

FT: Dave Asprey, welcome to So Money, Happy New Year!

DA: Happy New Year, Farnoosh.

FT: You know, I've been really, really interested speaking with you. You are very busy these days, you are in the process of spreading a very important message to the world about becoming more healthy, becoming more fit through your own personal journey. You have a new book out called "The Bulletproof Diet." But some people might be wondering why did I invite Dave Asprey onto So Money, this is a financial show?

FT: Well, if there's anyone out there that's proven that they've got a very disciplinary method to their life, you're one of them. You're very disciplined, you're very focused when it comes to your health but apparently also to your entire life. And I think that there are a lot of parallels in how we approach the discipline that's required to maintain a healthy living lifestyle and a financial lifestyle and a financial life.

FT: So I'm curious to see how that might translate into your own personal finances. We'll get to your personal finances in a second, but first congratulations on "The Bulletproof Diet". Tell me a little bit about the book and the biohacks, and you as a self-described biohacker, what made you wanna write this book?

DA: I spent \$300,000 in 15 years, first getting my health back and then exceeding what I ever thought was possible. And along the way, there's a certain amount of psychological, emotional stuff that you work on in order to be a peak performer. And I got really interested in all of the things that you can assemble to perform at your very best level, and then measuring what you were doing and do more of what works and stop doing what doesn't work.

DA: And when I ended up writing "The Bulletproof Diet", it ended up being a book about willpower. It turns out that there are many things that you do everyday that are outside your conscious awareness, and those zap your ability to make good decisions, of any kind of decision. And one of the biggest areas where people today are just wasting their energy is on food cravings and on hunger rather than eating, so that they have maximum energy to make the best decisions, whether they're financial or personal or just a decision that you're not gonna snap back at your kids when they pester you.

[laughter]

DA: Whatever that is, there's some amount of energy that you have to bring to bear on a problem. And if you're eating the wrong foods or if you're just not eating enough of them or if you're beating yourself up with exercise for two hours a day every day, all of those can make you a poor decision maker across your entire life. And that is something that became apparent to me, so I stopped wasting time and energy on being hungry and having food cravings, and that has unleashed a lot of entrepreneurial performance for me. So I wrote the book to share that with people.

FT: Tell us your personal story a little bit. What brought you to the point where you were like, "I'm gonna spend \$300,000 to figure this out." Where were you in your personal health at that point?

DA: When I was about 26, I had weighed up to 300 pounds and I started getting brain fog. I was working at a company in Silicon Valley that I had become very successful. In fact, I made \$6 million when I was 26. I lost it when I was 28, by the way. [laughter]

FT: We will get to that.

DA: Oh yeah. But at the time I was like, "I don't remember what happened in this meeting. My brain isn't working. I don't have the energy to bring it when I want to." And I'm a pretty smart guy and I just felt like I was losing my edge. I just didn't have that energy. So I started measuring this and paying attention to it and realized that there were a whole bunch of things I was doing that weren't working. I also started taking smart drugs and I just decided that if I was going to have the career that I wanted, that I was gonna have to get on top of my biology. That's why I worked out six days a week for an hour and a half a day and I did all sorts of things. I tried many different diets.

DA: But along the way, it was always what makes me perform the best? Not just look good cause it's relatively easy to lose weight, with just... Of a famine with a tiger chasing you, and you'll lose weight, you'll just gain twice as much back. [laughter] Unfortunately, you have to do it right, not just the easy way. And I've been... I've kept that hundred pounds of fat off for more than a decade now, and I don't use effort or will power to do it. It's an effortless thing. It just happens when you eat right. When you've cracked that code for what foods make you bulletproof and what foods are kryptonite to you, it might be different than the guy next to you, but you better know what makes you weak and stop doing it.

FT: Give us a little sense of what we can expect from "The Bulletproof Diet". Tease us. I'm really curious to learn what I might be able to accomplish and I'm happy to hear that I don't have to enter a famine and be chased by a lion or a tiger to lose weight. What are some of the unique tips that you provide in the book that you're especially proud of?

DA: One of the most important ones is you've gotta eat more healthy fat to be a high performer and I don't mean drinking olive oil, I mean, grass-fed butter, avocados, even things like a steak from healthy animals that ate grass. The quality and type of the fat you eat is at the foundation of who you are. And I say this 'cause your hormones are made of fat. Your cell membranes, every cell in your body are made of fat and your brain is made of fat. So if you don't eat quality fat that's undamaged, over time, you're not gonna perform the way you could and you're gonna experience a lot more food cravings which you just don't wanna have.

FT: Let's talk money now. I'm curious to hear how some of your health philosophies might be mirrored in your financial philosophies. And that's my first question is, what is your best, a most sacred financial philosophy that helps guide your decisions? And you are somebody who is a very successful entrepreneur. You've sold businesses. You know a thing or two about money. But I'm curious in terms of managing your money, earning your money, saving your money, growing your money, what's your philosophy?

DA: It comes down to awareness, and it's exactly the same for food and money. And hence, there is a whole universe of things that happen in your body that are not visible to your conscious brain. I actually write about this in "The Bulletproof Diet". There's a whole conversation that happens. There's kind of three big buckets, and this is between your nervous system, and you can almost think of your nervous system as a separate part of you. And it just ties directly to the financial

decisions you make.

DA: The first thing, if you imagine a Labrador Retriever in your mind, this is what the Buddhists would call "the monkey mind". But there's a part of you that, if you imagine that floppy dog, you say, "Look, there's a stick!" And you run aFTer it. That's distractibility. And also, "Oh, is that something I should be afraid of?" So there's this constant seeking for something that's either opportunity or something that's a threat. That's actually not really your conscious human brain, that's an automated defense system in your body.

DA: There's also this, "Oh, look, I'll eat anything," which is what that Labrador will do, and there's also that, "Oh, look, there's a leg, I'll go mate with it." So those are the three survival behaviors for the species. And as I look at how did I lose \$6 million when I was 28, it was because my body, my nervous system's automated protection systems, were forcing me to not pay attention to what was important because honestly, my nervous system was afraid of them.

DA: As a conscious, intelligent human being, I wasn't afraid of them, but I didn't realize that the fear response in my body had nothing to do with logic. So when I look at managing my money, the first thing I do is I look at what is my nervous system's response to a financial situation. Is there a fear or a tension or something? And if there is, I pay a lot of attention to it until that goes away, because I don't want to be dealing with money on that level.

DA: I will honor my nervous system if I have a deal in front of me, and some part of me is like, "Run screaming, this is a bad deal." Okay, I'll go with my gut. And all the great venture capitalists, when you talk to them about this, they'll say the same thing. Some part of what they do is intuition. So I trust my intuition, but I listen to my nervous system, and I don't let it make decisions for me. I make them consciously.

FT: How do you reconcile this? Because on the one hand, like you said, you want to respect your nervous system, you wanna be conscious, and if your gut's telling you to run the other direction, you might. But then, how do you manage that so that you actually end up, like you say you have to... You want to squash those fears. How do you squash those fears? What is the conscious effort that you make to make sure that your nervous system isn't necessarily taking over in a negative way?

DA: Some of my clients are very successful people, and I coach them on how to do this. I have very few coaching clients, I'm a CEO and I'm running Bulletproof, but I still set aside some time to share with other people I really, frankly, would like to spend time with anyway. I use a technique called Heart Rate Variability training. There's a little \$99 sensor that hooks up to your iPhone, and it's called the Inner Balance Sensor. I carry it on bulletproof.com, but it's not a main part of my business. You can buy them on Amazon, too.

DA: And what you do is, you plug this thing into your ear and into your iPhone, and you take a deep breath. If your body is in a sympathetic, this is a fight-or-flight kind of mode, then the iPhone turns red. Or at least the icon turns red. And if you're in a parasympathetic dominant, this is the relaxed, conscious mode, then it turns green. One of my clients learned what it feels like when it turns red because he got into the green zone. He's a hedge fund manager. He's sitting on an airplane and he thinks about work and it turns red. He goes, "Oh, wait a minute, when I think about work,

my body gets ready to run away and hide." So he learned to overcome that.

DA: He takes it into the office, turns it on, the market bell rings, and it goes red, and it stays red all day. So he was treating billions of dollars in a fight-or-flight mode. So it took him about two weeks of training himself to be aware of when his body did that, and then to take steps to turn that off, until at the end of the day, he had twice as much energy and he felt better and he made better decisions. I do that with myself all the time, and I do more stuff with advanced neurofeedback.

FT: So, did he do breathing exercises? Did he drink more coffee? What was he doing? What were the steps?

DA: It's actually a short breathing exercise that's guided by the iPhone. But what he's doing is he's learning what it feels like to change the spacing of his heartbeats. Not to make it go faster or slower, but just to space them differently. There is no way that you or I sitting here could know what that feels like, but when the iPhone tells you, it's actually kind of an advanced form of meditation, one that you would arrive at over years of practice, except we're all too busy to take years of practice to learn something that you can learn in about two or four weeks of doing this for 10 minutes a day.

DA: So, it's like breathing exercises for 10 minutes a day, and at the end of a month or so, you realize that you now know when your body gets ready to run away, and you know how to turn that off. And that is... It frees enormous willpower that you can use to make better financial decisions. You can stop being afraid of anything that way.

FT: And you can avoid the irrationality that can sometimes take over, and it's very human nature sort of thing. So the Heart Rate Variability training is what you recommend and there's an app for that. [chuckle]

DA: You call this... It's not an expensive thing either.

FT: Okay.

DA: And, like I said, it's not a part of my business. I'm an advisor of the company it makes it, called HeartMath, but I'm not a paid advisor. It's been transformed, for my own ability, to pay attention, so I make it available for people.

FT: Very, very, very cool. Okay, money memories, Dave. Let's talk about an experience that you had, perhaps in your childhood, perhaps more recent, that was very influential in how now you think about money and manage your financial life. Take us there.

DA: Back when I was 26, 27, when I made that \$6 million, it's remarkable to think you're done. You can do whatever you wanna do for the rest of your life, and then to lose that. It's actually really traumatic. Even the WHO, a list of traumas, it says, losing masses of money like that is like losing a family member in terms of the psychological stress you go through. And I remember back then, that when I had \$6 million on paper and some substantial amount in the bank, that I thought, "You know, I'll be done when I make 10." And I know when I would have got to 10 it would've been at 20.

DA: And so you can always be chasing it, and it goes straight back to that Labrador in your head

that's looking for the stick and something else. So, the bottom line is that a lot of people already have enough money, that it's not about the money anymore. It's about something else. And what it's become about for me is, money... As soon as you have your base needs met, money is a tool, and for me it's a tool to help other people. And different people have different desires for money and I realize for me to achieve some of the goals that I have, it will take money, and I have no guilt or reservations about that.

DA: When I was younger, and I look at why I was going for that six or that 10 million, it was a fear and a want, and like a psychological trap that I built for myself, what the Buddhists would call "grasping". And when I stopped doing that and I started looking at this and saying, "I'm really fortunate and how can I help the most people?" [chuckle] And I realized that having a team supporting me, lets me do more good. So I apply money to having my team support me.

DA: And that has been really transformative, and it's helped accelerate what I do with Bulletproof a lot. It's helped me reach more people, and I get messages every day from people who lost a bunch of weight, or their brains work again and things like that, and I think that that helps make the world I live in, and the world my kids are gonna grow up in, a better place. So, for me, that losing money, feeling like, honestly, I was gonna die I was losing so much money, you go through this horrible trauma. In retrospect, it was a good thing because it taught me both to respect and not to fear either money or the lack of it.

FT: And so this might categorize this a financial fail, you could say, right? But I'm curious how was it that you actually lost the money? How did you fail at keeping that money in the bank?

DA: My career accelerated quite a lot at that time. I was the youngest guy in the company to attend board meetings at a \$36 billion company, in terms of our market cap, doing a billion dollars a year in revenue. And this is Exodus Communications, if anyone is wondering. Google's first servers were in our building. This was a foundational part of the internet as we know it today. And I was in charge of due diligence for our M&A. So, when we wanted to buy a company, I was the guy who'd go in and say, "Is this technology gonna work for us? Yes or no?"

DA: And because of that, I knew all of the upcoming acquisitions. So, I was blacked out. It was illegal for me to trade my stock. And when those stocks started to teeter, what I should have done was quit my job, sold all of my shares and retired. Instead, what I did, is I said, "I can't do that. I might lose an additional \$4 million in uninvested equity or something." So I stayed at the company when the stock dropped from \$60 a share to \$5 a share, and it was illegal for me to trade it.

FT: Wow!

DA: Yep. In retrospect, I did that because it was fear of not getting everything that made me do that, even though another perspective would have been like, "I have enough money. I can do whatever I want. I should just walk away today." And I could have done that. And for six months, I didn't walk away today. And every day, I was worth less and less in the bank account. And that was a grinding down, horrible feeling. And there's another thing, I don't think I've ever talked about this. I was with some online broker, and this is going back 15 years, all my brokers still used paper statements and stuff, and it was a very cutting edge one that let me do options and all this stuff.

DA: And the reports from them, I'm like, "I have a couple grand there. So at least I have enough to

take care of the basics." There was a margin on that account that I didn't even know about because I wasn't managing the stuff tightly, and because I was too stubborn and fearful to hire someone to help me manage it, that the margin that I didn't even know I was using, consumed most of the account before I noticed, which was like my safety net went away, because I wasn't paying attention to it. And today, the advise that it translates to is hire a professional to pay attention to the stuff that you're not paying attention to. So, that's why I have a CPA.

DA: A lot of people don't have a CPA. They don't have a good financial guide and say they sort of do their stuff themselves. My perspective is that I don't love that and it's not a unique value that I have. So I pay someone to do it and whether they do it better than me, or not quite as good as I would do it, I don't have to think about it anymore and that frees me up to create something new.

FT: And how did you determine who would be your CPA? Did you go through a long list? Did you interview thoroughly?

DA: I didn't interview well enough and it actually took me quite a while, probably, three or four tries, before I found a team that I wanted to work with, and I say "team", it's a small office kind of thing. But that is... It's a risk. I have had some over the years who probably cost me a substantial amount of money because I didn't choose well. And that's also a fear that I have. I can't trust anyone with this. But if you don't find people that you can trust, then well you may have trust issues or you may just not know how to hire a competent people.

FT: So let's transition now to something positive in your financial history, a So Money moment, a time in your life when you had a financial win. Take us to that moment and tell us where were you, what happened, what did you experience?

DA: You know what? For me this was such a big thing making \$6 million that I can talk about what it felt like. I was in the Bay Area during the dot com boom and real estate was just out of control. And I sold my first year's worth of stock options for something like \$90,000, which was a down payment on my first house. And I was so excited about it. It was a giant win because when you make a normal salary and all of a sudden you get another year's salary just appears in the bank, it's just like an overwhelming... This is amazing. And so that was definitely a big win. But what I didn't do was sort of step back and think about it, 'cause had I waited three more months, that \$90,000 worth of stock would have been enough to pay cash for the whole house.

FT: Right.

[laughter]

DA: So maybe I took it off the table too soon, but in retrospect, I didn't because one of the lessons I learned from this whole time was, it's a good idea to sell half until you have enough money that you just don't need to worry about it, and that number is different for different people. But somewhere, I don't know, for some people, it's \$100,000 'cause you can go live for the rest of your life in Thailand. And for other people who have very expensive tastes, I can't imagine living without \$5 million or something. I don't know what your number is but you should do some thinking and know what that is and until you're at that number, when you have a windfall or a potential like that, sell half.

DA: If I had been smart enough to just take half of my money off the table when I was back then at Exodus, I still would have \$2 million or \$3 million. There were lots of opportunities there. So I'd do the same thing if I go play Blackjack or something, I'd try to take half aFter I'm far ahead and just sort of set it off to the side and I'm gonna walk away with that. And by the way, I don't gamble for money, I gamble for entertainment and I'm happy to lose whatever I put on the table. So I'm not a big gambler. But I do like to count cards because it's fun.

[laughter]

FT: Let's hope Vegas isn't listening.

DA: They can listen, I don't bet that big.

[laughter]

27:25 FT: Well, thanks for sharing that. I mean, yeah, the lesson there really is "you need to cut your losses or at least just not even your loses, take your fair share when you're done and be happy with what you have." I used to work with Jim Cramer and one of his favorite sayings is, "Pigs get slaughtered."

27:40 DA: That's so well said. I was definitely being a pig and if I had just harvested some along the way, I would've probably had more flexibility in my life. I've been working to support my family for the last 20 or so years and I'm enjoying my time as CEO of Bulletproof for sure. But I've been working this whole time, not rolling around on a Learjet or something, although that would've been fun too.

[laughter]

FT: Sure. Well, let's talk habits. What's a financial ritual, a So Money ritual that you do, that helps keep your money in check and where it needs to be? It could be daily, it could be a little less frequent.

DA: Well, you tell me if this counts, and it's something I do with my kids every night. And when I put them down for bed every night, I say, "Tell me three things that you're grateful for." My kids are five and seven, and it's, "I'm grateful that I got modeling clay," or "I'm grateful that we played together." It's little things like that. But having a daily gratitude practice means that I don't make bad financial decisions because if I live in a world where I'm grateful for all the amazing things that happen around me and all of that, when it comes time to make a financial decision, I never make it from that place of fear. So I don't know if that's directly financial enough, but I consider that to be one of the fundamental things that I do to keep my head on straight, so that I can do the financial things.

FT: Absolutely. I love that, and what I love most about that is that you involve your kids in that ritual and I think what a phenomenal lesson to be teaching them. They may not understand the value in this habit right now, I'm sure they just have fun with it and they think maybe during the day what they're gonna say at night when they meet up with you but certainly, when they are reflecting on their childhood, this will stand out and I think in a really big positive way. So that's awesome and I appreciate that you share that with us, because I think that's very inspiring.

DA: It's funny, I don't... You don't want to worry a five or seven year old about money but they know what money is and I literally say, "I'm grateful that today I got a book deal for 'The Bulletproof Diet' and it's gonna help a lot of people and it's gonna help pay for our house." And the kids go, "Wow, that's really neat, that's really cool." So even in the practice of gratitude, they learn that you can be grateful that you had a chance to add some value and to create some money. So I really think I am leading them in the right way and I hope I am.

FT: Well, I'm the new mom of a six-month-old, so I look forward to having these moments with him because they are priceless. And not only are you teaching them that money can support your goals but that hard work pays off. In your discussions, you'll inevitably be talking about the work that you're up to and the goals that you're setting, and I just think there's so many positive things that can come out of that. And that's such a great way to end your day, love that.

DA: You don't have to wait to start. My first big work in terms of writing was a book about pregnancy and fertility before I wrote "The Bulletproof Diet". And there is great value to saying what you're grateful for every night before you put your baby to bed because they still hear and absorb stuff, so you don't have to wait and it's good for you in the meantime.

FT: All right then, I will do that. All right, Dave, this is the finale for the So Money interview where I ask you a succession of questions, quickly, rapidly, give us your first answer that comes to your mind. I'll give you a sentence and you will finish it, all right? "If I won the lottery tomorrow, an infinite amount of money, I would... "

DA: Establish a foundation to make the money recreate itself, so that I could do lots of good stuff.

FT: Such as?

DA: Such as, right now I'm working on soil quality globally and you do that by changing food quality and farming practices, so I would fix the world's soil.

FT: Wow. Let me know how that's going. [chuckle]

DA: Slowly.

FT: Slowly, slowly. "The one thing that I spend on that makes my life easier or better is... "

DA: I spend on my health and performance. I invest a large amount of money on upgrading my performance with every possible technology and practice and vitamin and supplement that I can find. And it is money very well spent. That's a lot of what's in "The Bulletproof Diet", actually.

FT: How about splurge, your biggest splurge, something that you spend a lot of money on that maybe too much money but you really can't help yourself?

DA: I spend a large amount of money supporting the Ansari XPRIZE 10th Anniversary. This is the XPRIZE for private space in-flight. I spent a lot of money to spend three days with the founders of that with Peter Diamandis and I knew the money was going for a good cause but it was still a big

chunk of money. And I did that because I wanted to spend time with people and I wanted to see SpaceShipOne and SpaceShipTwo and watch rockets being printed and drive some ridiculously expensive sports cars that were part of the weekend. So it was a splurge but it was incredibly enjoyable and it actually was inspiring, so I'm happy I did that.

FT: Is that something that you, as a kid, have always been curious about and into?

DA: No. I just love spending time around people who are absolutely changing the world by disrupting things, and private space travel is doing in a fraction of the time what governments have never really achieved, so I'm just awed to be around people who, 10 years ago, there was nothing and now like, "Here's our spaceship." It's taking longer for everyone else to do it, so it's very inspiring.

FT: "One thing I wish I had known about money growing up is... "

DA: I wish I had known growing up that pretty much I'll always be able to make money and this is true of everyone. It's so much fear around money that was unnecessary. I just wish I had known to treat it as something that I can get more of and something that I can use for a greater good, and if I had known that, I think I would have approached it differently.

FT: And finally, "I'm Dave Asprey, and I'm So Money because... "

DA: Because I live much of everyday in the state of flow and I have so much joy in my life that it doesn't matter how much money I have, I still live an amazing life.

FT: Well, congratulations to you and your family. Your new book is called "The Bulletproof Diet", a fascinating read. I'm sure will be very, very popular as many of us embark on our New Year's resolutions to live a healthier life and lifestyle. And I wish you the best and continued success. Your website is bulletproofexec.com, you can follow Dave, @bulletproofexec on Twitter. Thanks so much, Dave.

DA: Thanks, Farnoosh. Love your show.