

Paleo Solution - 347

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Robb: Hey, folks, Robb Wolf here. Another edition of the Paleo Solution Podcast. Something special for you today. Today, I have my good friend Jonathan Levi. Jonathan is an entrepreneur, angel investor, and he's the founder of the incredibly popular Becoming SuperHuman Podcast. Jonathan, how are you doing, man?

Jonathan: Fantastic, Robb. Fantastic.

Robb: Awesome. Now, where on the planet are you located currently?

Jonathan: I am in my recently completed recording studio in Tel Aviv, Israel.

Robb: Nice, nice. How long have you been there?

Jonathan: Just over three years now.

Robb: Okay, okay. And how are you liking the scene there?

Jonathan: I love it. I love it, man. It's fantastic in the sense that everything is small and manageable. There's a lot of bureaucratic friction that I've had to kind of overcome but on the whole I feel like the lifestyle here is a lot healthier and happier than Silicon Valley where I came from. And that always surprises people.

Robb: Right, right. Well, give folks more of your background. Because you have a huge, just so many different hats that you've worn, particularly in that angel investing and entrepreneurship scene. Tell folks more about that.

Jonathan: Yeah. So, Robb, I never actually managed to get a real job growing up. I interviewed a couple of times for Togo's and Jamba Juice and I was told that I wasn't Jamba Juice material.

Robb: Damn it.

Jonathan: Yeah, I know, right? I started out at a very, very young age starting businesses. All the adults in my life were entrepreneurs or had small businesses and so I thought that it's just what you did. If you wanted to buy stuff and you wanted to have income, you started a business. And, I think, my parents were very smart in that all my chores were kind of optional. So, my parents really believed in the

free market. You could mow the lawn or find another way to buy that Nintendo game that you want.

And my friends and I usually found another way. The first real business that I actually started was probably the fourth or fifth iteration and that was selling luxury BMW parts on the internet, which is a really, really cool business when you're 16 and kind of a less cool business when you're 23. So, we ran that through college, my friend and I, and sold that, got it Inc 5000, grew it to about \$3 million a year in revenue and then kind of bounced up against the walls of our ambition and kind of what we wanted to do.

So, sold that company, went and did some soul searching, went and got an MBA, lived in France a little bit, lived in Singapore a little bit. In the preparation for that MBA, I decided to do a ten-month condensed -- I've always been the kind of person I want to put in the least and get the most. I want to try and find ways around things. I want to do things as efficiently as possible. So, I went through this ten-month condensed MBA.

I realized that I was just going to be swamped. During my undergraduate at Berkeley, I was just buried under the workload and the reading. I was always a slow reader. I'd been diagnosed with ADD at a very young age, so prescription medication the whole deal. And I kind of got the impression that my old tricks like locking myself in my bedroom and just working much harder than anyone else had to were not going to cut it in graduate school especially in a program where you need free time to network. You're there to meet people, to build connections and stuff like that.

Lucky for me, I happened to meet someone who was, what I would later call a super learner. Basically, he and his wife had developed this methodology around memory and speed reading that allowed you to accelerate your learning. And, of course, I thought this was total BS until I saw it and I saw what -- Lev was the guy's name. I saw what he could do. I saw his memory skills. And I was like, "Man, I got to learn how to do this."

I signed up. His wife actually coached me for about six weeks really intensively. And then I went off to business school and lo and behold I was able to keep up with the reading and I was able to memorize 500 people's names in the first week. And I was able to do all these things that, in retrospect, today I'm like, "Yeah, of course, that makes total sense." But back then I thought it was just magic. And so after business school I tried to do a bunch of different startup ideas with my classmates.

I wanted to build a software company. I had all these ambitions of building a venture backed startup. And I realized a lot of that, Robb, was ego and was just

kind of me wanting to do something bigger and better. And I came back to this accelerated learning thing which so many people had asked me about.

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I mean, every day, in B school, people were stopping me and being like, "Hey, didn't you read the case study? Why are you already done the exam?" kind of thing. And I found myself just constantly explaining and explaining how this works to people and referring people to Anna and Lev for coaching. Eventually, I was like, there's got to be a more efficient way to overcome this kind of hurdle. I don't know about you but sometimes I feel like each book that I've written I write it because I'm tired of explaining something.

Robb: Yes, absolutely. Yeah, yeah.

Jonathan: Exactly. So, it's that. And I was like, we should just -- I learned in Hebrew. I was like, I should just translate all this stuff. I've got a bunch of ideas. When you read 700, 800 words a minute you tend to kind of research stuff and I've got a bunch of ideas how we could improve this, how we could convert it to kind of a more hands off approach instead of having a coach sit on your shoulders.

And we should just make an online course. So we did. And funny thing, I always like to tell people I took the exact skills that I teach. The speed reading, the memory, the accelerated learning, sat down one day and was like, okay, how do you build online courses? How do you market online courses? And within about a month we were one of the top selling courses on one of the larger market places like online course market places, and within about a year we had 20,000 students, and within about two years we had 50,000. Today, we've got 73,000 students across three different versions of the course. So, pretty wild ride.

Robb: Nice. And so what do those courses look like? Are they broken into the speed reading, the memory? And how are those parsed out?

Jonathan: Yeah, absolutely. So, from the get go, we started -- and I was a very firm believer that the memory stuff needs to come first. I had tried speed reading before. Like I said, I grew up with learning disabilities and my parents -- I'm the first of one. My parents wracked their brains and they just didn't know what to do with me. They bought me the Evelyn Wood book and they bought me all kinds of books. I was like none of this stuff ever worked for me. I was able to read faster but then my comprehension dropped. I didn't remember what I could read. I essentially thought that it was just snake oil.

I think a lot of people, if they've taken a one day speed reading seminar, they come away with this idea like, okay, I got taken, I got had. And so my approach

was if you're going to improve the pace of your learning then you need to improve the infrastructure. It's the question of do you build the track first or do you run the race first? And so we started out early, early on with the short term memory and getting all of that up and running and getting you to a point where you can remember things faster and more efficiently and also retain them for longer.

Interestingly enough, about three weeks ago, we restructured the course to also move all the long term memory stuff up. So, basically, the first five weeks of our courses are just intensive memory training until you get to the point where -- I had a student ask me about, essentially it was a very intense medical term like laryngotracheobronchitis or something like that. And the goal is to get to a point where anything you learned can be quickly and easily converted to a highly memorable set of neurons, a neural network.

And at that point, you're ready to then go to the speed reading. So, the speed reading stuff is three or four weeks and you kind of continue practicing it on your own and then it goes into how do you adopt the skills and the kind of fine tweaks. What's the best dietary regimen for learning? How should you influence your sleep and how should you alter your sleep to learn more effectively?

All kinds of interesting cool stuff that I'm sure you and I come upon in the podcasting world. Like how does light affect your learning and what supplements, nootropics, stuff like that? I mean, there's so many different things you can do to learn more effectively. And, of course, sitting there and rereading the book ten times and pulling an all-nighter are not one of them.

Robb: Right, right. Interesting. So, Jonathan, before we started recording, you had kind of alluded that you have noticed a parallel with this kind of -- Like you've seen some efficacy in this evolutionary biology ancestral health approach to nutrition and health itself and whatnot but you've been kind of finding some underpinnings from that evolutionary biology perspective in enhancing memory and learning. Could you talk about that? That actually is -- I mean, on an intuitive level, it kind of makes sense to me but that's actually kind of surprising. It's pretty cool. I love to learn more about that.

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Jonathan: Well, I have to give you credit on that one, Robb, because as I was reading your book and you did this wonderful kind of almost Socratic interaction. So, I have all these visual memories that I've created from your book as I've read it. That's how I kind of go through and walk through the visual journey. And so you're having this conversation and I remember the part where you're bouncing back,

you're talking to the anthropologists and the nutritionists and you're kind of having this back and forth conversations.

In that moment I started asking myself like, "Wait a minute, why do these techniques work so well?" Because these techniques that we're teaching -- and we can go -- We're not trying to hide the candy. We'll go much deeper into it, I hope. This stuff has been in use for about 2200 years. These are the kind of memory techniques that were used to memorize the Odyssey before they were mass kind of reproductive writing systems, something like that.

So, this stuff's been around forever. And so the question is: Why does it work? Well, what I came to realize and the more I researched neuroscience, the way the brain works and things like the picture superiority effect, I realize that basically what this is Paleo learning. In the same way that the Paleo nutrition movement says like, "Hey, let's just adapt your diet to what your body is expecting because the body hasn't adapted in the last 10,000 years or 15,000 years since we domesticated animals, domesticated--"

And the kind of functional movement, movement if you will, is saying the exact same thing. Like your body is not adapted to doing bicep curls. This is almost the exact same thing. So, basically, if we really look at our Paleolithic ancestors and we ask ourselves a question what kinds of learning were life and death? What kinds of skills, of mental aptitudes gave these people a survival advantage?

Ultimately, what you come up with is visual. So, certain visual memories like what is the exact shade of the berry that made everybody so sick? Or where is the exact location where we buried our winter food. What are the tribal colors of the people that are friendly versus the people that are dangerous? All this visual information and, of course, sound is also pretty important but I would say like probably the most important thing to know is, "Hey, this tastes rancid."

Taste and smell are actually our most memorable scent. And if you smell today the perfume of your 11th grade girlfriend 20 years later you'll go right back to that moment. And it's exactly that. It's for two and a half million years, some of the most important information has been smell and taste followed by visual. So, the first principle of improving memory and -- On our show we've had, I think it's five different world champions or European champions or USA memory champions, people who can memorize pi to a thousand digits, people who can memorize 500 names in ten minutes, things like that. And it always comes down to visual memory and spatial memory. And that's exactly why it is, is this evolutionary kind of preference that we have towards visual information.

Robb: It's so interesting. I'm not a neuroscientist but I do understand that when we start integrating information with that kind of visual anchoring, we get this kind

of holographic imprinting. And in a hologram you can kind of break it into smaller pieces but it still maintains the integrity of the whole image. And so you can kind of -- You only need to brush around the corner or a piece of that thing and then you've got to route into it instead of it just being this distinct kind of like line item in a textbook kind of gig.

Jonathan: Bingo. And that's actually a great segue into kind of the second main foundational point of accelerated learning, which is linking every piece of information. So, in 1955, a guy by the name of Malcolm Knowles came out with a list of requirements for adult andragogy, adult learning. And he did mountains of research that said if all things are equal, what causes the adult brain to absorb something and what causes it to forget it?

And that's exactly one of the things. Adult learners need connection to pre-existing knowledge and they need immediate application. So, it's exactly what you said. Connecting to that visualization and then going even further beyond that, comparing and contrasting this piece of knowledge that you have.

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So, it makes sense that I've basically memorized your book, Robb, because I connected it to all these different things that I knew about diet and nutrition. I compared and contrasted it to the very erroneous nutrition classes that I took at Berkeley and adapted it also to the knowledge that I have about how Paleolithic men and women lived. So, that would be kind of point number two, is take every piece of knowledge no matter how desperate it is.

A few months ago, I decided I was going to sit down and learn quantum mechanics. And I don't know the first thing about quantum physics, quantum mechanics. But what I started to do is connected back. So, how does Planck's constant relate to experiments that I might have done in high school where I screwed up the experiment because I was observing it and I was checking it too often, basically connecting to pre-existing knowledge and to experience.

Robb: The watched pot never boils kind of gig. Nice, nice.

Jonathan: Absolutely, absolutely.

Robb: Fascinating. Man, I literally have like 50 different questions for you and I'm not sure which one to -- I need to remember which one to ask first. I remember what it was today I wanted to ask. Emotional content can really improve the memory process.

Jonathan: Absolutely.

Robb: When we're kids, everything is cool and everything is exciting and everything has emotional content. Or, I mean, you can get bored but generally if you're experiencing something new like there's just this emotional content and so everything seems to get this really amazing anchoring. Like visions that I have from childhood now seem to be more -- like I can pull those things up better than I can, things that I experienced a week ago because I'm just kind of sleepwalking through my day to day life. How do you integrate that emotional piece, that kind of amygdala and emotional kind of content?

I guess, some of that is just like having this like joie de vivre, like excitement for learning. So, you're trying to connect this stuff to things that you can relate so that we have that kind of holographic memory. But then it really seems like that excitement or passion or what have you is like serious glue that really makes that stick. Are you able to train people on that? Or remind them how they were as kids? Like how are you incorporating that?

Jonathan: Absolutely. You have 50 different questions. I have 50 different ways I want to answer that. The first is kind of weaving it into those other two pieces. When we visualize, it's not pretty but if it works it's not stupid. We often visualize kind of ludicrous insane violent sexual bizarre imagery. So, for example, my visual marker, we call them markers, visual marker for the Russian word open involves me being stabbed and standing in front of an emergency room.

So, very graphic imagery. But I'm certainly not likely to forget that word. And then we also, as you said, like what's emotionally relevant to us is our memories, the things that we care about. So, when I meet new people, what I'm doing is I'm connecting them to kind of the people that I love, the people that I cherish, the characters that I'm interested in. If I meet someone named Tom, I'm going to connect them to one of my favorite books, Tom Sawyer. And I'm going to find ways to make that emotionally relevant.

So, it's exactly what you said, Robb. It's aiming the brain. We have two hippocampi in the brain. People often talk about the hippocampus, which sits kind of in the center of the brain. There's one for the left hemisphere, one for the right hemisphere. And it is in charge of so very many things but one of the principle things is determining how important things are. And so it does that exactly like you said. It basically goes through -- A lot like actually Google's early page rank algorithm.

Like, well, hey, this is Robb's website. It's linked to Loren's website, is linked to ten other websites. Everybody seems to be linking to the Paleo Solution blog. It must be important. And it's exactly the same way in your brain. This one memory is linked to 500 other neurons with basically electrically excitable pathways.

They're called synapses. If there are 500 synapses linking to this one neuron, this must be pretty important.

There's a principle called Hebb's Law which says, basically, neurons that wire together fire together. And so the name of the game is literally gaming the system, tricking the brain into saying, into believing that these things are emotionally relevant and related to pre-existing knowledge.

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So that something like quantum mechanics, which is so far out of left field for a sociology major like me, suddenly becomes hugely important and something that my brain wouldn't dare to forget.

Robb: Interesting. So, Jonathan, I'll see if I can spit this thing out. We are exposed to a massive amount of stimuli even if we're sitting in a closed room or at our back porch and there's sun shining, like there's sights, sounds, feelings, the temperature of the air. There's a zillion different things which kind of gets -- They don't make it through that relevance filter. And then we could experience a situation with like psychedelics or different types of altered states of consciousness where those things that usually get filtered out we can't or don't filter them out.

So, I guess, I'm trying to lay that context. We have some barrier there where certain things get filtered in, get filtered out. Are you concerned about or thinking about like what things we are and aren't filtering? Is there a finite CPU storage limits so that you're kind of like, okay, I don't want to be firing on all cylinders all the time so that all 20 people at Starbucks that I just ran into like I'm going to remember them forever. There needs to be some purging of the cache memory or what have you. Does that make sense in context of this like relevance versus irrelevant to you?

Jonathan: Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. It's funny you say that. I interviewed Harry Lorayne who's kind of one of the seminal guys in the memory world, not so much in the learning but in the memory world from the 1950s. And he goes, "My problem isn't remembering. My problem is always been forgetting." On exactly those notes, right? I generally trust the brain to do what it's told. I always tell my students these methods will take you from remembering -- Someone tells you how to say hello in Norwegian, most people forget that within a minute or two minutes tops.

These methods will take you to remembering it a full day. But the truth of the matter is there's no way to game what the brain is meant to do. So, the brain is 2% of the body's mass and it's 20% of the resource consumption. The sheer amount of oxygen, the sheer amount of electrical signals that it consumes is

insane. And so in order to kind of not be a bigger energy hog than it is, it's constantly trying to trim unnecessary neurons.

So, every time you sleep you're losing millions if not tens or hundreds of millions of neurons. And so the brain will do that for you. What we teach is that things that you want to remember need to be forward linked. So, every time I read a new book on nutrition or every time I interview a new guest, I'm going back referring to my knowledge. I keep using the example of your book, Robb, because it's probably one of my best reads for the last couple of years.

Robb: Oh, thanks, man. Thank you.

Jonathan: Yeah. Loved it. But I'm constantly going back. And so I'm kind of refreshing the timeline. There is something called the curve of forgetting. So, the more you review the longer you push that curve out. So, each time I review something, I kind of re-up it but the re-ups but aren't the same time interval, if you will. For example, I'm kind of a language learning enthusiast. There are words in Russian - - And I use in algorithm and I use a piece of software that measures this. There are words that I will only forget if I don't use them for 32 years.

But there are new and more difficult words that I will forget if I don't practice them for four days. And so what we do is we apply all of these incredible hacks, the visual memory, the connection of knowledge, the emotional relevance, all that good stuff, and then we add on top of it something called space repetition which says I use intelligent intervals to review everything that I learned. I'm an avid highlighter, note taker. I review the books that I care most about.

Just last night I was talking to someone about quantum mechanics and it is the case that if you don't use it you learn it. I always tell my students like as soon as you get your nose out of the book, go out there and explain it to somebody, implement it. Take the things that you're learning in all these business books, and apply them in your company, team them to your employees, bring them to your manager, set yourself a reminder to review it from six months. It's definitely not the case that you can learn something once and then remember it forever.

Robb: Interesting. What's the name of that kind of triage software for the language? I'm super interested in that.

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Jonathan: Yeah. So, there's a few of them. The one that I personally like it's no frills but it's called Anki. I like it because it's cross platform, allows you to do multimedia so you can have sounds. So, if I want like the authentic muscovite pronunciation of a word or I want -- I used it recently to kind of memorize the entire piano

keyboard. So, if I want to know the notation of like the highest C on the keyboard, I can have it play that sound to me. I can use video graphics, all kinds of cool stuff and that's nice if you have visualizations for things. If you want to kind of sketch them out. So, yeah, Anki is really good. I think it's anki.net, if memory serves. It usually does.

Robb: Yeah. It usually does. Shocker, yeah. Again, I'm thinking 50 different things and I'm not sure which one of that. This is almost like what should I be when I grew up kind of question. So, maybe very difficult to answer and maybe a reflection of me being lost in my own life. But how do you prioritize what you want to learn? We have so much -- Like language seems like a super cool deal.

I actually just grabbed a calculus textbook and I'm working my way back through that and I'm actually going to cool my heels on that until I go through your learning courses now because I really want to get that stuff because I've got some renewed interest in this topic called non-equilibrium thermodynamics as it relates to life and sustainability and all this stuff. But, I mean, there's so much--

Jonathan: Amazing.

Robb: I'm excited. I'm actually really excited about that stuff and I want to go back and make sure my calculus is on point so I can understand the implications and the physics. But how the hell do you organize or prioritize or triage, again, what you're learning? Like what do you feel like are the valuable things to learn? Because we have so many options now.

Jonathan: That is a great, great question. And that's one of the things I kind of struggled with, if you will. Once I developed the skill set I binged hard, hard core. I learned about internet marketing and I learned about all the different sports I wanted to try and I learned about body language and public speaking. I binged really aggressively. There's still so much that I want to learn. Even for me, so many hours in the day.

I think I still have some remnants of guilt around not completing a subject. Like I would set out to learn Russian and my Russian is still very basic and so is my piano and so many other things that I learned. And what I realized was, first off, it's a lot of fun to just learn for me personally a little bit about a lot of things. And I'm not trying to achieve mastery. I'm trying to achieve above average. I'm trying to achieve fluency in every skill that I want to learn. Fluency is a notoriously kind of a--

Robb: Slippery deal?

Jonathan: Yeah. Exactly. But what I've realized over the last couple of years is the more I learn the more I'm able to learn. I'll learn something in acroyoga that will transfer into the way I do Olympic weightlifting because it will help me think about biokinetics in a different way. And so what I've realized is like I basically learn, first and foremost, what I need to, right? So, right now, we're doing all kinds of webinars and I'm learning about Facebook ads and not such fun stuff and I need to learn that to kind of manage my business.

But after that, it's essentially whatever I want to learn. So, I've taken a huge pause on Olympic lifting though I have nowhere near a perfect snatch or jerk, anything like that. And I'm just really going deep on this acroyoga thing which I'm so fascinated by. And I've kind of taken a pause on Russian and picked up the piano, which some people would say is a very closely linked skill. And it's exactly that. I look on my calendar and after this interview I kind of have nothing to do and it's what do I feel right now?

Because, I think, what you're most passionate about learning is what you'll ultimately going to succeed in learning. And for me, all learning is a step forward and learning in any area pushes you forward in every area. I started to learn copywriting about eight months ago. I didn't know anything about writing long form copy. A friend of mine kind of kicked me in the pants and made me realize like one of the most valuable skills you can have is writing, putting words on paper that influence people's emotions in a way that -- A blog post is cool and everything and informative but writing something down that's going to make you change your life today, Robb, or that's going to make you go about your day in a different way like that is real impact.

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And so I sat down and there was like probably a three-month period where I just devoured all the most popular books. I mean, I read the entire Robert Collier Letter Book and The Boron Letters and I read Scientific Advertising and 22 Immutable Laws of Marketing. And this was like probably one or two books a week that I was just devouring. And then all of a sudden it was like that point of marginal return where I'm like one more book is not going to add that much, I think I'm kind of done here, I'm definitely no Gary Halbert. But it's at that point where I no longer have the passion to push forward in the learning.

I think that's okay. The way that I would summarize kind of my whole rant here is I think that's okay. I think you have to follow your passion. I go in waves, right? So, this week I had a friend come from Russia and I was like, "Man, I really wish--" We're talking about politics and I was like, "I really wish I could have this high level conversation in Russian." And so you come back to it. And so now I've been like digging up the Russian flash cards.

Robb: Because you have the compelling reason now because you're like, "I really want to step this up." Yeah.

Jonathan: Bingo. That's Malcolm Knowles for you right there.

Robb: Right, right. Jonathan, two questions. I don't want to forget. So, the first one, and you kind of alluded to this a little bit, what are the things that we can learn that helped us learn other stuff? Like you mentioned the acroyoga and Olympic weightlifting. There were carryovers there. And I'm thinking like physical space, learning how to learn like Buddhism. There's different things it seem to prep the brain for learning. And then I also want to ask you a question about Brazilian jujitsu and then coaching movements. So, remind me when you get through with what should we learn to further facilitate learning?

Jonathan: Love to. So, to further facilitate learning, I mean, it ultimately like when everything becomes a visual, you develop this kind of fluency with visualization. So, a friend took me rock climbing and it was kind of this whole challenge. For me, every opportunity becomes a learning challenge whether it's meeting 100 new people at a conference. I asked questions in a certain way and then I'm able to translate things into visual symbols.

What I do when I approach a physical learning challenge, I've typically found that you can break down -- it's kind of the 80-20, Pareto principle. If you can get down the three most important principles of a physical movement pattern, you get a lot of the way there. So, in golf, probably -- don't quote me on percentages -- but probably 50% is like from where do you generate force and on what axis? Are you moving your shoulders or are you moving your hips? Where are you pivoting from?

And that one point, if you take away, it's almost like you said about all the noise that we're subjected to. Like take away all the noise about the position of the thumb, the height of the shoulder, all that is a distraction. That will keep you focused on the 20%, not the effective 80%. In rock climbing, one of the most important fundamentals is to monitor the distance of the body. And if anyone in the audience is a golfer or a rock climber, correct me. But monitoring the distance of the body from the wall so that you're basically controlling how much stress you're putting on the biceps and on the legs and on the triceps and things like that, and conserving energy.

And I've taken this kind of rule of three-principle and applied it to so many other things. So, acroyoga, most important thing is to monitor the lines of the flyer's weight. If I'm basing someone and I have either one or two or three people on top of me, I need to constantly be monitoring that there's a straight line

between their weight and the ground. And if I do that, in any kind of transition where I'm shifting their weight, if I'm constantly paying attention to where the weight is, that will honestly bring you 50% of the weight there to like being able to balance people and effectively move people. That's been my experience. With jujitsu--

Robb: Here's the question around jujitsu. So, you alluded, and correct me if I'm wrong, but if we get exposed to something then if we teach it -- Greg Glassman, when he rolled out Cross Fit, he was like, "Okay, you've wrapped up two days of a certification. You learned to Olympic lift with a broomstick, go grab your neighbor and start teaching them." A lot of people scoffed at that but there was clearly a lot of genius to that. I've felt for a long time that people who are new to Brazilian jujitsu, even though they're just getting exposed to something, like even as they get exposed to a technique or a concept, it seems like it would be really good for them to then turn around and try to coach it themselves almost immediately.

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But there's this kind of crazy hierarchy within jujitsu where it's like, well, the highest belt is kind of the -- That's where the buck stops. But I feel like that could really be hamstringing progress versus if we structure classes where we expose people to stuff and then they actually coach it back to us.

Jonathan: Yeah. So, something taught is something twice learned. Because when you approach -- Basically, to teach something, it forces you to conquer these questions of like what is it like to be a beginner? And especially because you are a beginner in that moment. It's kind of like mindfulness, if you will. I've been meditating very consistently for over a year. I really got into it as I started interviewing people on the podcast and realizing how many top performers do it.

It's caused me to have this level of meta-cognition where I can stop and go, "Why don't I want to be in my office right now?" "Oh, it's because the light bulbs are slightly too dim." Things that would have been on my subconscious level are now easily brought to the conscious level. And that's been probably one of the coolest things about meditation. It's like I'm annoyed right now and in the past I probably wouldn't know why. I'd just say I had a bad day. I'm not annoyed right now, right now.

And it would be kind of this illusory like why did I have such a rough day today? And now I'm able to say like, "Oh, right. There was this one person that I bumped into and--" It's kind of that exact same process. It's causing you to be super present in the moment to where you can say, "Oh, yeah, I get that. Right now, this person's weight is moving and so that's causing you to--" It's dissecting. I

think, honestly, teaching is one of the most powerful tools. I actually love to dissect jujitsu for a second with you and you can see how I go about asking these questions to get to these three points.

Jujitsu is one of these things that I've tried a few different times and I've never had, because of the fast pace of the classes and everyone's constantly pairing up and stuff like that, I've never been able to pin someone down and figure out what these three principles are. And so I imagine that there's one or two different core principles that are so innate to you at this point, Robb, that you could maybe even articulate them. And it's something to do with, from what I can determine, never find yourself between someone's legs. That's probably one of the most important principles, give or take.

Robb: I'll throw some stuff out there. The things that I've been -- everything that I do I try to think about what's my connection to the person and do I want to be connected with them, do I want to be connected a lot? Do I want to be connected a little? If they're in mount on me, I want to try to scoot them down near my hips and get super well connected with them because then I've got a better chance of dislodging them. If I happen to be in mount, I want to avoid the person connecting with my hips and so I'm able to kind of dictate the engagements but I think about it with regards to connection.

And this could apply to boxing. I try to want to connect to you and I don't want you to connect to me. And then the other two things, and I don't know that I could hierarch them, but posture. So whatever position I'm in I want to be mindful of what type of posture I have because that's going to keep me orthopedically sound but it also leads into the next thing, which is pressure. Like when I'm wanting to put some type of pressure whether I'm pinning the person inside control or I'm passing guard then my posture is going to dictate the type of pressure that I'm able to use.

And then all of those things are kind of viewed through the lens of connectivity. Like for a given situation or even in a transitional situation, I want to be really mindful about how I am connected to that person. And so I've got connection, pressure and posture. For me, being kind of the three things I boiled it down to and I've stolen some of that from Straight Blast Gym and also from Henry Akins.

Jonathan: Very cool. So, yeah, I kind of got the hips thing, like understanding the connection point and proximity and understanding that it's a bad connection point if I have two inner thighs wrapped around me at any point in my body. I managed to figure this one out in the first hour. How much would you say, if someone were to master those three things but maybe didn't have the fluency with all the exact postures of where hands go in arm bars and different things

like that, but they master those three things, how much would you say of the skill that is?

[0:40:00]

Robb: If we accelerate things forward such that we play the game that we would play as an 80-year old person, so it's non-attribute driven. It's not completely reliant on explosiveness and speed but like fundamentals that you could do a jujitsu match today and then the next day you die due to natural causes. Then in that case, these principles are 80%, 85%, 90% of the story. And the people like Rickson Gracie, Henry Akina, some of these people like their jujitsu is just on a completely different level, the thing that they have really, really dialed in are these fundamentals.

And then you have some people who are really, really great at jujitsu but they tend to play a very attribute based game and as they age oftentimes they didn't pay as much attention to those fundamentals and they relied instead on attributes and so they literally have to go in and pull the transmission out of their game as they age. And usually they don't do it in an aggressive all encompassing fashion. It's wiggling away which is super frustrating.

And so I've always tried to play a non-attribute based game. And for a 45-year old guy I'm in pretty good shape and have decent attribute but I don't really rely on those too much. Every once in a while I'll have some fun and do some cartwheel passes and handstand walk around somebody to take the back and stuff like but that's not my primary gig.

Jonathan: Right. So, that's completely consistent with what I found in just about every sport I've applied it to. If you can master those three fundamentals, and I think where a lot of people get stuck up is they focus on that other 15%. Because you would think if you're learning acroyoga, you need to know the exact positions of the hands and the exact timing of everything. But it's actually not that. It usually breaks down to these three massive things.

So, what I always advocate is figuring out a way, whether it's Socratic method or whatever you need to do, to ask questions. And so I am a teacher or coach's worst nightmare because I'm asking these awful questions. Like when I was learning Olympic lifting, I ask these questions and I ask them in my language. And then I repeat things back in my language to ensure that I understand in my terms. Because so much of learning frustration can be chalked up to communication errors.

I mean, so much of like life's problems can be chalked up to communication, misunderstandings. So I ask these questions like what's the method of force in a

clean? What percentage of the force would you say in a clean is driven from the arms? It turns out that it's very little, like almost none. You want to get under the bar, you want to drive it with your legs. So that's like a really important fundamental for the clean as you're not healing it.

And I've just found them. If you can get a coach to teach you in that way -- I've done this with skeet shooting. I've done this with so many different things around like what are these three most important things? And sometimes you have to suss them out. Because if you're dealing with a true master these are things that are now so deep in their kind of subconscious level. I mean, if you're going to roll with one of the Gracie Brothers, they probably -- It's now like breathing to them to be monitoring pressure and to be monitoring their hips.

Robb: Yeah. My years of training, I could have never done a day of training and it won't change the outcome at all. Not a bit. Because they're operating on such a different level that even though I've made for me enormous progress over the years there are folks out there that it just doesn't matter. Yeah.

Jonathan: Oh, yeah. And those are sometimes the worst people to learn from ironically.

Robb: Right. That's interesting. I've noticed that brown belts, because I'm right knocking on the door to a purple belt, but the brown belts have oftentimes been the most valuable people for me because they're further down the path than I am but they're not so far down the path that they don't remember where I am and they're still fiddling with stuff themselves.

Whereas sometimes the super advanced black belt, sometimes it can get a bit esoteric because they're just working on stuff that I'm a decade, two decades away from being at a spot where I will need to put the same bandwidth into it. That's definitely the difference between going really, really deep on a particular topic. It definitely -- you reach these really interesting stratifications. And jujitsu is one of the rare things. I'm usually a little bit of a sample plank guy but the jujitsu is the hook, sink and deep and I'm hoping to get on the deep on that.

[0:45:10]

Jonathan: Amazing. Amazing.

Robb: Jonathan, I could chat with you all day long and I want to be respectful of your time. We got going a little bit late because I had a funky morning. But where can folks find your courses and which courses would you recommend? What would you recommend that I start with? And then how do I work my way through the course work and also where can folks find you just generally on the interwebs?

Jonathan: Yeah. So, the courses are at becomeasuperlearner.com. People are going to check it out. They can do a free trial. They can test their reading speed, play around some memory stuff, download some worksheets, no credit card required, none of that stuff. If they just want to play around. And we recommend starting there. We do have a productivity course that we sometimes pair for people who are like, look, I don't have 20 minutes a day to practice.

I also do a whole thing on productivity, automation, how to get your day efficient. It's a great idea to start with the learning courses. And basically, everything is laid out for you. We give you a daily training guide. We give you worksheets. We give you exercises. And all you need to do is commit to about 30 minutes four times a week, is usually about right. A lot of that is speed reading your emails instead of reading them normal. It's not actually sitting in a silo.

To find me, people can check me out at JLE.VI. It's my personal website. That will link people to the becoming super human podcast and all that kind of good stuff. You can find me on Twitter, [@entrepreneur](https://twitter.com/entrepreneur).

Robb: Awesome. Jonathan, it was a ton of fun having you on the show. Are you game for circling back maybe four, six months down the road and doing this again?

Jonathan: Absolutely. It would be an absolute honor, Robb.

Robb: Fantastic. Awesome, man. It's great connecting with you. Are you getting back stateside anytime soon or are you mainly staying in Israel?

Jonathan: I'm staying here most of the time. I might be in San Diego in March for a mastermind. So, that might happen. I just came back from Summit at Sea and then I did Burning Man before that so it's been kind of like a lot of across the pond trips.

Robb: You were at Burning Man? I live in Reno. You need to come see me next time.

Jonathan: Yeah, I got to do that. I definitely got to do that. We got to get you out here to Israel, Robb. There's some seriously interesting stuff for you to check out.

Robb: I would love to. My friend Ido Portal almost got me to go out to Haifa but the trip fell through. Let's just make it happen. 2017, let's make that thing happen. Yeah.

Jonathan: Done.

Robb: Well, cool. I'm actually online signing up for Become a Superlearner currently. I'll have some reports to give on that, man.

Jonathan: Amazing. Cool, man. I appreciate it.

Robb: Well, Jonathan, thank you again. Thanks for being patient with the timing. I know that the scheduling was a disaster. My life's been a disaster lately between kids and dogs and everything else. But thanks for being accommodating.

Jonathan: It was my pleasure, man. It's an honor.

Robb: Okay. We'll talk to you soon.

Jonathan: Cool, brother. Take care.

Robb: Take care. Bye.

[0:48:22] End of Audio