

# **THE MODEL HEALTH SHOW**

**EPISODE 568**

## **How To Discover Your Brain- Type & The Neuroscience Of Happiness**

**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. What if you could get a peek inside of your brain? What if you can actually get a look at how healthy your brain actually is? Well, this is the opportunity we actually have today. We have the technology to get a peek behind the curtain at what theoretical physicist, Michio Kaku calls, "The most complex organ in the known universe." Now, what's often left out of the conversation is how much our brain health is controlling our mental health. These two things seem to be in separate camps, but truly, it is the health of our brain that is dictating our mental health. And as you know, mental health issues have skyrocketed in recent decades, but in particular, these last couple of years, they've reached epidemic proportions. And when we're suffering, when we're struggling with our mental health, we're looking for outlets, and oftentimes in our culture, we are leaning towards, or going straight towards pharmaceutical drugs and/or illicit drugs, and illicit drug use has hit epidemic proportions as well.

As you know, as we've talked about here on The Model Health Show recently, since 2015, we had about 50,000 drug overdose deaths in 2015, but in 2020, that number doubled. We had about 100,000 people, 100,000 of our citizens died from overdoses from illicit drugs, namely from opioids, and namely from Fentanyl, a synthetic opioid, which is now the leading cause of death for people between the age of 18 and 45. These are what are considered to be our prime of life years and the leading cause of death, contrary to popular belief, it's not COVID, it's not heart disease, when you combine those two numbers, the deaths from COVID and heart disease in people between the ages of 18 and 45 in 2020 and 2021, combine those numbers together and it still does not match the number of people who died from Fentanyl. In 2020 and 2021, Fentanyl was the number one cause of death. And we often brush those things off to the side, especially if we're not aware of these things taking place. There's just like these drug abusers, these people who are just doing these risky behaviors, not realizing that the advent of these very addictive synthetic opioids and opioids in general.

So many people that have turned to these drugs were struggling with pain, be it physical and/or mental pain. And this is really a huge mission on the part of pharmaceutical companies to change the definition of pain and where it constitutes a legal and/or ethical recommendation from physicians to prescribe highly addictive opioids under the guise that they're not that addictive guys, they're not even that addictive, and if they are addictive, it's the fault of the person, and not realizing the very dynamic chemistry and capacity for addiction that these drugs really have. Well, we've now hit the number of, since about 2000, since around the year 2000, nearly 500,000 American citizens have died from opioids. And many of these folks were not signing up to be addicted to opioids. It's just the nature of how powerful these

drugs are. And oftentimes, again, somebody's coming in for mild pain which was, once, these were dictated for very, very severe pain, if people's experiencing severe pain from chemotherapy or something of the like, post-surgery for a small stint.

But then a shift took place in the '90s where opioids... And this was largely driven by the pharmaceutical company, Purdue Pharma, redefining where these opioids should fit and creating a war on pain. Alright, that was the moniker, is a war on pain, "We're going to end pain and suffering." And just look, how has that worked out for us? And so, also, again, this is being utilized and why it's become such an epidemic for physical pain, but also mental pain and anguish. People are hurting. Our citizens are hurting. And the big missing piece of this is understanding that we're not often given real tools to understanding how our minds work, how amazing brains work, and taking care of the health of our brains. One of the biggest issues growing right now is neuroinflammation, specifically hypothalamic inflammation. A study that was published in the Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences dictated how body fat is one of the contributing agents to increased hypothalamic or brain inflammation.

And brain inflammation is one of the leading contributors to accumulating excessive body fat. It becomes this vicious circle that again, most folks are not talking about in relationship to our brain health and thus our mental health. So, with all of these growing issues, I turned to the number one expert in the world on brain health, the number one person that I trust, because he's actually looking at the brain. He's not just telling you, "You know what, you sound like your brain's messed up," or "You sound like you got some mental health challenges." He actually looks at people's brains. He's been when one of the pioneers behind SPECT imaging. So being able to actually take a look at the activity and the circulation of different areas of our brains. And he's accumulated about 200,000 scans. He's been a big part of some of the things that have come forward in CTE with the NFL, and just such a pioneering voice, multi, multi-time New York Times best-selling author, and just a true brain superhero, Dr. Daniel Amen.

But I couldn't talk about this stuff from a place of integrity unless I experience it. So, he asked if I wanted to get my brain scanned, I said, "Well yeah, I do." And so, I went to Amen Clinics and got a peek behind the curtain and took a look at my own brain. And I was lucky enough to be able to bring my youngest son, Braden, along with me. And he's actually here with me in the studio today to tell you a little bit about the experience. So, what was it like seeing your dad's brain?

**BRADEN STEVENSON:** It's something I would never experience ever in my life, that's for sure. And there's a lot of stuff I've never seen before. It was very interesting 'cause I don't think I've ever seen the inside of anyone's brain, especially my father's.

So that was a very fun experience. He got to ask a bunch of weird quizzes, to see how fast he can respond to them. He had to look at the emotions of faces, one of them looked like Jackie Chan. So...

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** So, we had a good time though, right?

**BRADEN STEVENSON:** Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** You learned a lot.

**BRADEN STEVENSON:** Yes.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And you also wrote a paper on it too.

**BRADEN STEVENSON:** I did.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah, that was cool. So, thank you for coming and going to the clinic with me, and thank you for coming on the show and sharing your experience. I love you, bud. So, he mentioned he got to actually see when I was getting the SPECT scan done. Basically, your head is going into this contraption where it's taking all of these different dynamic images of the brain and looking at brain activity. But then there were also cognitive skills tests to get a comprehensive view of things. So, it's taking a look at the physical activity of my brain and also the practical expression of my brain's capacity as well. And so I had a little bit of a curveball having my son there with challenging my focus, of course, because him and I, there were some parts where we were actually cracking up taking these cognitive skills test because he could see the computer as I was doing it, and there was one quiz where it had all these different faces and it was for me to be able to recognize emotions.

And as it turns out after I talked with Dr. Amen, which I had no idea at the time I was taking the quiz, I do have a negativity bias for faces. I'm able to recognize negativity much, much faster in a human face than I am positive emotions. And talking with this world-renowned, double-board-certified psychiatrist, he related that to my experiences growing up in a very volatile, often violent environment as a child, and me carrying that with me. And I never really thought about it before, that's a thing about people who are really great at their work, they'll start putting pieces together. And so, I'm able to recognize that. And also, as soon as that comes on, I have the awareness of like, let me look for more joy, let me proactively turn on the scanning of my environment for positivity. Because I got to be honest, I mean, I do proactively look for any type of questionable things in my environment for sure, and I don't think that it's a bad thing by any means, but we just don't want that to control our lives. And I think that I've done pretty good at managing that in the work that I've done over the years.

But also, he pointed out the fact, of course, I played football many years, and being a running back and returning kicks and punts and running into piles and players, all of those years and all the fights that I've been in, growing up in that environment. There wasn't very healthy inputs for my brain doing those type of things, and I could see some remnants, and for me and him as well, talking with him. And by the way, this is all going to be on his show. He has a show that's called Scan My Brain, and he brings on all of these celebrities and these influencers and has these conversations. Scans their brain, and then looks into their history and talks about how they can make their brain even better. So, for me, it's like scary good. Because there are brains that are far worse, but there are some improvements that I see there that I can make. And it just lights me on fire because just like, what if I could take this to another level? Man, it's just... It's very, very inspiring. But having these tools is accessible today, but it's not readily accessible for everyone yet.

And this is why doing practical things that every single person can do is so important. You don't necessarily need to get a brain scan to know when you are asking the right questions and having good self-analysis, being able to self-assess where you are and where you want to be, and what are practical things to help us to get there? Because right now we are in a deficit of happiness, for sure. And the problem is, we often don't talk about, what are the ingredients for happiness? What constitutes happiness? And truly, where it starts is having a healthy, happy brain. And so again, this is why I'm so very excited about this episode. Now, one of the things that I've been utilizing over the years that Dr. Amen has put his stamp of approval on is MCTs, medium-chain triglycerides. Researchers at Yale University published data purporting that MCTs, medium-chain triglycerides, can readily cross the blood-brain barrier and be utilized by our brain cells. Getting access into this VIP section of our body should be credit enough to their value and their importance, because very few things are readily able to cross the blood-brain barrier, to get that VIP access.

Most stuff needs like retinal scans, fingerprints, passwords and codes, all kinds of hoops that it has to endure in order to make it into the brain, but medium-chain triglycerides get that express pass. Another remarkable study, and this was published in the Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences, sought to find out if MCTs could have an impact on improving the condition of patients with Alzheimer's disease. It's well-noted that Alzheimer's disease is consistently accompanied by an impairment of glucose uptake into the brain. It's essentially an insulin resistance that takes place with our brain cells often attributed to an overwhelming amount of glucose hitting our bloodstream continuously through our weeks, months, and years of our lives in this culture. So, this is why Alzheimer's is also being denoted as Type Three Diabetes.

Now, the scientists in the study discovered that since MCTs are quickly metabolized by the liver, prompting the production of ketones, those ketones are then able to easily cross the blood-brain barrier as well and provide an alternative fuel source to the glucose-impaired brain cells of Alzheimer's patients. The scientists found that the consumption of MCTs directly led to improved cognitive function in mild to even moderate forms of Alzheimer's disease and cognitive impairment. We're talking about your brain getting better, even when these conditions hit that is largely considered, in recent years, to not have solutions to turn it around. You can do things to try to slow down the degradation, usually through the form of some kind of pharmaceutical intervention, but it's widely considered.

You can't turn this around. You can't get better. You can't get the brain better. But, got news for you, MCTs are one of the things that's been found to, again, help to improve cognitive function in mild to moderate forms of Alzheimer's disease patients. The MCT oil that I utilize essentially every day is from Onnit. They're sourcing things the right way. No nefarious compounds, no cutting of the oils. It's just high-quality MCTs derived from coconut. Go to [onnit.com/model](http://onnit.com/model), that's O-N-N-I-T.com/model, you get 10% off their remarkable MCT oil. They have an original MCT oil. They also have emulsified MCT oils, which are sort of like coffee creamers. They have a thickness to them. I like the almond milk late flavor. My wife really likes the vanilla. But these are great adjuncts to a brain-healthy diet. Go to [onnit.com/model](http://onnit.com/model). You're going to get 10% off the MCTs and also their wide array of human optimization supplements and foods. [Onnit.com/model](http://onnit.com/model). And now let's get to the Apple Podcast review of the week.

**ITUNES REVIEW:** Another five-star review titled, "This podcast is what we need right now" by Pharm KMJ. "I've been listening to Shawn for about a year and every episode is packed with useful, insightful information delivered with such passion for humanity. I'm a pharmacist who wants to put myself out of business. I think the key to health is within each of us and not at the bottom of a pill bottle. The way Shawn translates complicated information for the average person is remarkable. I look forward to new episodes each week."

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** That is remarkable. Thank you so very much for sharing your voice, that means everything. And listen, if you get to do so, please pop over to Apple Podcast and leave a review for The Model Health Show. And on that note, let's get to our special guest and topic of the day. Dr. Daniel Amen is a physician and double board-certified psychiatrist for adults and children, and founder of Amen Clinics with 10 locations across the United States. Amen Clinics has the world's largest database of brain scans for psychiatry, totaling more than 200,000 SPECT scans on patients from 155 countries. He's also the founder of BrainMD, a fast-growing science-based nutraceutical company, and also Amen University, which has trained thousands of medical and mental health professionals on the methods he has developed. In addition, he's produced 16 national public television shows about the brain, and his online videos on brain and mental health have been viewed over 300 million times.

Dr. Amen is a 12-time New York Times best-selling author, including his books "Change Your Brain, Change Your Life", "The End of Mental Illness", "Healing ADD" and many more. Now, let's jump into this conversation with the one and only Dr. Daniel Amen. It's not often that we get to talk to a living legend, and I'm here at your spot for a change. So, my good friend, Dr. Daniel Amen, welcome back to the show.

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** Shawn, so great to be with you, makes me happy.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** This is our subject today, one of my favorite things to talk about. And before we got started, I was thinking about this field of positive psychology finally starting to emerge because, same thing when I was in school doing the pre-med thing, we were so focused on disease and problems, and there's plenty of them, of course, but not many folks are looking at, how can we make the brain better? So, the first thing I want to ask you about is, we're at a very unique time as well right now, over the last few years, we've seen some tremendous changes in mental health, let's talk about our state right now.

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** So, before the pandemic, we were at epidemic levels of anxiety, depression, ADHD, addictions, the opioid epidemic, for example, depression was at 8.5% of the population, and then the pandemic hit, and by August of 2020, it was at 28% of the population. It had more than tripled. So, not since the Great Depression has there been this level of unhappiness. And as I saw that, I'm like, but you can learn to be happy. Whatever situation you're in, you just have to know the neuroscience of it, 'cause happiness is ultimately a brain function. And as I was tackling this, I came across a video that I just love by Dennis Prager called "Why Be Happy?" And in it, he says, "Happiness is a moral obligation," and I'm like, "What?"

I grew up Roman Catholic, and I went to Catholic school and Catholic high school, and I guarantee you that idea that happiness is a moral obligation was nowhere to be found, that it was about guilt and control and shame. And then it's like, so why is it a moral obligation? Because of how you impact other people. I guarantee you, and you know about this, if you're raised by an unhappy parent or married to an unhappy spouse and you ask somebody, "Is happiness an ethical issue?" and I guarantee you they're going to say, "Yes." And so, what we're talking about is not fluff. It's critical and central and ultimately, it's what everybody wants, but they don't know how to do it, and...

In the book, in the opening, I start with the lies of happiness, like more of something will make you happier. And I have a number-one New York Times best-selling book. Another one's not going to make me happier. That ultimately, happiness is in the little things that happen day in and day out, that hedonism is the enemy of happiness because it wears out your pleasure centers.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** So that's hedonic adaptation. So, the brain is... Like you just said, you already hit number one, New York Times, there isn't like a number above one unless you're just like, "I want all of them. I want all the spots." And some people think like that. And you've seen this, and I know that I've seen this as well, when folks, they win the championship or they achieve that highest level in whatever it is that they're doing, and then they sink, they kind of lose themselves. And it's because the brain gets acclimated to that high. Even the things that... The pleasure things that we seek today, I would imagine, like if we're... Whether people are utilizing technology or porn or whatever the case might be, you constantly need more and more and more to have the same level of normalcy in a sense. Is that accurate?

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** Well, there's an area in your brain... So, there's a neuroscience of happiness and the area in your brain that feels pleasure is called the nucleus accumbens, and it responds to a number of neurotransmitters, but primarily dopamine. And when dopamine hits it, you go, "Oh, I like that." But if it hits it too strong, cocaine, or too often, addiction, it wears it out, and then you need to engage in that behavior, not to feel high, but to feel okay. And this is why fame is a disaster for the brain. And I've been blessed, I'm in Justin Bieber's docu-series Seasons, to be his doctor, and Miley Cyrus, and I adore these kids, but what happened to them is just a disaster for brain function that they get so much cool stuff from money and drugs and...

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Notoriety.

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** Fame and notoriety and anything they want, but it doesn't make them happy. In fact, it makes them sad. And they don't know that we have to protect them rather than... Like Justin was on tour and he had to end it early because everything around the fame was then making it worse. So not sleeping, overworking, video games, bad food, drugs, all the girl... It's like everything to wear out that part of your brain and you just end up feeling awful. And people go, "But you have everything," but not a healthy brain.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah, that's powerful. So, the neuroscience... So, what would a healthy brain look like from a neuroscience perspective?

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** So, I did a study for this book where I gave 500 consecutive patients at the Amen Clinics, the Oxford happiness questionnaire, and then I scan them, 'cause that's what we do at Amen Clinics. I now have 10 clinics around the country. And we looked at people at high happiness scores versus low happiness scores, and you had better frontal lobe function if you were in the high happiness group, and you had low frontal lobe function in the low happiness group, which means don't let children hit soccer balls with their foreheads, that's a really bad idea. Marijuana is not a health food because it drops blood flow to the brain. Alcohol is not a



health food 'cause it drops blood flow, and if you have low blood flow to your front part of your brain, you end up making impulsive decisions that damage your relationship, less happiness.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Oh man. So, these exposures... So, the prefrontal cortex is going to be more correlated with happiness, is that what I'm hearing?

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** Good activity in the pre-frontal cortex is associated with happiness and low activity is associated with depression.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Got it, got it. Well, I just had a unique experience being able to have my brain scanned. We've had many conversations over the years, but to first-hand experience this and to get a peek behind the curtain at my own brain and to see... And to think about how my brain got into the state that it is so revealing. Because, again, it's this organ that has so much mystery, right? And as you enlightened me to this before I even met you, I caught a piece of one of your PBS specials at a random hotel in Hollywood, when I didn't live here in California, and I was just riveted by the concept of folks are coming in, maybe they have a heart issue, you can actually look at the heart, you could take a look at the activity, you can get a good beat on what's going on there. With the brain, it's a completely different thing.

If somebody's coming in, they have symptoms of depression, anxiety, ADHD, whatever the case might be, in the field of psychiatry, it's just an assessment of symptoms, and then you start throwing drugs at it to try to figure out what it is instead of looking at the organ you treat. And that really struck a chord for me, to look at the organ, let's take a peek so we're not guessing. And so, what would it look like for... You mentioned the pre-frontal cortex, but is happiness associated with other aspects as well? Is there going to be brain balance? Because seeing my brain and seeing the activity where you were like, "We want a little bit more activity in this part of the brain," is there such thing as a cohesive brain versus a brain that's going to be... Have a tendency towards lack of focus or unhappiness, or can you see these states when you look at somebody's brain?

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** You can clearly see the state of the brain. You can clearly see how healthy or not it is. So, when I first started doing imaging, I scanned everybody I knew, and I scanned my mom when she was 60. She had a stunningly beautiful brain, full, even, symmetrical, and it reflected her life. She has seven children, 54 grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. She knows everybody's birthday. She's everybody's best friend. She knows about their lives. And she's 90 now. I mean, it's just stunning. And then I scanned myself and it wasn't healthy because I played football like you. I played football in high school. And I had a lot of bad habits. I was overweight, I was eating a lot of fast food, I wasn't sleeping. And here I am, a double board-certified psychiatrist, this is 1991. I'm board-certified in general psychiatry, child, and

adolescent psychiatry, I don't care about my own brain at all because I had never seen it. And when I looked at it, I became horrified, and I developed a concept I called Brain Envy.

Freud was wrong. Penis envy's not the cause of anybody's problem, not seen it once. But you really... I wanted her brain. I had brain envy. And we have a foundation, Change Your Brain Change Your Life Foundation, and it makes t-shirts. And on the back, it says, "Freud was wrong," and the front says, "It's the brain." So we love that. And when you see it, and then you correlate happiness to brain function, you want a better brain. And if you want to be happy, the foundation will see... 'Cause there's a lot of books on happiness, but none of them talk about the foundational secret to happiness is your brain. With a healthy brain, you're much more likely to be happy.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Alright, let's go back to the penis envy. I think it was you who enlightened me to the fact that the brain is actually our largest sexual organ.

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** It is.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah.

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** And when you get your brain healthy, I love this part of my work because we talked about my mnemonic BRIGHT MINDS. You want to keep your brain healthy or rescue it if it's headed for trouble. You have to prevent or treat the 11 major risk factors that steal your mind. And the B in Bright Minds is blood flow. Low blood flow's the number one brain imaging predictor of Alzheimer's disease. But 40% of 40-year-olds and 70% of 70-year-olds have erectile dysfunction. If you have blood flow problems anywhere, it likely means they're everywhere. And so, as we get people's brains healthier, their sex lives are better. Their erections are better because of blood flow. And what we're finding is that brain cells don't age. Its blood vessels that age. So, if you can keep your blood vessels healthy through what you eat and exercise, hyperbaric oxygen, a treatment I really like a lot, your brain is better, you're happier, and your sex life is better, and you're happier.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah, it all fits together.

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** It all fits together.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** One of the things that... You start the book right off with this and talking about these lies of happiness, and just that part in and of itself, because that's where I saw also the hedonic adaptation, but I think this is important because even though we want to be happy as an individual, I don't think we often think about what that means for us, and it's individual. That's one of the things that jumped out at me immediately because my brain, what the

ingredient for happiness is different for me than what it's going to be for you or anyone else. So, let's talk a little bit about that, that everybody's brain is going to be looking for the same ingredients for happiness because, for us, it's going to be unique.

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** So, the book is based on the seven neuroscience secrets of happiness that very few people talk about or know, and like brain health is foundational, and each of these secrets has a question. So, every day I want you to just ask yourself what you're doing. Is it good for my brain or bad for it? Good from my brain, or bad for it? If you can answer that with information and love, love of yourself, love of your kids, love of your wife, you just start making better decisions.

The next one is, well happiness is different for everybody based on how their brain works. There's the balanced brain type, mostly anything will make them happy. There's the spontaneous brain type. They need novelty. They need excitement. They need stimulation. They like jumping out of airplanes. They like helicopter skiing. They like scary movies because it gives them a dopamine rush. Take a cautious brain type, they hate the idea of jumping out of an airplane. That will just make them miserable. They don't like scary movies. I don't like scary movies. I went and saw Amityville Horror and it gave me nightmares for weeks. I'm like, no, no. Life is... Just watch the news, that's horrible enough. There's the persistent brain type.

They hold onto things. They loop on things. They love rituals. So, for example, even choosing your religion, which I find this really interesting, the spontaneous type is not going to choose becoming Catholic or Lutheran because it's boring for them. It's like the same thing over and over again. They're going to go to a Pentecostal church or to a non-denominational church with great music and great sermons keep their attention. But if you're the persistent brain type, you become Catholic, or you become something that has ritual where you just know what to expect. The spontaneous person loves surprises. The persistent person hates surprises because they like it when things go as they expect, and when things don't go as they expect, they often can have tantrums. And then there's the sensitive type, and the pandemic was the worst for that group because they need connection, they're deeply empathic, and the isolation just drove drinking and drug abuse and depression for that type, and then the cautious type. And you could always tell what their brain type is by how early they are for their appointments. The person that's balanced, they're on time. The person that's spontaneous is five or 10 minutes late. The persistent person is on time. The cautious person's 10 minutes early.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** This is so fascinating. And then to get a peek at people's brains to affirm these things is just really remarkable. So, I got a question just specifically about the persistence type, would there be more activity in a certain part of the brain that you would, see? Where would that be?

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** In the anterior cingulate gyrus, so in the front... Deep in the frontal lobes is the brain's gearshift, it allows you to go from thought to thought, move from idea to idea, be flexible, go with the flow. But when it works too hard in my studies, they tend to be argumentative, oppositional, and if things don't go their way, they get upset. And so, I had this one guy, I tell the story in the book, he was head of the Alzheimer's Association here in Orange County, where I live, and he wanted to learn more about my work, and so he came and got scanned. And as I sat down with him, I said, "Tell me about yourself," and he said, "No, I don't want to say anything about myself. I want you to tell me about myself from my scan." And I'm like, "No, that's not how it works. We always take your scan and put it in the context of your life." And he's like, "No." So right away, I knew he was the persistent brain type. But when you saw his scan, his frontal lobes work way too hard. And so, in front of his wife, I go, "You're persistent. You're like a dog with a bone. And when you say you're going to do something, you do it, and you're on time." And he's like, "Yes, yes, yes." "And you're worried and you're rigid, and if things don't go your way, you get upset. And you tend to be argumentative and oppositional, and you hold grudges." And his wife went, "Yes, yes, yes, yes."

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Wow, this is like...

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** Which is why when I met Tana, you know Tana, my wife, I really liked her. She's beautiful and she's smart, and three weeks later, I'm like, "You haven't seen the clinic. Don't you want to see the clinic?" 'Cause I needed to scan her, 'cause I'm not going to fall in love with her unless I knew what her brain looked like.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Got to see that brain. That's... But this is smart. What if that was a prerequisite? When you go to get your marriage license, you get a brain scan, so you know what's actually happening behind the curtain? Because oftentimes in relationships, you meet somebody's representative. You don't really meet them.

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** I like that. I like how you phrase that; you meet someone's representative.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And this is the thing too, whether... Even with a job interview, you're meeting a representative of the person and not necessarily who they really are. And humans are very creative at making a facade or an appearance of something. Social media highlights that perfectly. But what if we can actually get more educated, not just for learning about the other person but learning about ourselves? This is why I was so grateful for the experience today, because for me, it's not that I'm necessarily trying to fix something, which a lot of people are, they want to fix different things that they're struggling with, I want to be as good as I possibly can be. And we lie to ourselves even with that on how good we're doing. So, this is very empowering. And this leads to another one of these lies as well which is, regardless, if you

want to be happy, just don't worry about it. Just be happy. Don't worry, be happy, right? That's the mantra. I remember... Didn't he win a Grammy for that song?

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** Bobby McFerrin.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Robin Williams... Robin Williams was in the video. Do you remember that?

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** No.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yes.

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** Oh, I'm going to go watch it.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Robin Williams was in the video.

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** Yeah, so I always wanted to be the "Don't worry, be happy" person. My older brother is a "Don't worry, be happy" person, and he's also 150 pounds overweight, and he'd leave work at 3 o'clock and always go play golf, and he was just having fun. And I've always been serious and driven. And then I read a study from Stanford, where they did one of the longest longevity studies that actually started in 1921, and they followed this group of 10-year-olds for 90 years, looking at what goes with success, health, longevity. And one of the things they found was conscientiousness was the main driver of longevity, that the "don't worry be happy" people died the earliest from accidents and preventable illnesses. I used to think when I became a psychiatrist, I would help people have lower levels of anxiety until I realized some of my patients, I have to give them higher levels of anxiety, so they start making better decisions. And I found the scan was just such a great tool, it's like, "Your brain is not as good as it could be, let's make it better," and...

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** You also showed me what the downside could be too. It's just like...

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** "If you don't do what I ask you to do, aging is not a good thing for the brain." It's like the worst thing for the brain and... Did you know if you live to be 85, you have a 50% chance of having lost your mind? You have a 50% chance of being diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease or another form of dementia. I'm 67 now. I'm not okay with that. But I can't start when I'm 82. It's like, I need to start as soon as I know because the decisions, I make today will impact me tomorrow, and all of my tomorrow.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** This is a paradigm shift right here in and of itself because I think that even with this concept of "don't worry, be happy", there's some altruism in it, which is, it can

be, don't let things anchor you or tie you down or control you, but to ignore them, that's the problem. And this is what I'm hearing even with following in that study, folks that were ignoring intelligent advice of like avoiding certain things or having some healthy anxiety... You said healthy anxiety, giving people anxiety, when that term, that word is given so much negative connotation, it's actually valuable, human feedback, is it not?

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** What's the appropriate dose of anxiety? Too much is bad, it causes people to suffer. There's a verse in Proverbs, that the beginning of wisdom is fear of the Lord. And that used to always bother me. I'm like, "Why am I supposed to be afraid of God?" And I got it because if you have no fear, you might not be making good decisions. You want some anxiety. You shouldn't just give your phone number or your address to the person you... To the cute girl, you met at the bar. Do you ever see the movie Fatal Attraction? It's just good to not drive 100 miles an hour down the freeway in the rain, because you can play out what could go wrong. Now, if you stay there, you're going to be unhappy, but having a healthy dose of what could go wrong helps you be happy because you protect yourself.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Makes sense. Very logical. I'm so grateful for this because I think we've gotten away from understanding... We're so external today that we don't really understand, take the time just to acknowledge the feedback our bodies are giving us, what our brain is giving us, whether it's anxiety or even happiness. What is this guiding me to? What is this informing me about that I'm enjoying? And getting these tools, this leads to another lie, which we're outsourcing our emotions to people who are profiting from us. And one of those is like fast-food restaurants, for example. It hit me like a ton of bricks reading the book. It's called A Happy Meal. It's literally called A Happy Meal. I mean, damn, if that's not marketing, like powerful marketing, that I definitely fell into because for me, I had a birthday... I shared with you when we're doing the brain scan that I live with my grandmother, it was one of the happiest times in my life. That was my first time having a Happy Meal, by the way. There was a McDonald's... There was only one fast food restaurant that was close to us, it was a McDonald's, and they had a playground inside.

I had a birthday party there. I'll never forget that. It was like, of course, you got the ball pit, without a doubt you're going to lose a kid or somebody's going to throw up or whatever in there. But just thinking about the characters of McDonald's, they're all... They've got the Happy Meal, but the rest of them are really dark. I don't know if you ever thought about this. Ronald McDonald, first of all, Dr. Amen, is a clown. I don't know... No disrespect to the clowns, but I'm pretty sure most people are a little freaked out by clowns. And then you've got Grimace, his name literally denotes pain. He's this big overweight purple guy. We don't even know what he is. And then you got the Hamburglar, he's a convicted criminal. There's all these sketchy characters, but they're telling you this is the way to happiness. It's a smile and this happy meal. So, is it true? Is it a Happy Meal or should we be calling it something else?

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** It's a lie. It's a sad meal because of the low-quality food that increases inflammation and vulnerability to depression. And Coca-Cola is the same way. Their slogan is "Open Happiness", and it should be open illness, open diabetes, open obesity, open depression, open heart disease, open cancer, but that wouldn't sell. And without real thought behind what you put in your body; you are making other people rich based on your early death. And that's not happiness. And secret number four is love food that loves you back. And too often people go, "But I love sugar." I did this big program with Pastor Rick Warren at Saddleback Church called the Daniel Plan, and after I gave a lecture there, one of the pastors' wives came into my office, and I was drinking tea just like I'm drinking now, and she said, "Would you put the tea down?" And I thought that's really weird. But I'm generally a cooperative person. And she said, "I didn't want you to spit it at me." I'm like...

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** What?

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** Okay. I've never spit tea at anybody. She said, "After your lecture, I told my husband I'd rather get Alzheimer's disease than give up sugar." And I'm like...

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Wow, that's...

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** "Did you date the bad boys in high school? Because you're in an abusive relationship. You love something that hurts you." And too many people, they're attached to alcohol, they're attached to pizza, they're attached to ice cream, but it hurts them. And I was in a marriage for 20 years that was awful. It was just awful. It's why I became a psychiatrist. And I'm not doing it anymore. I am not doing bad. I'm married to my best friend, we're respectful to each other, affectionate, and I'm damn sure not doing it with food, that I can control what I put in my body, and I only want it to love me, not hurt me.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Why do we allow McDonald's to do it to us then?

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** Because we don't know. We are blind. In my book, The End of Mental Illness, I have a writing device that if I was an evil ruler and I wanted to create mental illness, what would I do? I'd create American society with fast-food restaurants everywhere, with food deserts, with this notion that alcohol's a health food or marijuana is innocuous, or the news is in fact the news. 'Cause the news is not the news. The news is a marketing device for advertisers to make money, and they scare you, where millions of amazing things happened yesterday, but you never hear about them because they don't get eyeballs. Fear is a primitive response. The brain pays attention to fear first. And so, they scare you, and in that way, they can sell you the medications that have this laundry list of side effects.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah, it's such a twisted system. I was just talking about this recently, but the United States and New Zealand are the only high-income nations that allow television marketing or just, period, direct-to-consumer marketing of drugs. It's a very abnormal thing. And coincidentally, of course, we're the most drugged nation in the history of the world, really. And I want to ask you about this too because you mentioned things were already trending upward at a shocking rate. We're almost at about one out of 10, essentially one out of 10 of our citizens having depression prior to the pandemic hitting the scene, and then things doubling, tripling. This was already a big issue. And the ingredient's here because... I think this is so important because... I sent you this study. Let's talk about this. I sent you this study yesterday, and it was a big study done by the CDC, and they were looking at what the biggest risk factors for death from COVID was. It was over 800 US hospitals, over 540,000 COVID-19 patients.

They found that obesity was the number one risk factor for death from COVID, which we knew already. We aren't doing anything about it, but we knew that. The second leading risk factor, which was the most shocking for me that it was published, not that it's a thing because I could see it coming from a mile away, as I know you could, the second leading risk factor was anxiety and fear-related disorders. And for me, that jumped right out because it really spoke to our tragic state of mental health here in the United States specifically. Right now, anxiety, depression, ADHD, these things have all been trending up, but it's been heightened. And I don't think people make that connection with the news, for example. They're very well-versed at manipulating human psychology to get eyeballs, and it's not necessarily... And the first thing I want to ask you about is, why are we tuned into them? I think it's this concept of like we need to be informed.

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** But there's a difference between being informed and being inundated or being informed and being controlled or manipulated. There's many ways to be informed, but when you start to feel that... They're speaking right to a primitive part of our brain, isn't that, right? Can you talk a little about that?

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** Yeah. I call it, Global Amygdala Hijacking. So, the amygdala is this almond-shaped structure in your brain that responds to fear, and especially with the pandemic. And I think a lot of it, we were manipulated purposefully so that we would act like sheep. And in my book, *The Brain Warrior's Way*, I'm like, I basically ask the question, "Are you a sheep or are you a sheepdog, or are you a wolf?" And the wolves were out for the pandemic, frightening us, isolating us, separating us from each other. We're a connected species. We have to be connected in order to feel okay, in order to feel happy, and they separated us and then stressed us. Businesses went out of business. People lost their job. There was this chronic anxiety. And I think the decisions they made killed way more people than COVID did and will continue to kill



people for a generation because children's development wasn't normal during that period of time.

Now, not for everybody, but as a rule, I was horrified. And there's not been a time in the 40 years I've been a psychiatrist where governments have told me what I could prescribe and not prescribe based on my education and training. I was furious, I am furious at the reaction so that they could vaccinate everybody. And I'm not an anti-vaxxer, but I'm like, "Don't tell me I can't prescribe hydroxychloroquine. I read the studies. I'm educated. And if that's a choice my patient and I choose, that's between us. You need to stay out of it." And they did it for hydroxychloroquine, for Ivermectin, for fluvoxamine, an anti-depressant that actually happened to work to decrease death from COVID, is actually pretty effective.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** That was shocking to me when I saw that study...

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** It's so interesting.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** This anti-depressant, yeah.

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** And when you're sad, your immune system doesn't work and you're more vulnerable. And we've known that for a long time, that there's association between depression and cancer and depression and autoimmune disorders. Yeah, no, it's a shocking study. And we can do better, but only if we have a voice. And that's the thing that people... This politicization of science, it's, they shut down doctors who had a different opinion. And I'm like, "What about this is not denial of freedom of speech, where you demonize someone who goes, 'No, I don't like this?'"

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah. At this point in human evolution, that's the thing...

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** In American society, at this point...

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** We think we're so evolved, and we've got this stuff figured out. Throw in a little bit of fear, which again, it's justifiable fear, and it's just like we devolved, we went backward so quickly and so much.

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** I like that term. And right in the beginning of the pandemic, 'cause I was online on Instagram almost every day, and the favorite thing I would tell people is I would read an essay from CS Lewis from 1948 that he actually wrote about the atomic bomb, and I'm like, "Let's just replace COVID-19 where he writes about the atomic bomb." And he said, "In many ways, we think a great deal too much about the atomic bomb," COVID-19, "when you could have lived in the 16th century when the plague visited London almost every year, or you could

have lived in a Viking age when raiders from Scandinavia could land and slit your throat any night, or as you're already living, in an age of car accidents and cancer." And he's like, "Let's not make more of this than it is. If the virus comes, let it find you doing sensible and human things."

He would have been furious about the lockdowns, kids wearing masks in school, all the stuff. And what I saw as a psychiatrist, families got divided, and that was the worst thing for mental health. They wouldn't see each other at holidays. They would belittle each other. If you didn't believe the way I believe either side, they would cut you off. And I just saw the media do the same thing, left, right, red, blue. They were demonizing people. And this is the way to create mental illness.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah.

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** So, who's the big winner when we create mental illness? The drug companies. Again, it's the drug companies that are the big winners because anti-depressant use skyrocket. Benzodiazepines, which you and I both know are bad for the brain, skyrocketed. It's insanity.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah. We had some shortages as well with anti-depressants, isn't that, right?

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** We did for a short period of time, then they ramped it up.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yep, yep.

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** And I'm not opposed to it. I prescribe them when I need to, but it's never the first thing I think about. It's like, "Well, how's your thyroid? How's your testosterone?" and "How's your diet?" and "Are you exercising?" and "Do you believe every stupid thing you think?" It's like, "Let's get that right, and then if you need medicine, great," as a supportive tool rather than as the tool.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** The tool, yeah, that's one of the biggest mistakes. And again, I just hope that we learn from this. As we are right now, I don't think that we are. We're just kind of...

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** Well, I think a lot of people are really unhappy. And even the people that were hiding in their house, I think they're beginning to see... The study from Johns Hopkins came out that said, "All of these measures, the masks, the lockdowns, shutting down businesses saved 0.2% of COVID deaths. I'm like... And you know that's not considering suicide and job loss and drug abuse..."

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah, in all the other things that...

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** We made mistakes.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** All the other things that come from that, even when somebody is unemployed, they have a 40% increase in their incidents of having a cardiovascular event. It's just like all of those other things were suddenly not considered. It was this one-size-fits-all...

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** And they said that. They said that. Dr. Fauci said that. He's like, "I'm only thinking of COVID deaths. That's outside of my expertise," which is pretty insane when you think about it. A physician should be thinking about everything, not just, well, decrease the spread of the virus. And that didn't decrease the spread of the virus at all.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Do you remember the two weeks to flatten the curve? That was literally two years ago. And again, it's this one-size-fits-all approach to things which nothing, even with COVID, even if that is your goal to stop the spread of COVID, nothing happens in a vacuum. Everything else is going to be influenced in a very dynamic, complex society that we exist in, and to even have a one-size-fits-all treatment when you... You're not there face-to-face with that patient, for example, like you having that... Somebody trying to control what you're doing to serve the person in front of you...

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** Oh, people got their licenses taken away from them. They got investigated by the medical board. They scared us. There were even editorials like on WebMD that if you do this, these bad things are going to happen and, "Oh, by the way, you deserve it." There was a lot of control. And the dumbest thing the government did, the number one stupid thing they did is they talked about, everybody has to be vaccinated, and they never talked about, you need to lose weight, you need to eat better, we need to be exercising. Instead, we huddled people in their homes afraid and gave them bad food. And that's frickin' insane. And I'm a psychiatrist, so I diagnose insanity a lot. This is insane that we know having low Vitamin D levels associated with higher mortality. We know being overweight, being hypertensive, having diabetes, but did we talk at all about, Let's fix the health problems we have in this country? No, we just created more. And...

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Exactly.

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** Just stepping back, it's like the messaging is just backward.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** But this is the thing, and I'm so... Again, I love talking with you because it's been like this, Dr. Amen. We've been ignoring the underlying cause of issues. We've just been allowing it. You've had your universe, you've been making a huge impact, of course, but

it's still a certain version of reality that most of our healthcare system is not invested in. We've been allowing our society to become sicker and sicker. We are literally the sickest nation in the history of recorded human civilization right now.

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** As sophisticated as we appear to be on paper, and we look around the skyscrapers, but we are just...

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** But we're not the healthiest.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Falling apart. Exactly.

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** I think we're 28 or something among developed countries with the happiest. But you're right, we're the sickest in large part because the politicians are funded by big pharma, big food, big agriculture, and big energy. And you got to go, how does this make sense where there are fast food restaurants everywhere? And the messaging is... In fact, when Bloomberg in New York actually tried to get a health message out, he got shamed by it. He's like, "Let's not sell sodas over 16 ounces. Who needs more than 16 ounces of sugar water?" And it was like big nanny's coming for you, and they would shame him. I used to love being on the subway in New York when Bloomberg was the mayor because they would have these great posters about drink water, not soda, and they would actually have soda turning into a glass of fat. It was really creative, the messaging. But no, we want our freedom to be as sick as we want to be. The problem is everyone is paying for it...

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Right.

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** And in an awful way. And I don't want to be big nanny. I want to be big teacher. I want to go, "Do you want to be happy? You need to be healthy." 'Cause happiness and brain function are connected.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah, as you said, we're paying for it even if we don't realize it. We have a \$4 trillion a year healthcare system. \$4 trillion... We're so far ahead of any other country, and yet we're the sickest.

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** But we're not. But we're not.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah, that's, again...

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** We can do great brain surgery, but we're not making any progress in chronic... 75% of that \$4 trillion is spent on chronic, preventable illnesses, and that should horrify people. And we have to start teaching little children. We have a brand new, Amen University, my education arm, we have a brand-new pre-school through grade one course where we teach kids to love their brain and it's called Brain Thrive and it's done with puppets and it's super fun and cute. I know McDonald's is going after your children, and Coca-Cola is going after your children. Well, I want to go after them too, but in a way that sustains their health rather than in a way that hurts their health.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah. If they're as intelligent, which they are at doing their job, they're going to be looking for lifetime customers. Get them while they're young is kind of the tenet, and especially getting the developing brain is going to be so much more susceptible, I would imagine, to their marketing...

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** And that's why God gave you parents, but if you're...

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah.

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** Children do what parents do, right? You're modeling health, or you're modeling illness. And if you want to be healthy and happy, you have to model health and happiness. So secret number six is notice what you like about other people more than what you don't. I love that one so much because to be happy, you have to give away happiness, and you do it like you totally can shape your wife by what you notice. If you only notice what she does wrong, she's going to be unhappy, and you're going to shape her to be miserable. But if you really focus on paying attention to what you like... I mean, I know exactly how to get my wife to yell at me. She has red hair, she's pretty intense. And I know how to make her smile and want to hold me. And so, if I focus on giving away happiness, I'm so much more likely to be happy.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** It just sounds intelligent. But I think, again, we don't know that we have that power and we're... I don't know what it is, and I've got you here so I'm going to ask you, why, when we know what makes the other person happy, would we pick on or choose to focus on the things that irritate us?

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** Well, the spontaneous person plays this game. None of it is conscious, but they play this game called "Let's have a problem" because it stimulates them. I often think of ADD is adrenaline deficit disorder. So, they're often adrenaline-seeking. And you can actually tell when a girl has ADD, a teenage girl, by her dating patterns, 'cause they get adrenaline from falling in love and dopamine, and so what you see with them is they fall in love, and then they fight 'cause they get adrenaline from fighting, and then they break up, and there's all that

drama adrenaline with breaking up, and then they fall in love, and then they cycle through that. So, if you see a girl that's doing that, get her scanned because she very well may have ADD that nobody knows. And in my book Healing ADD, I talk about the games ADD people play and it's "Let's have a problem".

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** That's bananas, but I've seen it before. "Let's spice things up," unconsciously.

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** Unconsciously.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Because there's no reason that the person would even constantly want to have a problem.

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** Unless they grew up in... 'Cause the brain doesn't do what's good for it. The brain does what it has done, which is why you have to be very careful with what you allow your brain to do because once you allow it to do it and it gets dopamine, it's going to go seek it again, even if it's bad for you.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah. Got a quick break coming up, we'll be right back. Our microbiome plays major roles in regulating our metabolism, literally playing a role in determining how many calories are absorbed from our food, for example. Our microbiome also controls so much about our mood, with a vast majority of our body serotonin being produced in our gut. And our microbes interact with these enterochromaffin cells and enteroendocrine cells that produce our hormones and neurotransmitters in our bellies. And one of the biggest issues we're seeing today is gut dysbiosis, where friendly microbes are getting overrun by opportunistic bacteria. One of the few amazing sources of nutrition that's been found clinically to reverse gut dysbiosis is highlighted in a study published in The Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry. It discovered that the traditional fermented tea called Pu-erh may be able to reverse gut dysbiosis by dramatically reducing ratios of potentially harmful bacteria and increasing ratios of beneficial bacteria.

Another peer-review study published in the journal of Nature Communications uncovered that a unique compound called Theabrownin found in traditional fermented Pu-erh has remarkable effects on a microbiome as well. And the research has found that Theabrownin positively alters gut microbiota and directly reduces hepatic, AKA liver fat, and reduces lipogenesis, which means the creation of fat. Pu-erh is absolutely amazing on so many levels and it's also a powerful adjunct to any fat loss protocol because it's been found to support fat loss while protecting muscle at the same time.

And this was documented in a recent study featured in Clinical Interventions in Aging. Now, the key is the source of the Pu-erh matters a lot, and the only Pu-erh that I drink uses a

patented cold extraction technology that extracts the bioactive compounds in the tea at cold to low temperatures for up to eight hours. And this process gently extracts natural antioxidants and phytonutrients and preserves them in a whole bioavailable form, and this is the purest way to extract the phytonutrients for maximum efficacy. This Pu-erh is also wild-harvested, making it even more concentrated in the polyphenols that we see having benefits in those clinical trials. Also, triple toxin screen for one of the highest levels of purity tested for pesticides, heavy metals, and toxic molds, and making sure that it's not in your tea, which is common in most other teas. This is why I'm a massive fan of Pique teas. Go to [piquetea.com/model](http://piquetea.com/model), that's [P-I-Q-U-E-T-E-A.com/model](http://P-I-Q-U-E-T-E-A.com/model), and you get 10% off their amazing, fermented Pu-erh and all of their other incredible teas. These teas are in a league of their own. Their Pu-erh is amazing. I'm a huge fan of their ginger tea as well.

Go to [piquetea.com/model](http://piquetea.com/model). Again, you get 10% off everything that they carry. One of the best investments in your health, supporting your microbiome, supporting your metabolism, it is absolutely amazing. Head over to [piquetea.com/model](http://piquetea.com/model). And now back to the show.

Another one of these lies you kind of dissect is focused on technology today, and I didn't even know that there was a thing as... Well, of course, I know that people can be addicted to gaming, but now it's like a classified disorder because it could so dominate and take control of somebody's life and their livelihood. But again, we seem so evolved because we've got technology, we've got all these incredible tools that we can use and create these entirely different universes, but most of it right now has confiscated a significant percentage of our focus, I would say. And you put one little statistic that a nice chunk of teenagers, they spend more time on social media than they do even sleeping.

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** That's insane.

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** And these devices were created to be addictive. There's actually a process that they go through, they hire neuroscientists, and many in Silicon Valley will take a dopamine detox because they know they created these things to hook your attention just like slot machines in Vegas. And you have to be just very mindful and careful. There's a reason Vegas makes a lot of money; is they understand human psychology. So, give someone free alcohol with a cute waitress with a low-cut dress, and people are not going to be making the best poker decisions. And it's the same way with Instagram and Facebook and TikTok. Now I have 1.2 million followers on Tik Tok. I figured out what people are really interested in. But you have to be very careful because it's with a whole bunch of stuff you really don't want your children seeing.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** So how can we better associate with these things? Because like you just said, you were dabbling in TikTok, for example, which for me... And so many people have told me to get on TikTok over the past couple of years now, and they're like, "You're made for this. Your family's made for TikTok." It's like another thing. I just got versed with Instagram, for example, which for years, I just wasn't even really participating in social media. I focused on one thing, I focused on podcasts. But it's so interesting that...

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** And that's why they're doing well.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah, where you focus.

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** It's where you focus. So, I think do one thing really well before you do something else. But the cool thing about TikTok is you can impart wisdom in 30 to 90 seconds, and what I would tell you is write down the 300 things you say all the time, the 300 things you know to be true and put them in 30 to 60 seconds, and your TikTok will blow up. And that's how you... Like my kids' friends follow me. And I want to have influence with the next generation, and so you have to go, "Well, where are they?" Because they need you. And they may not have the attention for an hour-long podcast.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** But how do you do it without getting sucked into the universe?

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** You should have your team do it, so you don't have to watch it all day long. That's what I would recommend. Like I have Natalie and I just love her so much.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah, she's awesome.

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** She'll put a camera in my face and go, "Go." But I always think, what are the things I say to my patients over and over and over again? And I just want more people to know, that's why I wrote books early on, 'cause I want to teach people what I know more than just who I can see.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** A couple of other lies... I really want to focus on these because I think that, again, we are wanting real sustainable happiness and we have an idea of what that might look like, but I think we often go for short-term pleasures, not necessarily happiness. Is there a distinction with the two?

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** Hedonism is the enemy of happiness, because of where's our true pleasure centers. So, I want you to do things that help you feel good now and later versus now but not later, and that's long-term happiness. And they're habits. So secret number five is master your mind and gain psychological distance from the noise in your head. There's nowhere in school



they teach you to manage your mind. How insane is that? Like brain health and mental health should be like English. Remember when we were in school, we had to take English every year? It's like, what about brain health? It's more important. What about mental health? It's more important. And so, I have all these little, tiny habits. Have you ever interviewed BJ Fogg?

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** I have not. I was at an event with him.

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** You would love him, he's great. Well, I hired him for six months, so that we come up with tiny habits for brain health, and every day I start the day with, today is going to be a great day. It's on the top of my to-do list. And that way I'm like, "Well, what am I looking forward to today?" rather than "I have to get through this day." When I go to bed every night, I say a prayer and then I go, "What went well today?" And that's my favorite happiness strategy because it's like a treasure hunt where I start at the beginning of the day, and I just look for what went well. And the bad things will pop up, and I'm like, it's not the point right now. What went well? And I even look for the micro-moments of happiness, "What's this smallest thing that happened today that made me happy? And it's just... I love that so much, and I remember... And I think you and I talked about this last time I was on. About two years ago, my dad died, and he died of COVID, and it was terrible, and it was an awful day.

And when I went to bed that night, I went, "What went well today?" 'Cause, it's my habit, right? Your brain does what you've done. And initially, I'm like, "Really? Today?" But it's my habit. And I thought about an interaction between the police officer and my mother, and it was so funny, and then I thought about all the texts I've gotten from my friends and how much... How loved I felt. And then I thought about holding my father's hand before they took him away, and was so soft, and then I went to sleep. And you have to build these habits. 'Cause even though I grieved for him, still do, still miss him, I went to sleep. And if you want to get over grief, you have to sleep, right? I mean, you would agree with me on that. And it's these little, tiny exercises, looking for the micro-moments of happiness. I have another fun exercise where... Write down the 20 happiest moments of your life. I actually had one happened last May, the Canadian Association of Nuclear Medicine. So, my work has been very controversial, I've got no end of grief from my colleagues. But last May, the Canadian Association of Nuclear medicine wrote new procedure guidelines for SPECT as if I wrote them, and of the 10 authors, five of them were my students. So happy.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Wow.

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** But I take those 20 happiest moments of mine and I plant them around my house. So, I'd make an association in my mind like my front door is my wedding day, and I'm carrying Tana over the threshold, and I almost drop her, but that's...

Because the night before when we were practicing our wedding dance, I almost Dropped her, but it was funny and nobody got a head injury. That, every time I walked through the door, plus that reminds me how much I love her, so I'm going to notice what I like more than what I don't like. And when I go into the living room now, it's where I was... Got an award from Discover Magazine. One of my research papers was listed as the top science story, neuroscience story for 2015. That's pretty cool. And then I put the Canadian paper there as well. So, every time I see my living room, I see happiness. Whenever I go to the kitchen, my grandfather is at the stove, I'm named after him, he was my best friend when I was growing up, he was a candy maker, and we're making brain-healthy hot chocolate. So, we used to make fudge together, but I'm like, "No, I want you to live longer." It was sad when he died.

And so, wherever I go in my house, I find happiness.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Wow, I love this so much. So just to wrap things up, these... We're talking about real sustainable strategies for happiness, which is coming at a premium right now, but I think that all that's taken place is a big opportunity for us to do some of the things that we should have done prior to the pandemic, and it's bringing those things right into the spotlight for us, but it's getting caught up in these short-term lies of happiness, which again, it's not...

We don't want to vilify these things, but I know that you will, especially if you know what it does to the brain, but we go to, if we are feeling unhappy, alcohol to lift us up, or a particular drug or technology even, and not understanding the long-term ramifications when we keep leaning on those things. Those are the lies, and you outline that so well in the book. And then also, most importantly, you give strategies for what does real happiness looks like, what does a happy brain looks like, and here's the map to get you there. So, it's just... You're a remarkable human being and I'm so grateful that you're here right now for all of us when we need you at this time in human history. And I want everybody to run out and get a copy of the book like yesterday, "You, Happier". And literally, when I was reading this book, it came up for me several times which is like, how do you have the time to create these books? It is unbelievable. All the stuff that you have going on in your life, your family, and yet you just keep on writing these remarkable books for us that keep on just shooting to the top and reaching so many people. How do you do it?

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** I love writing. Writing makes me happy. And I love sharing, and I'm disciplined. So...

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah, there it is.

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** Yeah, no, creating makes me happy.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** I knew that was going to be the answer. This is why I asked you. It makes you happy.

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** It makes me happy...

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** So, it's not even something that you got to try so hard to make a part of your life.

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** No, it's an automatic... And I often will tell my wife, "Oh, I think this will be my last book," and she rolls her eyes.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah.

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** Yeah, no it's who I am, and I love it. It doesn't mean it's not a hard process, like creating the idea, I mean that's just pure joy. Doing the outline is fun. And then about a quarter into it, I suffer from that.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah.

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** Is it the right one? Is it the right message? Do I want to do it? And sometimes it'll change and... But now I get to talk about it, and then I get to connect with my friends.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** It's a very special process. I told many people that writing a health book is not necessarily healthy. And it can... It's going to cost you something, but the reward is so great to follow through. And so, I want to close by mentioning this article. This was just published in The New York Times; I think it was yesterday. As of this recording, it was yesterday. The title of the article is "We Will Forget Much of The Pandemic". That's a good thing. And earlier I mentioned this that I don't think enough of us are taking the opportunity to learn these lessons. The separation has taken place with our citizens, the divisiveness, the politicization of science, the ignorance of really high-quality science, the one-size-fits-all treatment of our citizens of our children. We need to learn from this stuff, ignoring our biggest susceptibility, which is obesity, ignoring all these things. If we don't really learn from these things... I don't want us to forget. Do not forget. We need to learn from these things and do better moving forward. So, what do you believe we should all right now, this is the one-size-fits-all question, by the way, but what do you feel for the majority of us, what should we be focused on right now to learn from what we've experienced in society so that we're better moving forward?

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** Well the brain has memory for a reason so that we can be better and we can know what's dangerous, that being controlled as population is bad for us, that freedom of speech is foundational to a democratic society, to our democratic society, and whenever you see someone being shamed for their position, that's bullying, and that's not okay, that you have to stand up even if they don't agree with you. Shutting down speech is wrong. And you saw that with the social media platforms. We should have just been furious with that. But let me close with happiness, which is so many good things happened out of the pandemic.

I'm a child psychiatrist. I have seen a lack of a vulnerability and bonding between parents and children because we've had two-parent working families now for three generations, and parents are tired, and they're guilty 'cause they don't spend as much time for their kids. With the pandemic, people were at home. There was historic positive levels of bonding going on in families and that will change the next generation. Why? I adopted our two nieces, and right before the pandemic, they came to live with me, and we had like two-hour dinners, and we made dinner together. We cleaned the kitchen together. We talked about abortion. We talked about the death penalty. We talked about everything under the sun, and we will be closer for a generation because of that. So, if we can look for the blessings, not just be focused on the curse of it, that will help us be happier.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Wonderful. Dr. Amen, can you let everybody know where they can pick up your book and also where they can follow you on TikTok?

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** So, Dr. Amen at TikTok or @doc\_amen on Instagram. They can get the book at youhappier.com, or if they pre-order or order the book on the first week when it's out, we actually have five free gifts for them. We have a bottle of Happy Saffron. We didn't talk about supplements, but it's my favorite happiness supplement, a 30-day happiness challenge, which we studied on 30,000 people, increased their happiness by 30%, a workbook that goes with that, Tana wrote a new cookbook called You Happier, and a special event with me. So youhappier.com.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Awesome. Dr. Amen, you are truly one of my favorite people. You are a superhero in this field and for all of us, and I just appreciate you so much.

**DR. DANIEL AMEN:** Thank you, my friend. You're doing a lot of good in this world.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Thank you. I receive that. You Happier. That was Dr. Daniel Amen, everybody. Make sure to pick up a copy of You Happier. It's a really important book right now, very practical strategies and insights, and really shifting our focus more towards positive psychology. We've had an obsession in our culture in the last few decades with disease, just focusing on problems, problems, problems, problems and not much focus on, what can we

actually do to stack conditions in our favor so that we're not experiencing those problems in the first place? So, it's a shift in our attention. And the times we've been experiencing is really helping to press this conversation forward faster, and I'm really grateful for it. But it doesn't matter if we're not taking action on the things. It only works if we work it. So again, put these things into action for yourself and make sure to share this episode with the people that you care about.

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