followers as a standard part of whether they'll be interested in acquiring a book.

Now, the article went on to say that that doesn't actually. They're really predict sales, but still, if you're an aspiring author, there's this pressure to build followers and to do it. And the pressure is so intense sometimes that it's hard to do it out of a love of communicating good ideas. So I'm curious what your thoughts are on.

Brad Stulberg: Um, it's a game and sometimes you just have to play the game. And I think that reminding yourself that it's just a game is the most important thing. So, you know, it's something that I've been thinking about a lot and that's such a profound example, but. Like Facebook's Metta. The more that our analog selves and digital selves become one, I think the worse, it will be for mental health because we're not meant to compete for 60,000 followers.

We're meant to be [00:30:00] enclosed community with the people that live in the square mile around us. And I think that my answer to that question as the people whose validation I want most are truly like physical people that live in my neighborhood. And that allows me to view the social media stuff as more of a game.

Now I can still try to be helpful. I can try to use Twitter as a platform to share good information, but like the number of followers I have. I mean, I could tell you exactly how I could get my follower account to a hundred thousand. I'd start like spewing conservative, bullshit, but like, I don't want to do that.

So like it's a game. And within that game, you have some boundaries.

Yael Schonbrun: I love that. The other question that I was going to ask, as you had been talking before, which is this idea of non-duality that you talk a lot about in your, in your writing. And I, I just wanted to give you like a platform to

talk about it because I love this idea, that many things that we think of as bad or good, really have some [00:31:00] elements of both.

And for example, like Twitter is not all bad. Instagram's not all bad, but they have some goodness embedded in them. And some elements that can be dangerous if we're not, if we don't moderate ourselves. And I'm just curious, sort of like, how do you bring this idea of non-duality into grounded-ness.

Brad Stulberg: I think through, well, first just being aware and having some language for it. And so many people tell me just that they're like, oh my gosh, like I never knew that you could see the world. This. And it really makes you less of a judgmental person, not only towards others, but towards yourself. Um, so like no one, no behavior gets like just a green check or a red check.

There's generally a whole bunch of gray in between, um, like extremes. Um, so then how does non-duality [00:32:00] actually affect, like how you go about and behave in the world? Um, you know, I think you could get like, super esoteric about it, but then I think it kind of comes back down to core values, which is okay.

So like if something is good and something is bad, what's, what's the expected value. And then how does that align with my core values? So if one of your core values was to, um, just completely educate the universe on one topic, and that was like the pinnacle for. Then you'd probably use all the social media platforms and have more capacity to incur the downsides in the costs.

Whereas if one of your core values is presence, then you probably are going to leave a lot on the table on social media because you value presence. So, you know, Ryan holiday, he's a good friend. I love Ryan. He spends a lot more time and energy or his team does on social media than I do.

And I think part of that is one of his core values is like [00:33:00] just spread stoicism is broadly as possible because it can help people. And he really feels that. So it's, it's honorable, whereas I want to spread my work, but I also value like just presence and being in for me too much social media encroaches on that value too much.

Yael Schonbrun: Yeah. Yeah. I love that. I mean, that's a part of what I, I like many things about acceptance and commitment therapy, but it is one of the things I love most, which is that when you, when you focus on values and you, and you clarify them for yourself and you bear witness to somebody else

clarifying what's important to them, it really does take the judgment out of it because there's, there's rarely a good or bad value, really rarely a good or bad value.

People are just making different choices about what they're prioritizing. Um, and I think that really does make a lot more room for us to each make our own choices with a lot less judgment and stigma attached to it.

Brad Stulberg: And I think boundaries again, I'm going to come back to boundaries. They're so important because you know, in the first month that my [00:34:00] book comes out, I am on Twitter all the time. And that's because like, there's, there's, there's this event that's happening and I don't want to have regrets and I want to get the book.

And maybe it's 20% ego being relevant, selling copies and 80%. Like, I really believe in the ideas in it. I want this to be a part of the conversation. I want my kid to grow up in a world with less heroic individualism. So for that month, I'm happy to deprioritize everything else and just push really hard, knowing that I'm probably going to feel like shit, I'm going to be more restless.

I'm going to be more anxious. And I'll probably have a one to two week period at the end of it, where I feel like a little depressive and just accepting all of that and being like, all right, I'm willing to incur those costs for the potential benefits, not judging myself, knowing it's going to happen, but then being really firm on the boundary, having my wife, my collaborators, like hold me to it.

And then coming out the other side in kind of grooving back into more of what my natural [00:35:00] equilibrium would be. So even that's non dual, like it's both core values. And then it's for a given season of life. What makes sense? What are you wanting to do? And what's going to get you there at what point.

Yael Schonbrun: right. That's the flexibility to say right now, I'm going to prioritize this value and then I'll pivot to something else, but it also speaks to acceptance, right? Acceptance that you're going to incur some costs and discomfort along the way by prioritizing one value. But that's. You've clarified your value sufficiently that you've decided it makes some sense to do that.

It's like, it's like deciding that one day, you're just gonna do a Netflix binge and eat junk food. But deciding that you kind of need it, you want it, it feels good. You'll be healthy tomorrow. And you're gonna tolerate the fact that your body

might feel a little gross the next day. But doing that with your eyes open makes it makes it okay.

It's still value consistent.

Brad Stulberg: Yes. It's so I'm so glad that you said that the example I was thinking about is like, if you're someone without a substance use [00:36:00] disorder, it's like deciding that you're going to have four drinks, even if you're going to feel like shit the next morning, but as long as you make that conscious decision and you don't judge yourself, that's.

Um, you just don't want to be doing that frequently because then you're feeling like crap all the time.

Yael Schonbrun: Rigidity. I

Brad Stulberg: launching a book is like having like 40 drinks, you know, it's, it's, it's, it's really, uh, have you, is this your first

Yael Schonbrun: So this is my first. You're giving me a little bit of insight into what to look forward to, but also an opportunity to clarify for myself how I want to handle that month.

Brad Stulberg: Yeah. And I think that something that I've learned is, um, not knowing your, your values or anything about it. I think there is a modicum of just accepting that like you are literally when you launch a book, going to swim in a sea of dopamine and kind of giving yourself permission to do it. And then just having really, I sound like a broken record.

Well-defined concrete boundaries for time space, and then people to [00:37:00] hold you accountable. Um, that's kind of what I would recommend.

Yael Schonbrun: Yeah. I mean, that's kind of an interesting metaphor more generally, like obviously, you know, books are just one example that we share, but you know, anytime you get to the top of any mountain, it feels great. And there's something so addictive about that delightful feeling that we wanted again, but we can't always be climbing to the tops of mountains.

We're going to burn out where we're going to neglect other responsibilities. And so having a community to hold us accountable, having a plan of action for how

we're going to feel when we get off the mountain and feel a little less excited because it's not as beautiful on the ground. Um, I think can be really helpful.

Just that open awareness of like, we're not always going to live on top of a exciting mountain. Just human nature causes us to habituate to it and we can't stay there because we got other things we have to do.

Brad Stulberg: Yeah. And this is, this is such a part of the argument in, in groundedness, right? Is again, it, what makes it hard? Is [00:38:00] that like the whole consumer end? Runs on the illusion that you ought to always be happy and you ought to always be excited and you ought to always be on top of mountains. Um, 95% of the books, predominantly those written by dudes in this genre are all about like optimizing and hacking in productivity.

And if you have that expectation of yourself, always, you're just never going to meet it. And you're always going to be frustrated in whatever supplement or 10 steps to 10 superpowers in 10 days, you know, it might make you feel good for a week or two, and then you constantly need the next thing. And that is like most of the so-called wellness industry.

Like it's all a sham

Yael Schonbrun: Yeah.

Brad Stulberg: and I hate to be like, so, so blunt and are there. And I think it depends on how you define wellness, but, you know, is there anything wrong with like lighting a candle and using skin lotion? If it makes you [00:39:00] feel good? Of course not. If that's the thing that like you're searching for to make you feel good, then, you know, you'd be better off working last night, spending all this money on supplements and lotions and having more time to build community.

Yael Schonbrun: Right, right. Which is not profitable. Um, so that, isn't the message that gets gets out there. The other thing I wanted to talk to you a little bit about, and you mentioned this in your book is that there's certain elements of our culture that really reinforced symptoms of mental illness. Right? I'm thinking anxiety.

My co-host Diana Hill who talks a lot about healthy striving, talks a lot about how this applies to eating disorders, that there are certain ways that we almost

reinforce things that look like mental illness, because that's what sucks. In our culture looks like, right? It's like you push, push, push, you're rigid.

You never give up. You don't bother to rest or engage in community. You just go for the next dollar, the next follower. Um, [00:40:00] and so how can we think about healthy striving in the place of mental illness so that success doesn't end up getting conflated with anxiety or unhealthy ways of striving.

Brad Stulberg: I mean that in a nutshell is like why I wrote the book, presumably it's why you're writing your book. Presumably. It's why your colleague, you know, has termed this healthy striving, which I think to a lot of people, it sounds like an oxymoron. Um, and it's so important to try to like reclaim a healthy way to strive, you know, in, in Buddhism, on the eightfold path, which are, you know, the Buddha was like a McKinsey consultant.

He had all these frameworks, it's why I love Buddhism. Right? It's like the analytical mind in me, it's like a big PowerPoint deck. Um, so the April path is a really powerful framework and people often think of Buddhism is completely releasing from striving on and just kind of being, but one of those [00:41:00] eight values is what the Buddha called right effort.

And it's probably what Diana would call right. Striving. It's what I would call groundedness. It's what an act therapist might call like values-based drive. So the Buddha didn't say like, you ought not to strive. The Buddhist said like you should strive in a very present grounded, wholesome way. , it's what modern research has called, like harmonious passion versus obsessive passion.

So there's nothing wrong with striving to your point. The issue is when, the way that striving is framed in, encouraged in the culture starts to look a lot like. Obsession or anxiety.

Diana Hill: I am here with Katy Rothfelder there who is our dissemination coordinator, and we thought we'd bring her on because we talk a lot about Praxis, how Praxis sponsors this podcast they've, offer online, continuing education for professionals, everything from DBT to act training to compassion focused therapy and Katie's had some personal experience with practice that I think would be helpful for you to all learn.

Katy Rothfelder: [00:02:00] Yeah Diana. And I started out with Steven Hayes act immersion program, and that was really my first chance to get, you know, really in the act. And then since then I've had these kind of on-demand course

opportunities., the one that really sticks out to me is Lou Lasprugato's feedback, enhanced act course, which was this. Beautiful mix of instruction for really difficult act concepts. And then in-depth learning with practice. that grew my muscles as a brand new clinician.

Diana Hill: so if you are interested in taking a Praxis course, go ahead and go to our website off the clock, psych.com and we have a discount code for you for some of the live courses, check them out. Praxis, continuing education.

Jill Stoddard: Hey listeners. If you've loved learning about acceptance and [00:43:00] commitment therapy on the podcast, and you're a clinician who wants to incorporate more act into your clinical work, I have just the training for you. I'm offering my breakthrough act techniques and experiential exercises, a clinical roadmap to help clients overcome psychological distress through PESI.

This is an on-demand training that you can access at my website. Jill starter.com/. Learn. This is an interactive way to really bring your clinical work, especially your work with act to the next level. You will get six CES and I hope to see you there.

Yael Schonbrun: I wanted to talk a little bit about the value of vulnerability, but in that one dualistic way.

And the reason that I say that is, you know, sometimes I think specifically about my role as a therapist and, you know, you don't want to be too vulnerable as a therapist because your role is not to kind of share your own stuff, but you also want to be human. And then in other spheres of life, it's really important to kind of show up and be vulnerable.

And yet [00:44:00] there are times where you. We want to hold back the, the more vulnerable sides of yourself. I'm actually thinking of a study that I read recently about, the early stages of dating. I and they found that too much honesty early on was a predictor of the dating relationship not progressing.

And so there are ways that you want to kind of be careful about how much of yourself you share. And yet you argue that vulnerability and I, and I agree is really critically important for groundedness, for living a healthy, sustainable life.

Brad Stulberg: Right. So, um, the first thing is I think that we should separate performative vulnerability from actual vulnerability.

Yael Schonbrun: Fair.

Brad Stulberg: So performative vulnerability, as I read, Brené Brown, whose work I love and has done so many good things for our understanding of vulnerability. But a lot of people would read that book and be like, oh, I need to be vulnerable.

So I'm going to go tweet about that time that I was up all night or that I'm sad. [00:45:00] Sometimes in the simplest heuristic I have is if you are sharing something. Because you think it will elicit a good response and the other person that's not real vulnerability, like real vulnerability should feel pretty uncomfortable when you're doing it. Um, so when we talk about real vulnerability, um, I believe, and I, I still think that erring on the side of more generally makes you feel better, the person doing the sharing is also the recipient. So, um, in my own coaching practice, um, I am pretty vulnerable and I trace that back to a moment that I had. So I'm going to go back to my own therapeutic relationship with my therapist.

It wasn't right away. Like mirroring, you know, the dating study and not the therapies like dating, but it's an intimate relationship. So it certainly wasn't right away. [00:46:00] But maybe six or seven months in my therapist opened up to me about her awful depression. And instead of me doubting her or not trusting her, my trust for her went to 140 because it's like, oh, you've been there.

You get it. Um, so I think that, yeah, there's probably like a situational. You have to read when it's appropriate. But I think like if you want to say something and you're just a little bit scared, that's a good sign to probably say that thing. Whereas if you're doing like this mental calculus in your head, like, oh, is y'all going to like me more?

If I say this thing that might be classified as vulnerable, that is just ego, you know, like that's not the right way to treat. , now, so a question that I often get asked and I tell this story in the book is, well, what if you're in a professional setting and you've got a team of a lot of people and how you actually feel is completely overwhelmed.

Like everything's going to shit, [00:47:00] but you can't get up in front of a workforce of 10,000 and save it. That's how you feel as CEO. So there, , what I

like to coach toward is ask yourself what you really want to say, and then say, it's close to that as possible. So I've had like a C-level client that's had that, that, that feeling, and just felt like they were utterly performing.

So they can't go say that they're in over their heads because they want to have their team confident in them. But what they can say is something. You know, this job is so hard. It's more than any person could do. Sometimes I feel like it's too much for me in that. Doesn't make me weak. That makes me human.

And that's why I need all of your help and so on and so forth, you know, frame it that way instead of going and pretending to be all buttoned up. When deep down inside you feel like you're treading water

Yael Schonbrun: Yeah, I think that's such a illustrative example. And I imagine that people can Take from that example and bring it to their own lives, for a script in areas of their life, where they feel [00:48:00] like they want to be more vulnerable, but they struggle to do that.

Brad Stulberg: Yeah. I'd use, I'd use intuition. Like just, just, um, cause I know you got it. Cause this stuff is like all second nature to you, but just to be really explicit for the listener, the heuristic is just, what do you really want to say? And what's the closest thing to that? That the situation makes you comfortable saying.

Yael Schonbrun: yeah. I love that. Just to go back for a second to the performative piece, as you were talking about that, I sort of had this thought of. I think sometimes when people are sharing vulnerable things on social media and it's not, it doesn't necessarily start out as performative, but then once it's out there, there's, uh, an impulse to check, are people connecting to this?

Did I put myself out there? Or, and, and I think the problem there with vulnerabilities in person vulnerability, you get like the immediate feedback. Did we connect more or did we not? And you don't feel left hanging. And so I'm curious what your take is on, on being vulnerable in that more social media [00:49:00] or digital space.

Brad Stulberg: Huh you're like really onto something. I don't know. I have no idea other than, other than it's a great question. I saw someone the other day tweet like your Twitter following is not your therapy.

Yael Schonbrun: Hm.

Brad Stulberg: And it kinda made me think of, uh, of your question, which you put in much better language. Um, I don't know.

It's a great question.

Yael Schonbrun: Yeah.

Brad Stulberg: like that's the, that's the best I can give you. Um, I think that just being like, sometimes these questions, like you just have to be aware of them, right. And then pay close attention to your, your behavior and kind of what you get in return and how you feel in return.

Because I could imagine that somebody that is suffering from a depression or anxiety disorder that genuinely goes out to social media and shares from a completely authentic place of [00:50:00] being vulnerable and then gets no feedback, probably would make that person feel worse. Um, but then that begs the question, like, are you doing it because you're expecting feedback. And I think maybe that is like a helpful kind of principle for social media sharings, if you're doing it because you're expecting feedback, probably not great to do on social media, probably better to do with an analog human in your life.

Yael Schonbrun: Yeah. Yeah. And I asked the question without knowing the answer, but I guess my additional thought is that the function of vulnerability is to connect with people. And I don't think that showing vulnerability in on social media is a very effective way to connect more intimately. Um, because it is so removed.

Brad Stulberg: Yeah. It's not an intimate platform. I think if you're, if you're sharing something vulnerably [00:51:00] on social media, because you want to have other people not feel so alone that might be suffering or hurting in the context of mental illness. But if you're sharing, because like you want to have an intimate connection, then I agree with you.

I think you're kind of like, you know, striving for an intimate connection where it's just not possible. It's not the right platform for that.

Yael Schonbrun: Yeah. Yeah. So maybe it's, maybe it's a question too of asking yourself, what am I looking for here? Am I looking, you know, to, to help other

people feel less alone in this experience? And so I'll share my, my suffering in order that other people can get that sense of common humanity.

Brad Stulberg: Yeah. And I think, again, it's going to be the theme of our time together, non dual. What's the alternative. So it's not as extreme of an example is social media, but, um, something like better. Is it better help or better health, like [00:52:00] online psychotherapy on your phone? I first heard about that. And I'm like, this is the best thing ever.

It's going to open up access for so many people. Then I'm like, are all these therapists going to quit their jobs? Because they're supposed to be online to respond within 24 hours. And then I'm like, well, it's not the same as actually being in a room with a therapist, but not everybody. So like, so many of these things are both good and bad.

So like I've done a fair amount of research. I was going to write a big piece about that, but decided not to, but if you have access to an in-person therapist in your community that you connect with, then that is infinitely better than any of these therapy apps. If you are in a community where mental health is stigmatized and your parents won't accept you, if you tell them that you have intrusive thoughts, but an app is like your, your pathway into some normalization than it is gold.

So it's not good or bad. It just is. It [00:53:00] depends. Um, and it's probably pretty situational. And again, that's a lot more nuanced. Whereas social media is probably less effective than something like a better help, but there are probably instances where someone shares something on social media and it genuinely leads to fruitful connection.

Yael Schonbrun: Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. It does sort of get into this interesting territory for therapists these days. Cause we all went online to offer telehealth during the pandemic. It was so convenient, but I would argue, that something gets lost, right? It's like online classrooms versus in-person something gets lost, but having it is so much better than not having it.

, and now that things are opening back up again, there's this kind of dilemma because it's so much more convenient for people like. You take up much less of people's time. I do a lot of couples therapy and so at least one of them is working.

And so, you know, they can even attend couples therapy from different places and yet something gets lost. But in [00:54:00] that non-dualistic thinking if I tell them, if I sort of remind myself, you know, better that they attend regular therapy than not. And so on balance, this is a good choice. Um, but also recognizing you know, that if I can get them in that that would be even better.

Brad Stulberg: exactly. In maybe there's like, um, there's a middle ground to where it's like they're in once every four sessions and then the work can be virtual, the other three,

um, something like that, but you're asking such great questions and I'm not just saying that to like, um, to butter you up or anything. But I, I think that there's like even a more, you know, meta question there, which is like, at what point.

Do we keep doing the good enough thing. And then the actual thing just goes away completely when in fact like, no, we need the actual thing. Like, [00:55:00] is that a bandaid on a problem, which is why can't someone make an hour, once a week to try to better their marriage or why can't some, maybe the reason someone is so anxious is because they don't have an hour a week to go to therapy.

Yael Schonbrun: Yeah,

Brad Stulberg: Like if you're in that environment where you don't feel like you have that, that time or your commute is so long, it's like maybe all the reasons that you have to do the work online or what's actually contributing to the problem itself. Um, so it's really tricky.

Yael Schonbrun: It's really tricky. And I do think this pandemic has given us plenty of opportunities to zoom out and ask those curious questions. It doesn't mean that the answers are easy to come by or easy to, um, you know, put into action. But I think it, do you think we have an ongoing opportunity to be asking those good questions?

, it's a, it's actually a nice segue to talk a little bit about community, right? When we think about success, we often think about individual success, but you argue that so much of it is about community. And, you know, I started off by [00:56:00] talking about how I loved reading your acknowledgement section because so many of the big endeavors that we undertake require lots of people, even if, you know, there's only one person standing on the podium at the end, um, But one thing that I was thinking about the theme really is like,

non-dualistic thinking is that it's a balance between community and being on your own.

So you write a lot about, exercise and movement and how doing it in community can be very motivational. And I was thinking as I was reading it, but I love exercising alone. It's like I am a mother of three and a therapist and just constantly doing it's my alone time. And just this past week, my son came down to the treadmill, my youngest, while I was running and was just standing there.

I just had this very strong thought of, I want to be alone. So I think, um, it's an interesting question of like how to build community in, in ways that are nurturing [00:57:00] for ongoing health and sustainability, and then how to access alone time. And I'm curious how you approach that balance.

Brad Stulberg: so I think that it's quite individual based on someone's temperament. Someone might need a lot more alone time or a lot more community than someone else. , so everyone probably has their own kind of unique set point between those two. And then it's around. I hate the word optimizing, but in this case it makes sense optimizing that set point, , I think where people get into trouble.

Is, , if efficiency and productivity is the reason that you're not making the time for community, that's very different than you genuinely want to be alone. So if I'm canceling plans or if I'm doing everything over text instead of a phone call or zoom, instead of driving 10 minutes to go [00:58:00] to a hike or a coffee shop, because I genuinely want to have an hour just to be, that is very different than I'm doing it because I'm looking at my schedule and I realized I can see one more patient.

If I do this over zoom, instead of drive to meet someone at a cafe, or I can write two more paragraphs. So that to me is like the kind of red herring to identify as are you choosing not to build community because it's inefficient or are you choosing that to build community because you're fricking worn out of extroversion and other people and you want.

Yael Schonbrun: Yeah. Yeah.

Brad Stulberg: In my own life. That's certainly true. When I, when I left efficiency or productivity, cannibalize community, I always feel like crap. And

when I want to sit and read a novel, instead of hanging out with the neighbors and I cancel the barbecue, I feel great.

Yael Schonbrun: Yeah. Yeah. Can I follow that up with a personal question? So your first two books were written with your colleague, Steve, who I think co-founded growth equation with and [00:59:00] this recent book, which has such an emphasis on community is written as a, as a solitary author.

And I'm curious how you made that decision.

Brad Stulberg: Ah, that's what you think. So I love this question. Um, cause people are always like, huh. So Steve is like my best friend, my collaborative partner. I'm on the phone with him 18 times a day. There is nothing but love there. And the best part about this book experience was watching Steve promote it as if it was his own.

And he said he was going to do that. And it's one thing to say that it's another thing to just go full on shameless mode promoting for three months, a book that doesn't have your name on it. And he probably promoted it harder than me. I remember three days in back to like the dopamine. See I called Steve I'm like I'm done the sales rank, starting to drop.

I feel gross. Screw this I'm done. And he gave me this huge. And thank God he [01:00:00] did, because if I would have quit like promoting, then I would have sold the book way short. , so that's been absolutely wonderful. So then the question is, well, yeah, why did I write this book alone? , two big reasons. The first is if you read it and I know you have, but listeners, there's such a through line in the book as my own experience with OCD and depression.

And that is just super intimate and personal and not something that Steve has shared, , not shared meaning he's gone through it, but we haven't had that. He hasn't had that experience in the way that I have. Um, and then the second reason is just kind of the mechanics of making a living in large, by being a writer that if you split a book advance that's half than if you do it alone.

And we had two really good ideas. Grounded-ness was one, this examination of like what it means to be tough as the other. And that book will come out in June.

Yael Schonbrun: And

Brad Stulberg: very much like

a Brad and Steve book, but Steve's name [01:01:00] is going to be on it and I will promote it as if it's my own. , so that is the backstory there.

Yael Schonbrun: Yeah. Yeah.

And there's something so wonderful about writing with other people. And then there's something so nice about just leaning into the single voice, the, the, I, that is just easier. Um, but, but it's also nice to do that still with like silent collaborators, right. To have people that read it and give you their honest feedback, the brain trust idea, which I love.

And maybe you can even talk about what the brain trust idea is.

Brad Stulberg: Yeah. It's just that it's having a group of people whose brains, you really trust that you can run stuff by that. You know, we'll give you, , an honest answer, even if it's not what you want to hear, and then you'll listen to those people because you trust them. I think in creative pursuits, especially, , it's so helpful, even if their name's not on the book to have that person that is in your corner as if it was their own, because it is lonely out there.

when you [01:02:00] launch a book in like going through it with someone else that can help keep you grounded. And also that you can just like have fun with and just laugh at the absurdity of like everything. So I'll tell a story from, and I hope this isn't too inside baseball from the book launch of grounded-ness.

Um, so. The kind of publishing plan and the goal for grounded-ness was to get on the New York times bestseller list the first week. And again, non dual I'd say 20% was purely ego, but the other 80% was just dying to not have to promote the book so hard. And if you get on the New York times bestseller list, it does a lot of the promotional work for you because that's where podcast hosts go.

That's where readers go. So it helps generate future sales. So you don't have to grind. And the book had sold enough copies to get on the list and then the list came out and it wasn't there. [01:03:00] So the reason it wasn't there is, it turns out my publisher had forgotten to invoice one of the largest.

Purchasers for the books. And even though this purchaser think like a Barnes and Nobles had sold the books, they don't report the books until the order is closed. And for the order to be closed, the publisher has to invoice them. So the

book is sold. I don't know what it was 6,000 copies the first week, but it only came across as like 4.5 and it missed the list.

So if I would have gone through that alone, I would have been like pretty freaking down. The fact that I could call Steve about it helped me get from pretty down to laughing about the absurdity of it all within like 30 minutes. Um, so I think it's not just launching a book, kind of any big thing where there's stuff that's outside of your control and you want something badly, but so much can go wrong.

Um, it's so helpful to not feel like you're alone.

Yael Schonbrun: [01:04:00] Yeah. Yeah. It helps you recover when things don't go well and, and things sometimes don't go well, like no matter, I think that that's a really important point that you make, again and again, in your book, which is you can try hard and try well and do all the things that you're supposed to do. And sometimes the outcome isn't what you want.

And that is why focusing on the process is so important because not only because it increases the likelihood of a good outcome, but also because it helps you to rebound more quickly. Um, and so part of the process of having community is, is what helps you to rebound.

Brad Stulberg: Yeah. It's another area of, um, of non-dualism and we can get back to the community part, but I know you said, I think you said you have three kids, you just said.

Yael Schonbrun: Mm.

Brad Stulberg: Yeah. So we only have one. Um, but it's something I think about all the time in terms of like non dual parenting is, you know, I grew up like hard work, hard work.

If you work hard enough, you can do anything. Well, that's not true. Genetics plays an enormous [01:05:00] role. So then what happens? I worked my ass off to be a NBA basketball player, but I'm not, I didn't work hard enough. And that's an extreme example, but maybe it's, I worked as hard as I could to be this mathematician and I couldn't get into the college.

Is it? I, must've not worked hard enough. That's on me. No, it's not like a lot of like, you know what, you're good at? There's a huge genetic component. The

flip side is just to say, oh, it's all genetics. I shouldn't track. Like, that's also not true. So it's having this non dual approach, even to that, that you can do everything right.

And nail it and still not get there and be frustrated, but that's not your fault. So I just think it's like such an important thing. And that doesn't mean you, you ought not work hard. That gets back to like picking goals where the process aligns with your core values, because the ultimate joy should be in the working hard, not necessarily in whether or not you get the gold silver, bronze.

Yael Schonbrun: Right, right. And just to add to the genetics piece, like, you know, the [01:06:00] color of your skin, the amount of money that your parents have, the teachers that you have, the opportunities, right? There's so many things that are not in your control. And as you're saying, like, you can give up if you don't have those things, but actually there's a lot you can do through effort.

It's just that you can't do everything. It is that non dual approach and sort of seeing things in context. The other thing I just wanted to also give you an opportunity to talk about is like, community is not just for picking you up when you fall down, but it also can raise your performance. And you gave this really lovely example of your friend, Shalane, Flanagan.

, and have how community helped her become a much stronger runner as well as the. With whom she was running in community.

Brad Stulberg: Yeah, so Shalane is the best. I'm like, well, she's actually the best and she's the best. So Shalane is a four time Olympian. , she's the first American woman to win the New York city marathon in over 40 years. And that happened at age 36 for her, which is fairly late for [01:07:00] a professional distance runner.

And for the vast majority of her career Shalane trained to load very solitary. And for good reason, her training was super scientific. So workouts had to be an exact pace and exact mileage, totally prescribed for her unique body, her unique fitness level, her unique goals. And she came devastatingly close to winning these major events.

, but didn't, and then later in her career, she decided that she wanted to train with a group of other women, and that meant forfeiting some of the optimization of her. 'cause now she's running with other gals. , but what happened is her performance just skyrocketed. And so did that, as you said, of many of the other

women in the training group and, , Shalane really attributes her New York city marathon victory to the fact that she stopped training solo and started training in a group.

, and you, you realize this, I think in other domains too, there's some pretty solid research that shows [01:08:00] that, , emotions are contagious. Motivation is contagious. And ultimately, I don't know if there's a study that pointed it, but like doing hard things with other people is just more fun. And if you're having fun, you're more likely to do those things well, and I think so much of it just comes down to that.

Yael Schonbrun: Yeah, well, it's like the equation for grit that Angela Duckworth talks about. Passion plus persistence. They feed each other, right. Enjoying what you do, being passionate for it. , helps you remain persistent in, in that goals that you're pursuing.

Brad Stulberg: Yeah. And I think that that's about, as you said, like, you know, the community that having other people around you, and then back to our prior conversation around like unique genetics, it's also about like finding the right fit and finding something you're good at. Um, this is just a footnote in the book, but I actually think it's really important in, in the pre the chapter on patients.

Um, I talk a little bit about grit and how I think the Angela Duckworth's grit is such a useful concept, [01:09:00] but I firmly believe that you first need to have fit before you can have grit. So in my own upbringing, I quit everything related to math. I quit AP math in high school. Then I quit calculus. I thought I was going to go to business school and undergraduate, I quit.

Then I thought I was going to major in economics. I took econ 401. I quit. I quit. I quit. I was the opposite of gritty and. But in English and language arts, I got rejected from journalism school. I kept writing. I didn't get on the school newspaper. I kept writing. I had countless things rejected from magazines, from blogs.

I kept writing. So I was a hugely gritty writer. And as a result like here, I am making a living writing. So it's not that I'm a gritty or not gritty person. It's that I found something that was the right fit for me. And then I could be gritty at it. , and it, it, it very much relates to this. Like if you just work hard, because if I would have just worked hard at math, I would have [01:10:00] constantly failed.

, so I think non dual, again, the ability to have grit and also the ability to quit are really important.

Yael Schonbrun: Yeah. A hundred percent, so, okay. Just as a repeat. So the principles of groundedness, art, acceptance presence, patience, vulnerability, movement, and community. And so this is my final question. I'm curious. I think that you've become more grounded since becoming a father.

Brad Stulberg: Uh, yes and no. Um, the ultimate level yes. On the daily level. Heck no. I mean like there's so much frenetic energy. Um, a, you know, listeners can probably get a sense. I think that so much of my own kind of philosophy and spirituality is rooted in Buddhism.

And, , back when I lived in the bay area, there was this meditation teacher named will and often people. And this is right around the time that Theo [01:11:00] was born a few years ago, people would ask, you know, how am I supposed to practice? I have this kid in, Wilwood just laugh and say, well, if you have a young child, you basically have, , live in Zambia. Because talk about not getting attached to what you're doing to a certain way of feeling to a certain way of being to sleep to anything the kid comes in and says, kill all your attachments and like be in the present moment. , so I think kids are really good teachers, but yeah, day to day it can feel really, , really frenetic.

Yael Schonbrun: Yeah.

Brad Stulberg: Yeah. If there's anyone out there listening that is, um, expecting, or has a young child, um, don't worry about like sitting with your eyes closed for 15 minutes a day. Like your life is about to be a grueling retreat and also a very joyful retreat. Um, for the next few years.

Yael Schonbrun: Both. Both and well, that's the perfect place to end. So we'll in our show notes. , send people to your [01:12:00] website, definitely pick up Brad's book.

It is, it's such a terrific again, I'll, I'll just say again that it Mary's personal stories, yours as well, as many other people that you interviewed with science and Eastern philosophy and ideas from psychology and business and sports.

Brad Stulberg: That's it? Um, website. And then as I mentioned, um, I for better or worse and hopefully for better, I am on Twitter. And, um, my handle is at the Stalberg. So just be in a, my last name.

Yael Schonbrun: Thank you so much for joining me today.

Brad Stulberg: Thank

Yael Schonbrun: and yeah,

Diana Hill: thank you for listening to psychologists off the clock. If you enjoy our podcast, you can help us out by leaving a review or contributing on Patreon.

Yael Schonbrun: You can find us

wherever you get your podcasts and you can connect with us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

Jill Stoddard: We'd like to thank our strategic consultant, Michael Harold, our dissemination coordinator, Katy Rothfelder [01:13:00] and our editorial coordinator, Melissa Miller.

Debbie Sorensen: this podcast is for informational and entertainment purposes only and is not meant to be a substitute for mental health treatment. If you're having a mental health emergency dial 911 if you're looking for mental health treatment, please visit the resources page of our web page offtheclockpsych.com