



EPISODE 459

Tame the Hidden
Dragons That Control
Your Happiness, Habits,
& Hang-Ups

With Guest Dr. Daniel Amen

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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 in with me today, I'm giddy today. I'm giddy up, I got to be honest. Very rarely do I feel like this, but today I've got somebody who's an incredible mentor in my life and somebody I've just really aspired to learn from and to work with, and this is so true about really working until your mentors become your colleagues and become a part of your life. And I'm a testament to that because coming from where I come from, when I first saw him on TV, I was in a dusty rust bucket of a "Hotel." It was really more like a motel. What's the difference anyways, is it just the quality? I don't know. But it definitely had a motel vibe to it, it was supposed to be "Vintage" in Hollywood, California, I was visiting from my hometown of St. Louis, Missouri, specifically, I was living in Ferguson, Missouri, Ferguson Florissant at the time, and I was getting ready, getting dressed, and I had a meeting to get to, it's why I was out here, just really already feeling like I have no business out here, and I heard a voice on the TV that was talking about the brain, and I was completely enchanted by the demeanor, the delivery of the information and what he was saying.

He was saying things that I'd never considered before. Him being a double board-certified psychiatrist saying that the field of psychiatry has been fundamentally flawed. There are wonderful people in the profession, but they're often treating an organ that they never actually look at, they're not able to actually test, and yet they're giving diagnoses and they're giving out medication, based on a conversation, and there's been this term that is finally being debunked and being changed and shifted because the danger of the terminology itself to say that somebody has a chemical imbalance. How do you know? Did you test? Are you looking at the organ? And talking about mental health issues? Are you actually looking at what's happening with the mind, looking at what's happening with the brain itself? And so he's compiled a database, he actually found methods to look at the brain to see the health of the brain, SPECT imaging, and it is the largest database in the world, about 175,000 brain scans at this point, and he's been behind some of the largest studies done in the conversations we might hear more about because of the media, but in looking at NFL players and the fallout associated with that.

In the movie Concussion, he was one of the consultants on that movie, and the list goes on and on with his sphere of influence, but also in that moment, him saying that, it just



kind of hit me like, "Wait, you're right, we're not actually looking at the organ because the dysfunction of the hardware can lead to out-picturing of behavioral flaws, and we might be battling with some type of addiction or some type of inability to change or to create a healthy habit, and the root might be something is unhealthy that's happening with our brain, even potentially some damage is taking place." And so him getting in there and looking for it from so many people, they finally find out, I'm not broken, there was actually something behind my behavior or something behind my struggle, and it was because my brain was hurting, and plus, and this is the big part, seeing how the brain can be healed through different strategies and techniques and nutrition of removing the causes of the insults, be it chemical or the like. Alright, so our brains are very, very delicate, this is the thing. Theoretical physicist, Michio Kaku said that the human brain is the most complicated organ in the known universe. That is a big statement to say something like that in the known universe, do you know that the known universe has billions of other galaxies? Billions. I didn't say billions of other planets, billions of other galaxies.

We can't even comprehend, we can't even comprehend the vastness, right? But from his perspective, we got one of the most complicated, the most complicated object in the known universe, sitting atop of our shoulders, right, head and shoulders, this isn't about dandruff, this is about when life's rough, alright? This incredible entity, infinite potential with the human mind, infinite potential. But here's the catch, this incredibly powerful, complicated organ is one of the most delicate organs, one of the most delicate things, period. It just rained here today, and there was a snail crossing the street, and I just see, and there was like slimy, or whatever, and I was thinking about that movie where the snail gets super speed, shout out to, I believe it's Ryan Reynolds voiced the snail, but anyways, so I'm just looking at the snail, I'm just like, "Man, you are delicate bro, you are delicate. You got that shell though. That shell is going to keep you safe when need be. Hopefully, you know how to use it." But anyways, when I thought about that in the context, and how delicate it is because the human brain is as delicate, it's the consistency. This is a fact, listen to this, the human brain is the consistency of soft butter. It is incredibly delicate and fragile, but infinitely powerful. It's the duality, it's the poetry of life, it's like a cosmic joke.

It's a cosmic joke that we've got this powerful organ, but it's also incredibly fragile. Alright, ha ha, very funny, life. Okay, now here's the thing. Nature didn't come to the party without party gifts. We do have the, like the little snail out there, like my snail friend who's trying to get from point A to point B, he's got his shell. We've got... It's the only organ that's fully encased in hard bone, so we've got our cranium, cranium, skull. Alright, we've got that hard shell protecting it, but here's the other part of the equation.

The brain is not just fragile or sensitive to external intrusions, it's also incredibly fragile for internal intrusions as well through the things that we're exposed to that come in through our bodies, that come in through our mouth because just evolutionarily speaking, there could have been a food that our ancestors ate that can literally kill them, that can create toxicity in the brain and take them out because the brain is so delicate, and so we evolved this highly sophisticated blood-brain barrier. The blood-brain barrier, the BBB. And it's not big baller brand, alright. The blood-brain barrier, protecting our brain, and only allowing in very specific nutrients. Very specific things are allowed to get in and out of the brain. Period.

Now, here's the catch. I liken it to a tollbooth. There's a tollbooth allowing certain things into the brain, what we call neuro nutrition. Not everything you eat, not even all the different nutrients that have wonderful benefits for different parts of our bodies, not all of it gets to your brain, not all of it gets to go to the VIP section. So at the tollbooth, it's very choosy. We've got a couple of bouncers there, we got Stone Cold Steve Austin's at one of the tollbooths, we've got The Rock at another one, we've got freaking Aaron Donald from the Rams is another one, and just people like, "I miss the Rams." Listen, though, the Rams left me, okay. I'm from St. Louis. They came in, made it look like everything is all good on the Super Bowl, and they left, they left. You came and left, but then it's like also, of course, LA lost them in the first place, but did they deserve him? I'm just kidding. So they're back with LA, and it just so happens that I moved here too. Who's following who, Rams? But anyways, no disrespect if Aaron Donald is not your guy. He plays for the Rams, big shout out.

So he's working at the tollbooth. We got Bautista, Drax from the Guardian of the Galaxy at a tollbooth, like don't mess with these guys. They're checking, making sure everything is good for you to pass through, but then there's express lanes, there's express lanes of the tollbooth that allows in specific nutrients in droves, one of them being water. Your brain is the most water-dominant organ in your body next to your lungs, about 80% water. But also the structural integrity of the brain, the hardware is made of specific nutrients. The first one of that "dry weight" of the brain is fats, and then proteins are not that far behind. So it's predominantly fat, but proteins aren't that far behind, and then minerals, but this is the issue, and one of the biggest problems that we're seeing today, is the fallout from this is the damage of the blood-brain barrier itself, and it being eroded due to something called neuroinflammation, brain inflammation.

And it's become one of the biggest issues that many people are not talking about in association with our body composition, for example, because your brain is controlling



your metabolism, and so somebody can be in a calorie deficit, but the hypothalamus is in communication constantly, and other parts of the brain as well, via the vagus nerve with your gut. Feeding information back and forth, and your brain can literally tell your gut to increase the absorption of calories from the food that you eat, or to decrease the absorption of calories and other nutrients from the food that you eat, and this is one of the things that we talk about in Eat Smarter, in the new book, but the bottom line is this: Researchers at Yale University School of Medicine have articulated this, and also the degradation and the breakdown, inflammation in the gut and/or inflammation in the brain damaged this process. It damages this process of metabolism because your hypothalamus, hypothalamic inflammation, often resulting from degradation and damage to the blood-brain barrier and inflammatory things getting into your brain that shouldn't be there.

Your hypothalamus is controlling... It's kind of like your internal thermostat, if you want to think about it like that, determining what your metabolic rate is set at. And this isn't being talked about enough because also the research has found that one of the biggest culprits behind our obesity epidemic is neuroinflammation. Brain inflammation increases the propensity of obesity, and obesity increases the propensity, the likelihood, of neuroinflammation. They go hand-in-hand. So we've got to address this. One of the things that's been proven to help to reduce neuroinflammation is cited in a study published in PLOS ONE, Public Library of Science One, revealed that the super green algae, spirulina, has the potential to, one, improve neurogenesis in the brain. So the creation of new brain cells, specifically the hippocampus, is where we get a lot, and the hippocampus is the memory center of the brain. This is kind of important. And two, the study revealed that spirulina is able to directly reduce neuroinflammation. It's incredible. It's helping the structural integrity of this master gland, this master organ controlling everything about us.

The most complicated object in the known universe is also one of the most fragile. We've got to protect it. This is why for myself and my family, spirulina, chlorella, ashwagandha, all of these powerful foods are put together in the incredible blend at Organifi, and this is a regular staple here in my family for good reason. Spirulina, in being one of the highlighted ingredients, not only does it have this benefit for neurogenesis and neuroinflammation, but also has rare nutrients like phycocyanin, the same thing with chlorella as well, that phycocyanin is one of the few things that can trigger stem cell genesis, the creation of new stem cells. Very few things have been found to do that, and then chlorella's in the formula as well, and that growth factor, the chlorella growth factor is just remarkable, and also its benefits in helping your body to metabolize and eliminate heavy metals and the list goes on and on. It's incredible.

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But the bottom line is this: It tastes good, it tastes good. I've experimented for at least about 15 years of all these different green formulas and different green super food plans. Many of them's not very good. Many of them, they shall remain nameless, but I've tried them back in the day, before tasting good was an option is was just like, "Just get it in by any means necessary," if you got to do the whole pinch the nose and get it down, whatever, but now, pleasure leads to longevity, pleasure leads to taking a practice on it and imbibing it and making a part of your routine, your habits, your daily life.

So this is why I appreciate the fact they've created a formula that actually tastes good, all organic, cold processed, so you actually retain and get the nutrients that we're looking for, in Organifi. So, pop over there, check it out, it's Organifi.com/model, that's O-R-G-A-N-I-F-I.com/model, and you get 20% off. 20% off their green juice formula, their red juice formula, and also their gold as well, so they've got some incredible blends all done the right way with integrity, again, organic, low temperature processed and yummy, alright? Organifi, you got that yummy yummy. Organifi.com/model, and now let's get to the Apple Podcast review of the week.

iTunes Review: Another five-star review titled "setting a new standard" by Craig McCloskey. "There is no podcast better. Shawn has raised the bar so high, there's a new standard set for high quality health info. Subscribe today and tune in like it's your new Saturday morning cartoons."

Shawn Stevenson: That's my guy right there. Craig, thank you so much for leaving me that review over on Apple Podcasts. Saturday morning cartoons, such a vibe. That's what we want to create, having that same feeling, the same nostalgia, but for learning and for growth and for health, and today, again, we're just going to continue to take things to another level. Our special guest is the incredible Dr. Daniel Amen, and he's a New York Times best-selling author, and he's written over 40 books. And the Washington Post has named Dr. Daniel Amen America's most popular psychiatrist, and largely because of his wildly popular clinics that have over 7000 patient visits per month and has the world's largest database of functional brain scans relating to behavior totaling over 75,000 scans on patients from 155 countries. And as mentioned, he's authored or co-authored 70 professional articles and more than 40 books, including The New York Times best-selling book, Change Your Brain, Change Your Life, and he's appeared on numerous television shows, including Dr. Phil, Larry King, Dr. Oz, The Doctors, and The View, and now he's back here on the Model Health Show to talk about his incredible new book that is incredibly timely for right now to add more value to your life. Let's jump into this

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conversation with the one and only Dr. Daniel Amen.

Dr. Amen, your new book is just blowing my mind, we talked before and you told me that you were writing the book, and I mentioned how important and timely I thought that the subject matter was. And the title of the book is, "Your Brain is Always Listening: Tame the hidden dragons that control your happiness, habits and hang-ups." First and foremost, can you explain what you mean when you say your brain is always listening.

Dr. Daniel Amen: Your brain is always listening to so many different influences day-to-day from the scheming dragons, things like the news and societal input, it's listening to your bad habits, every day. It's listening to something I call the "they, them, and other dragons," other people past and present, and it's listening to something I call the "dragons from the past" that are still breathing fire on your emotional brain. And in the book, I talk about 13 dragons, people can actually learn about their dragons at knowyourdragons.com, we have a very cool quiz, and my primary dragon is the abandoned, invisible, or insignificant dragon, because I grew up with a family of seven children. I have five sisters, an older brother, which in a Lebanese family, automatically means you are not special. The oldest boy is the golden child in so many societies, but in particularly in Middle Eastern culture, which is what I grew up in, and I just always felt invisible and insignificant and they're good things to this dragon.

So in the book, I talk about the origin story of each of the dragons, what triggers them to breathe fire on your emotional brain and cause you pain, how they cause you to react and how to tame them. And there's also a section on the upside, so the upside of the abandoned, invisible and insignificant dragon is I've been seeking significance my whole life, and it sort of worked out for me, we have nine Amen clinics around the country and it just makes me happy because what it does is it tames that dragon that I've been listening to my whole life, and so that's the idea behind your brain is always listening.

Shawn Stevenson: Oh, so good. And what I found as I was going through, of course, I find character traits that I see in myself and then also that I see in my kids, that I see in other family members. It was as if you were literally scripting out and detailing our personalities and our tendencies and our triggers, and this is why I love your writing too is that it's so right to the point and very practical and kind of pragmatic, and for me, I think that when you're even talking about this particular dragon, abandoned, invisible or insignificant, and just the... I never... Well, let me not say that... I didn't think about it in depth before, about birth order, and how



that can play out for so many people.

Because even like we're watching Vikings or Game of Thrones or something, the first-born son, he gets to be king. If you're a third-born or a second-born son, you're the vice president, you're the vice king. You're automatically second tier, and so just even growing up with that kind of chip on your shoulder. I thought about my little brother, and I'm just like, "Why, why are you like this?" And he's really been driven to find that significance. And the thing is, and like you just said... And this is what I freaking love about your work, is that you can find an upside in it. Because that's driven him to really make it through very tough circumstances, and to make a name for himself, and to be significant. He just took his... He just started coaching football this year, and took his kids, their little Pee Wee football team to the Super Bowl of their state.

Dr. Daniel Amen: Wow!

Shawn Stevenson: And it's just so wonderful, but it's a driving force that he's turned into something positive that used to hold him back.

Dr. Daniel Amen: Birth order, so important to... And there's a lot of research behind it. And being a middle child, I'm a peacemaker, and I like that. So it's important to find the upside of the dragons so they don't hurt you. And the oldest, the golden children, often it causes them to struggle because they may not have to work as hard as those of us... We think of Avis and try harder.

Shawn Stevenson: Right.

Dr. Daniel Amen: But you know that success often doesn't come from being special. Success comes from your ability to work hard over a prolonged period of time. Now you have to get over some of the self-esteem issues associated with not feeling special, and that leads into the inferior, flawed dragon, which is driving the epidemic of teenage suicide. And when you compare yourself to others in a negative way, it can often drive sadness and drive hopelessness.

Shawn Stevenson: This one right here, I'm not saying that any one is more pertinent right now, but it really jumped out at me, and you said specifically, and I'm quoting you directly from the book, you said that due to social media, these dragons are causing an epidemic rise of anxiety, depression, and suicide in young people, the inferior and flawed dragons. So can you talk a little bit about that?

Dr. Daniel Amen: Whenever you compare yourself to someone else in a negative way, it makes you sad, it makes you anxious, and given that social media is just in your face, over and over, we see especially young girls... And before social media, young girls hated how they looked, 93% of young girls were unhappy with how they look, and now it's constant in their face, which just drives the negative thoughts... I call them ants... It drives the ants to really shove their self-esteem in the dirt, and they get hopeless because of that. My wife was doing Christmas shopping, and you've met my wife and we've had you on our podcast, and Tana's beautiful. She's beautiful, she's smart, but while she was Christmas shopping, one of her friends about her age popped up and she's like, "Wow, she looks so good," and within five minutes Tana's thinking about, "Oh, I should get my eyes done. What's the next thing?" And it just was like trashing her self-esteem. Imagine having that happen over and over and over again. And I teach my patients something called the 18-40-60 rule, which says when you're 18, you worry about what everybody's thinking of you, and when you're 40, you don't give a damn what everybody thinks about you, and when you're 60, you realize nobody's been thinking about you at all.

People spend their days worrying and thinking about themselves, not you. So you might be comparing yourself to them, but they're probably not comparing themselves to you. It's such a trap, because there's always going to be someone, always, taller, richer, smarter, stronger, and there are always going to be people who are not those things. When you want to just ask yourself, "Am I as good as I can be?" and stop comparing. And in the book, there's actually some techniques on how to stop, but the first thing to do is notice when you do it, and then distract yourself to look for what's right, rather than what's wrong.

Shawn Stevenson: So I just thought about when you said that, that principle when once you get to that point, when you realize nobody's thinking about you, I thought about my friend, Jim Kwik, which I believe you guys know each other as well. He says that people are tuned into a radio station, WIIFM, What's in it for me? We're all thinking about ourselves, thinking through our own lens, and we often get caught up in what the... Everybody else is thinking, and so often that dichotomy, that contrast is like driving us. And my mother-in-law calls it borrowed desires. We're borrowing everybody else perception about what we think we should be, what we think we should be doing, what we think we should look like, and it can create a lot of disruption for sure with our psyche. And so I want to ask you a little bit more about this one, because number one, you just mentioned basically, and this

is so powerful, is just becoming aware of it, becoming aware of when you're doing it... When you start comparing yourself. And also you mentioned about recognizing your triggers. For your wife, a trigger was... Was that on social media? Yep?

Dr. Daniel Amen: It was seeing someone else about her age. And whenever you see somebody on social media, generally, they have makeup on, they pick the pictures they want, they're not how they are in everyday life, but you're comparing yourself to you in everyday life, like when you first got up in the morning, and you're like, "Well, I don't look like that." And when you do that, it just drives your self-esteem lower. And I've been blessed to see some of the world's greatest athletes and like I got to scan Muhammad Ali, and greatest movie stars, and pop stars, and you just cannot believe the negative thoughts they have like, "I'm not enough. You're not enough. No one will ever be enough. So am I enough for me?" And one of the strategies I have them do is between now and the next time I see you, I want you to write down the top 20 accomplishments that you've done in your life, because we focus on what we didn't do, rather than focus on what we did do. And where you bring your attention always determines how you feel. So where you focus determines how you feel. So if you focus on what's wrong, you're going to feel wrong, and if you focus on what's right, you're going to feel so much better.

Shawn Stevenson: Right, continuously where we're putting our attention. I love that so much because this is something very practical, again, that we can do when we notice that we're doing this thing and also just putting it in our tool belt to focus on our own strengths, our own accomplishments that we often... Because it's us, we belittle those things, they're not as important, but some of these things we've all accomplished are just freaking remarkable. It's amazing that I even stepped foot on a college campus, because I didn't know anybody in my sphere of influence, any of my peers who ever went to college. It's just something I never saw. So even if I just put that in my accomplishments bucket, when I'm starting to feel inferior, for example, if that was one of my dragons, I can have that there to remind me like, "You know, you've actually done a lot of cool stuff as well."

Dr. Daniel Amen: How exciting is that? Like I'm the first one in my family to graduate from college and the first advanced degree person in my family. And when you start to get to a level and it's like, "Well, I've not sold 10 million books." I can look at what I haven't done and feel bad or feel inferior, or I can look at what I have done and feel good. Now it's always a balance. You want to stretch yourself to be your best, but ultimately the death dragon wins, which we might talk about. And if you don't



tame that guy, you're going to always feel inferior.

Shawn Stevenson: Alright, now this one, I'm sticking here, because again, this is something that all of us are really inundated with today, which is this comparison. I'm sticking with this, and I got to ask you about this. You say something that seems kind of counterintuitive as one of the tools for taming this dragon, which is to praise others. Why did you put that in there as a tool?

Dr. Daniel Amen: Well, because then you're getting outside of yourself, and you're not so focused on you, because when you're self-critical, you tend to let that leak to other people in your life and it's a habit. Do I notice what I like more than what I don't like? And there's a whole section in the book on bad habit dragons, and one of the bad habit dragons is, let's have a problem. It's where you're sort of always poking at other people. And often it's because the inferior flawed dragon is running your life, so you can't notice what you like about you. Well, you're not going to notice what you like about other people either.

Shawn Stevenson: Yeah, so good, so good. So I say this, that what you appreciate, appreciates. So when you see something that might have you feel in peanut butter and jealous on social media, but to praise that thing, and appreciate that in somebody else, and it just kind of encourages... It's kind of like letting your mind or like, "Hey, I like that I'll have more of that myself, if I can make an order off the menu of the universe." But this kind of actually ties in for me, as we're talking, it just really hit me that feeling invisible can easily lean into feeling flawed and inferior. These things can be a little bit connected, but specifically when you talked about taming the dragon of abandonment, invisibility, and being insignificant... And I think this can help here as well, and I just want to talk about this, I did not want to miss this... You talked about one of the strategies for taming that first dragon is to know your life's purpose, and I thought that that was like... It seems like this very gargantuan thing to know that, but you made it very practical.

Dr. Daniel Amen: Yeah, now I'm working with this 18-year-old girl I just adore, and no one's ever asked her to get very clear on her goals and her life's purpose, and it's something that we should actually do in school. Like, why are you here, and what do you want? In a balanced way. I've an exercise called the One Page Miracle. On one piece of paper, write down what you want: Relationships, work or school, for kids, money, physical, emotional, spiritual, health, and then every day you ask yourself, "Is my behavior getting me what I want?" That is the definition in my mind of mental health, that you're able to act in ways consistent with what you want, but

if you never define it, how do you know? And purpose, you can actually find quickly by the exercise in the book, and it's basically: What do you love to do? What are you so good at you could teach other people? And what do people want or need from you in your circle, and how do they change as a result of what you do? For me, I change people's brains, I change their lives, and so as a result of what I do, my purpose is to create a revolution in brain health, and so every day I just go, "Okay, what am I doing to live out the purpose I have?" And purposeful people not only live longer, they're cognitively sharper because they are engaging their brain. And if you don't know your life's purpose, there's a section to work on, and it's always a work in progress, right?

Shawn Stevenson: Yeah.

Dr. Daniel Amen: And another thing for the inferior or flawed, and I find myself doing this, that I get to hang out with some really cool people. I just finished I think it's my sixth session on Dr. Phil, and when I was younger, I might go, "Well, why am I not like him?" and you don't have a television show and all of that. And that's the inferior, flawed dragon breathing on me, but as I tame it, I'm like, "Well, how cool is that? I get to do this." And I'm grateful for the opportunities rather than I'm comparing myself to other people. And I found out this as a young psychiatrist. As soon as I thought you were cool, and I wanted to get to know you, within three weeks, you'd be in my office telling me about the garbage in your life, that if you think someone's normal and better than you, you probably don't know them well.

Shawn Stevenson: Yeah, and I got to say, I'm so grateful that you are not on TV doing a show consistently, because we get to have you more often, and also you've written 43 books. It doesn't even make sense in my mind. And just having that capacity for on-the-ground healing, so much that you've done, and the impact, and then you've also had this incredible trickle-down effect with the people that you've served and helped, and them sharing things with their communities, and them sharing things with their family, your reach, it's got to be like a billion people by now. It's just... It's incredible.

Dr. Daniel Amen: Well, see, it just depends on where you look. And it's true for me, it's true for almost everybody I know, if you look to what's wrong, you're going to feel bad, and if you look for what's right... And it's training, you have to train your brain. When we talk about the hopeless and helpless dragon there, to train that dragon... And this is the dragon that drives depression... Is something I call positivity bias training, it's you need to start pushing your brain to look for what's



right during what's wrong, and in the middle of a global pandemic, it's like, "Well, how can you do that?" Start every day with, "Today is going to be a great day." Start every day, start every day with that's actually on the top of my to-do list, in case I forget, and when I go to bed at night, I always go, "What went well today?" And it's like a treasure hunt for me, every day, just looking for those little micro-moments on "what went well today?" and that way I can train the hopeless and helpless dragon out of that negative state.

Shawn Stevenson: So good, so good. One other piece, and I really want to talk about this because it is very interesting. I'll put it like that, the situation that we're in right now in regards to this, so whether it's feeling abandoned and invisible, and of course, insignificant as well, or anything related to feeling like we're not enough and that we're flawed, being a part of a group, a positive affirmative group can be incredibly healing for so many different things, and that was one of the strategies that you talked about for taming that first dragon, but you also... And I remember in our last conversation you mentioned the term that's been put into culture, social distancing, and you felt that that term was not ideal for what we wanted to accomplish.

Dr. Daniel Amen: It should have been physical distancing, so the virus doesn't hop from you to another person. Social distancing is a prescription for loneliness and disaster. Loneliness is actually a risk factor for Alzheimer's disease and depression, and we need to be socially more connected than ever before, so we get to do this. We get to hang out even though we're not sitting next to each other, it's just as intimate, just as thoughtful, and this is where technology can really help us. Obviously, we have to be careful with it, it doesn't hijack a whole generation of children, but at the same time, being connected through voice mail and text and FaceTime is so important.

Shawn Stevenson: Yeah, I love that. You said in the book, "the accurate use of language matters". And when I saw that, it just really hit me in how the language we use with ourselves, of course, and these dragons, that language, and also our language that we use with other people, which we're going to come back and talk a little bit about later, but the other people's dragons, those language... That language affecting us too, and I shared a study the other day, because I saw a news clip once this variant of the virus hit and they had cases here in LA and they had a new segment and I rarely ever watch the news, but I turned the TV on and within a minute it was getting played, and this is getting broadcast, of course, to millions of people here in LA, and the physician, even though the thing is, he's really trying

to tell people to exercise extreme caution, but he literally said and I'm quoting, "If you go outside, you are subjecting yourself to... Putting yourself in front of a firing squad."

Yes, and so with that language, what firing squad, what is connected to psychologically for us is imminent death and also is associated with you doing a crime, and he said, and I've recorded and I put it on to teach a lesson on social media and also tied it to a study. And this was a peer reviewed study published in Frontiers in pharmacology, reiterated how negative suggestion by authority figures and physicians can have significant neurobiological effects and incite symptoms of physical and mental illness. So just being aware of our language, express in a different way to exercise caution, but don't tell people that you are in imminent death, you're going to definitely die if you go outside your door. We just got to be a little bit more careful in language we use, so when you said that in the book, I was like, "Absolutely, let's be more intentional in the words that we use, so we can get to the place we want to go without creating more problems," if that makes sense.

Dr. Daniel Amen: Well, it reminds me of the "should and shaming Dragon," and a lot of that has been put out in the media during the pandemic, and it's causing a negative reaction and a backlash. When you shame people or make them irrationally afraid. Now, we should be afraid of the virus, there's the anxious dragon, and I always say my goal is not to completely eradicate your anxiety. Low levels of anxiety kill people. Right. The "Don't worry, be happy" people actually die the earliest from accidents and preventable illnesses, so you need a healthy dose of anxiety. Too much'll ruin your life, it'll ruin your marriage it'll ruin your job, your sense of happiness and joy. But yeah, that's pretty crazy. I always tell my community, your best defense against COVID is your immune system and your brain, because ultimately it's about decision-making. Low levels of anxiety, you're not wearing a mask, you can infect a whole bunch of people, and you can become a super spreader. But too much anxiety will keep you locked in and put your immune system at great vulnerability to be hurt by this virus.

Shawn Stevenson: Yeah. So, in talking about the anxious dragon, 'cause this is another big one that has definitely skyrocketed. One of your patients, Miley Cyrus, reached out to you. It just seems like she got hit with a massive wave of anxiety, and can you talk about some of the triggers there and some of the reactions, how does this affect us when this dragon starts to breathe fire on us.

Dr. Daniel Amen: Well, I actually remember the night she called me, so I've known Miley for 10 years and I adore her, and she was freaked out because of the pandemic. As a country, we were freaked out, as a world. And it's like, "How long does the virus live on packages and I can't go out, and is my grandmother going to die?" And as I walked her back from the ledge as we tamed that dragon, she invited me to be on Instagram with her the next day, and we did that for her millions of fans, and you have to be very careful with what you allow yourself to think. I always want you supervising the thoughts going through your head. Just because you have a thought has nothing to do with whether or not it's true. The thoughts lie; they lie a lot. And it's often our uninvestigated thoughts that drive anxiety, panic and fear, and so managing our thoughts is critical. I have a new technique. It's actually not in this book, it's going to be in my next one, called "You, Happier." 'Cause it's what everybody wants. All my patients, they come to me because they want to be happier, but a bonus technique is give your mind a name.

Just so you can separate from your mind a little bit, like I gave my mind the name Hermy. Hermy was my pet raccoon when I was 16, and she'd talk, talk, talk all the time. I have no idea what she said, and when I just don't have to listen to my mind when I separate from it, I feel so much happier. I have this NHL player I treat, and he struggles, even though he's a Stanley Cup champion, struggles with anxiety, and we were talking about give your mind a name and he couldn't think of one, and I'm like, "Do you have a nemesis?" And he's like, "Yeah, several." And so he ended up giving his mind the name Johnny based on this guy he was hypercompetitive with. 'cause he knew if Johnny got on the ice, Johnny wouldn't win, right? That's the competitiveness of high performing athletes, and it's like, you just don't have to believe everything you think, and please don't say everything you think. That's why God gave you frontal lobes, to suppress. It's just evaluating, does this thought help me, or does this thought hurt me?

Shawn Stevenson: So good, so good. And in this section, you give... Of course, every section you're giving very tangible tools for taming these dragons. So with the anxiety Dragon, you share that prayer in meditation can calm the amygdala, so it's where we experience a lot of the side effects of this dragon. And you said that in a 2009 study in the International Journal of Psychiatry in medicine found that prayer may be useful in treatment of anxiety and depression, and then you actually performed studies yourself because you're, again, you're somebody who's looking at the brain on how meditation can influence the health of our brains.

Dr. Daniel Amen: So, we did a study, we actually did three of them, on a Kundalini yoga form of



meditation called Kirtan Kriya it's a chanting meditation, or really, it's a singing meditation, and it's all of 12 minutes. So I treat a lot of people who have ADD and they have short attention spans, so I'm like, "12 minutes, give me 12 minutes." You don't have to go to an ashram in India and sit on the floor for months at a time; 12 minutes a day. Sa Ta Na Ma, Sa Ta Na Ma, Sa Ta Na Ma. Two minutes out loud, two minutes whispering, four minutes silently to yourself, two minutes whispering, two minutes out loud, you're done. Unbelievable. Calm the emotional brain, but activating the thoughtful brain. It's just like the perfect balancing technique, and it's so simple to do. I just love it. There's a term one of my friends coined called "spiritual fitness," and prayer and meditation is part of that. I always think of people in four big circles, and people think of physical fitness, so I think there's a biological circle, there's a psychological circle, so that's mind fitness, there's a social circle, how we get along with our kids, our spouses, our co-workers, so their social fitness and spiritual fitness. You want to be a whole healthy person that's successful, not just in the amount of money you make, but you're more likely to make more money if you're happy. We want to be fit physically, mentally, socially and spiritually.

Shawn Stevenson: Wonderful, so good, so good. Dr. Amen, I want to ask you about the external dragons that can breathe fire on us. Nobody likes dragon breath. Alright, nobody likes that. And we're going to do that right after this quick break, so sit tight, we'll be right back.

Shawn Stevenson: One of the most important topics of the day is how to have a healthy, robust, functional immune system, and our immune system evolved to have a myriad of weapons at its disposal. From the T-cells to our B-cells in humoral immunity, to our natural killer cells, and so much more, it's an incredibly intelligent and powerful system, when it's all online and working correctly. But as we know today, we have many things that suppress the function of our immune system, which suppresses our ability to fight and defend our bodies against all manner of infectious diseases, but also chronic diseases as well, like the management of cancer. Our immune system has a major part to play... The major part to play in defending our body from cancer, and so this is a topic that needs more attention, and we have, right now, access to things that have massive clinical evidence to support the function of our immune system, especially right now when viral infection is such an important conversation, and one of these things is highlighted in a peer-reviewed journal, Antiviral Chemistry and Chemotherapy, revealing that propolis powerful product from bees has significant anti-viral effects, specifically in reducing viral lung infections.

What's on top of people's minds right now? Viral lung infections, and we have things clinically proven to help the body to defend itself against these things. Why is this so powerful? Well, there's over 300 active compounds in propolis, the majority of these compounds being forms of antioxidants, specifically polyphenols, that are well-documented to reduce inflammation and fight disease, even more specifically, polyphenols have been proven to inhibit the activity of Coronavirus according to recent data published in the peer reviewed journal Archives of Virology. This data exists, this exists, and these are things that we have easy access to today more than ever, and this is something I regularly give to my family and even my kids. There's a wonderful propolis spray that actually uses third party testing to ensure that you're not consuming pesticides and herbicides and DDT and all these different things, arsenic and all these different compounds that are finding their way into our bee products today. So they're making sure that you're not getting any nefarious thing along with these powerful compounds. And I want to share another really interesting study with you, because this is looking at a viral infection that tends to not have a lot of solution.

And this is from a recent study published in Vital Therapy Research, they found that topical propolis, even putting it on topically, applied three times a day, accelerated the healing of cold sores, herpes simplex one, faster than not having treatment from propolis. The researchers found that topical propolis not only reduced the amount of herpes virus present in the person's body, but also protected the body against future cold sore breakouts, and again, this isn't information that you hear very often. Alright, so definitely check out this propolis; it is amazing. It's a propolis spray from Beekeepers Naturals, that's B-E-E-K-E-E-P-E-R-S Naturals.com/model. Beekeepersnaturals.com/model. And you're going to get 15% off this incredible propolis spray, and they even have one for kids. There's this cute little bottle for the kids, and this is what my youngest son uses all the time as well, especially during times like this, just to give you that added edge in defense. Definitely check out Beekeepers Naturals. Go to beekeepersnaturals.com/model. And now, back to the show.

Alright, we're back, and we're talking with New York Times best-selling author, Dr. Daniel Amen about his new book, Your Brain is Always Listening. Your Brain is Always Listening. And we've been talking about the hidden dragons that can breathe fire onto our brains and the different parts of the brain, and one of the things that I didn't bring up earlier is that in the book, which I always love that

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you do this, you give us an overview of our amazing brains, and you talk about the different processes they control and how they can become dysfunctional, and I was actually reading this I was reading that section to my nine-year-old, he was like hanging out on the couch, and I was having a conversation with him about it, the different parts of the brain while we went along, so it was like a really cool moment. So now he knows a little bit about the amygdala, he knows a little bit about cerebellum, and of course, the prefrontal cortex, and he understands like That's the boss. It's somebody who's there to make some decisions of what not to do, like that has forethought.

So I explained that to him that to be able to map it out, like If I do this thing, if I take this action, this is going to happen, maybe I might not want to do that thing, and when that part of the brain is not active or undernourished or we've got a fire-breathing dragon, creating some kind of fire somewhere else in the brain, it can mess that part of the process up. So, yeah, I just love that you do that and you talk about the brain in the book as well.

Dr. Daniel Amen: I mean, your brain controls everything you do and everything you are, so knowing about it, and then learning to love, respect and nurture it, it's absolutely essential to being successful at school, or with your money, or in your relationships, or at work, or just how you feel about yourself. It's one of the big missing pieces in the discussion on health and success. I got to scan Tony Robbins, which was really fun for me because you know he's the world's self-help guru, and he's just so smart and so thoughtful. We did a Facebook Live, and I'm like, you teach people really great software programming for success, but what if they have hardware problems?

Shawn Stevenson: Right.

Dr. Daniel Amen: You have to get your brain right, and then program it. You can't do that in reverse, because you can give someone the best software tools, but if their brain's not healthy, they're just not likely to run the program as you intended. And for a long time, I'm like, I'm giving people is great information and they don't do it, which is why I'm like, I have to look at your brain, 'cause if your brain's not balanced, it's hard to follow through with the things you know are helpful for you.

Shawn Stevenson: Yeah, I would love to ask you about one more kind of inner dragon, personal dragon. Which again you have... Is it 13 that you go through in the book? Right, so this one, because it's just coming up for me right now, because I'm just thinking



of so many people that I know and that I've seen in my clinical practice that if we can't really dial in what they're doing with their nutrition or their movement practices or their sleep, so often it would be because they feel they're responsible for so many other things, so many other people, they put themselves last. Can you talk about the responsible dragons?

Dr. Daniel Amen: Oh, this is what causes co-dependency in that you worried about someone when you were young, and you wish you could have done more to help, maybe a sick parent or sibling or friend, and you end up growing... You end up feeling responsible for other people, and you may actually end up doing too much for them and causing a dependency, and then bitterness. So this is very important to tame so that you allow people to be responsible for their own lives and you don't take on more than is actually good in the relationship. So this is the dragon that causes people to do too much for others.

Shawn Stevenson: Anybody listening... Is anybody listening, do you have a tendency towards doing too much for others? Just check in with yourself, because I know that's some of us for sure. It's definitely... Has been a tendency of mine before too.

Dr. Daniel Amen: I gave the quiz... So people can learn about their dragons, go to knowyourdragons.com, and I gave it to the police chief in Newport Beach, and that was his dragon, was the responsible dragon, along with the judgmental dragon, which is actually Tana's main dragon. "If I ruled the world, it would be better." But self-care is so important. And if this dragon gets out of control, you create entitled people and that's not a good thing, 'cause entitlement often goes with depression.

Shawn Stevenson: Wow. And you talk about that dragon as well in the book too, and again, I'm just sharing... You were so candid in the book too, which some parts is like, "Oh, I cannot believe that happened to you." But just to share really quickly, for me and this tendency, I lost my grandmother way too soon, overdosed medication, lost my grandfather, the love of her life, and this was shortly after he passed away. She just really began to fade away pretty quickly. So, of course, just having this internal drive to want to help, basically save the world and having that on my shoulders. It can almost kill you if you're trying to do something that's completely unreasonable and I made a shift from being very self-centered because of growing up in a very volatile, violent area, you have to worry about yourself or you're going to die. But from there, I swung the pendulum all the way to the other side to be very other-focused and I just lived and breathed, and did everything

that I could for my clients, for the patients that were coming in and I got a little bit out of balance. But you just said the thing that really helped me so much was my own personal self-care and putting myself first so that I could be of better service without depleting myself and also without creating that, like you said, that codependency. So people helping to inspire that power within them and being much more aware of my need and tendency towards overdoing.

Dr. Daniel Amen: Yeah. And it's biblical, love your neighbor as yourself. So if you're not taking care of yourself, you're going to end up burned out and that's not going to help anybody. If you do too much, you actually create dependency and bitterness in other people. Now, the upside for the responsible dragon is you are helping tens of thousands of people every week and how exciting is that? I love that for you, but it's when you become unbalanced that you burn out and then you can't do the mission that you're on the planet to do, and so taming this dragon is really important.

Shawn Stevenson: Yes. And like I said, you've got very practical things, if any of these dragons are speaking to you, but there's more, there's many more. I promise you will see yourself in these pages and there's practical things that we can do to help to manage these things and tame these dragons. In section two of the book, you talk about how other people's dragons can affect you, how other people's dragons are contagious. You even use the word contagious. Let's talk about that a little bit.

Dr. Daniel Amen: Well, part two is the "They, Them, and Other" dragons. You're always listening to people alive and dead that are still impacting you. They're your parent... The parent dragons. Even though my dad died last year, he's still in my head, virtually every day. Or your mom. And I remember I was six years old and I told a lie, I have no idea what it was about. And my mom started to cry and she said, "I never thought I would have a son who was going to hell."

Shawn Stevenson: When I read that, I was like, "Oh, that's harsh, Mom. What?"

Dr. Daniel Amen: And she was usually not that harsh, but boy, every once in a while... And so when I find I'm harsh with myself, I'm like, "Oh, you're listening to that parent dragon that I need to reeducate." There's teacher dragons, and coaches dragons, and mean girls and popular kids. Our brain's always listening to that unless we tame them and you tame them by basically rewriting your story. And I talk in the book about how storytelling is really how we've communicated history and values and

goals. And you're always writing your story, and you get to choose. I actually talk... Yesterday, one of my patients is a screenwriter and I'm like, "You get to rewrite your own story. How exciting is that?" But you need to know about the dragons that are influencing the current story and then tame them. And you don't want... You have kids. I have kids. I have grandkids. I don't want them growing up with harsh dragons. I want them growing up with influences that encourage them, but you don't want to swing it the other way. The best parents always remember two words: Firm, like when I say something I mean and I'm going to back it up, and kind, that I'm not a dragon, that I'm not breathing fire on your brain. I'm setting appropriate boundaries and doing it with love so you have secure attachments.

Shawn Stevenson: Yeah. So good. So good. So simple. Something else that is a little bit later in the book, you talk about outfoxing the scheming dragons. These dragons that are external, that are scheming on you, scheming on your attention, scheming on your brain. And one of those being, if this is in that category, digital dragons. Digital dragons. So can you talk a little bit about that?

Dr. Daniel Amen: So your brain is always listening to what's going on around you. There's a news monger scheming dragon, there's a contact sports scheming dragon, like those are good for us; no, bad. There's the holiday dragon that we just came out of, where people... "Oh, it's the holidays, so I should let myself eat anything I want." But one of the worst dragons is the digital dragons where they've literally... Gadgets have hijacked the attention span of a generation of children and now adults. Silicon Valley purposefully makes your gadgets addictive. As Kellogg sugar cereals went after stomach share, that Silicon Valley's gone after mind share, and we should be very cautious about it. I remember my grandson, he's nine months old, and he knew how to work an iPhone at nine months old, but I could tell that our relationship was really around the iPhone whenever I'd see him when he was little. And, you know, his parents did a good job of, like going, "Okay. No technology." because they could just see how addictive it was, and many of my patients actually have developed Tourette's Syndrome, a tic disorder based on their exposure to gadgets.

Shawn Stevenson: This is nuts. We don't even... We literally have no idea of the long-term ramifications of this. It's like it's such a new thing in our evolution as humans. It's pretty concerning, to say the least. Well, you do talk about, and really close the book out with this, in talking about your internal dragon tamer, right. There's a movie series, really great movie series for kids and adults... You know, they make the movies now for families and like the little mature jokes are in there as well.



There's How to Tame Your Dragon, shout out to that movie, if anybody's seen it's really good, but your internal dragon tamer. So first of all, what does that mean? And second of all, can we talk about what hurts our internal dragon tamer?

Dr. Daniel Amen: So the dragon tamer is the front third of your brain. It's your pre-frontal cortex, it's the brake, if you will. It stops you from saying things you shouldn't say, or doing things you shouldn't do. And there is this dance always between the front part of your brain, the most human thoughtful part of the brain and the fear centers, or the amygdala. When the dragons breathe fire on your amygdala it causes you to react with anxiety, with trauma, with grief, loss, hopelessness, or helplessness. And you need to strengthen the dragon tamer that front part of your brain, because it actually sends inhibitory signals. It sends signals to brake, or to calm down your emotional brain and how do you strengthen it? Well, you don't hit soccer balls with your head. It's really important, you don't hurt it physically. This is why I did the big NFL study at a time when the NFL was sort of not telling the truth about traumatic brain injury in football. And my NFL players, I have 300 of them, four times the risk of depression as the general population.

So it's really important not to hurt your frontal lobes. So protecting against traumatic brain injury, but also eating healthy food, sleeping. You get less than seven hours at night, you have lower overall function in your frontal lobe and the dragon tamer sort of goes on vacation. If you have ADD, often sleepy, or dragon tamers, the frontal lobe function is less. Go too long between meals, low blood sugar goes with weakness in the pre-frontal cortex. And so, doing the right lifestyle strategies to strengthen the dragon tamer just helps you feel better overall. You want to protect the front part of your brain.

Shawn Stevenson: Perfect. Perfect. Dr. Amen, it's always such a gift to talk with you, and I always walk away feeling smarter. And again, I love the way that you write because it's very to the point. It's very practical and just incredibly insightful, and it has to be coming from you and your experience. And so I want to make sure that everybody gets a copy of this book as soon as it's available. You can pre-order it right now, and you want to do this because the publication situation right now. You want to make sure that you on the list to be the first to get your hands on this book, Your Brain Is Always Listening. Can you let everybody know, you've got some special pre-order bonuses that I told you, literally, "Don't tell me about it", because I want to be as excited as everybody else. So, what are the bonuses and where can I get the book?

Dr. Daniel Amen: So if people pre-order the book, Amazon, Barnes Noble, anywhere great books are sold. They can go to yourbrainisalwayslistening.com and enter their receipt number in and I have four gifts for them. One is a special playbook that my team created on just a summary of the book. So it's actionable, quick. Two is a program I created called Magnificent Mind with medical hypnosis. Actually, six hypnosis audio downloads I do for you as if you're in my office. I love that 'cause it's really a great dragon taming methodology. And then for people who pre-order the book, I'm going to do a two-hour live event where I just meet with them and answer their specific questions.

And my favorite bonus is a bottle of my favorite supplement from BrainMD, which is the company I created to help people have better brains and better minds, and the supplement is called Happy Saffron. It has saffron, zinc, and curcumin, and saffron has been found in 21 randomized controlled trials to be as effective as antidepressant medication. Saffron has been found to help your mood, to help your memory, to help your eyes, even your focus and weight. So I'm just a huge fan of saffron. It's a \$50 value, they'll get a free coupon for a bottle of happy saffron and my team's telling me it's like, "We're going to run out because so many people are pre-ordering the book," but I'm leaning on them. Don't let that happen. But this book will help you so much, it makes a great gift for the people in your life, here at home, people are talking about, "Okay, Tana has 13, has 10 of the 13 dragons and how her dragons interact with my dragons" and just makes for a great way to talk about how you can have a better mind and a better brain.

Shawn Stevenson: So good. Are you kidding me? You're giving that away? That is incredible. So what's the website again? After we pre-order.

Dr. Daniel Amen: Yourbrainisalwayslistening.com.

Shawn Stevenson: Perfect, so good, thank you so much, Dr. Amen, I appreciate you immensely. Of course, we want everybody to go and pre-order the book right now, get this bonus. You get a free bottle is going to get shipped to you, going to get a coupon for that, incredible. And the other bonuses as well, just so cool, you always... Again, you over-deliver and I'm just excited to see... You mentioned earlier you're working on another book, and we're excited to see what you have in store for us next. So it's always a pleasure. Thank you so much for hanging out with us.

Dr. Daniel Amen: Thanks, Shawn. So grateful for our friendship.

Shawn Stevenson: Yeah, me too, me too. Everybody, thank you so much for tuning into the show today. I hope you got a lot of value out of this. Truly one of my greatest mentors and inspirations, Dr. Daniel Amen, the world's largest database of SPECT imaging scans and actually looking at the brain, looking at the organ that he is treating and getting that valuable feedback and data for us to understand what interventions actually help to heal our brain and what things hurt our brain. So our brain is very... It's a very private organ, you can't really get in there very well and get a peek until recently in modern science, and the brain is very choosy on the data that it's giving.

It'll give you data about anything else in your body, if anything else is in pain, your brain will let you know. If your toe hurts, your brain's going to let you know. If your stomach... If you've got a tummy ache, your brain is going to let you know, but your brain itself, if your brain is hurting, there's no pain receptors in our brain, so your brain is given the news about everybody else, but it's very private, very private about what's going on with itself, and so this is why so often we can have things going on with the physical structure of our brain, with the hardware that he was just talking about earlier, and not even know until it's too late.

So this is a big advocacy to getting our brains healthier, the physical metrics, and also avoiding the things that can damage our brain and also changing the software, of course, so that we can have the thoughts and feelings and emotions that empower us and help us to deal with life's inevitable challenges, and so this book coming at this time is not an accident. You need to read this book, yourbrainisalwayslistening.com to get those bonuses, I implore you to get them. It is remarkable. Go and pre-order the book, get those bonuses, scoop them up, I know that I'm definitely going to take advantage of it myself and listen, we've got some power house episodes of the Model Health Show coming very, very soon. So make sure to stay tuned. Take care, have an amazing day, and I'll talk to 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 can 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.