



EPISODE 844

Stop Draining Your Energy & Reclaim Your Time

With Guest Israa Nasir

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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. Do you personally think that, you know what, I do be doing the most? Well, today, more than ever, there's so many things to do, and yet we feel that there's so little time to do it all. And I love the quote from Seneca that says, "It is not that we have a short space of time, but that we waste much of it." And he's affirming it's not a lack of time. We all have the same time, essentially, but that we waste so much of it. And so many of us are like, we're taking on this philosopher mindset and we're like, well, I'm not going to waste my time.

I'm going to keep doing stuff. I'm going to stay busy. I'm going to keep grinding. I'm going to stay productive. And there lies an issue that so many people are dealing with today where we're being productive. And yet we feel like we're not going anywhere. We feel trapped, or we feel at its extreme that we're digging ourselves into an early grave. We're literally destroying ourselves. By trying to do all the things that we are supposed to do in our modern society. And so today in this powerful episode, we've got an expert who's going to add so much value and insight to your life about our culture today of mass productivity. All right, and this was incredibly insightful and very helpful for me as well. And so I'm very excited to share this with you.

I want to share something with you that I haven't really talked about before. And it's a way that I like to spend my time where I feel like. There's just so much more space within that time, and it's through listening to music. And just putting on music during certain moments of my life. Whether it's in the kitchen cooking or just kind of hanging out and doing some work in my office. It really does make my heart and my mind feel more spacious. And it's so funny how we might forget something like that and we get stressed out and we remember to put on some music or understand the power of changing the vibe that can literally change our outcomes and our energy. And of course when I'm in the kitchen, every day, whether it's making a meal or making some coffee for myself and my wife. I'm putting on my favorite vibes. And actually this is a place where we spend a lot of our time. Just kind of hanging out in the kitchen, and in the dining room, as a family.

And one of the most recent things that we've been incorporating in our kitchen. It's been a couple years now, but it's an air fryer. All right, the air fryers are popping out here on the

streets. But there's a dirty little secret about these air fryers because of course just even hearing frying might put off some red flags for people who are really about that health life, but the air fryer is such a cool technology. But what many people don't realize is that most of these air fryers are absolutely lined and their coatings are teeming with PFAS Chemicals. These "forever chemicals" that are literally inescapable once they get into the human body, they're virtually impossible to get out of your system.

Now I'm saying virtually because there are some ways, all right. There are, but some things we don't have data on yet, are, can these things get out of your blood, out of your bones. Even finding ways into the human heart. We can go on and on where they finding all these different chemicals holding up shop, but having practices where you can actually sweat, where you can have ample health of your liver and your kidneys and all of your organs of detoxification. We can find a pathway of getting some of these chemicals out of our body, but they don't leave the environment. And my point being that we are in part of the environment. And so we're dealing with an issue that has just grown massively in the last few decades. And one of the primary contributors to this epidemic forever chemicals was the company DuPont and their Teflon Cookware. And that Teflon coating was well noted to have a compound called perfluorooctanoic acid or PFOAs that were found repeatedly in peer reviewed studies to contribute to higher rates of infertility, liver disease. We need that liver for detoxification in a variety of cancers including a study published in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute finding that PFOA is a strong kidney carcinogen.

Now, of course, it's been cycled out only about 10 years ago, but it's still these chemicals, you cannot find people on earth, just about anywhere. 98 percent of people have these PFAS chemicals, PFOA in blood supply, in their blood. You have to go back and test human samples from the 1940s to find people that didn't have these chemicals in their blood. And so, yes, they cycled it out of cookware, but these companies kept coming back with other iterations of these chemicals that studies after studies found they were leading to the same issues. And so it's like going to the same people who are making you sick to get a solution. And it's simply not a viable use of our time and energy. So with that being said, where do we turn for our cookware, our pots and our pans, our air fryers, our slow cookers. My family's favorite place is

Our Place. The company, Our Place, has been PFAS free, toxin free since its inception. And we're talking about over 75,000 five star reviews on their award winning products.

Again, PFAS free, non toxic, and their incredible ceramic coated cookware. And also the same holds true for their air fryer. And their slow cooker is the dream cooker. The titanium always pan is one of my favorite pans. And right now if you go to themodelhealthshow.com/OurPlace. You can get access to their absolutely beautiful cookware. Not only of course, is it non toxic and protective of our health, but it's gorgeous as well. And i'm telling you going to see that once you go over to themodelhealthshow.com/OurPlace. And if you use the code model at checkout, you're going to get 10 off your entire purchase. And by the way, a little insider secret, they've got some incredible cookware bundles. So check those out, you're going to see discounts of up to 20, even 30 percent off their bundles.

Once you go to checkout, you're going to see that discount. And if you add the code model, you're going to get an additional 10 percent off on top of that. So it is incredible. This is new. All right. And I don't know how long they're going to keep that available for us, but you can basically double discount. And this is an incredibly invaluable investment into your health and your family's health. So head over to themodelhealthshow.com/OurPlace. And now let's get to the Apple podcast review of the week.

ITUNES REVIEW: Another five star review titled "nerd heaven plus practical application equals success" from B bland 1522. I'm such a nerd when it comes to all things, body, mind, and spirit. I could, and do listen to Shawn's voice for hours. Along with the practicality of his content.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Thank you so much for leaving that review over on Apple podcasts. I truly do appreciate that. And if you get to do so, pop over to Apple podcast and leave a review for the model health show. And without further ado, let's get to our special guest and topic of the day.

Israa Nasir is a psychotherapist, writer, and founder of WellGuide, a digital community for mental health awareness. Israa has been featured all over major media, including NBC, Vox,

Teen Vogue, and other major publications. And she's been invited to work with corporations such as Google, Meta, and Yale university and many others. And today she's here to share her powerful insights about the concept and application of productivity in our modern world. Let's dive into this conversation with the incredible Israa Nasir. First of all, thank you for coming to hang out with us. It's pretty awesome.

ISRAA NASIR: Yeah. Thanks. It's been really fun so far, and I'm actually looking forward to this conversation.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Awesome. This is going to be the best. I'm just going to tell you that.

ISRAA NASIR: Okay.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Right out of the gate. But seriously, you know, we're living at a time where exhaustion is like, it really is a status symbol in a way. You know, I'm just, I'm doing the most, you know, it's a cultural term. But, we oftentimes are sacrificing our well being in order to do more. What is going on? What's going on with this paradigm? Why are so many of us? Living our lives in this way?

ISRAA NASIR: I really believe that, so our emotions are a very powerful driver of our behavior. And I think as society has transformed and the lines between work and home, personal life and friendships, they're all kind of blurring. What's happened is in order to cope with these uncomfortable feelings, we're actually tapping into productivity habits and achievement. And we're utilizing that as a way to self soothe. And it gives you a very quick return, right? Like if you're feeling bad about yourself, you do something, you achieve something, you immediately feel good. And you're like, Oh, okay, I can keep doing this. And the more you do it, the more you can tell people, and the more you tell people, the more you get external validation, and that just the cycle keeps growing deeper and deeper.

And I think that it's very rewarded, right? Like you get a lot of kudos for it. Even. Like, when I was just knee deep in all of this stuff personally, one of the things people would often say to me is, oh my gosh, like, how do you do so much?

Like, I would be such a mess if I was doing so many things, right? And I took that as, damn, I'm so competent. Here I am doing all the things. But, my wellness was absolute trash. I was living off of kind bars and, you know, coffee. It was not a good life.

SHAWN STEVENSON: The C and the K.

ISRAA NASIR: Yeah, I guess so.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Kind and coffee.

ISRAA NASIR: Yeah, exactly. It was not, it's a fast lifestyle, but it's not a good one.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah. That was not very kind.

ISRAA NASIR: No.

SHAWN STEVENSON: To yourself.

ISRAA NASIR: It was very unkind.

SHAWN STEVENSON: But, you know, many of us fall into those patterns, you know, in seeking out. And I love this about your book. One of the lines that you shared was essentially we have all this potential in us. And instead of being grateful or rewarded, or having introspection about this potential, we measure ourselves by our potential to create and to do more, you know, instead of just our value as a human being and the potential that we have in us as a human being. And so it's kind of a race to the bottom essentially today, you know, and all of this competition. I've been thinking about this a lot lately, you know, we really evolved in cooperation, you know, and there's so much less of that and even just cooperating in a family context, you know, we're all so isolated and it's just leading to these behaviors. And as you shared, just to even kick things off, we're band aiding it by being more productive. We don't address the feelings. Like, I feel alone. I feel like, you know, I just don't feel good, and we try to self soothe.

ISRAA NASIR: Yeah, I think like, you're talking about the convergence of so many factors on this, right? And I think that it's definitely, you know, impacting our relationships. That's why when I was doing the research for this book, I really wanted to go beyond the workplace because when we think about productivity and hyper optimization and things like that, we usually think of work. But what's happening is we're bringing this into our relationships and so we are feeling lonelier, we're feeling disconnected. We are feeling under fulfilled and all of that is creating this like friction. I think just overall that temperature are like, the environmental temperature of people is just so just like there's so much friction right underneath the surface. And you see it now with people having public meltdowns everywhere on airlines and the mall.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Like Walmart, definitely.

ISRAA NASIR: Road rage, right? And I think it's because we're just not addressing our emotions in a healthy way. And I think that was the biggest gap that I saw when I was starting to do research on this. Because of my own experiences was that I think people talk a lot about surface level behaviors, creating systems, organizing yourself, time management. But those are only helpful when you are feeling good, right? When you're not feeling good, your emotions will take over and you will start behaving in a very survival mindset, and that is very urgent. It's fight or flight. It's stressed out. It's frankly toxic. Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: This is such a good segue because I feel like there's this underlying thing for many of us. If I can just produce, I'll feel better, right? So let's talk about the difference between productivity and toxic productivity.

ISRAA NASIR: Yeah. So I think that our productivity becomes toxic when we become singularly focused on outcomes. So we are in pursuit for the sake of pursuit. We're like, we just have to, I have to get this, but it's a very unintentional pursuit. It's, you don't know why you're pursuing the thing you're pursuing. Whether it's a relationship, whether it's a job, a salary. You know, so I live in New York city and I meet so many people per week who say arbitrary things to me. Like I want to hit my first million before 40. I want to make it to VP

before 32 right? And it's these are arbitrary deadlines that were self imposed. You don't know why you're pursuing it.

You're just you just want that check mark, right? So that's one thing. The other thing is in that pursuit, that the pursuit becomes primary. So your wellness, your relationships, your health Joy, beauty, all of that becomes irrelevant. So you will forgo a friend's birthday to work a little bit more. You will skip out on, you know, a dinner so that you can do something that is more achievement oriented. That's people have started pruning their social circles to only be around like successful people, right? Because of that thing that people say that you're the average of the five people you're around.

So it's making our relationships very transactional. And the final thing I'll say, productivity becomes harmful when our value, our sense of self, our self image becomes completely contingent on the outcome. So you only feel good about yourself if you achieve the outcome. So there's a very binary thinking about if you're good enough or not. And when that happens, you start believing that I'm only valuable to this person, to society, to my family, if I'm producing this outcome. And outside of that I have no value. So you become disconnected from yourself. You have no boundaries. You don't know what your emotions are. You exist to please other people because you are in service of producing for acceptance and belonging. And as a very long answer, but I think you know, this shows up in the small ways every day.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah. In your book, you actually talk about the fact that being a therapist, you're always looking at the why behind the what, right? So the person wanting to be VP by 32 or hitting their first million by 40, that's a what, but why do you want that? Like, where did you get that idea from? Not that it's a bad idea. That's the thing too, right? And having goals and aspiration is a big part of being human. But if we don't have some introspection on why we want the thing, right? The why behind the what. We can end up siphoning so much of our life energy after something that wasn't even giving us the fulfillment we wanted in the first place. Because that's what we're really after and you shared your own story about this. If you could share a little bit because you were a productivity boss.

ISRRA NASIR: Yes.

SHAWN STEVENSON: But then you ran into some issues.

ISRAA NASIR: I did so, I mean you know, it was raised to be a very successful student and overachieving, high achieving, you know, that's just like the family culture. And so that embedded in me this drive to whatever I touch has to be gold. Like I could never do something in a mediocre way. And if it was mediocre, it felt really bad, right? So I had this mindset that I have to do a lot. It's not just enough to only get an undergrad. It's not just enough to only get a master's. Like you also have to do other things and you're constantly moving. And so by the time I hit my early thirties, I had achieved a lot of the things that I was working towards in my twenties, right?

So I was expecting it to feel good. I was expecting that, oh, like, this is what the other side will feel like, right? I checked all the things, I'm living in New York. But that feeling didn't come, like it did, I didn't feel good. And I just felt emptier, if that makes any sense. I felt disengaged from my life. I felt very disconnected from the people around me. At one point I even wondered if I was, you know, maybe I was like high functioning depressed. But it wasn't that. And I think that's what indicated to me that there's something off balance. Something is happening. If it's not depression, then why am I feeling this way?

Right? Why don't things feel good? And I really had to take a step back and reflect on where I was putting my energy. Where I was putting my time. How was I feeling before and after doing the things. And I did this like three four week audit on myself. And I think that's where my like therapist hat really kick in. I was like, why am I doing this? And this is before I started my own therapy. So this is, I'm just doing it on my own. I'm just using all the skills. I know that I would use on a client obviously biased because I'm doing it on myself. But it did indicate like a pattern to me that I was driven by a lot of fear of missing out on opportunities, fear of like things will slip through my hands and I won't get it and I'm not maximizing.

I was very much on like maximizing. Opportunities, time, all of that stuff. And I just realized that there were some things I had to change in order to feel good. But that was like the beginning point of my journey, like it didn't end there. Like that started this exploration into what does being busy actually give me? What does it mean for me? I was exchanging it for a

feeling. And the feeling was being valued and being perceived. As competent that's a that was a big part of my self identity is other people seeing me as competent. And that just comes from like my family role. Like i'm the middle child. I'm the eldest daughter. I'm a child of immigrants. I'm a libra like whatever it is, right? But that perception of competence is really important for me that i'm very self sufficient. I got this. I can figure this out. But that was like making me miserable. So I had to stop. Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah. Thank you for sharing that.

ISRAA NASIR: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Because I think a lot of people can identify with some of those "quirks", you know? Some of those ways of being. And I encourage everybody to really think about like why do we do some of the things we do? We live so much of our life, especially today on autopilot. And we don't give ourselves time to even think about, or to decompress, or to think about our thinking, you know. And we just fall into these patterns and oftentimes today more than ever, we have an epidemic of unhappiness. And like what is this all about if it's not for your well being and for your happiness?

And now I want to ask you about this because you know it sounds similar to how many of us grow up which is like we're doing these things to better our family, right? We're doing these things just to take care of our loved ones, right? And I know a lot of parents, it's self sacrifice, right? And doing whatever we have to do to put food on the table, roof over the heads, and clothes on the back, right? I heard these things from my mother a lot. And of course, I have that drive. I think it's an innate human thing to want to take care of our family. And today, more than ever, we have so many options. Now, with that being said, this gets into conversation that it's a complicated P word that is getting kicked around a lot without context often. And you're just like, what P word is this?

ISRAA NASIR: Productivity?

SHAWN STEVENSON: Privilege.

ISRAA NASIR: Oh. Privilege.

SHAWN STEVENSON: It's privilege.

ISRAA NASIR: Yes.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And having the privilege to think about my thinking, to think about my why behind my what, right? I'm just, I'm busy. I'm trying to just get this stuff done because I have to survive, right? There is that, but I want to say this. Our ancestors, you know, even just a few generations ago, that work life and again working hard for their families. They had time to think still, right. There was time to think we weren't constantly plugged into something even in our downtime. I'm seeing again, I just walked down the street people are just if they're waiting on the taco truck or if they're waiting on the they're on their phone. Right! Everybody immediately is jacked into the matrix. As soon as you get off the, out the matrix, if you get out of it, you're doing your stuff and then you get right back to it and we don't have time to decompress. And so how do we think about this in terms of, again, I want to produce so I could take care of my livelihood and my family. But not venture into a place where this is literally killing me.

ISRAA NASIR: That is a really important point. And I think it is definitely a privilege to think about, you know, how you live your life because you have some choices to make and that I would say that's like the foundational difference between the way my parents worked and the way I work, right? Like they were immigrants, and internally displaced refugees in a conflict. To them work was survival. Like if you were not hustling you could literally lose everything, right? And so, but that's the model that I grew up in but I get the privilege to step out of it and say, let me just think about why I'm doing the things I'm doing. And I think the way to balance that is to think about your intention.

I think our intention really guides whether our productivity is healthy or harmful. Why are you chasing this thing? What are you hoping to get out of it? What is the intention behind the actions that you take? And a lot of times, even when we are in survival mode, we are still engaging in a lot of extraneous things that might not actually be beneficial to your survival,

right? So just stopping to think about is this truly necessary? And is it going to improve my life in some way? I think is a really good way to start thinking about that. And the other thing I'll say is there are sometimes life circumstances that you cannot, kind of, get out of, right? Like maybe you have to work multiple jobs.

Maybe that's just what your situation is. To those people I always say it's okay to kind of sprint. In some, sometimes you need to sprint in an unhealthy or toxic productive way, because it needs to get you on the other side, right? But once you get to the other side, be mindful about stepping out of this mindset. So if you have seasons of your life or circumstances that are requiring you to rise up and really hustle because you need to. Absolutely do that because that's your survival, but when you get to the other side have a clear definition of what enough is so that you can step out of it. And that way you can tap into this when needed as like a coping skill instead of it being your whole life, right?

And so I can do that like now I can say that because I was in this like, you know, obviously like hustle mentality for many years. But currently right now I'm in a season of like hyper productivity because my book is coming out in four weeks, but I had a 10 week countdown and I've just been on the grind. But what gives me hope is I know that I can tap out of it. When the book is out, right? Like I have a plan and that way I have balance in my life And I think that's what I want people to have. I'm not saying become anti productive. I'm not saying forget your ambitions. I'm just saying you should have some balance. Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah. This is fire. All right. So you said something so profound right here that we overlook you said seasons. All right. This is a part. We talk a lot about like circadian medicine and like our clock genes and this is a part of reality here on planet earth. There are seasons on this planet. And we evolve experiencing seasons and the same thing goes for how we're working and how we're producing. There's supposed to be times of transition, but in our culture today, we basically have one button, and you talk about that in the book as well. It's seen as very binary, like you're either productive or you're not productive.

ISRAA NASIR: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And so, and of course, this is one of my questions I was going to bring up was like you're out here doing, you know, the book tour and you're doing all this stuff. And I would imagine you're being extremely productive right now. And isn't this counter the message? But it's honoring, this is facts. It's a season. You're in a season right now and it's intentional. And you know, also what's on the other side of that is probably intentional time to decompress.

ISRRAA NASIR: Yeah. Truthfully, I'm not doing a book tour right after. I'm doing a book tour in January, like two months later. Because I want that holiday time with my family. I want to go see my parents and my in laws and just I want to chill for a little bit. And that keeps me going, like I slept four hours yesterday. I had five podcasts today, right? This is a very hyper productive season for me, but I know that in four weeks, this is gonna be done, and I will intentionally rest. So yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Well, thank you for sharing you do you know the insider experience. And that's amazing because all of us experience opportunities also of those sprints. And this is kind of how I think of things as well. And you know, there are certain things that are operating as a marathon kind of in the background, whether again, as family taking care of things and whatnot. But having those sprints of things that you're hyper focused on and hyper productive really, and then times again, where you are able, and this is tough for me personally, it has been, to give myself permission.

And I want to talk about this, what goes on in our psychology of somebody who is a creator, somebody who is driven to serve and to, you know, do good in the world, right? And so I'm very passionate about helping families, helping people's health. And so that really does drive me, but that can drive me right into poor health, right? Sacrificing myself. And I've been through seasons of that. And so developing a mindset like mine, it comes at a cost of in those downtimes, thinking about what I could be doing. How productive when I'm sacrificing, right. And so you talk about that in the book as well, like when you're on vacation, for example, you know, and you're thinking about work or whatever the case might be, how common is that?

ISRAA NASIR: It's extremely common. And I think work is the most common thing people think about at work on vacation. Especially now, like here in North America, people will leave on vacation and say stuff like, If you need me, you can slack me. I have my notifications on, right? Whereas you go to Europe and you can't contact anybody for the entire month of August. You're like sending them emails and they have this like, out of office that says, I'm coming back in September. So it's a cultural difference here in North America. But I do want to say one thing about this seasonality of being flexible and adaptive to your life, right? If life is coming at you with something that requires you to kind of put a little bit more of yourself in.

If you have previously been more intentional about your energy and time resources, you will be able to deliver when it's required. If you're always giving your 110 percent and that's your baseline, when something extraneous comes at you and you have to now go above and beyond, you actually don't have anything to give. So you won't be able to rise to the occasion. And so that's how I think about it, you know. Earlier this year, I was very intentional about not taking on more work. I stopped doing my consulting. I stopped doing therapy as a therapist. And because I knew that this was coming. So I was able to prioritize. And our current urgency culture is telling us not to prioritize.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah.

ISRAA NASIR: It's saying everything is equally important. Every single email is equally important. Every notification needs to be addressed, right? And so you're constantly giving a hundred percent and that's why the productivity becomes harmful. So to me the seasonal sprint mindset makes my productivity longer, like it's more sustainable. I get to be productive forever, right? And that's a good thing for me because I can tap in and out of it instead of being super productive and then just crashing, which is what happened earlier.

SHAWN STEVENSON: My next question is about where our psyche comes from. All right. In my decisions that I'm making, for example, you know, coming out of the gate when I wrote my first book, I was working as a nutritionist and I had people coming in all day, but I decided I'm going to go in early. First couple of hours and try to get done like half a chapter a day, we'll

just say, like really intensely focused. But then work with people the rest of the day and then come home and be super dad, super husband, and all the things, all right. So it was a season and, after getting that done, I definitely again just life structured in a certain way.

Maybe it was unconscious where I pulled back and kind of got ready for when the book comes out, right? So I just, and also I started to transition out of doing clinical work, right. And once the book came out. I just focused on that. And so but once I got to my next book, I literally shut everything in my life down, except writing and researching and doing the model health show once a week. I turned down incredible what see again. It's the FOMO. Right. Some incredible opportunities to speak it really cool events and places and stuff like that and a bunch of other stuff and just focus on this because I had experience knowing what this is going to do to me if I try to do too many things at one time. And over time, you know, and the crazy thing is even if your book is really about health.

It's about mental health and well being overall. But it can be unhealthy to write a health book, if you're not if you're not careful about it. And this just speaks to your experience like your wisdom the way that you're doing things. Like the fact that you're taking off for the holiday season. I love that so much.

ISRAA NASIR: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: It's so awesome. And also you're knowing that this is going to be there, you know, this issue is not going anywhere. But this is my opportunity to invest in me and so I want to ask you about our come from, when we're making these choices, because I have sacrifice myself and my well being in order to serve others on more than one occasion. My wife would tell you I do it all the time. But, and also, but it energizes me in a way too. And so, but other people have different things for their come from, for their toxic productivity. And so, I want to talk about our emotional foundation.

ISRAA NASIR: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Right.

ISRAA NASIR: I love talking about this stuff, because this is like the most therapy, you know, clinical foundation. And why we do the things we do is based on how we learn to relate with others when we are very young. And that can be from your primary caretaker, so your family, your siblings, neighborhood, peers, friends, teachers, right? But it does, it is the way we view the world and the way we view ourselves in relation to other people is really built in the formative years. And it can change as we grow older, like, you know, our families are not our destiny, but it only changes if we are intentional about changing it, right. So, we learn in our families how to get accepted. We learn in our families what belonging looks like, right? How will people be happy with me? How do I get what I need from people if I need them to take care of me?

And it creates these emotional foundations of perfectionism, of a fear of expressing your needs, right, which is commonly known as people pleasing. How do I get people to love me if I'm very good, right? If I don't ruffle any feathers, if I bring home the awards, then my parents will love me. And nobody, maybe some parents do this explicitly and that's a different conversation, but I think most parents are pretty well meaning, right? Like they want to encourage their kids. They want them to do well. They put them in all these like different things so that their skillset is expanded. So it's not like a malicious thing. Like my parents were not malicious. When they were like, yeah, be an overachiever, and they didn't say it like that, they were not like driving me out of ill intent.

But we just learn it maps to the receiver the child in a different way. So you as a parent are saying I'm so proud of you right to your kid, but me as a kid I'm hearing I have to make my parents proud for them to stay happy. And then that extends to other relationships. That extends to your boss, and it shows up in work. And so that is where we build this foundation. And a lot of times when we don't do well, there's a lot of shame. Shame is a very disciplinarian tool that is used by a lot of families and school, right? So shame becomes a really powerful driver. If I feel shame, I'm gonna do everything to not feel it.

And that means I'm just gonna get busy. I'm gonna get so busy that I don't feel that shame anymore. If I have guilt, I'm gonna try to alleviate it by action. I'm gonna start moving, doing things, changing things in my life so I don't feel guilty. If I'm afraid that you're gonna reject

me, I'm gonna be perfect. So you don't do that. And so these emotional drivers are just lurking so deep in the back, that we don't even know that's what's operating. Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And if we don't have the tools in this culture, we oftentimes don't. And this is why resources like this are so important. Got a quick break coming up. We'll be right back.

Snuggle up with some fat burning nutrition. This holiday season, you know, what time of year it is. It's a time to get cozy. It's that time to snuggle up. It's that time for a nice pumpkin spice, everything, but truly some of the most potent nutrition can be found right in our spice cabinet. And this particular spice that you need to know about has been used traditionally in cooking medicine and rituals for thousands of years. And what I'm talking about is turmeric and one of its most renowned micronutrients curcumin have well noted anti-inflammatory effects. But what isn't commonly known is its surprising anti-obesity effects.

A study published in the European journal of nutrition covered that in addition to down-regulating inflammatory cytokines curcumin and turmeric also upregulates the activity of adiponectin and other satiety-related hormones. Turmeric has been found to actually improve insulin sensitivity, reduce blood fats, and directly act upon fat cells. Another really interesting thing about turmeric is that it has anti-angiogenesis properties. A study published in the Journal of Nutrition found that curcumin in turmeric is able to reduce angiogenesis in adipose tissue, which is fat tissue. And angiogenesis is the process of decreasing the blood supply, nutrient supply to those pesky fat cells and also to cancer cells as well.

And turmeric has been found to have an intelligent, selective capacity to target rogue cells and reduce their ability to grow really fascinating stuff. And it's one of my favorite things that's in the gold blend from Organifi. This blend highlights a supercritical extract of organic turmeric, plus other metabolism-enhancing spices like cinnamon and ginger. Reishi, which is clinically proven to support your sleep quality. It's a great vibe, great way to relax and a great time to enjoy this season. Head over, check them out. It's [Organifi.com/model](https://www.organifi.com/model). That's O R G O R G A N I F I .com/model for 20 percent off your gold latte. Check it out.

SHAWN STEVENSON: I want to ask you about, because some of this is creating our beliefs about ourself, obviously, and our sense of, and these two words can be, I think, a little bit, people have them be interchangeable, but they're not, self worth and self esteem. Can we talk about the difference between the two?

ISRRAA NASIR: Yeah, so they are used interchangeably, but they're very different things. So self esteem is what we see as our value in the face of our achievements. So self esteem is externally validated. And that's, there is a level of external validation that is healthy, right? You get something, somebody gives you applause, you feel good. That's a healthy model of being. Self worth though is your inherent value as a human being outside of what you can achieve or produce or bring to the table. So this is like your basic human dignity, your value as a person. It has nothing to do with achievements. And what happens is we kind of merge the two and our self worth. what I feel that I'm valued at as a human being becomes connected to my external achievements. And external achievements are sometimes out of our control. They are kind of like varying throughout life, right? So it goes up and down.

And when your value as a person becomes connected to that, then your value in your eyes will go up and down. Right? So I work with a lot of high achieving people as a therapist and many of them, their sense of identity is just fused with their jobs, with their titles, with having a role. And when there's layoffs, somebody gets fired, like, you know, they lose their job, devastates them. It completely shatters their sense of self because they think that they're only valued if they're working. And that's the harm in putting your value in an external achievement. But there are different things.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah, well, thank you for sharing that. I think one of the kind of popular ways that we see something like that is athletes. Happens a lot.

ISRRAA NASIR: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And again, it's kind of like the identity being tied to this particular thing, but it's inevitably going to change. And we see the fallout with a lot of athletes and you know really lacking in, you know, identity and finding another way to kind of transform or

transition into something else. This actually happened for me in a way, because coming from an environment where that's really the way out is through athletics. And, you know, when my body started to break down when I was just a teenager, just really, I struggled a lot, you know, and I can look back at those times, like seeing myself getting into more fights and having more challenges.

And being able to, you know, understand today we have more options. There are so many different things that we can attach ourselves to, but any one thing, if that becomes our identity, we're going to suffer. And what I was lacking was a sense of self worth, really just, you know, a sense of worthiness. And I carried that with me into adulthood and I still have some inklings of that, for sure. And, because of the message in my environment was, if you're going to be successful, if you're going to be safe, you have to suffer. You have to suffer in order to accomplish anything, you know, because I saw so much suffering. And the thing that I learned just in the past year, and I want to ask you about this. For me, what was holding me back from being able to metabolize some of this stress was talking about it, right?

It's only been about a year where I actually, because I'm carrying all this stuff, subconsciously having this belief that I have to suffer through this. If I'm going to make the world a better place, if I'm going to, you know, fill in the blank, suffering is required. And having a respected voice of reason to share with me to work on my sense of worthiness. You know to really focus on that. Because my self esteem is sky high. But the self-worth can be an issue even for some of the strongest among us.

ISRAA NASIR: Absolutely, and this idea that Good things have to be painful is a very pervasive myth in our culture, right? I mentioned this in the book too, but like, I think a lot of us are very mean to ourselves. To motivate ourselves, because we think that's the only way to motivate yourself is to just yell at yourself or like be disparaging, and really use that as fuel to motivate yourself. A lot of us shame ourselves to motivate ourselves. And again, there's this idea that if I'm not suffering, if I'm not in pain, if this is not hard, and hard doesn't mean challenging, hard means painful, right? Then it's not worth it. Then I'm not doing the right thing. And in fact, like I used to think that too. I used to be very extremely overwhelmed and

frazzled and stressed out all the time, but I honestly just believe that's what you do if you're ambitious.

Like if you're not stressed out, then you're not ambitious. Like how could you be chill if you're an ambitious person, right? And so I think that's the thing is we need to kind of reimagine the ways that we can be motivational to ourselves, that we can be like productive, we can be ambitious in all of these different ways. And I think unfortunately there is, not to make this purely like a gender binary because I think everybody can experience this. But the way different genders are socialized, definitely impacts the way we internalize stress. So men unfortunately in the patriarchal paradigm are not allowed to talk about their feelings, right?

Nobody talks about how damaging the patriarchy is for men. It doesn't allow you to speak about what you're feeling and so you carry it with you and you get heart disease and you get like high cholesterol or you become aggressive, right? Because there is no outlet. You are robbed of your humanity because someone is saying to you, you can't talk about your feelings. And that you know, most men I work with their identity is like this to their work. And it's the only way they can get their like competition aggression out because they can't talk about their feelings.

SHAWN STEVENSON: You're reading me, right? That was a specific thing the example that was gonna share, you know in this past year and in sharing how I feel. That's something I hadn't historically really done. You know, here and there, maybe I might say something to my wife, but also because my perspective was all of the things that I'm carrying, I got this. You know, I have this and I'm strong and I have the capability and I love it. You know, also I had that story as well and it's not that it's not true. But I didn't ever share If I was exceedingly stressed. I didn't yeah.

ISRAA NASIR: Sorry, I was gonna say you probably didn't even have the language for it, right. If you ask most people to describe emotions, they'll say excited, angry, happy, sad. That's it. So the vocabulary is so limited because you've never actually accessed that part of your brain. You were just not allowed, you know, you don't know how to do it, right? And so how can you talk about it? You can talk about how it feels in your body, right. So a lot of people will say like

I just can't sleep or I've been eating more or my shoulder hurts, right? We can talk but that's just stress manifesting itself.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yep. I hope everybody's listening. You know, there's a lot of people and again, thank you for sharing that because it does lean towards men. Especially again, because you're not voicing how you feel, but you know, work yourself into the ground. For your family, for the mission, whatever the case might be. And the only time that people will be okay with you, not, you know, showing up for the thing that you're supposed to show up for, is if you're in the hospital, or if you're completely wiped out, like taken off the board. And, because then that gives you a reason. Now I have a real reason. It's because I can't, I literally can't move or can't function. And we've got to stop putting ourself in position to where that's the end story. Because our families and our communities don't just want us to show up. They want the best of us, and the best of us requires us to put some energy into ourselves and to have more well being.

ISRAA NASIR: Yeah. Yeah, it's a journey. It's a journey for people though.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Oh my God. All right.

ISRAA NASIR: Wait, I want to say one thing. Earlier you mentioned that, you know, there was these issues with self worth over time, and you might have some inklings of it right now as well. And I'll say that the feeling of being alone, having like solid self worth is not a destination anyone ever arrives at and stays. So that's a very common like self judgment that I hear people say is oh, look, I should be healed. I've done all the work where I was healed before now. I'm not so all that work is gone. But it's really like a constant journey because we are constantly changing. So our self worth evolves as we change. Our self esteem evolves as we change, right? And it's important to see yourself as a constant work in progress. Healing is not a destination. It's actually the process through which you achieve well being. I just wanted to say that because I think it's important.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah, and it's also not a straight line.

ISRAA NASIR: Oh gosh, no. I wish.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Can we talk a little bit more about, because the reason we do these things is that it is offering us something. And in the book you actually detail some of the things that and asking again this question, what is toxic productivity really offering me? And then we kind of get into these major subconscious motivators of toxic productivity. And if we can go through these. The first one is shaming yourself for not being good enough, smart enough, fast enough or simply not enough. Your habits are an effort to make up for what you believe you lack.

ISRAA NASIR: Yeah, so that is like what you were talking about earlier is I'm going to do this. Like in the example you were giving is like, I'm going to take care of my family, right. And if I can do that, then I'm valued. I'm good enough. I'm a good enough father, mother, husband, brother, like whatever, right. And, but there is no definition of what that enough is. So you keep doing it, you keep doing it, you keep doing it, but you're not actually stopping to give anything back to yourself. And a lot of times you're doing things that are very misaligned, they're value misaligned. You're doing them because somebody else thinks you should do them. And so, when that balance is off, you just have no idea what to do to make yourself feel good. And I want to say that when we think about what is toxic productivity offering us, right?

At the core, it's offering us belonging and acceptance. That's what we're gunning for. That's what we're like racing towards. As if I do all these things, people will love me. I'll be valued and I'll be accepted. To that I say, how can we diversify where we get those feelings? So instead of being singularly focused on an outcome to make you feel that way, how can you diversify this? How can you engage in other things that might give you that return, but you were not considering before? I think a really good example for that for me. In this last year. I call this year my year of hobbies because I didn't really engage in any hobby- like activities that were not giving me like a valuable return, right?

And I would only watch serious movies and read serious books and listen to serious podcasts because I had to learn all the time. But this year, I just started doing things just for doing

them. I wasn't even trying to be good at stuff. I took an improv class, zero experience, right? Did a whole show, like an improv show, zero experience. But it gave me the return, that feeling of community and acceptance and belonging that I was like, wait, like this actually feels really nice, even though I suck at it. So I think like, that's the thing is we can diversify where we get these needs met.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah. Yeah. But our blinders, right, from our emotional foundation, it. We tend to be like, it has to be this way. This is the way that I get this thing. When in reality there are probably countless ways to get those inputs. So another one of these subconscious motivators that you talk about is being a perfectionist in how you meet others expectations or even your own expectations for yourself. Your habits are an effort to maintain a rigid ideal of what you quote should be.

ISRAA NASIR: Yes. Perfectionism is so glorified, right? People wear it like a badge of pride, but perfectionism is just a way to control things you can't control. It's an anxiety. I will be perfect. So I control how you view me. So I'm controlling your perception of me. I'm gonna be perfect so I can control all the variables in my life. Mistakes are uncertain. I don't want to make those. I want to control it. So perfectionism is just an exercise of control and it's extremely harmful because you cannot control this world. There will always be variables. out of your control, right? And we can plan for and be prepared, but we can't aim for perfection. And there's three kinds of perfectionism. And they all kind of play their role in toxic productivity or just like unhealthy habits in general.

One is the one you just kind of read over, which is that I need to be perfect. The other, so that's internal, right? Self directed. The other is you need to be perfect. So it's externally demanding. And the third is you need to see me as perfect. So your perception of me needs to be perfect. And it's a very confusing, convoluted place to be in. The only reason we glorify it is because it benefits the workplace and it benefits academia. It benefits the very, you know, home domesticated life pattern that we have, especially in the heteronormative environment like perfectionism benefits people in that way, but it's actually not a helpful way of living. Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: You don't say.

ISRAA NASIR: Yeah. I want people to lean into being a type B successful person. You know, like a type B person who is like, okay, things are out of control. I'll still figure it out somehow instead of I need everything to be in control. And that's the only way I can figure it out. It's a very rigid mindset.

SHAWN STEVENSON: The third one of these subconscious motivators that you talk about is comparing yourself to others or to an idealized version of yourself. Talk about that one.

ISRAA NASIR: Gosh. Comparison is an evolutionary mechanism, right? We evolved in these like communities. Human beings evolved in communities, right? And in order to be safe in these like far away long ago communities, you have to be like the rest of the people. So you're constantly assessing and judging if you fall in line, so that you don't stand out, right? So I'm talking about like hunter-gatherer societies. But, the brain has evolved to take in information and automatically do comparisons. What's happened in the last 30 years is the data set has increased so much. Whereas before I would only compare myself to the person in my neighborhood, now I can compare myself to somebody in New Zealand, right?

SHAWN STEVENSON: Right.

ISRAA NASIR: At any time of the day or night. And so the community is the whole world. And because we're comparing predominantly on social media. We're also comparing to other people's chapter five, right? While we are on chapter one. Someone might look at your show and be like, I got to be like him, but they have no idea all of the things you had to do, the years you spent building this to get here, they're only going to compare to your now. And so what happens is two things happen when we compare. One is we feel bad about ourselves. Two is we start inheriting other people's values. Now I want to live your life. Because I'm comparing myself to you and when I inherit your values and your goals, I lose my own. So I lose connection to myself and that's where the disengagement happens. You're just doing things because other people are doing it. That's kind of what happened with me, right? Like I was just doing things that my family wanted me to do that I assumed in my head is what a

successful woman is in New York, what a therapist should be like, right? What does it mean to be young in New York? Like I had all of these things in my head, but I was not connected to my own values. What I actually enjoyed, where I wanted to spend my time. And so comparison is not only the thief of joy. Like that's what people always say. I think it also starts making you hate your own life because nothing feels good enough. If I log in and every day I'm seeing somebody who looks a certain way and has a certain lifestyle. I'm just not going to be grateful about the stuff I have because I will only see deficits. And that can be a very sad place to be in. Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Now, we know, many of us today, thanks to you and kind of shining a light inward that these might be causing some issues in our life, this toxic productivity. How do we address this like what are some practical things we can do because I know that voice. And many of us know that voice of when we're not being productive. Our mind is talking sh*t, like you could be doing this, you should be doing that. How can we silence that inner critic a little bit?

ISRAA NASIR: Yeah, so there's a couple of ways, depending on where you're at. So, if you are somebody who is not very emotionally connected. Let's say you're at the beginning of your journey, right? You don't have a lot of vocabulary, you can't really figure out how you feel. To those people I say, get in your body. When your mind starts being very critical you kind of lose touch with your body, but your body is reacting. You will physiologically feel the impact of those negative thoughts. So when you start feeling this chatter come through, see if you can engage in some body work and that can look like anything. It can be a meditation, it can be like a body scan, it can be dance, it can be working out. It can be whatever it is but just kind of get in your body. Feel connected to your body because that will help ground you. What happens is the inner critic gets going, you get super activated, stress hormones are all over the place.

What do you do? You try to distract and you go into doing something. What you want to do is just kind of relax your body, bring yourself down so that you can counter those thoughts. You won't be able to counter those thoughts if you're activated, right? So that's one thing I'd say. For people who are a little bit more emotionally attuned or have a practice of introspection, I

would say the thing that I love doing is fact checking my thoughts. You know, kind of like putting on this like argumentative hat and asking my thoughts why should I be doing something? Like why should I, why can't I do this later? Why can't I just sit here right now? It is a little bit more combative, but that's the point. The point is to show your inner critic that you are unreasonable. That this is unrealistic. The world is not going to end if I just sit here and watch TV for one night.

And that is probably my biggest struggle, is that chatter. So you have to have multiple ways to kind of get there, right? So body work, fact checking, like talking back to your thoughts is really helpful. Another thing you can do is something I like doing with clients is writing out your thoughts as they're coming. So like a stream of consciousness. Literally set a timer for three minutes. Literally just write down every thought that's coming through. Then read it when the timer goes off, and highlight all the mean words. And then you'll be surprised at how mean you are to yourself. And then ask yourself, like, would I literally ever say this to anybody else?

Would I say this to a young child? Would I ever speak to a stranger like this? And you will be shocked at how much, like, just like how disparaging we can be to ourselves. Without even realizing it. It's just the norm, right? You're so lazy. You're so stupid. You're so silly. You're so disorganized. You're such a mess. We just say this stuff to ourselves all the time. And the final thing somebody can do is sometimes it's hard to counter the thoughts. Sometimes it's hard to turn down the volume. So what can you do? You can turn up the volume on the coach. So try to drown it out, right? Try to tap into a voice that is very validating, that is affirming, that is countering, but in a more gentle way. And that helps some people more than being combative. And I call that like your inner coach, like. And I think it's really nice to think about somebody from your past who you really cared about, who cared about you, and you can envision them. Or like a made up future version of yourself who you know is very incredible and on all of that. So

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah, that's so powerful.

ISRAA NASIR: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: That's such a powerful example. This is one of our greatest capacities as humans for us to visualize for us to use our mind and find like, again, somebody who's been a figure of love in your life to speak to you about these issues, or your future self and just being able to say, you know, everything's going to be okay, you know. And these are, again, thank you for inviting us to go inward because we have these tools available all the time. But usually, you know, our minds are scurrying off in all these different directions. And so it's so powerful. And I think it's really about, and you have a chapter on this as well. For us today, if we are, if we're engaged in something like this and listening to a podcast to better ourselves, we do have privilege. And this is not a, just because it's different it's better necessarily because we have a generation previously that just like you guys aren't working hard enough. You're soft. We had bullets flying around and da. You know, I had to walk to school and, you know, seven feet of snow backwards, you know.

ISRAA NASIR: With no shoes.

SHAWN STEVENSON: With no shoes, right? And, you know, and you think this is tough? And then, you know, we have a generation now that has the ability to create success from their phone. Right? There's so much more potential for creativity and for the ability, if we chose, to be introspective about our thoughts and what we really want. We live at a time of far more options, right? And we could argue that our previous generation made those options possible, right? And what I'm feeling encouraged to do is to blend the two together because the previous generation, for many of us that have had parents or grandparents, experienced a dysfunction from that as well.

And, you know, that parent or grandparent not having an ability to be personable or to, you know, express themselves in a healthful manner, or, you know, to have a modicum of self care and all these things. And maybe they, again, experienced some not so good things because of those things, right? And so we can learn from those and then take the best of today and imbue them together. And it's really about reimagining productivity. So why did you choose to have that to be a focus as well?

ISRAA NASIR: The reason I want to reimagine productivity is because productivity is essential to growth. For societies, for people, for relationships. So, I think it's very challenging to continue to stay productive in the way that we define it right now. Because the current definitions of productivity don't actually include rest in it. Rest is something that is outside of productivity, right? Resting and joy is almost antithetical to productivity. So for me, though, you just can't be productive if you don't have joy. You can't be productive if you're not resting, right? So for me, I want to like make sure that we don't rid ourselves of productivity, but I want to reimagine it, redefine it, so that it's healthier and sustainable. And I think that's a really important conversation to have, and it's also very empowering. I feel like I was very disempowered at one point in my life.

Because I felt like I was at the mercy of my tasks and my calendar and my obligations, and my self imposed expectations. Like I have read journals from my past where I journal a lot. In the research for this book, and I've read some past journals and I'm like damn like I feel sad for that girl, like I like my heart would break sometimes reading some of that stuff because I just didn't fully grasp how beautiful dynamic and complex life can be because I was so singularly focused on just one little box, one definition of it. So I think that's why I want to reimagine it because I want people to experience the beauty and dynamic nature of life.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah, and these insights and so much more is in toxic productivity. And as of this recording, it's available everywhere books are sold. So run out and grab your copy at your favorite bookstore. Of course, online, your favorite online retailer. Is there anything else? Is there any specific place people can go to connect more with you? Or a certain place you want people to pick up a copy of the book?

ISRAA NASIR: Yeah, so if you go on my website, istronaster.com, there's a book page. The book page is going to have a lot of resources. So like a lot of downloadable stuff to as like add ons to the book. So definitely get that and other than that instagram. I'm very active on instagram. I'm still the person who responds to the dms. So I do get a lot of people chatting with me there and it really helps me understand where people are at. Because I can see the themes of the questions people are asking and what their pain points are, and it helps me design my content to be more relevant. So I'm always happy to chat.

SHAWN STEVENSON: What's your IG handle?

ISRAA NASIR: Well.Guide

SHAWN STEVENSON: Well.Guide Awesome. This has been phenomenal. I had a bunch of aha moments in this conversation. And just thank you for taking the time. And doing this in a more graceful way to create this for everybody. And also for you taking some time off after you do this. And you know, putting all these insights together for us in this one resource is really powerful. Thank you.

ISRAA NASIR: Thank you for having me. This was a very lovely conversation. You had some really great questions.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Damn right. Thank you for tuning into this episode today. I hope that you got a lot of value out of this. And if you did, you know what to do. Share that value with somebody that you care about. Of course, you can send this directly from the podcast app that you're listening on, or take a screenshot, share it out on your socials. Instagram is where we tend to hang out. It's really the same thing she mentioned you can tag her @Well.Guide and I'm @Seanmodel. Tag us, show some love. I appreciate that so much and we've got some epic master classes. And world class guests coming your way very soon.

So make sure to stay tuned, 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.