



EPISODE 793

Strengthen Your Mental & Emotional Fitness Through the Power of Creativity

With Guest IN-Q

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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. Our life experience as a unique phenomenon in this universe is based for us. Through our thoughts, through our emotions, through our perception, that's how we experience things. And there is nobody on earth who's ever been or who ever will be that has the same perception, that has the same experience as you. Now, here's the rub. Today, more than ever, we don't even know what our experience is. We're so outwardly focused, we're so distracted, that we are oftentimes simmering a quiet and sometimes loud suffering, a quiet and sometimes loud disconnection. And we're missing out on this opportunity because this again is a unique special opportunity to be you. As my friend, Dr. Michael Beckwith says, if you don't do you, you're not going to be done. All right. It's up to you to fully express all of the gifts and talents and capacities within you.

And that's what this episode is all about. It's about introspection. It's about understanding this important emotional feedback and also being able to express, to offload, to allow our story, to allow our experiences, to potentially be a gift for others. There's so much embedded in this, and this episode is going to wow you. It's going to inspire you and you're going to experience some things that you didn't even expect. It's going to be an adventure and I think you're absolutely going to love this. Now, before we get to our special guest, we got to keep in mind our mind and our emotions and our thoughts and all this is still existing within a physical body.

And there are certain laws of the body. There are certain requirements and it's a constant feedback loop. There is no separation between them. Our mind and body are indeed the same system. And we've talked about this with numerous world leading experts like Dr. Ellen Langer, the first woman to receive tenure at Harvard psychology department. Truly the mind and body are an entity. They are one, but our body is going to affect our mind. And so stacking conditions for our bodies, for our energy is of the utmost importance. Number one, making sure that we're eating predominantly real food. Just eat more real food. It should be Captain Obvious, but unfortunately today we're just inundated with ultra processed, largely fake, newly invented foods.

And according to the BMJ, British Medical Journal, Over 60 % of the average American's diet today is made of ultra processed foods. Just simply shifting that ratio is going to lead to more energy, better health, and better cognitive function as well. But if we're checking those boxes, making sure that we're Prioritizing real food.

We're reminding our sleep hygiene, our sleep wellness, and getting in some physical activity to add that extra layer of energy to our day. Whether it's for cognitive tasks, whether it's for exercise, I highly recommend you check out something that was analyzed in a recent study that was published by the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology, AKA the FACEP Journal. And they found that exogenous ketones. One of the other fuels of the body. Yes, we can run on glucose, but we can also run efficiently. Many processes of our bodies can run cleanly and abundantly on ketones. And these researchers found that exogenous ketones can be up to 28 % more efficient in generating energy.

Then glucose alone, plus another study found an up to 15 % increased mean power output after recovery when utilizing ketones. There's only one, there's only one ketone product that is making sure that they're minding the science and minding the quality. And that is the folks behind Ketone IQ. Go to hvmn.com/model, and you're going to get hooked up with 30 % off your first subscription order. All right. 30 % off your first subscription order. Get yourself some Ketone iq. Check this out, test it out. I think that you're gonna be amazed. Go to hvmn.com/model. And now let's get you the Apple Podcast review of the week.

ITUNES REVIEW: Another five star review titled "This show is a Game Changer" by Anne from Montana. Every single episode of this podcast has inspired me to continually improve my health. Sean is so easy to listen to, has interesting guests, and always teaches me something new. As a person who also has degenerative discs in my spine, Sean has given me hope. And a better outlook on life by sharing his story.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Amazing. Amazing. Thank you so much for sharing that review over on Apple Podcasts. I truly do appreciate that. And if you feel inspired, please pop over to Apple Podcasts and leave a review for the Model Health Show. And now speaking of being inspired, this episode is amazing.

Our special guest is IN-Q. He's an Emmy nominated poet, multi platinum songwriter, world renowned keynote speaker. And the bestselling author of inquire within his groundbreaking achievements include being named to Oprah's super soul, 100 list of the world's most influential thought leaders being the first spoken word artist to perform with Cirque du Soleil.

That's vibey right there. And being featured on any ESPN and HBO's deaf poetry jam. That's iconic right there. Who's grace that stage DMX, DMX most deaf. Erykah Badu, Dave Chappelle, the list goes on and on. So our special guest has indeed been featured on the most iconic stages, the most iconic platforms, and he truly is the real deal. Now we're going to kick this episode off with a special exclusive piece that he created from his new album. And you're

going to hear this really valuable. introspection opportunity for us to look at this emotion of sadness. Now, sadness is a part of all of our lives, but what if sadness becomes our life?

What if we get trapped in a chronic loop of sadness? What if we move away from that sadness? All of that and more is covered in this piece. So listen with your ears and also listen with your heart. Check out this incredible piece and this amazing interview. With the one and only IN-Q.

IN-Q "SADNESS"

Sometimes I miss my sadness. I get so sad without it. It was with me all these years, It never gave me cause to doubt it. But as my joys increased, My heart was suddenly too crowded. And it pushed my sadness out, And now I'm sad to be without it. It was my best friend, With me everywhere I went, Ride or die until the end.

I got so used to sadness, That my sadness used to like To play pretend. Cause it didn't trust strangers. So it hid behind my happiness and hid behind my anger. But really it was sadness. I couldn't let it out. I couldn't get it out. I couldn't, wouldn't, shouldn't. What if someone saw, they'd know what I'm about.

Then they'd view me as weak and they'd take advantage of the secret I couldn't keep. So I kept it to myself and I built a wall around my heart. My tears became a crocodile moat. You'd have to swim across and not get torn apart. But even if you reached the other side, that was just the start. I'd have archers posted way up high.

You can't get to my sadness. How dare you even f**ing try. I'll kill you before showing you the sadness that I have inside. After all, it's mine. I worked hard for this. Plus, it's the primary fuel my ego harnesses. What if I give it up and nothing takes its place? What would I do with all that space? It'd be a waste.

I'd rather stick with sadness. That's what I told myself. I'm comfortable with sadness. At least I know him well. He wants to kill me in my sleep. When he smiles, I can tell he's terrified I'm gonna leave him in a self imposed hell. I feel guilty. guilty when I'm happy. Of course, I know it's wrong, but somehow suffering is easier than braving the unknown.

Connection can be scary. I don't want to lose control because nothing else can hurt me while I'm hiding in this hole, but nothing else can love me while I'm hiding in this hole. If I don't try inside this hole, I'm going to die inside this hole. So I leveraged my depression and made climbing out my goal.

Happiness was my obsession, but my heart had grown so cold, I had to tear myself apart to keep the parts that made me whole. Now my life is like a lucid dream. I wake up when I'm old because everything is perfect. Even when I notice flaws. All the suffering was worth it. What it is, is what it was. But sometimes I miss my sadness.

We had some awesome times. I hear he's talking this shit about me through a twisted grapevine. It's kinda empty here without him. It used to be so packed. Maybe I should puff my life up. So I can get him back.

SHAWN STEVENSON: My man. IN-Q, this is a consolidation of so much, full spectrum of human emotion. And I was taking on an emotional rollercoaster going through this album. And one of the things you highlight is one of our most prominent human emotions that funny enough, we don't talk much about, but a lot of us live in this state of sadness. And you are illuminating how we would fight for our sadness just as hard as we might think we'd fight for happiness. We'd fight to keep that because it becomes our identity.

IN-Q: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: What inspired you to write this piece?

IN-Q: You know, it was as simple as acknowledging one day that my life was good and it hurt differently because I wasn't used to it being so good. And I started thinking, wow, I miss my sadness. And that's kind of how the piece began.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah. Oh man. I love this already, man, because I feel that I can relate to that, you know, and the, the, the beautiful part is as we move through these different emotions. We can have reverence for those emotions, right? For that sadness, for, you know, um, losing this, there's two loves of my life. One of them was my grandmother. Losing her and that, that sadness, that mourning that I feel, I don't ever want to lose it. I don't want it to go anywhere. But it doesn't control me. But whenever I think of her, it really, you know, it gets me very emotional. And now I can, I could sit with that and I can embrace it and I can love that feeling.

Whereas there was a time where the feeling engulfed me, you know, and so that's what I really get from this track. And I want to ask you about this. This one line you said, *I feel guilty when I'm happy*". That hit different. Tell me about that.

IN-Q: Well, I think for me, sometimes when my life is going in a great direction and I'm having a lot of success and abundance and connection to myself and, the people in my inner circle

and my career is going well and I'm being validated or recognized, I feel guilty for leaving that part of me. And I also feel guilty for leaving other people that are still going through pain and misery. People that I love, that I wish I could help them or fix it or carry them on my back in an opposite direction. But I know that I can't do that. So it's almost like simultaneously holding on and letting go. With those relationships and with that relationship with that part of me that might sometimes still feel left behind.

SHAWN STEVENSON: So this would, it's akin to survivor's remorse or survivor's guilt. Would you say that's kind of like a similar label that somebody might experience?

IN-Q: Yeah, I think that's a great term for it. I think that there's different comparison points for survival, right? And so what might mean survival to one person might not mean survival to somebody else. And there's also mental survival, emotional survival, physical survival, spiritual survival, right? Financial survival. So I can't answer that for anybody else, but for me, yeah. And being willing to follow my own bliss without always looking back to the point where I'm hurting my neck.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Right.

IN-Q: You know, so.

SHAWN STEVENSON: I want everybody to think about this and ask yourself if this is familiar. You feeling guilty about being happy or you feeling guilty about achieving something or you feeling guilty about taking care of yourself. I know this is a common theme for people that especially if you come from circumstances that are, you know, turbulent or even dysfunctional, you know, this label, it gets thrown around a lot. But find me a family without some form of dysfunction and I'll, you know, like that's, that's, that's imaginary, you know, and funny enough, I don't know if you peep this, there's a lot of imaginary kind of pet or imaginary friend movies coming out right now. Some of them are creepy. Like there's one, I think it's like five nights at Freddy's or something like that.

IN-Q: That's a horror one, right?

SHAWN STEVENSON: That's a horror one. Then there's one that is like moderately You know, with an imaginary friend, then there's one with Ryan Reynolds coming out now. It's called If.

IN-Q: If. Right. Exactly. I like him a lot. So, I'm sure that'll be a good one. But it is an interesting concept, like, you know, imaginary friends, we still have them.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Facts.

IN-Q: And sometimes we don't even recognize when they take over the ship. And when we catch amnesia, our imaginary friends start doing stuff outside of our minds. And, and kind of like. Creating self destructive situations, you know, yeah,

SHAWN STEVENSON: I mean, honestly, I think if any of us were really assessed We'd have multiple personality disorder Diagnosis, you know what I mean? There's a lot of people in there. There's a lot of age brackets. There's a lot of emotional states And that's the beauty of humanity, you know, and I think it's just more of a matter of like Is there a North Star? Is there like a kind of a parent in the room, sort of, to manage all that stuff and kind of show up as an adult? But all this mess is going on and this is why I'm so grateful to talk to you and just to sit through the album because I got to really think about some of this stuff.

IN-Q: What did it make you think about and also, a tag on to that question, what are some of the ways That you communicate with the long table of imaginary personalities that you might have in your mind to make sure that You're always moving things forward and you in unison.

SHAWN STEVENSON: There isn't a day that goes by that I'm not Remembering, you know remembering my life experiences Replaying things and looking from different perspectives and And I think that's kind of wisdom in a way, you know, looking at things from multiple perspectives and trying and the funny thing is like I'm doing this and I'm only saying this out loud to you just now I'm doing this for the purpose to find more freedom, right?

Because some of these incidents, some of these scenarios, these stories can hold us hostage. So I'm going through and refining them and looking at different ways of perceiving them. And also funny enough, man, I'll catch myself justifying things too, you know, um, because part of me too has that survivor's remorse, you know, because also I think. If you have a heart which is all of us you want to take everybody with you Yeah that you love, you know through the progression through the growth To that place of happiness, which we're gonna talk about happiness too, and I can't wait to talk about this but going through the album I Felt this familiarity, right?

There were so many touch points and I felt like I Felt like everybody can relate to certain things, you know, there isn't. There isn't a track on the album that you're not going to feel some resonance with. And I don't know how you tapped into that, you know, but even in this context of sadness, we've all experienced sadness. We've all experienced it. And you're just kind of like helping us to shine a light on it. And I want to ask you about this as well. This is

another verse. You said, *somehow suffering is easier than braving the unknown*. Somehow suffering is easier than braving the unknown. What do you mean by that?

IN-Q: Well, I just experienced a lot of pain growing up, you know, and I don't like to compare pain or circumstances because pain is pain. But my father was not around. I didn't meet him until I was 15. My mom and I grew up. By ourselves and she's a school teacher. He didn't help us at all financially or anything like that. And, I was a secret to his other family. He didn't ever tell them that I existed. So I knew that I had like, you know, two female and two male siblings.

These four half siblings that didn't know each other. That I was in the world and that his new wife probably didn't know either. And so when you kind of grow up thinking you're a secret that you know about. There's a lot of self worth issues that start to come up and I was always like externalizing who I thought I was supposed to be as a man and trying to figure out those things outside of myself rather than inside of myself. And so that was very challenging for me, you know, and I developed these survival techniques and these patterns that continued to keep me in this cycle of self abuse, I think.

And I was very violent to my own mind. And then I would choose to do things outside of myself. That kind of like kept me trapped in a certain type of lifestyle. But the biggest thing that I always had was poetry and creativity. And that gave me a sense of empowerment and ultimately alchemy. So I started exploring these trapped stories that were inside of me. And that was one of the ways that I was able to have more self awareness, more clarity to release the things that were no longer serving me and manifest the things that I wanted. So that line is really about being willing to face the unknown and find magic in not knowing rather than trauma and not knowing.

Because I was kind of walking around expecting there to be or expecting to get blindsided by something. And so I was trying to control everything all of the time. And in doing that, I was also suffocating the potential magic that could come out of every moment. So poetry helped me to process all of that stuff. But that really is what that line is about, is like not needing to know everything all the time and just, Showing up so I can see what's actually there, yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah, and what's even more incredible about this is that you are directing us to use this form of expression for ourselves And it's in like now that you're saying this now. It really brings all the pieces together for me, which is. This was a way for you to put a voice to the way that you were feeling but also to share your secrets. To actually, To see yourself as a secret. First of all, oh my gosh Like there's so many layers and I love you started this off by saying "*I'm not here to compare pain*". But that for us we still can resonate with

that because we've all felt pain and it's just again that that's these are the things That bind us together as humans.

Yeah, but oftentimes that pain we experience is we unknowingly stuff it away somewhere, right? We suppress it, we hide from it, and it can start to eat us up inside in a number of different ways. But in this journal that you've created, which of course I get early access, thankfully, and I went through some of the exercises, and they were just so good, just like directing us to, okay, let me think about this, but then being able to, let me give voice to this, in this form of expression.

And humans have been, this is the cool thing about it too, humans have been doing this for a long time. You know, poetry, it might be the first language in a, in a strange way, you know, and actually having the journal right here, I'm going to share this quote that you put in here as well from James Baldwin. It says "the purpose of art is to let bear the questions, which have been hidden by the answers. We're indoctrinated with answers' '.

IN-Q: That's right.

SHAWN STEVENSON: But because of that, we often don't have this introspection to ask the right questions for ourselves. Is that accurate to say?

IN-Q: Yeah, and the answers to the questions will change over time. So you have to un-answer and re-ask in order to find who you are now. All these different ages and stages. I mean, he's one of the best to ever do it. So, he's been certainly an inspiration and a poetic guide over the years.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah, man, this is so good.

IN-Q: So I'm going to give you a little more context of the journal and how it came about. I was doing these writing programs since I was in my mid twenties. I started out in libraries, junior high schools, high schools, after school programs, art share. Upward bound. I even did juvenile facilities and it was really powerful because I was watching and providing space for kids to explore those stories that were trapped inside of them through an art form that they might not ever normally use. And once they got the story out of their system, they saw that they were separate from the story.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah.

IN-Q: And so the story had less power over them. And then when they got a chance to share it with each other and to be celebrated no matter what the story was I got to see in real time the process of alchemy and these people became Energetically lighter the more that they did it. And I was like, this is magic. This is medicine. And it wasn't until many many years later that I started doing it with adults. And I quickly realized that adults Needed it as much if not more than kids sometimes because they had more stories piled on these years and years. And They had more layers to dig through to get that stuff out. Emotion is energy in motion. It has to move or it gets trapped inside of us and it becomes You know disease or dis ease and you take it out on somebody in traffic. So There's many ways to move the energy.

You can do it through breath work, meditation, therapy, yoga, any way that you're moving your body, being in nature, having a great relationship. But one of the ways to do it is through creativity. And, once I made the album, I was like, maybe I should come up with an accompanying journal. That is the culmination of all of the wisdom and experiences I've had since starting to facilitate for these poetry workshops So that I can scale this beyond having to show up. And then I don't have to be there for people to use the art as a mirror for their own humanity, And dig into these stories And ultimately wind up in a place of empowerment and infinite possibility.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Now I love this exercise as a way, You just said it, for us to see the story as separate from ourselves, because we're more than the story. But if we don't have sometimes a tool or even permission to see that story, that's not who I am. It's just, it's an event. It's something that happened to me or it's something I experienced. The same thing holds true just for our thoughts in general, right? Because sometimes we don't realize that, you know, there's a presence that's witnessing these thoughts and we think we're the thinking. And that can go crazy. So having a tool where we could create that separation so we could See it more clearly, right?

It's so valuable. And again, you just shared you've helped different demographics different situations to be able to do that, such a valuable gift and what I want to encourage people to do is just to slow down So you can go faster, right? Slow down. Do some of this inner work and free yourself. And having these incredible resources available now, by the way, and where can people go to get the new album and get the journal?

IN-Q: Yeah. The album is just anywhere that it's streamed, you know, Spotify and Apple music and YouTube. And then the journal, I partnered with Passion Planner, who's like a leader in the space. And they designed a really, really beautiful work of art from cover to cover. So you can get it on the Passion Planner website. You can get it on my website, in-q.Com. And it'll be on Amazon and yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Awesome, awesome. So I want to go back to this bar again from this piece. Saying somehow "*suffering is easier than braving the unknown*". For me, this, and I want to ask you about this, this brings up this experience of us getting stuck in a certain emotion and resisting change. Resisting, even if we aspire to be happy, even if we aspire to be more optimistic, but what I know it, my comfort zone is sadness. My comfort zone is depression. And you even said I got people with the arrows up there. If you try to touch my sadness, I will kill you. If you try to take this from me, this is what I know. This is my comfort zone. This is my reality. This is my identity. This is who I am.

IN-Q: I mean, I gotta say, I've ruined a lot of relationships or friendships because I haven't really wanted to be intimate. And when it really got intimate or really got vulnerable. It you know, I would just flip over the table. And I hear you in terms of like the law of attraction, but I think the law of attraction has been overgeneralized, overused. It's a cliché thing. And so sometimes we don't really recognize how powerful that universal law is. And it's just about energy and focus. Like what is the vibrating energy you're putting out? What are you attracting and what are you attracted to? And then what are you choosing to put your focus on? Like I used to be angry all the time because my anger was hiding my sadness and I would go out and if I walked into a room and I was in a bad mood, I would find the one other guy that was vibrating on that anger level.

And we would just start to dance with each other, you know, like we were attracted to that same mirror energy. And now I can walk into a room and I wouldn't even really notice it unless it was directly threatening. So yeah, that's a kind of truncated example of that. And one of the ways that I have learned to frame it is to Slow down as you said so that I can speed up. It's to notice When i'm putting my focus on something that is just retelling that same story of suffering over and over again. It's not that I want to ignore reality. I want to accept reality. I'm not like, everything is fine. Everything's fine. Everything's fine. I think But I also don't want to perpetuate reality being negative. I want to acknowledge it, integrate it, And then choose to put my focus on the other things that I have to be grateful for. And it's like lifting gratitude weights every single day. But incrementally and cumulatively I've gotten stronger.

SHAWN STEVENSON: I think you said in this line too, "*it's going to require you to go and venture into the unknown*".

IN-Q: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And you can perceive that as, you know, an adventure or, you know, absolutely frightening. But that's one of those things. And I don't think people are told this enough that, yes, you're going to be uncomfortable when you go into, because if you've

perpetually had a temperament of like, you're a worrier, but you're like, I want to be a warrior, not a worrier, or, you know, I've got a problem for every solution. It's just how I'm, you know, I'm always looking for the same thing. I'm looking for the conflict. I'm looking for the danger. that serves you in some ways and it has, as you said this earlier, survival mechanism. We were talking before the show as well. You know, we developed these coping mechanisms to help us to survive, but, and that's fine. That's the thing too. That is okay. And if you want something other than if you don't want to just survive. You want to, you want something else or something more, something different. You want to thrive. All right, dare I say thrive. That's going to require you to grow and to offload some of this stuff and this leads us to. This next track because I think people would on the surface see The polar opposite or the other end of the spectrum from sadness you're going to find happiness. But you've got something to say about that.

IN-Q "HAPPINESS"

Happiness is not a point. It's a range. It's not a goal that you reach because it's constantly in phase. But if you stay inside the margins and you consciously engage, your happiness can find a balance on the razor's edge of change. The main problem is, Society has taught us that our happiness is something we can gain, something we can claim, something we attach to our name, so we distract from our shame and search for happiness outside ourselves, perpetuating pain.

But happiness is not. is not a place. It's not a destination on the map. There's nothing that's outside of you that's gonna show you where you're at. Awareness is a conscious act. My happiness is not an accident. I practiced it. I practiced it and practiced it. I tried to master it, but life's too multifaceted.

Besides, we'd all get bored without resorting to change. What's my point? Happiness is not a point, it's a range.

SHAWN STEVENSON: So soulful! That's amazing, man. Thanks, man. "*Happiness is not a point, it's a range*". Can you elaborate on that a little bit?

IN-Q: Yeah, so I was sitting with my therapist. His name was Dr. Bob Resnick. And he's not with us anymore, but he was a really important person in my life. Anyway, I was like Complaining about something that was going on. And he looked at me and he said, well, happiness is not a point. It's a range. So what can you do to get back in the range for yourself? And I was like, that's a bar. Can I write that down? And he said, yeah. And I wrote it down and I didn't do anything with it for like a few years. It was almost like I had to catch up with the idea in my

life before I was able to describe it through a poem. But now I can do different things to get myself back in the range. And, I know when I'm hitting the edge. I know when I'm about to dip into a place that won't feel good. And some of those ways that I do that are by kind of pushing my timeline out, because a lot of the things that are good for you in the medium term or the long term are hard, but they're worth it. And so, reminding myself of what I'm doing when I'm moving out of the range and then what my time horizon is on my decisions.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Got a quick break coming up.

We'll be right back. It's time to get your metabolic oil changed. There's a specific oil that's been found to positively alter your metabolism. And researchers at Yale university published data reporting that medium chain triglycerides MCTs can readily cross the blood brain barrier and be utilized by our brain cells.

So this translates to more energy. But also MCTs are absorbed more easily by other cells of our bodies as well. Medium chain triglycerides are smaller so they can permeate our cell membranes and don't require the use of special enzymes in order for our bodies to utilize them. The result is more efficient energy. They're also supportive of a healthy gut environment. Especially since they have the capacity to combat harmful bacteria, viruses, fungi, and parasites. MCTs are metabolic and cognitive win-win. But the quality matters. Make sure that you're sourcing your MCT oil from the very best place. I've been utilizing the MCT oil from Onnit for many, many years.

It's exclusively coconut based, so there's no other nefarious oils that are involved in getting these MCTs. I highly recommend you checking them out. You can add it to your teas, to your smoothies, to your hot chocolates coffee, and some folks even utilize it for solid dressings. But make sure to utilize these MCTs for better cognitive function and metabolic health.

Go to onnit.com/model. That's O N N I T. com/model for 10 % off their incredible MCT oil. And you get 10 % off store wide. So make sure to check them out. Go to onnit.com/model for 10 % off. And now back to the show.

SHAWN STEVENSON: You also mentioned that happiness isn't somewhere that you could, you know, throw into the GPS and just like, if I just get here, Then I'll be happy. And that's the story unfortunately for many of us. I think we're where do we get this story from that if we just achieve fill in the blank, then we'll be happy.

IN-Q: That's a great question. And I think we are culturally trained to Push our self worth into some future event or some future achievement Because if they keep us chasing, then they

keep us consuming. You know, so a lot of it is a distraction. So that we'll buy, buy, buy. Fear, fear, fear. Buy, buy, buy. You know, and it keeps us on that, like, never ending treadmill. What I ultimately realized, and what I have to continue to realize every moment of every day, is that there is no there, there. There's only here and who do I want to be right here and right now? And who do I want to be with right here and right now? Not overly pulling the puppeteer strings, but like, cutting them and then just like really meeting people in the middle. And when I do that, I, I always tend to feel like what is happening is better than what I would have wanted to happen. Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah. One of the other things that you noted was, and I love this part of it is I practiced it when referenced, when referencing your happiness, I practiced it, I practiced it. The same thing holds true for sadness or for any other emotion. It's like what are you practicing? You know, I love that sentiment that practice makes perfect. But My friend, dr. Kelly starrett said practice makes permanent. Practice makes it permanent so it becomes reflexive. It becomes automatic. So what are you practicing? Are you practicing? You Those things that keep you feeling the way that you're feeling. So when you say I practiced happiness, what do you mean by that?

IN-Q: Well, I think it's once again about where I choose to focus my attention. Like in any given moment, I could choose to focus my attention on the things that are not working, or I could choose to focus my attention on the things that are working. Or, I could think about other things in my life that aren't in this moment that are working. Or I could think about other things in my life in this moment that are bad. You know, like, let's say this moment is great. I could be thinking about something in my life that has nothing to do with this moment that is bad. And then when I come back to this moment, I have that kind of energetic field around what's happening. So, there's what's here, and what I choose to focus on here, and then there's what's here, and what I choose to focus on here.

SHAWN STEVENSON: In your mind.

IN-Q: And in my mind. And so I've like tried to practice happiness, not at the risk of being delusional, or being out of reality, but at the risk of continuing to live better mental and emotional, healthy life.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Man, this is sparking so many things that are going to be valuable for, for us for a lifetime. Truly, man, I'm not exaggerating at all. With practicing happiness, we first have to do self inquiry because there isn't a cookie cutter template on here. Do these things to be happy.

IN-Q: Right.

SHAWN STEVENSON: What are the things that make you happy right now? And if, again, Take a moment to slow down. What are those things just maybe do a top ten list? All right, do a top ten list of the the ten things that make you happiest, you know So this could be for some people, you know, taking my dog to the dog park or, taking my kids to the, the Ferris wheel or for some other people, it could be, you know, going to the gym and banging and clanging, you know, lifting weights or, you know, going on a walk with my significant other in the evening.

What are the 10 things that make you happy is talking on the phone to your sister. What is it for you? Just take time. And what are those 10 things? And if you're not doing these any of these 10 things, some of us those things that make us happiest we rarely ever do them. Give yourself permission to practice these things Right? Add them to your, ideally daily, like at least one of those things. And so you can practice those things and keeps the happiness channel open for yourself. Does that sound like a good piece of advice?

IN-Q: That's amazing advice. What are some of those things for you like personally?

SHAWN STEVENSON: Oh, man, this I love sitting in this chair and talking to exceptional people, you know, and this again, this is not to compare, you know, that kind of thing, but like, I'm just a fan. I'm a fan of people. I'm a fan of, you know, people that have the audacity to share what's within them. So I love this. I love writing, you know, and so there's, there's another resonance here. I didn't share this with you before, but you know, a bit of a poet. No, I'm just kidding.

IN-Q: Let's go. Let's go.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Eighth grade, man. My English class, we had a poetry lesson, right? So we'll just say it was like a month-long part of the course. And we went through different forms of poetry, you know, the tankas and haikus and, you know, free form poetry and all this stuff. And, we turned into poetry. Folder at the end. I still I can picture it. I might even have it at the house actually and You know, it's different forms of poetry and my free form poem was in the school newspaper. It was the best. It was chosen as the best poem and there was read over the school intercom, right? So I'm like school famous. All right, this is but there's social media didn't exist, right and I remember that so much because you know, we're supposed to illustrate it as well and my mom she's amazing artists like as far as like drawing and she illustrated these poems for me and these are those small things that she would do like. My

mom never like she wasn't the type of person to you know to hug me or to "help me with my homework". But she loved art and that was her thing.

So just even hearing about that. She jumped into action to you know to, to help, you know, to not just to help, but she wanted to just do it because it made her feel good as well. And those are the things, again, I get to choose to focus on later in life. I got to look at like my mom, we got to find that thing that she loves to do that also showed me that she loves me at the same time, you know? And one of the pictures she drew, it was a poem that I did about, you know, like sleep, something with like having a fun day and then getting, you know, going to bed at night, right? And so she drew me in the bed and I used to have, you know, you remember when everybody had a box? Yeah, then with a tail.

IN-Q: Yes.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Right side the braided tail coming down the back So it's like a little kid laying down and she showed the back was like a tail and it's like that's me! So but I'm saying all this to say that. It was in that writing process and me being acknowledged for the first time by a teacher and by this kind of, you know, this system that I respected.

I love this English teacher, Ms. Blackmore. And if you turn around, bro, those are my books right there on the shelf. You know, those are books that I've written and they would not be in existence without that moment. That moment was a catalyst. Little did I know for my passion. I love to bring things to life, you know, being able to use words to illustrate beauty. And, you know, so when I'm talking about nutrition and people might pick that up, it's not just about this. It's about, it's about beauty. It's about struggle. It's about love. It's about figuring things out. All those things are embedded in those words.

IN-Q: It's interesting too, that you said that a part of it was about sleep.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Come on.

IN-Q: I mean, all these years later, you think about. like the channel that was open for you to choose something that you are enthusiastic about. To even have that just be a small element or a theme of that poem that got you that recognition. And now this is where you put a lot of your time and energy into studying sleep and dreams and giving other people a better relationship with closing their eyes at night. So that they could have a better relationship with opening their eyes and moving into their day. It's incredible.

SHAWN STEVENSON: We're going to put that on the loop for me, personally.

IN-Q: I mean, it really is like it, it, yeah, it's super cool. You should find that poem if you can and read it.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah.

IN-Q: Like on the podcast or just call me up and read it to me, man. I'd love to hear it.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Oh man, that's amazing, man. And the free form poem, it was about a place that I'd never been. You know, it was this kind of fictional pond, you know, where I would go and get away from. And at the time, again, I'm living in not the best circumstances, you know, and, yeah, man, thank you for helping me to remember, you know, and also just to keep on that list and I'm going to pass this over to you too. I love watching my son play basketball. I, absolutely, that brings me so much happiness because he's expressing his happiness and also frustration and also growth and all these other things. And I love, I love doing, you know physical stuff, you know, I love training. I love i'm really into this sled, you know So like pushing and pulling this heavy ass sled. And I love working out with my wife, you know, so these are things that bring me happiness. So what are those things for you? What are a few of yours? happiness practices.

IN-Q: Well, the first thing that comes to my mind is a joke because I would be like my wife, my wife, my wife, my wife, my wife, you know, and go all the way down to 10 or up to 10 actually. But I would say writing and performing and facilitating for other people to find their voice. That's huge for me. That feels very present and purposeful. I would say my daily meditations Are very very helpful for me to just practice over and over again letting go of the thoughts That I have and the emotions that I have .That are pulling me to the past or pulling me to the future. Breathing. You know, I do like very intentional breath work And then I get lightheaded or high off of the oxygen. And then when I come back, and the little tingles start to go away. The little stars start to go away. I feel more ready to be where I am and listen to my true north, for where I want to go next.

Boxing. I love boxing. I don't like getting hit and I don't really spar, but I go to this Mayweather gym in Culver City and I love it, man. Yeah. I absolutely love it. And sometimes I'll even go in there and think about something that I'm trying to release or something that I want to create. And I dedicate the practice of moving my body to that thing. Being in nature. But more than anything, my wife, because she's my ride or die. She's the person that I feel most myself around. And the more that I have been unconditionally accepted and loved by her, and been able to unconditionally accept and love her, the more trust I've had in my own life, in my own choices. And then the more trust I've been able to have as I navigate the world.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah, because you had to go through a process of acceptance and still do. And that's leading us to the next part of the album.

IN-Q "ACCEPTANCE"

If I told you that I loved you, would you believe me? Would you receive me? Would you even see me? Or would you see yourself? Are you scared that you would need me like you needed someone else? It's so easy to deceive me if you first deceive yourself. So you leave, but you don't leave me. Once again, you leave yourself.

I could let your ego feed me, but I've learned it doesn't help. I could yell at you to hear me, but you won't, and I can tell. I wish you could feel my love, so maybe I could feel it too. I wish that you could truly see me, but I see you seeing you. It's all about you. It's like no matter what I do, there is nothing I can do.

There is no one I can be to prove my endless love to you. And since I cannot love you for you, we should just take in the view. Because my breaking heart adores you, even though you never knew. See, I would give my death for you, but refuse to give my life. I would take a bullet for you, but won't wrestle with your knife.

I would give you my last dollar, but won't pay a higher price. I'm not walking with a collar, I'm not rolling loaded dice. You can use me as a weapon, but I won't be an excuse. I'd risk my neck for you, but won't help you tie your noose. So I tell you that I love you, even though I have no proof. Even though you don't believe me, even though I can't get through.

It kinda hurts to love you mom, still it's something that I do. Because my breaking heart adores you, even though you never knew.

IN-Q: You know when I finished this album, I wasn't sure that I wanted to put it out. Cause it had done so much for me, as a healing process, to make it. That I wasn't sure I wanted to show it to anybody as a product. I wasn't sure I wanted to monetize it. I wasn't sure I wanted to market it. And I honestly didn't want to hear anybody's judgments about it. I didn't want to hear anyone's criticisms. I didn't even want to hear anyone's compliments. I didn't want to externalize this thing that was so meaningful to me and allow somebody else to give it self worth. One way or the other. And then I was like, let me just send it to five people because I felt so complete with it. It was exactly what I wanted to do, but I was also embarrassed by it because it was so vulnerable and it was so soft.

There wasn't a lot of ego or bravado. It was just kind of like me and me. And my criteria was okay. Like if one person out of these five people is like, Hey man, like this made me think of my own life. And made me think about some of these stories for myself that I needed to move through and gain a different perspective on. Then I would say, all right, like, I'll take the hit. But I felt like I was going to have to take the hit. And even hearing that publicly is so hard for me. But I also feel like I teach people vulnerability because it's what I need to learn. And I'm probably like naturally suspicious, but I f**ing fight to keep my heart open because it's made my life infinitely better when things are good and infinitely better when things are bad. And, here we are.

SHAWN STEVENSON: I just want to thank you, honestly. Because I wasn't expecting to be kind of thrust into this self inquiry, listening to this album. I just thought I'm going to throw on my guys tracks and just like, you know, kind of vibe out. But it was exactly what you said. It connected with parts of myself because the story is not the same. This is your story. But it immediately connected to these moments for myself in particular with my mom. You know, and it's like, I was, I remember I was turning the corner to get to my son's school and I'm just like, I might have to pull over, you know, just like feeling this like.

It's, it's beautiful and it's messy and it's, you know, some of these things are painful, but you're giving it, you're, you're giving it a voice, you know? And it's beautiful. And I think in a weird way, it would have been selfish to withhold this. You know, because it is a gift and we tend to do that as humans. We tend to have these things, especially you said a keyword, you know, being embarrassed by something. It can be a great indicator that this is something that needs to be shared because chances are other people feel the same way. True story. The first time that I shared how terrible my health was, which is, this is, I know this is going to sound crazy. When I taught my first nutrition class, like, you know, I was a strength and conditioning coach at the time and you know, I just wanted to help people in a bigger way. Right. So it was three people in that class. I knew two of them. They were my clients. And then like one of their friends, I was terrified, but I shared where I came from and I never said it before. out loud. You know, I had this degenerative spinal condition. I was, you know, I was fat. I broke my couch. You know, I was just sitting around playing video games and the couch broke through.

IN-Q: Wow.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And I was embarrassed to share that I was unhealthy because I'm supposed to be this person who's teaching you about health. I didn't know that the come from is what is the most inspiring. The come from that I wasn't always this person is what connected with them. And eventually the next class or two, you know, it just, it went from three to five to 10 to 20 to like, we got to rent out these big places. But the next like two, three classes because in the next class you know it was another client and she came you

know, the class after that, she was before the class started, she was like, you're going to tell this story about your back, right. From when you were 20. And I was like, I never, I never thought about that. Like I, I should share that again? And it's that it's that's that's the stuff that connects, you know, and..

IN-Q: So I want to ask you what made you do it. Like what do you remember? What made you actually decide to share that thing that you felt was embarrassing that actually led to the thing that connected with the most people?

SHAWN STEVENSON: I mean you've I've never thought about that. I never, to this day, you're so good at this, at this, at this self inquiry, man. I, I didn't consciously, I didn't do it on purpose. You know, like I think in the moment, looking back on it, I feel like maybe I just had to get it off my chest. I had to share it. You know, I just had to, I just had to talk about it because that was my own quiet suffering that I went through for those two years.

And nobody in the world knew about it really, you know, I was abandoned. My mother abandoned me at that moment as well. Friends and family, nobody was checking on me except my grandmother. But I think that that's what it was, man. I just needed to release that, you know, and just, I think a part of me also just because I was, here's, this is, this is probably it. Now, now I'm talking it out and I can find the words. I think a big part of it was I was so focused on service now, I would, I was trapped in this sense of self and self survival, selfishness. And now I want it, I really wanted the people in front of me to feel loved, to feel like they could do anything. And I think that that was the catalyst for sharing, like, I've been in bad places too. And I was able to, to move past that. And so I think that that was the catalyst was just like really wanted to connect with them and to be of service and also to get it off my chest.

IN-Q: That's beautiful, man. I feel like our society says, look up to people or look down on people, but it doesn't ever say look at people. And because of that, this celebrity idolization that we have is really like this damaging cycle because I can look at someone's accomplishments and instead of it being inspiring to me to approach goals in my life with that same energy, I could actually be discouraged because I could just make them into a God. I could say, these people are perfect. And you were willing to risk that embarrassment and fear and possibly even shame to pull back the curtains and say this is what i came from this is what i went through. It's not easy but here we are and you can do it too. And that's what it's all about is continuing to share our experience and truth with other people So hopefully it can make their lives just even a little bit better.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Is this why it's titled acceptance?

IN-Q: Yeah, because there's no way that I can do anything or be anything to change that. The only thing that I can do is be and accept and love.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And that's the perfect transition to this next piece.

IN-Q "LOVE"

Every love poem I ever wrote was about you. You are every dream I've ever had, and now they've come true. You are every dream I've never had, somehow they've come true. I gaze into your eyes and know there'll never be a better view. I see heaven in your face. I see children in your smile. I see our future and our present.

Will you stay with me a while? Will you dance without the music? Will you laugh without the jokes? Will you cry without a reason? Will you play with all the notes? I've come to love you in a way that is impossible to quote. Forever and a day. Day is not enough. Forever is a joke. Any moment we're together is forever.

Now or never. Whether you are in my arms are too far away to measure. I respect you in the pain. I accept you in the pleasure. I'll be your shelter in the rain, you can shine in any weather. Every love poem I wrote was an invisible letter, reaching out beyond my time and space to what I would discover.

From a place that was unknown to a home inside each other, I am floating on a cloud, I am singing in a gutter, our relationship is sailing and we do not need a rudder, I don't care where we go from here, cause here is with each other. Your soul is like a mirror, you're a goddess and a lover. You're a sister and a brother.

You're a father and a mother. You're a son and you're a daughter. You're a stranger and a friend. Even when I end, our love's not something I can transcend. You're more than just a perfect ten. Your beauty lies behind your skin. It's the way you taste, reminding me of everyone I've been. It's the way you smell, reminding me of everywhere I've been.

Your sweetness overwhelms me. Can we end where we begin? I'll only come back to write our stories intertwined again. You're the greatest poem I ever read. You made me find my pen. You're the greatest poem I ever wrote. The wisdom from within. You inspire me. It took me lifetimes to comprehend. You're my who, what, where, and when.

You're my why I even try. I vow to have you and to hold you till the day I die. I say goodbye. I vow for better or for worse as long as you are by my side. I vow to cherish you in sickness and

in health until I die. On our first day, you asked me why I hadn't settled down. I refused to give an answer, but I have your answer now.

I was always waiting for you. You're the reason that you asked. My words have never done you justice, but I search for them at last. I've asked myself a thousand questions about who I want to be. I've asked myself a thousand questions to reflect on you and me. I've asked myself a thousand questions, but your loves would set them free.

There's only one question left, so I'll ask it on one knee. My love, I want to spend the rest of my life with you. I promise I'll do right by you, morning, noon, and night by you. I promise I'll be nice to you even when I fight with you. I promise I will fight for you. I'd even give my life for you. I promise I will write for you.

My art is now my life for you. My heart is yours. So on your darkest day. I'll be the light for you. And when you're out past midnight, I promise I'll leave a light for you. To guide you home into my open arms, if that's all right with you. They say that love is blind, but you're the one that made me see.

I've asked myself a thousand questions to reflect on you and me. I've asked myself a thousand questions, but your loves would set them free. There's only one question left.

Will you marry me?

SHAWN STEVENSON: What does this mean to you?

IN-Q: Everything. I asked my wife to marry me by reciting the poem to her. We were in the middle of a field in Utah. It was during the pandemic. And I told her we were meeting friends for dinner. And by the time we got there, she was hungry to the point of being hangry.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah.

IN-Q: And then of course, my friends weren't there and they were supposed to bring the food, so she's like, Where the f are they? And I said, I don't know, but while we wait, can I like maybe read you this poem that I wrote? And she's like, before dinner? Yeah. And I'm like, yeah. And I said, I wrote it about you. And so then I grabbed her hand and I said, every love poem I ever wrote was about you. And I did the whole entire piece and then, when I finished I had this guy I had hired to take pictures, jump out of the bushes like a ninja, you know, he was like, and she was emotional and we hugged. So I thought it was appropriate to put on the album and to

put into the journal because really the healing journey is about the journey to self love so that you can be open to having love with someone else.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Man, you know, it's.. There's thousands of years of documentation of this. What I think that the word love itself is like, it's, It puts it into a kind of a pithy box. It is so much, so expansive, so many different versions of what it can look like. And your unique expression of that in that moment, and to share with us, is special because again, it's the, it's the authenticity behind it, I think, can resonate and there's parts of it for all of us, again, to pick up. And to maybe see something that we have to see something that we might aspire to, to see something we might've lost, right? That's the beauty of this art, you know? Now, what was remarkable about the story behind this that I wasn't expecting, which is a great litmus test for whether or not a relationship is going to be successful, is that she was hangry.

All right. So she's already, cause that, I mean, that could be ground. That could be a position of some serious conflict. All right. I've seen it a time or 20. All right. As a matter of fact, it got to a point where, you know, my wife and I, at one, when we lived in Wildwood, Missouri. The gym is probably 25, 20, 25 minute drive away, you know, we drop him and our son off. Well, she'll drop him off most days and then meet me at the gym, then we'll train, then we'll get food when we get back to the house. All right. Could be another 20, 25 minutes driving back. And if we're driving together, if we dropped him off together, like, Ooh, you know, just even just that car ride, you know.

IN-Q: Keep a bar around.

SHAWN STEVENSON: But fortunately we caught the pattern. Cause it's usually patterns, you know, and also just giving ourselves. You know, that these are relationship skills you pick up, you know, like we are human, you know, we have our different emotions and our needs, blood sugar does matter, but you know, to, to have that kind of be the, the story behind it, you know, in the circumstances and it's, it's so cool, man, it's your unique love story.

IN-Q: You know, even when I got down on one knee, cause I, at some point in the poem say, so I'll ask it on one knee, so I. I get down on one knee and I'm like looking up at her and you know, the joke me in my head, I'm like there, but there's this other like comedian observer. And I was like, "you're not thinking about dinner now, are you?" but of course didn't say that, you know, both like start crying. And, um, yeah, it's interesting though. You make a really solid point, like how things that we don't, Attribute to mood can so deeply impact our mood. And sometimes we just need a banana or an apple or something. And then that can get us back into a place of being ready.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah, man, listen, this, this is just some. This is just some of the amazing, there's, there's stories, there's, there's insight, there's revelation, there's inspiration. And I think again, you're giving voice to these experiences, these emotions that, you know, we all have and also giving ourselves permission to look at these things and to maybe, think about them, maybe to think about them a little differently and along with the journal as well. Again, the journal is beautiful and everything is available right now. And so again, can you share where people can pick up the journal and also where they can get this amazing new album?

IN-Q: Yes. So passionplanner.com, you can get the journal. It'll also be on in-q.com, in-q.com and on Amazon as well. And then people can check out the album on Spotify or Apple Music or YouTube. And if you get the journal, they have a QR code on the inside so you can immediately listen to the album to deepen your experience. And they are separate but connected works of art. So if you just want to get the journal, you don't have to be a poet. You just have to be a person and be willing to take this ride. I think it will be moving and meaningful because it takes you through all of those different themes and leaves you in hope and an empowerment to live your absolute best life. And if you just want to listen to the album, just take a long drive, take a walk, take a hike. I suggest listening to it in one chunk of time, almost like an audio movie so you can get the full experience. It's only 40 minutes long, but it's the Never Ending Now album and the Never Ending Now journal. And I'm just super grateful to you for this conversation and for opening up your incredible community to my art.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Hey, Real Talk, it's my honor, man. Thank you for creating this and giving me an unexpected, but much needed experience. And yeah, man, I appreciate you so much, man.

IN-Q: You too, man.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Awesome. IN-Q everybody.

Thank you so very much for tuning into this episode today. I hope that you enjoyed this immensely. I hope that you enjoyed this new experience. And if you did, please share some love over on social media. Take a screenshot of the episode, tag in queue, tag me, share the love. And of course, if you feel inspired, share this with somebody that you care about. And listen, this is just a glimpse of what we have in store for you. Got some incredible masterclasses, amazing world class guests. I'm telling you, stay ready. All right, stay ready. We are just getting warmed up. So, so much more good stuff to come.

I appreciate you so much for being on this journey with me. Take care. Have an amazing day. And I'll talk with you soon. And for more after the show, make sure to head over to the model health show. com. That's where you can find all of the show notes. You can find transcriptions, videos for each episode. And if you've 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.