



EPISODE 438

The Stress-Movement Connection & Finding Alignment Today

With Guest Aaron Alexander

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Shawn Stevenson: Welcome to the Model Health Show. This is fitness and nutrition expert, Shawn Stevenson and I'm so grateful for you tuning with me today. I'm very pumped about this episode, we're talking about the impact that COVID-19 has had on our movement, our exercise practices, and sedentary behavior here in the United States and I just got my hands on some early data that was tracking the behavior of our kids pre-COVID. The physical activity and sedentary behavior and what's happened in the early... Just looking at the early stages of COVID and the shutdowns and the quarantines and things have progressively increased as far as children and their screen times, officially having many schools shut down and a lot of children doing their learning through screens so we already know on the surface that the levels of sedentary behavior have skyrocketed.

That's what the data confirmed. It confirmed what we could already know just by taking a meta-perspective and also the levels of exercise have decreased. So sedentary behavior up, exercise down.

In the study and this was published in BMC Public Health, what the research has discovered was that these current changes in physical activity and sedentary behavior in reaction to COVID-19 are looking like they're having a tendency towards becoming permanently entrenched, leading to increased risk of obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disease in children. What are we doing? What are we doing to our children and ourselves, of course? We really need to look at what are some of the things... What's happening right now, really get face-to-face with the issue and what can we do moving forward to improve upon this?

Because what you're going to learn today is that there's a solution. Movement is accessible. There's access, there's movement opportunities all around us but we really need to have something to engage in, we need to have something to spark that desire because our lives are so different right now.

For a lot of folks, the gym has been their sanctuary. It's been a part of their lives and having that pulled away has led to a reduction in activity in and of itself and just getting out and being in the world and going to work and those different things but for many of us, we see exercise and movement through the lens of lifting weights exclusively and there's a wonderful thing about weights. Weights can provide the opportunity for

strength training in an interesting way where we build more muscle and we know that muscle is our body's fat-burning machinery, it's so metabolically expensive to carrying your body. You're burning more calories than the fellow next to you who doesn't lift. So do you lift bro?

So that's one interesting dynamic but that work takes time. It becomes a practice. Many people who fall in love with the weights, it's become a part of their life while for some folks, it's just not their thing and they're lifting weights and they're not seeing the results right away, they don't understand they're called weights because you have to wait. You got to put the reps in, you got to continuously do the thing and that's what we're going to talk about today is what are these simple things that we do incrementally that don't take up a lot of time, that doesn't have to be fancy, that we can add to our practices and become more human to enjoy more movement and also to share these things with our friends and family because our children are suffering right now.

We're creating a culture. We're literally entraining our children with very deep-seated beliefs right now that we don't even understand the ramifications that come. So we have to take it upon ourselves to make sure that we are employing as much healthy, safe movement as we possibly can but what you're going to learn today, we've got one of the foremost experts in the world to talk about this subject, is that it's a matter of something we have control of. It's a matter of shifts in our environment so can't wait to have this conversation.

But something else really important that I want to let you know about is that I've been working in the past couple of years on a very, very powerful project to help to really revolutionize our connection with food, our connection with each other and really help to put a big dent in and even potentially end our epidemics of heart disease and obesity and Alzheimer's and these conditions that have continued to skyrocket because there are solutions for these things and there are wonderful, powerful things that we already know but the access to this information, there are so many barriers to it.

There's a lot of just dry science and so that's what I really strive to do here with the Model Health Show is making the complexity of some of these studies very attainable and easy to understand, even enjoyable in just sparking that interest and desire to learn and there's something very powerful and even a virility to the nature of a book.

Right now in our very social media dominant thinking, stuff is just here today, gone today. We're scrolling, scrolling but a book has this very powerful transformative



staying power, especially when it's a book that's rich in transformative information and so that's what I've been working on and the new book is called Eat Smarter and this book is addressing: Number one, how to actually empower people in understanding how our metabolism actually works. What are the key nutrients and foods that are involved in the enzymatic processes, the hormone processes that really drive our metabolism, and what are the things that truly create these hormonal blocks?

And bringing these things to the forefront so that we can understand this, we can use it for change and so that's part of the book but one of the most important parts of the book for me and that's been the most powerful is the sections looking at how our food affects our cognition, how it affects our emotional stability and how it affects how we relate to each other and the science is going to blow your mind and right now, when you preorder the book, you're going to get a very special mini-course that I put together and this is a really true value-packed mini-course and it's the 10 foods that are clinically proven to optimize your fat loss hormones. You can get that right now for free when you pre-order Eat Smarter.

Just go to eatsmarterbook.com, pre-order the book. Be a part of this movement, get access to the free mini-course, it's a \$97 value for the mini-course that you get for free. Please do that right now. We need to create change in our world and food is a big part of the solution. So pop over there, eatsmarterbook.com, and pre-order your copy right now and just within the context of foods that have a powerful influence on our metabolism, in a recent conversation we had with Dr. Cate Shanahan, she reiterated a very powerful fact that I want us to really get. I really want us to understand this and in taking biopsies from humans about 100 years ago, the content of our body fat...

So a biopsy, we're literally seeing what are the fat cells made of. The content of our fat cells themselves, around 2% to 4%, polyunsaturated fatty acids, or PUFAs. PUFA, PUFA, puffy. Naturally occurring in many foods. However today, we have so much of these polyunsaturated fatty acids from these very highly processed seed oils that are used to make processed foods that people have been indoctrinated with this idea that it's a good idea to cook with them. The canola oils and the quote vegetable oils that are not made from vegetables by the way. It's marketing.

Now today, taking biopsies from human fat cells, we went from 2% to 4% PUFAs making up our fat cells to upwards of 30% of human fat cells being made of these highly unstable polyunsaturated fatty acids. The very nature of human fat has changed. The ingredients that make up the human body has changed rapidly just within this small time frame. What do you think that means for us as humans when you change the



ingredients that go into making a human? We're coming out with a totally different recipe and wondering why we're battling so hard to figure out our problems with our metabolism. It's the very stuff that we're making ourselves out of.

So I just want to encourage us to start to think about the fuels we're taking in, what we're making ourselves out of and in the lane of fat loss, listen to this, there was a study that was published in the European Journal of Clinical Nutrition and they found that the inclusion of as little as 15 grams of medium-chain fatty acids, alright? So MCTs medium-chain triglycerides per day was enough to boost study participants' rate of calorie burn by 5%.

Now, what this study is showing us is that simply paying attention to the oils that we're bringing into our body, these oils make a huge impact. Your body does a lot of different processes utilizing the oils that we bring in through our diet and so I get in MCTs every single day. One of my all-time favorite sources of that is an emulsified MCT oil from Onnit and I love it because number one, it's easy to mix so we can easily add it to smoothies, teas, coffees, things like that. It tastes amazing and you get these benefits of these medium-chain triglycerides.

Now it's essential for us to understand that these MCTs, these medium-chain triglycerides, would be a natural part of our food intake throughout history but as we've moved away from natural foods and more in the processed food realm, these MCTs are not a big part of our diet anymore. So getting access to incredible resources like this is just really a game-changer, super valuable. I have the MCT oil every single day. Highly recommended. Pop over there, check 'em out. It's Onnit.com/model. That's O-N-N-I-T.com/model. Get 10% off everything that they carry and on that note, let's get to the Apple Podcast review of the week.

iTunes Review: Another five star review titled “Personal Training Knowledge” by SECraven23. “I absolutely love this podcast! As a personal fitness coach, I am fascinated with all the knowledge Shawn has to offer. I feel like I've learned more from Shawn and this podcast than I have from all my undergrad schooling as well as my training and certification from the National Federation of Personal Trainers. I have been able to offer more help and knowledge to my clients, because of Shawn. Thank you!”

Shawn Stevenson: That's so powerful and that's what it's really about is paying it forward. Taking this information in all of us and imbibing it, making it a part of who we are. Being the model ourselves and of course, being able to share this with the people that we care about. Planting seeds, getting on our Johnny Appleseed, and planting seeds wherever we can

because we never know whose life we can impact. We never know how those seeds are going to sprout and the changes that we can make.

I'm here as a result of somebody planting seeds. My mother-in-law, she took the opportunity to share some things with me that changed my life and so take every opportunity you can to teach and to pay it forward and I appreciate this so much. If you had to do so pop over to Apple Podcast and leave a review for the show and now, to our special guest and topic of the day.

Our guest today is Aaron Alexander and he's a world-renowned movement coach and therapist who's helped the world's best athletes, celebrities, and everyone in between to relieve pain, increase strength and optimize their movement. He's also the author of the best-selling book, *The Aligned Method* and he has an incredible podcast as well. He's just making such an impact right now in helping us to reconnect and remember how important it is to implement movement in new and dynamic ways in our life. So really pumped about this conversation so let's jump into this interview with Aaron Alexander.

Shawn Stevenson: Got the sexy Voss bottle.

Aaron Alexander: Yeah, it's actually just some water replaced in Voss very LA of me.

Shawn Stevenson: Hey, the bottle though. That's that...

Aaron Alexander: Sure. It's all about the bottle.

Shawn Stevenson: It looks like you're getting a check cashed at the bank. It comes...

Aaron Alexander: It also doubles as a little myofascial release tool.

Shawn Stevenson: See man, you're so innovative.

Aaron Alexander: I find myself typically doing any type of interviews. Especially, if it's a Skype thing. I'll get a little ball and I'll roll out my joints and roll out my wrist and stack some variables.

Shawn Stevenson: You're like the MacGyver of movement, you know?

Aaron Alexander: Thank you, I appreciate that.

Shawn Stevenson: Or MacGruber.



Aaron Alexander: I'm MacGruber.

Shawn Stevenson: Either one.

Aaron Alexander: Yeah, I don't know that reference either.

Shawn Stevenson: SNL, MacGruber? MacGruber!

Aaron Alexander: No, I didn't see that.

Shawn Stevenson: Yeah.

Aaron Alexander: I need more time in front of a TV.

Shawn Stevenson: I've never actually seen any of the skits but I just know of it. I know it became a movie.

Aaron Alexander: MacGruber.

Shawn Stevenson: MacGruber! You got to say it like that.

Aaron Alexander: I'll get it.

Shawn Stevenson: You asked me "Do I sing?" Yeah.

Aaron Alexander: Shawn Stevenson.

Shawn Stevenson: Listen, man, I'm so glad that you're here. I'm so glad that everything aligned. You are the align king, you know? But dude, the world is out of alignment right now. That's what we see on the surface. So first of all, what do we do man? We're out of alignment. How do you see this through your filter, through your lens, your experience, your professional perspective? So many people, since this whole thing began, we've gotten further away from our core of humanity and movement. We were already a sedentary population, now it's just doubled down on that so how do we get back in alignment? What, from your perspective, what's not in alignment right now and what do we need to do to get back to it?

Aaron Alexander: Well I think the first thing... Thanks so much for making time to do this and then the first thing after the first thing is that our perceptions color the world and so before this,



we were talking about antennas and tuning into channels and frequencies, and are you in resting- -face channel? Are you in a hunched-over-addicted-to-your-cell-phone channel? Are you in the confident-strong-king-of-the-world channel? What channel are you tuned into? So I think if you're coming in from the channel of the world is chaos and it's all polarized and the social dilemma and everyone's... Civil War! And we're inside too much! And it's like the whole world's against us. If we come from that perspective, it's kind of like there's a term, the Pygmalion effect. Familiar with this? You ever heard of this? This comes from an ancient Greek myth.

This is the Pygmalion effect, essentially: Pygmalion was a sculptor and so he was sculpting these various different statues out of marble and then he got a... I'm probably butchering this story so please, research the Pygmalion effect or who Pygmalion was but he got a wish from the Goddess and it was like "Okay, you have one wish. It's a special holiday." and he was like "I'd like to have a woman in the light and in the essence of my sculpture." And she was like "Okay, you got it." And the sculpture comes to life. So he put all this work into forming and creating and visualizing this sculpture and then eventually the sculpture became his reality.

So I think that a starting point is coming from a place of like "Where can I find compassion for what's going on? Where can I find compassion for that person that's pro-this-political-side, pro-Trump, pro-Biden, pro-mask, pro-no-mask, pro-BLM, pro-whatever-their-perspective-is, be able to see what is the echo chamber that that person comes from? What are the stories that they've been told? And how can I start to come from more of a place of like okay, I can kind of start to put myself into your shoes so now I don't have this otherness and this separation and this distance between me and you." It's more of this sensation of like "Oh, I get it." And if you can come from that place, I think from there we can start to actually have a meaningful conversation.

And then also, so that's more of like a political thing, which I don't think it's wise to get into but from just, a purely physical, biological perspective, your perspectives, that filter that you perceive the world from, shapes the production of cortisol and adrenaline and the way that your body goes through the HPA axis. Originally, our bodies are... They're built to move. That's why we have a brain and so when you go through the world and there's, as we were talking about before, the idea that's like essentially, we move to eat and we eat to move and we just do that on repeat, ultimately to survive and create new... Continue the species, etcetera but we've kind of switched over into more of this place of just eating, sitting, eating, sitting.

When a person gets stressed, that stress is an indicator that it's time to move. So this is



a really big deal. So you're all set up that when you're moving, it means something important is happening. When you're still, it means "Okay, cool. It's time to chill." Nothing that important of that high of relevance, is happening right now. Resting, maybe I'm whittling some fibers together or something but I'm kind of just even still I'm moving at that point. Whereas when you're moving, it's like "Okay, something's happening." So your brain comes online and your whole neurophysiology and your hormones and everything, it starts to show up for you and says "Okay, we need to be here for this. There's something going on."

And so when you get stressed and your body goes through that whole HPA axis and all the things that you're already familiar with and your audience is probably familiar with, now your body is producing this chemistry in order to get you to get up and at them. So there's a lion in the room, all of a sudden they go "Oh my God!" The cortisol and the adrenaline and norepinephrine, all the things. Get out of the room. Fight, flight. Make the thing.

Now, instead of that stress, which could just be a story of the world, translating into you making action and moving and getting out there and getting something done and being able to work that physiology out, now it's just, I'm plastered into my couch feeding more and more stress signals into my body. It's starting to back up and back up and back up and so what happens with a person that has a lot of stress hormones going and excessive amounts of cortisol? That's associated with visceral fat. That's associated with degeneration of the brain and the hippocampus and so when the body is chronically under that stressed state, the system begins to deteriorate and so when you get those little punches of stress, it's sweet. It means time to wake up. It means time to run away. It means time to protect. It means time to build. It means there's a storm coming. I need to move and build my shelter and we can work, kind of massage those stress hormones out.

So ultimately I think there's multiple conversations. One, what is your perception of the world? Do you feel safe? Do you feel home? Do you feel loved? Do you feel a part of something meaningful? And then the next portion into that is, are you moving your physiology? 'Cause if you're not, it will back up like a dam.

Shawn Stevenson: Man, this is profound. This is profound. Like when you said the "lion in the room" and our hard wiring, the way that we've evolved to operate is compelling us to move and that lion in the room could be that political candidate on your television.

Aaron Alexander: Yeah.



Shawn Stevenson: It could be that news report of this particular protest going on or the news report about this particular death count. It's the lion in the room and we just sit there and ruminate on it and absorb more or we try to distract ourselves with more sitting and Netflix, like let me get that out of my head. Let me watch some How to Get Away With Murder and what you said today has already inspired me so much because if you just look at animals in nature. We are an animal, we're part of nature but of course, we've separated ourselves so much from it. They shake that off. When something traumatic happens, you've got to... You shake it off physically, shake it off, moving the body, then you rest when things are cool when you're cool.

Other than that, the natural response is to move, to get yourself into a place of safety, to try to move around, fix the problem, whether you're not, you're actually fixing something today but just getting out and going for a walk or going from a hike or changing your environment, moving your body is going to help to bring you back to a more centered, aligned space.

Aaron Alexander: Yeah. So they'll go through that kind of tremulous, cathartic release. Say zebra just escaped the clutches of a lion out in Kenya but what they'll do with that, is they'll find a safe shady place to purge that stress. So in relation to your history that I'm sure you've shared quite a bit on this show if you don't have the resources, which could just be a story, ultimately, everything is a story. Like what's your perception of this place? You know, Victor Frankl "Man's Search For Meaning." He was able to find this sense of... I mean I don't know how he felt find meaning exactly, in the concentration camps but in his books, he seemed to at least in all of that.

So the story of Victor Frankl in that, about as heinous of a situation as you could possibly think of. In the United States, it's like if the wrong president gets elected, people go and they're grieving stations and it's like the schools shut down for a day and all that stuff. People from countries that are actually going through some real would be like "It's a little soft." Like Victor Frankl would probably be like "Really? A grieving station."

We've gone through some real things and our perception paints our reality in a big way and so I think it's like figuring out: One, what are the literal brick and mortar environmental conditions that you exist in that induce the sensation of safety. So perhaps that could be conversations, you've already had a lot, being like maybe, you're bombarded by blue lights at the wrong times of the day. Before you go to bed, you got your cell phone, your TV, and all things that you've already talked about ad nauseam so I'm not going to go into. It could be the shape of your furniture is forming your body



into a more defensive position.

So that's where it gets a little bit weirder to think like "Oh my God! My body, I'm continually sending signals to other people of the way that I feel and the way that I think and with my present state." If I'm scared, suddenly the lion's in the room, I might clench my jaw a little bit, TMJD. I might contract my shoulders up and I might do a little bit more of like, my spine might go into this hyper-kyphotic type like Dowager's Hump type position. Which I'm literally protecting my vital organs so that's a deep mammalian, reptilian defensive expression of, I need to go into protection.

And so when you're in that protective space, it's a super valuable position to be in. You just wouldn't want to live your whole entire life in a position of defense, protect, scarcity. It's I got to get mine, I got to pull it in and you see that even with people with, in relation to your upcoming book, getting into the Psychology of Eating and such and how we choose the food that we eat. I think a major portion of what we eat is based off of our identity structure, who we believe we are. Are you a person that is like I'm not really worth regenerative farmed meat or some bone broth or some organic vegetables? It's like it's a little expensive, I'm not really that guy. I'm more of like a Twinkies and maybe fish fillet or whatever. I feel like that's where I'm at.

So until you start to change that structure, that belief system, the story that you run about yourself, it's going to be very challenging for you to start to veer into a different nutritional program. It would also be very challenging for you to veer into a different postural place and then within that, your posture is feeding back. Just when we're sitting having this conversation to be more granular about it, we're sitting having this conversation, you're continually taking my body patterns in, right? So if I'm gesticulating with my hands, my hands are open and all that stuff, like when we shake hands, we're checking to see if we have weapons. When you wave, I'm saying I'm not here to hurt you. Here! Huh, huh, huh. I'm body languaging to you that I'm not here to hurt you.

I'm communicating to you with my appendages and with the tone of my voice and the pacing of my language, that's how we actually communicate. A very small percentage of our communication is the actual literal words, the vast majority is through body language and the tone of our voice and so it's like okay cool, most people can buy that. If you're a sensitive person at all or have any degree of success in your life and in business and relationships, you're probably somewhat of a body language expert and you may or may not realize it. So cool! Most people can buy that and so what about the reciprocal of that?

So if we invert that equation and say okay, what's the story that I am telling myself through my body language and that gets into there's all sorts of research from all over the place. I know you have resources like research from San Francisco State University. They took different groups of students. They put one group into this kind of like hunched over in the align method book. In my book, I call that the mopey posture and kind of just like the deflated flat like... I.e. Just like hunching over staring into my phone on the sofa and then they had that group think into different memories and then they had another group go into what I call the aligned position which is just like an upright strong stacked Tadasana essentially in yoga talk. Like you just your joints are aligned...

Shawn Stevenson: Tada.

Aaron Alexander: Tada, yeah! The people in the mopey posture it's easier for them to access memories that are more depressive. So your physical posture is literally anatomically depressed then your... The antenna, the way that you perceive the world, and the way that people perceive you start to become a little bit more closed defense defensive depressed. No moralistic good bad judgment. Just that's the language and then you can go over to the other side more open aligned, stacked, well oriented, centered, integrated, dynamic all of those words. That body is expressing something very different and in the San Francisco State research what they found is those people were able to access more what would they would deem as like uplifting, positive memories.

And the reason for that, I would pose is because we're continually anchoring postural patterns to felt states and felt emotions. So throughout your history, forever and ever and ever, ever since you were a little baby, if you wanted to protect you... Everything's contract, right? Shoulders go up your sphincters clench and then when you're happy you go... You open up like a lotus flower. Like the blossom comes open and it just brings it in. So every time throughout your history and this goes ancestral winds back millennia but just in this physical body history, every time you felt good and you want to bring the world in you go...

Shoulders come back. You start to come into this like your diaphragm drops, your breath comes into your abdomen, you say "Oh yeah. I'm home." and then scary time I contract so now when you start to kind of parse that apart when you take on that position, it starts to invoke a certain sensation. So I don't remember what the question was. Exactly but I think that's interesting.

Shawn Stevenson: Man! This is so good because one of the things that you brought up there... Man, this is



really profound but one of the things you brought up was identity. It's tied to how we move but also our perception of the foods we choose to eat. That's something I've done work on as well for folks and like you said, there are certain kinds of prototypes but we're so dynamic as human beings. I'd liken it to like a snowflake, metabolic snowflake but I love the idea of working from both directions but we tend to just work from the symptom treatment so I want to talk about that identity piece a little bit more because what we tend to do and I've said this statement many times but the number one driving force of the human psyche is to stay congruent with the ideas that we carry of ourselves.

So however we perceive ourselves to be is how we are continuously analyzing the world reacting, moving. Everything about us is based on a perception of who we are and if we could change that but part of the issue is that we are comfortable with who we are even if we're not happy. We're comfortable with it.

Aaron Alexander: Yeah, we haven't died in that state yet.

Shawn Stevenson: And so when we try to move and we want change but we still try to remain the same, that's where a lot of the tension and turbulence, the discomfort happens is when you're changing your identity but once you do that, once you change the identity it makes it automatic. So I want to talk about that because you changed your identity to be the person that you are. You wear flexible pants because you're going to move. You know what I mean?

At any time, at any given moment because you're compelled to do it but you had a shift in your identity and your body loves you for it. What brought about that shift in identity for you and how can we employ some of that for ourselves to shift our identity right now to really where we need movement more than ever?

Aaron Alexander: Yeah. There's like a quote that comes to mind is Winston Churchill and it's "First we shape our buildings and then our buildings begin to shape us." So I think that in your home, we're in your beautiful home, it's very open. It's very like light colors. There's space to get around and play and move on the ground. I see some like toys for your kids to play with. It feels very open and free and you could probably might... If someone stayed here, they might all of a sudden be compelled to like paint or...

Shawn Stevenson: Although a lot of singing does happen in this house too.

Aaron Alexander: Exactly or maybe like you'll do a little dance. You probably have... I bet you have a decent



sound system someplace or at least have like some speakers that are creating something that will get kind of the hips wiggle a little bit.

Shawn Stevenson: Constantly dancing too, yeah.

Aaron Alexander: So it's...

Shawn Stevenson: That's so funny. I never thought about that before.

Aaron Alexander: Yeah. I did several chapters in the book of aligning your home, aligning your office, aligning your travel. You know because all of those are opportunities to tap into Churchill's statement of first, you've come into this blank slate and you're the lord of the house and you're shaping it, wow! And then you spend some time in there and it starts to reflect back on you. So something that I would start to tinker with would be not looking for such grandiose changes because anything meaningful just takes time and then it kinda sneaks up on you and five years pass or ten... I mean with you, I already blew lots of smoke up your butt in the last conversation of, you were one of the first people that like inspired me in the podcast world and so I was, at the time, I was a little weird. I would obsessively take notes on every episode, yours and there was a couple of other ones.

I saw you have John Lee Dumas' book over there as well or his notebook or whatever. I'd listen to all of his and so it's like okay, where was my mind at that point? I was really into helping clients so I was doing Rolfing and personal training and kind of in-blending this movement and manual therapy conversation, which is kind of rare for both of those worlds to really integrate well and then I was also interested in how to take that conversation and kind of encapsulate it for masses to be able to consume it and have an impact beyond just my office. So if I go back, I mean the irony is kind of ridiculous, actually. Like you and John Dumas at the time were major, major inspirations. The fact that you have his notebook thing over there, I haven't seen the notebook. I haven't opened it up yet but that's pretty interesting.

Shawn Stevenson: That's not an accident either.

Aaron Alexander: Very fascinating.

Shawn Stevenson: That's totally... Even the timing with you being here but that's literally sitting prominently. It's not like a book to me, it's sitting right there.

Aaron Alexander: It's the only book I've seen here actually.

Shawn Stevenson: You know, it's his freedom journal, which he wrote about me in it actually and so I just opened a new one and I started to go through it and then I saw the story that he was using me as an example in how to use the book and it's just like that is so fab. It re-invigorated me. It gave me another reminder of how powerful I am because I was about to go into a new domain so...

Aaron Alexander: Yeah and how powerful you've always been and so something that I think like we want big change and I'm going to try my best to not sound cliché with any of this because I'm sure people have heard thousands of self-help people say similar things but ultimately, I think it's those small, steady, consistent shifts that matter and so it's like the Egyptians building the pyramids, maybe it was done by aliens or what... I mean I don't know how it was done exactly but assuming it was done by people, my guess is probably people.

Shawn Stevenson: Nanu nanu.

Aaron Alexander: Yeah. What is this?

Shawn Stevenson: Nanu nanu.

Aaron Alexander: What is that?

Shawn Stevenson: This is another reference you don't know, bro?

Aaron Alexander: I don't know. Ask me about any bone in the body I'm like, cool, perfect, we can get into it. As soon as you go to media references, I really go off.

Shawn Stevenson: You sound like me with tech. Like Zoom, you should see me on Zoom, like how do you... What is this tarnation... You know? I feel the same way man.

Aaron Alexander: I need more...in my life.

Shawn Stevenson: That's Robin Williams.

Aaron Alexander: Oh!

Shawn Stevenson: Mork... Is it Mork and Mindy?

Aaron Alexander: Oh! Mork and Mindy or whatever.

Shawn Stevenson: Or whatever, yeah. Same theory.

Aaron Alexander: God Robin man! You've got to watch out. If you get too deep, too smart, there's a quote from some basketball coach saying "The key to developing a great basketball player is for them to know enough about the game to be great but not too much to realize that it doesn't matter."

Shawn Stevenson: Wow!

Aaron Alexander: Yeah and so I think that there's certain people that it's like, you got to watch out with going into this human experience there and not to say that with any trepidation or fear because I don't think ultimately like there's nothing to fear but it's an interesting thing. Some of the people like a Robin Williams and it's like "Wow! The beautiful mind." and they get in so far, it's like I think you can start to step into some kind of nihilistic type place, I think life in some ways... I know this doesn't have anything to do with movement or anything like that but it's an interesting balance of maintaining engagement with the game and also being able to step back and witness that there is a game happening but not get overly consumed with either side. That's not in response to a question either.

Shawn Stevenson: Yeah, no I mean listen, what you just said, it really leans into... And we're going to come back to the pyramids by the way.

Aaron Alexander: Alright. Alright, that was...

Shawn Stevenson: This really leans into what's happening with when we're becoming separated from reality and we see this uptick, even with children. What was in social dilemma, which we were talking about and the suicide rates and I think more important, more than ever, we need a sense of grounding, we need a sense of connectedness but not in an idealistic way but in a real way but to go back to the pyramids, so the Egyptians building the pyramids or aliens, as you were saying.

Aaron Alexander: Yeah. Oh! So within that, they're bringing the bricks in and carving them out and I mean who knows how anything happened in the history but they're bringing bricks and carving them out and it probably took freakin' centuries to get that thing done but it's just one brick at a time, one brick at a time and then eventually you step back, you know and it's... You assume that it just happened and it's like no, that was decades or centuries



of consistency.

It's like the consistent part isn't overly sexy but just know that if you are making subtle shifts in your world and they're manageable, they're bite-sized enough that you can maintain consistency. When someone goes on some massive fad, super crazy diet, I'm full ketosis or I'm full this, that, whatever. I think I got love for ketosis, I got love for vegan, I got love for carnivore, I got love for all of them but when someone goes real deep, real fast, the amplitude of the change was very strong, I very rarely have much trust about it as far as having any longevity.

But the person that just, they just show up. They're on time, they're dependable, they're consistent and it's like when they show up, it's like "Wow! Every time that person is here, they make the room a little bit better." I don't know how to say this like they brought some... You know, we noticed they needed water so they brought water, they noticed oh this person seems stressed out, he's like massaging his shoulder. Oh, he noticed there was trash in the way and picks it up. That person gets invited back and so that's like "Okay cool. There was nothing glamorous about that person. They just consistently make the room better and so if you can do that with time, then all of a sudden the matrix starts to expand and you've done well by this person, you've done well by that person, you've done... And it's all of a sudden, they start talking about you, and then it's like you fill out this matrix but you need to show up.

You need to do the work, you need to support people, you need to live your life in a way that's actually like "How can I make this room better? How can I improve this person's life? How can I improve my own life?" If you consistently do that, I think inevitably, success in air quotes just inevitably manifests itself but it's like, for me and not that I've been perfect in any way but I'm not especially stupendous at anything, I would say.

But I have been consistent with a few things around this movement conversation. So I'll consistently sit like a weirdo in interviews. I'll consistently be barefoot when we're doing these conversations. I'll consistently offer to do Acroyoga or be able to see some way that I can support your body when we're together and I think that has added up. I'll consistently listen to podcasts that are supportive to my mind. I'll consistently eat food that's supportive to my biology and that times five years I think, is very impactful.

Shawn Stevenson: Yeah, man. Very well said. This goes back to the very simplistic quote and I first heard this from Peter Ragnar. Have you heard of Peter Ragnar?

Aaron Alexander: Yeah yeah.



Shawn Stevenson: Man I think about him on a regular basis. This Viking living in the Rocky Mountains, building this house with his bare hands, Taoist, enlightened, kung-fu, weight-lifting, raw food-eating immortal. Alright? And by the way, I had him on this show, on the Model health Show many years ago. So make sure you check... I will put in the show notes for you. Peter Ragnar. Legendary, right? But he said and I know this quote has been around for a long time but he said... But when he said it, it was like "Oh damn, that's true." By the inch it's a cinch, by the yard, it's hard."

Aaron Alexander: Totally.

Shawn Stevenson: So it's just those little... We try to do too much too quickly and some of us have a tendency towards it. Some of us have a tendency towards everything being perfect before we take that small inch. Some of us have a tendency towards balance and each within each of those constructs, there's gifts but I think that we all have it in us but at the end of the day, what you just said is the most logical approach because our identity... To try to change too much is just incredibly uncomfortable and there's going to be like a snap-back effect.

Aaron Alexander: You also have to watch out for people that you're... I don't know what direction you want this conversation to go 'cause it's veering a little bit away from the movement realm but I think it's relevant stuff but watch out for the way that people's perceptions of you can potentially trap you inside of a container of who they thought you were and so that's I think, a really valuable thing as well as sometimes, I think one of the healthiest things a person can do if they are seeking really major shift in their life and they feel stagnant and they feel stuck and all of those words, I think ultimately, you could Byron Katie or Eckhart Tolle and sit on a bench or be on a hardwood floor with cockroaches colony but they're two separate stories, Byron's and Eckhart's and all of a sudden have this deep dark despair that translates into enlightenment in that moment.

Or you could buy a ticket to Puerto Rico or Austin or any place and change up your physical environment for a span of maybe two weeks or whatever. I'm going through a process right now where I'm minimizing my material world. Not in any kind of really spiritual way just for... So I'm a little bit more nimble over the winter 'cause I'd like to travel. Specifically, in relation to doing some research stuff for an upcoming book but in that process of letting go, purging some of the materials that I had, each material that you have, it harbors a certain level of psychological real estate or bandwidth, weight.

And it's like, you walk into your house and these materials, at some point you felt a certain way, you went out and you painted this wall this color and you went and bought that vase. You went and bought those pots, they made you feel a way. So it was like your snail shell that you were living in and you're like "This feels fitting. This fits me. This identity that I'm at now, at age 23 or 33 or whatever."

And then with time, that room starts to form you, it keeps you in that place and I think that's something that I've personally felt is starting to be a little bit more minimalist in my present material world, it's really lightened up the binds of who I think I am and I'm like, I'm not necessarily LA guy right now 'cause I sublet my place and I was just like "Where do I live? Well, I'm planning on traveling. I live in Austin sometimes, I live in LA sometimes." It's like "Who am I?" It's like some of those material I have in Austin, I'm with a different group of people. When I'm traveling, all of a sudden I'm speaking Spanish. It's like "How do I express myself in that language?"

So each place will form you and so sometimes if you do want to create change, I think a really valuable thing is to... You could be as simple as, maybe change the color of your walls or change the couch or take the couch out entirely. Or, literally, go a little bit more major and say like "I'm going to take a trip and go out and give myself the opportunity to shed the parts of me that maybe I didn't really need." They started to be like barnacles and I didn't know how to shake them off and be able to maintain the parts of the ship that I want to keep and then you can come back and what may happen and this is why people sometimes have resistance around certain... Maybe a partner going for a trip or me going to a Burning Man or something like that, where it's like "I hear you come back kind of different. Will we still be together?" That's a storm to enter a relationship. Can that relationship bear that weather? But it's ultimately, I think we can make major change by also looking at our environment and not just purely looking between our ears.

Shawn Stevenson: Incredible, man. Well, I want to talk about... More of the tangible things that we can do, some of the more practical things that we can do because even changing things in our environment is such a powerful insight, just to change up the energy of things. So that is a really practical, valuable thing but there's more and we need it right now so we're going to do that right after this quick break. So sit tight, we'll be right back.

For years, people will come into my office wanting to get the programs designed for improving their health and wellness and accomplishing their goals. But the biggest question that people would ask me is, "Shawn, what can I take for more energy?" Now, what I first expressed to them is that humans don't necessarily get energy, we create



energy through our interaction with food and nutrients, and also through our movement. Even as I'm moving now, I'm generating something called piezoelectricity. It's a form of energy, it's a current in our bodies that we're all capable of when we are simply moving our body. So again humans don't get energy we make energy, but the things that we are interacting with, with our nutrition can be paramount to our experience of having energy.

And today, when people are looking for energy because of these crazy things that we have access to today, we're like chugging down these "Energy drinks" that are causing more harm than good, because they're hitting on one channel, just being a nervous system stimulant. And that's okay in some small doses, but when we're doing that over and over, because what generally happens is we get a correlating crash, we take something that spikes our nervous system, then when it starts to calm down and cool down, it goes even lower than it was before, and we need to take something else again.

So whether it's an energy drink or going ham at the local coffee shop over and over again, we start to actually lose the resilience of our receptor sites for this caffeine, and our body doesn't even use it as good as it once did. And many people have had that experience where one cup of coffee, that first experience was like life changing. It was a... The music came on, and you fell in love, "Oh my gosh, this exists." But then after that, you need two cups, three cups, and we have to have a better strategy because I'm absolutely a fan of coffee and of caffeine because of some of the benefits it has like for example, on human metabolism.

Studies show that caffeine can increase your metabolic rate by upwards of 11%, that means your body's ability to burn calories, and a study published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition found that most of the increase in metabolism from consuming caffeine is from the increase in burning effect. So it is triggering your body to burn fat. So that might make some of us run out and want to take a bunch of caffeine, but there are different versions of caffeine. The source that you get it from matters a lot because they're dirty versions, there's dirty caffeine, right? But we want to go for the clean stuff, right? There's clean... There's big clean eating movement, we need that to be more intentional in cleaning our sources of things like coffee as well. Because dirty caffeine... Because what good things in life come with the word dirty attached to it. Right? We got dirty clothes, nobody likes dirty clothes. Dirty bulking, dirty looks, nothing good comes with the word dirty attached to it. Expect maybe, "Christina Aguilera's Dirty." That was pretty hot when that came out.

But bottom line is this, we want to get clean sources of caffeine. So organic coffee is



the way to go, so we're not consuming pesticides and herbicides or rodenticides, that do in fact influence our microbiome because they're meant to destroy small organisms and guess what our gastrointestinal track is made of? These small organisms. And they can damage our endocrine system and also our nervous system as well, so organic is definitely paramount. But also I want to see a reduction in the amount that we're taking by balancing it out with something else that provides the human body a natural source of energy production that happens within ourselves. And there was a study that was published in medicine and science, in Sports and Exercise that looked at 30 healthy people for six weeks and record the effects of Cordyceps, medicinal mushroom on their performance.

The group that added Cordyceps to their daily regimen had twice the oxygen intake of the control group who didn't get the Cordyceps and this oxygen by the way, when we're talking about energy, this is the number one thing that we need. Oxygen is the most important thing, far more important than anything else. You can only last a few minutes without oxygen, and oxygen is essential in our cells and providing nutrients to our cells, so this is really important. And another study that was conducted with the same researchers found that consumption of Cordyceps medicinal mushroom led to a 9% increase in aerobic activity from taking Cordyceps. It helps you to perform better. It directly influences your stamina and it doesn't have these weird crazy after effects of having a crash. Alright, so this is why I love the blend of cordyceps and medicinal mushroom and organic coffee that you get with Four Sigmatic. Alright? And I highly, highly recommend checking it out. I absolutely love it. It's what I had today. It's foursigmatic.com/model. That's F-O-U-R-S-I-G-M-A-T-I-C.com/model.

And you get 15% off all of their incredible mushroom coffees, mushroom hot cacaos and mushroom elixirs as well. If you're not a fan of coffee, you can get cordyceps by itself, you can get Reishi and Chaga all from great sources, and they're dual extracted, which sets Four Sigmatic in a league of their own. This means it's a hot water extract and alcohol extract to give you all of these nutrients that you're hearing about in these studies, you're making sure that you're getting everything. Alright, so head over there, check them out, foursigmatic.com/model. And now back to the show.

Shawn Stevenson: Alright, we're back and we're talking with Aaron Alexander, the author of The Align Method and before the break, we were talking about the value and power in simply changing our environment, like physically getting out and going somewhere else to change the energy, to change our exposure, to change the things that shape our identity and also potentially making changes just within the construct of our own home, within our own rooms, just to change up the energy, to change the vibe,



especially if you're feeling stagnant or uncomfortable or things are kind of jagged and irritating and true story, yesterday... My wife, so she went on a date with her friend, shout out to Kenyetta. They went on a date to The Container Store? Do you know about this store?

Aaron Alexander: No, I don't know about container store.

Shawn Stevenson: They were so giddy. I'm just like, "What is the big deal?"

Aaron Alexander: I'm thinking like shipping container, like the ones you live in that's obviously not that it but...

Shawn Stevenson: I don't know what to think, man. It's like they were so amped about it, I just didn't understand but then she came back, she came back with her bounty, and basically, it's a store that has all these different containers. That's why it's called a Container Store.

Aaron Alexander: Oh.

Shawn Stevenson: So all these different containers but outside the realm with which we think. There's containers for putting your spices together, like when you saw when I opened my cabinet.

Aaron Alexander: Like a Tupperware party.

Shawn Stevenson: But my mom used to tell me that they were having a Tupperware party but sometimes they weren't Tupperware parties. You know what I'm talking about?

Aaron Alexander: Obviously. I feel like that's a perfect front for many things.

Shawn Stevenson: There was some weird oils and stuff. But anyway, let's not dig into that back but you saw when I opened my cabinet over there, how beautiful and arranged it is. It was not like that two days ago, okay?

Aaron Alexander: Oh wow! Wow!

Shawn Stevenson: She got all of these things and yesterday she just took the time and implemented all these different containers throughout the kitchen and it gave... She has been so happy today. She woke up just dropping ideas. She came and have a... She's never had a sit-down with me. She sat me down like I'm her child. She sat in the chair, she sat in a chair



that was higher than me, sat me down, she started talking to me about what I should be doing.

Aaron Alexander: Wow!

Shawn Stevenson: I'm just like, is this real? But it's because of getting that change, that new dynamic, that new order for herself and kind of changing the energy and things that have been... She told me this has been in her mind since the second day we moved here and she did it and it kind of opened up a new space in her mind so changing the space outside of us could change the spaces and the recesses in our mind.

Aaron Alexander: And then that continues into a more musculoskeletal biological conversation where you can have disorganization within your physical body and that will impact not only the way that you regulate yourself at a cellular level but also the way that you... That trickles into the way that you feel and the way that you move and perhaps the likelihood for injury or the likelihood for success.

So in that, the organization of that cupboard, before it looked perhaps more like an adhesion, which is a little bit irregular, almost more like scar tissue-esque and then all of a sudden we start to align the cupboard and from the outside looking in, you're like "Man, I feel so organized. I feel like before I had this kind of this chaos, this disarray happening in that corner of the house and it was just... I couldn't really grasp it. It felt almost like disassociated. It was too much to process.

Now all of a sudden I come into alignment with that and it's like "I can take a breath." When you see that literally in the physical body in places where there's adhesions, it's like this misaligned chaos and so... And as well places like say in the spine, people that will have back pain in... Say you have low back or thoracic spine pain or if there's someplace in the back that kind of just like... Kind of didn't feel really great back there. You'll eventually start to literally disconnect or disassociate from that place if you can't find a solution for it and so now all of a sudden you feel disembodied disassociated disconnected from your central freaking nervous system. So if you would try to draw a picture of that place of chaos within your spine, it would be much more challenging for you to actually come up and have a succinct clear image of that place in you.

There's not a lot of places that are more valuable than your central nervous system and for you to feel completely disconnected from the main channel of information that's surging through your body to perceive and interact with the world all day long? Probably a big deal and so the way that the cabinet in your house, when it comes into



an organization, now in your mind, you can create a clear picture of that place. You know where the oregano is, you know where the pepper is, you know where the salt is and so in your spine, in your ribs, in your diaphragm, in your feet, it's a similar thing where when you come into that place of organization, then all of a sudden you have a relationship and so what we were talking about in relation to the environment, we are passively tuning our bodies all day long based off of the formation of our environment.

So there's a book called Muscles and Meridians by Phillip Beach and I borrowed the language of postures of repose from him and in my book, The Align Method and the postures of repose are all about what any hunter-gatherer ancestral third-world like all of those words, slash healthy person today. If you you'd talk to most dancers, yogis, people that are just kind of like their thing is being in their body, you will notice that they'll squat regularly. You'll notice that when they sit on a chair, they're probably not going to sit on a chair like most... The standard American diet. Stereotypical Americans would kind of like a loaf in the chair. They're probably going to kind of sit more like a kid. So they may twist over to the side a little bit and then they might change positions a little bit and maybe they're facing backward on the chair for a little bit.

And what they're naturally doing with that is like "Oh! That was a massage. Every time I press my body up against something, I'm literally moving lymphatic fluid, I'm moving blood and I'm starting to re-orient that connective tissue. I'm bringing electricity to that tissue through contact and so we live in a world where we're living kind of like we're wearing coffinous desensitizing shoes all day, for example. So your shoes have... There's 26 bones and 33 joints and 7000 nerve endings and there's a lot of flippant information surging through your feet. Perhaps why there's a whole modality called reflexology that's all about poking at specific spots to create impact on the rest of your body.

And so our shoes are essentially the opposite of reflexology where it's like "Let's just dumb down this way more complex than anything NASA's ever created an instrument called the bottom of our feet by allowing it to atrophy in these pads for our whole entire life and so something that a person could do would start to bring a little bit more intelligence and organization and integration into their body by increasing the level of feedback and the way that they could... I know I've kind of gone a bit like meta out there but coming back into what we can do. Something very simple would just be bringing yourself in greater contact with your environment by spending...

In my book, I recommend at least 30 minutes a day just being on the ground. For most people hopefully listening, they're like "I'm already like two hours. I'll do a yoga class, that's a whole hour." Maybe I drink tea or coffee or whatever in the morning and I have



a low coffee table and I kind of sit down on a raised cushion. As I'm going through that motion, it acts as a passive massage, it's also mobilizing my ankles, my knees, my hips, my pelvic floor, it's circulating cerebrospinal fluid and getting my central nervous system online. So with just that passive action of getting all the way down, all the way up, it starts to kind of unkink some of those hoses throughout your body.

Shawn Stevenson: So good, 30 minutes a day.

Aaron Alexander: That's my low-grade recommendation for the non-ground sitting American but hopefully most people listening to this are already like "Oh, I'm already past that."

Shawn Stevenson: Yeah.

Aaron Alexander: And that doesn't mean that you need to be... You can sit on a chair like you're on the ground. You can sit on your couch like you're on the ground. I just want you to get out of that same repetitive position that your teachers put you in ever since kindergarten. I was always weird, freakish giraffe, uncoordinated body as a young person and so you like freaking poor kid. Thinking back to that and I'm breathing through my mouth and my upper palate's all collapsed in we should have a whole conversation on nose-breathing, the value of that. I put a whole chapter in the book about it 'cause it's important.

But coming in through there and being placed from what would be the potential for my body to grow and orient to the world around me and be able to circulate all my fluids and just sending all this information and for me to be able to adapt to. That's just taking a walk barefoot in your backyard for a minute. Your body, your brain goes into this electrical storm of information, you come alive. So instead of that, it's: Okay cool, pipe down. No speaking, teacher's talking. Let's keep you still. If you're kind of fidgeting a little bit too much, we have some medication for that, it's okay. No problem and just how to you can now...

Now, don't even think about creating any kind of mechanical advantage with your spine and your hips. Let's not even talk about that 'cause the teacher doesn't know about that 'cause the teacher was never taught about that 'cause it's not a part of our cultural model of education." So you go in and you say "Okay cool, I'll just hunch you over here." and now, all of a sudden, I'm literally at a mechanical disadvantage. I'm training disadvantage handicap into my body each day while being a good boy sitting in place, hunching forward into this, what we talked about before like a little bit more, literally, anatomically depressed position.



Shawn Stevenson: Right.

Aaron Alexander: I go into this collapse. Now, I'm in that position for 12 years and I come out and I want to be a strong, confident, autonomous, like "Man! I feel at home in my body. I feel like I can do anything." It's really hard, to feel like you can do anything when you come from a whole decade of training your body into a disadvantageous position.

Shawn Stevenson: What just came up for me and I just wrote it down, is that the training that's taking place, whether we realize it or not and how our environment, the people around us... You said something earlier and you was like "I don't... I know that this is getting into a different domain but the people around us." when you just mentioned the teacher, when you mentioned that, specifically, these are people who influence our movement but she's operating in a system that influences our movement and so number one is becoming aware of them and we know of some wonderful people who have been doing work in this space like Kelly Starrett has been on this show, really good friend.

Aaron Alexander: Yeah. Did the foreword for my book.

Shawn Stevenson: Awesome! Yeah!

Aaron Alexander: Yeah.

Shawn Stevenson: But what he's done is they've got a standing desk at their kid's school, which was the first school to do that and it's a step in the right direction, of course, just being able to move, to sit if you want to, just to be able to move around a bit because we are literally indoctrinating our children to literally mold themselves, not just physically but like you just mentioned it, it affects our psychology the way that we're positioned. So this is...

The reason I'm bringing this up is that right now when all of this is going on, this is also... It's not just our opportunity to assess our movement practices, it's not just our opportunity to assess our healthcare system, it's our opportunity to assess our education system. So it's really profound for you to bring that up and one other thing is when we talked about the environment and there's this wonderful statement that your inner world is a direct reflection of your outer world.

Aaron Alexander: Certainly.

Shawn Stevenson: And I had Chalene on the show, Chalene Johnson and she brought up some really



fascinating data on how clutter affected people's food choices, how clutter affected folks' tendency towards cravings, and things like that. It's just like some of these things are really profound but we would never talk these things, we never think about.

Aaron Alexander: We need to... If you feel out of control, you're probably going to look for some type of a short-lived, kindling-esque, nutrient-rich type food. You want the sugar and you want the salt and you want the fat and you want all the things. Whereas, if you're in a place where it's like "I feel pretty calm." you're like "It might be good for a fast." It's like "I feel like I'm good for... I could be good for the week." It's like "Okay, cool, you probably... Your body's not going to get those internal signals that you need to get something in quick." And so but then, once again, there is, I think, another conversation of what is your perception of organization? 'Cause I think that sometimes, people can be more of like a type A personality type place where they are internally having...

They're breaking down internally and then you go into their home and it's perfectly spick and span and everything is organized and labeled and titled. So from the outside looking in, you could look at that person and be like "Oh they're winning." like "Wow!" But in fact, they're all tied up in knots and they're ready to explode and they're reaching for some semblance of control anywhere they can find it and it ends up translating to becoming addicted to The Container Store. Not putting that on anything in relation... I'm sure here, this place seems like a really great balance actually like "It's great but it's not like too perfect." That's where the perfection is, I think.

Shawn Stevenson: Yeah, yeah, spot-on, spot-on.

Aaron Alexander: Sometimes, when you go pass houses where you're like "It feels like they might be having some strange things in their closet." When you go in, it's like "It's a little too perfect."

Shawn Stevenson: We've literally... I've got handwritten signs.

Aaron Alexander: That's great.

Shawn Stevenson: That we've put on trash cans.

Aaron Alexander: That's legit. You want to be 'cause there is something to developing your capacity for tolerance and acceptance and ultimately, it's... I think all this does wind back into what is your story and narrative of the world so you start to... But you can start to come in and pull the toggles of your story by just augmenting what's happening on the outside.



So it comes back to that quote: Your internal world's a direct reflection of your external world and vice versa. There's, it's like chicken or the egg. It's like "I don't know, they're just the same, it's just interconnected." So if you want to create change in your life, do anything.

Because... And if you read Sleep Smarter, you might think "Oh, the strongest spoke in the wheel is sleep, nothing else matters." If you read The Align Method, you might be like "Oh, it's all movement. You're not moving right. You got to... It needs to be a part of your life, who you are." If you read somebody else's like Bessel van der Kolk, you might be "Oh, it's in your mind." And it's like ultimately it's like no, spoke, spoke, spoke, spoke, spoke, spoke all tied back into the same hub. Pull-on any one of those and you'll impact the whole. So it's like, what's the best... The best move is your next move. Just do something.

Shawn Stevenson: Perfect, perfect. Listen, I've got... Actually, I've got one more question, just as a take away for everybody. In this time in human history where we are so deprived of movement right now, for many people, of course, their gym was their therapy. For many people, just even fear around going outside just the stress of going outdoors a lot of times...

Aaron Alexander: Yeah.

Shawn Stevenson: Just to see the atmosphere that might be around many folks throughout the country, throughout the world really, just as soon as they step a foot outside their door. What are some take away things, just maybe three things? You've already given work on... Make it a target to spend 30 minutes on the ground each day. What are two other things that folks can do right now to really address this?

Aaron Alexander: So first, I'll go granular bullet points, and then the first thing is coming back to language and starting from a place of... It's not that we're living in a world that is deprived of movement. It's that we're living in a world where we're choosing convenience. So it's like you're empowered to start from the place of... I'm not deprived of anything. Culturally, the zeitgeist has chosen convenience to its own detriment I think. So first come into a place of "Okay, I'm responsible, like cool, alright, I'm not... There's nothing scarce about this. There's nothing... It's like, it's not there." It's like "No, no, it's there. We're just choosing."

So first of all, you're responsible and then from there, I would say a really simple thing that people could add into their daily worlds, which is one of the principles that we



break down, is just the value of getting your arms above your head each day so you're just getting a pull-up bar in your house. Please, if you don't already have a pull-up bar, get a pull-up bar in your house and not even... I don't even care if you ever do a pull-up, a lot of girls can't do a pull-up. It's great, no problem. They're a lot better rock climbers, typically because they're forced to use their lower body in order to climb, whereas guys that can grunt through and muscle through and use their upper bodies, they end up lacking form.

So I don't even care if you can do a pull-up. What I care about is that you get your arms up over your head and you just spend a little bit of time each day, in the book I recommend 90 seconds total so that could be 15 seconds, six times or whatever, hanging from that position and you could think of it as you're doing that, you're literally restructuring the shape of your shoulder girdle, which a common tendency is to go into impingement if you're always punching forward, cell phoning, carpal tunneling yourself and computer-ing and chairs and all that. So just that simple practice of just... Ahhh, get long, create that space in there, hang for a total of 60 to 90 seconds. Whatever you'll do is what I want you to do. If what you'll do is 10 seconds, 10 seconds. Whatever you'll do, whatever bite is good for you.

And within that, literally think of it as visualize yourself. It's like imagine if you had a wet blanket and you left the wet blanket kind of crumpled up and it would start to kind of fester and kind of get moldy and get all gross you're like "Oh, we might have to throw that blanket out. That's not going to work." That's your lungs and your ribs and your intercostal and all this precious tissue if it's not being breathed and expanded and contracted with regularity.

When you're doing that... That opening up, imagine what you're doing is, it's like you're taking that wet blanket and you're exposing it to the sun and you're kind of lifting it out and kind of letting that air blow through it. Now all of a sudden that blanket's starting to heal. So by having that relationship of your shoulder girdle and your neck and your ribs and all that in a position that's most aligned, balanced, stacked, a really simple way to do that like a shotgun approach, is just spend some time hanging each day.

Another tangible bullet point that people can start to integrate in their daily lives is recognizing... We were talking about your central nervous system and gaining a relationship with your spine and your neck and your whole body really but a continuation of your central nervous system is your eyeballs. So if you are staring into screens all day long, that's literally putting your nervous system, your autonomic nervous system, which I would say is a misnomer because your autonomic nervous



system is continually responding to your environment that you're consciously choosing.

So when you are staring in that myopic vision, what do you do if you are in that fight-flight state? What do you do if a lion comes into the room right now? You go... You just focus in on it and now we take action. So now we go in and we go through that whole... the adrenaline and the cortisol and all those things come online, gets you ready to move and then what do your eyes do once you've defeated the lion or made it away or go into like you're over the... You're in the Savannah and you're kind of just like... "Oh, you're..." You're probably not focusing in on a lion anymore. You're probably just kind of spacing out and saying like "Oh man, that was crazy."

So your eyes, the continuation of your brain, your central nervous system are continually feeding information back into your physiology saying "Okay, are we focused? Are we executive function, fight-flight, make it happen?" Or are we more in that panoramic vision, where it's a calming, soothing, rest, digest, repair-type state? So if you're staring into your phone all day and you're wondering why it's hard for you to wind down and go to sleep at night, well you're essentially sending this signal to your brain, especially doing that right before you're going to bed. Think of it as like...

You're sending a signal to your brain that it's time to wake up, it's time to go into action, it's time to move. It's not time to be still and so if you want to be calm, you're feeling stressed out, say before... And this I'll just compound one little variable stack. If you're stressed out, you're going into a date with somebody you're nervous about or a business thing or anything of the sort and you're feeling like "Oh my God! My shoulders are clenched up and I feel like I'm clenching my jaw and I'm just like panicking." Emphasize calming your eyes. Take the whole room in and so when you walk in utilize that panoramic vision by really feeling the whole room. You can even visualize like "Okay, what's the room feel like behind me? Do I have a memory of what's going on back there? Can I kind of feel the people behind me? Can I really take..."

Aaron Alexander:

And anybody that's ever gone bow hunting, which I know people's beliefs around that but whatever, the experience of hunting is really fascinating to have. You usually don't ever actually kill an animal, just the experience of stalking an animal is one of the most unbelievable experiences because your senses turn on in a way that will never happen in a Whole Foods unless it was like there was some sniper came in and then all of a sudden you're on.

So when you're out there hunting you're hearing every little stick, every little twig



breaking, the wind, you're noticing the directionality of the wind 'cause that's going to determine the smell from me. You're taking distances, okay, cool, that's 20 yards, 30 yards, 40 yards, 50 yards and so you're physical, environmental, internal map of what's happening goes... And expands out and you become the forest.

So what is that at a neurological level? It's you coming alive. It's you engaging with your world, where if you're in a place where we have these Coffin shoes and these... Tony Robbins has a thing is if you have your boxed lunch and then you get in your box and you drive to the box and it's like all these boxes when you're just a bunch of circles and spirals. Now, it's like there's a certain level of conflict there. It's just something that people can do is start to just by you engaging with your environment, you come alive and if you're feeling stressed out, bullet points, relax the eyes, and emphasize the exhalation. Don't take a deep breath, emphasize the exhalation. When somebody says "You're freaking out, take a deep breath." don't listen to them, emphasize the exhalation, and when you're emphasizing that exhalation, you're engaging more of that calming, parasympathetic rest, digest. People can do it now.

Shawn Stevenson: I was already doing it.

Aaron Alexander: I could feel it.

Shawn Stevenson: Wonderful man. Aaron, you're amazing, man. Can you let everybody know where they can check out your podcast, get more information?

Aaron Alexander: Yeah. Well so we just did a really beautiful podcast on Align Podcast, which is one that I've hosted for the last five and change years, which was predominantly inspired by you, in large part so I appreciate that. So people can jump over and listen to the, essentially, the continuation of this conversation. If they found this interesting, there's more on the other side. I'll release this whenever. I'm sure we'll co-release, whatever and then people can check out the Align Method book if they want to learn more and that's in... Amazon's probably where most people get it but it's in all the Targets and the Barnes & Nobles and that. I don't even know if... Do book stores, are they happening?

Shawn Stevenson: Is that a thing? Is that a blockbuster video?

Aaron Alexander: I really, really don't know. You order digitally, I guess.

Shawn Stevenson: It's a different world out there, man, it's a different world.

Aaron Alexander: I know, yeah. So Align Method and there's a lot of cool stuff. If you just go to alignpodcast.com, we have a six-week online program that's kind of like the living, breathing continuation of the actual steps from the Align Method but if you like books, that's that. If you like audio, Align Podcast. Align Method has an audio book. So I think that's a great starting point.

Shawn Stevenson: Awesome, appreciate you, brother, seriously. Just your story and you're a great example of what is possible of becoming interested in something and like you said earlier, you found a couple of things that you repeatedly did and you ended up becoming world class at them. So you're a true leader right now and I'm so grateful to have you on, truly because movement is something that we all need but I think it can be looked over and I love the reference point that you gave of there's not a deprivation of movement, the movement is all around us, it's available, it's in us. It's just becoming aware of it. So thank you so much brother, appreciate it.

Aaron Alexander: Thank you. I appreciate it.

Shawn Stevenson: Everybody, thank you so much for tuning into the show today, I hope you got a lot of value out of this and, listen, one of the biggest takeaways for me is a reiteration of how important it is to understand and really self-assess. Just take a look at what our identity is. How do we see ourselves because the way that we perceive ourselves is going to determine the actions that we take and so if we can begin to see ourselves as somebody who enjoys movement, as we begin to see ourselves as somebody who sees the world through the lens of play and creativity.

It's so crazy, when I talk with Aaron I start realizing stuff that I didn't realize before. We saw a bunch of houses or different places to move and nothing really felt right and it's a feeling thing. We can logically talk ourselves into things but it's because we were looking for a space of play, a space that accommodates the way that we live, the way that we think, the way that we move and regardless of what type of space, even if we're living in a small apartment because that's what we lived in when I first met my wife. The way that things were structured within that space allowed for play. It's so funny, we literally put a tent. My son had a Spider-Man tent, we put the tent up in the middle of the living room of my tiny apartment in Ferguson, Missouri. You know what I mean?

So it's shifting our identity first, becoming the type of person that... Because, I've said this statement before but health isn't something that you chase after, it's something you attract to you by the person you become. So self-assess and do that as your homework first. Look at how do you see yourself and start to speak to yourself a little

bit differently. Start to identify yourself as somebody who does fill in the blank, spends 30 minutes a day on the ground and it's the small things. We don't have to try to transform the entire movement paradigm right now for you but just adding in more nutritious movement here and there, getting in more input, is incredibly valuable right now, not just for our physical health but the way that we're relating to the rest of the world, the way that we're relating to each other. So it's very, very important.

Shawn Stevenson: I appreciate you so much for tuning into the show today. If you got a lot of value out of this, please share this out with your friends and family on social media. You can tag me, I'm @shawnmodel, and tag Aaron at...

Aaron Alexander: Alignpodcast.

Shawn Stevenson: Alignpodcast and let us know what you thought about the episode. I appreciate you guys so very much. We've got some epic, absolutely epic, shows coming your way very soon. Take care. Have an amazing day and I'll talk with you soon.

And for more after the show, make sure to head over to themodelhealthshow.com, that's where you can find all of the show notes, you could find transcriptions, videos for each episode and if you got a comment, you can leave me a comment there as well and please make sure to head over to iTunes and leave us a rating to let everybody know that the show is awesome and I appreciate that so much and take care. I promise to keep giving you more powerful, empowering, great content to help you transform your life. Thanks for tuning in.