



EPISODE 866

What Is This Voice in My Head? And How Do I SHIFT My Emotions?

With Guest Dr. Ethan Kross

You are now listening to [The Model Health Show with Shawn Stevenson](#). For more, visit themodelhealthshow.com.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Have you ever wondered what that voice inside your head actually is? Have you ever wondered where your emotions come from and why you actually have them? Today we're going to be talking about this and so much more. And please understand that our thoughts and our emotions have a huge impact on every area of our lives. And you're going to hear about some studies today demonstrating how being able to better manage our emotions lead to better health outcomes, better outcomes in our finances, better outcomes in our relationships. The list goes on and on and on. Some of these things might seem Captain obvious on the surface.

But now we've got data to affirm how important this actually is. Just one example of how our emotions impact our health, I think a lot of people don't realize, there's an entire field of psycho neuro immunology. There's also psycho neuro endocrinology. And these fields are looking at how our thoughts and our emotions are deeply controlling and impacting, helping to regulate or create some dysfunction with our immune system, with our endocrine system, our hormone production. So, please remember this. Your thoughts create chemistry in your body. Your thoughts can literally change what's going on with your hormones. These powerful messengers that are sending data to all the other cells in your body trying to tell everybody what's up. Trying to keep everybody on the same page.

Responding to a potential threat or letting you know that this is good. Times are good. You can relax and focus on burning fat and having a strong immune system. The list goes on and on. Our thoughts can deeply impact what's going on with our immune system and with our hormones. So again, this is something for us to put more focus on because we tend to be focused so much more on the external environment versus our ability to healthfully interact with the external environment and to have an appropriate emotional response. And I want you to keep this in mind, a lot that's going on with our emotions is unconscious. This is something that is very reactive and very primed in our system, in our biology. And so our special guest is going to detail all these different factors, but there is a place for us to be able to jump in and to manage to healthfully respond and react to the things that are going on in our external and our internal world.

And I'm telling you, many of these insights are an absolute game changer. And I also want you to keep in mind that our conditions can make it harder or easier for us to have healthy emotional regulation. Under the most dire circumstances, we can absolutely intentionally choose our emotional responses and help to manage those things, but it's harder. Including when we are deficient in the things that our genes expect us to have. And we're deficient in key nutrients that help to manage and sustain our biology. Take for instance, a study published in the Journal of Nutrition and Food Sciences. The researchers found that both emotional and physical stress can affect a person's vitamin C status.

Emotional and physical stress can increase the requirement for vitamin C to maintain normal blood levels. When stress depletes vitamin C levels in the body, it reduces our body's resistance to fight infections and reduces our resistance to diseases and increases the likelihood of further stress. The scientists discovered that when vitamin C intake was increased by the test subjects, the negative effects of excess stress hormones were reduced and the body's ability to cope with stress in the future was improved. This was definitely something that I was not taught in my university education about vitamin C and how vitamin C was required for so many aspects of our body's stress response. You know, we tend to see it in this very vanilla one trick pony is good for your immune system, but vitamin C is critical in helping us to manage our stress response. And when we are under stress and a lot of times we don't really even realize today how much stress we're under is just zapping the vitamin C from our body.

So, we definitely need to target eating plenty of vitamin C rich foods. And also with our growing amount of stress in our society today, this is definitely one of those places to supplement. And if you're going to do so, keep in mind that most vitamin C supplements are coming from genetically modified corn syrup and cornstarch. Really low quality stuff in this kind of synthetic version, versus a whole food concentrate of vitamin C, which is what I've been utilizing for years from the incredible folks at PaleoValley. Their essential C formula has three of the most vitamin C rich foods ever discovered. Including camu camu berry, amla berry, and acerola cherry.

All organic, no binders, no fillers, no nonsense. This is the best vitamin C supplement on the market. And you get 15 percent off when you go to paleovalley.com/model. That's PALEOVALLEY.com/model for 15 percent off their essential C formula and all their other incredible supplements and foods as well. Definitely head over there, check them out. This is something to keep on hand at all times. I always keep this in my superfood cabinet. It's one of my favorite supplements, especially during times of stress and travel. The Essential C Complex from PaleoValley. Again, go to paleovalley.com/model for 15 percent off. And now let's get to the Apple podcast review of the week.

ITUNES REVIEW: Another five star review titled, "Listen to this if you want to improve your overall health and longevity. Let's go" by Cody. Wow. Shawn's work has been the foundation for a milestone year in my personal development. Eat smarter. Started by turning all of my previously learned nutrition info upside down. Then sleep smarter channel my focus to better night time recovery. I'm still trying to convince my wife to let me take the TV out of our bedroom. Wish me luck. Now, I'm hooked on the Model Health Show and the amazing people featured on it. Some of my recent favorites have been Naseema Inyang, Simon Chang, Seth Godin, and Cody Sanchez. Shawn, I can't thank you enough for sharing this knowledge and making it fun at the same time. I've never felt better physically and mentally, and I'm stoked to continue this path of learning. As they say in my favorite blue zone, Pura Vida.

SHAWN STEVENSON: I love every single bit of that. Thank you so much for sharing your own experience and your insights. Thank you for the shout out on getting the TV out of the bedroom. That's a deep cut from Sleep Smarter and some of the science on having the TV in your bedroom leading to less sentimentality. And also thank you for shouting out some of your favorite episodes and guests here on the show. Something that I take a lot of pride in and something that I am always looking to bring on the best of the best in their respective fields for you to learn from and also to present some of the most powerful masterclasses on different subject matters so that you have a definitive guide on whatever issue you might be dealing with or curious about. And of course being able to help our families and our communities to improve their health, and today's episode is no different. Our special guest is absolutely remarkable. Our guest today is the one and only Dr. Ethan Kross.

Dr. Ethan Kross is one of the world's leading experts on emotion regulation. He's an award winning professor in the University of Michigan's top ranked psychology department, and he's the director of the Emotion and Self Control Laboratory. Dr. Kross research has been cited in top peer reviewed journals and featured all over major media. He's here to share some groundbreaking insights about managing your emotions so that they don't manage you. Let's dive into this conversation with the incredible Dr. Ethan Kross.

First and foremost, thank you so much for making the pivot to be here with us and share these insights because I know you flew in here to do some of the top shows and to be here in the studio with me, but something, I don't even know the words to process what took place, but can you share a little bit about your experience, you know, coming here, and then why we're doing this virtually right now.

DR. ETHAN KROSS: Yeah. So we're recording this virtually a week after I evacuated LA. So I flew in earlier last week and, and quite frankly, I've been, I've been so, just overwhelmed with work. I've been running from like meeting to meeting to dinner, to sleep and all over again. It's just been that kind of series of days. And so much so that I found myself in the airport, getting ready to go on a plane to LA and getting a text message from my wife saying, have you heard about what's happening there? And I was like, no, what's going on? I didn't have a chance to read the paper. She's like the fires. And, you know, I just, I just figured, well, if it's bad, they're not going to fly there.

And so I got on the plane, took it across the country. And then I should have known something was up when the pilot started announcing over and over and over to buckle up, you know, they usually do it like once, but they just kept on doing it. And next thing I know we're doing the equivalent of what I imagine is like a military landing through hurricane winds. I mean, the amount of topsy turviness on this flight was extreme. I kid you not when I tell you I was. I was left nauseous for like, I went to bed nauseous. I woke up nauseous. It was not pleasant. And, that was just the beginning of the fires. And I was hoping to be in the studio with you and, and had a bunch of other meetings.

I was staying in West Hollywood, seemed pretty sheltered. I was monitoring the situation as it grew worse. And, just tragic. And then one day, one night before dinner on the second night, I look out my window and I can see the Hollywood Hills fire and, and then a little voice inside me said, time to go. And, so I had to leave, but, you know, I've been monitoring the situation, trying to help where I can. And you were gracious enough to host me virtually. So I'm happy to be here with you and delighted that you've been safe through all this, which is my understanding. Is that right?

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah. You know, thank you for that. And our studio was shut down for a little bit. We're right on the edge of Encino. And, you know, obviously we were just on standby 10 minutes away from here. My friend, a close friend, got a knock at the door in the middle of the night that they had to evacuate. The fires were crawling from the Palisades and getting closer and she's been here for over 20 years. She couldn't imagine that from the Palisades that they would make their way to Encino.

And so, yeah, it's just, it's been, I, again, I don't even have the words, but a big part of this conversation. And not only is this relevant and powerful for us right now, but moving forward in our lives, as well, is being able to understand process and even shift our emotions.

DR. ETHAN KROSS: Absolutely.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And I can imagine you went through a whole smorgasbord of emotions in your own experience and being able to have these tools is obviously important and we're going to get to that. But first I want to start with something that every single person listening experiences on a daily basis, pretty much throughout the entire day, but there's this, there's this voice in our head. There's this inner chatter that's going on. What is this? It's internal chatter that's going on in our heads.

DR. ETHAN KROSS: Well, the internal chatter, if you've got it, you know, welcome to the human condition. It's quite common and essentially it's our ability to silently use language in our, in our minds. And we often call that like an inner voice and it's a really useful tool. It's a, I

like to call it a Swiss army knife of the mind because it's a, you remember Swiss army knife, Shawn?

SHAWN STEVENSON: Of course, of course.

DR. ETHAN KROSS: Not everyone does. Younger generations do not always know.

SHAWN STEVENSON: I love the corkscrew one, even though I never opened a wine bottle when I had one as a kid.

DR. ETHAN KROSS: There you go. Oh, there we go. So Swiss army knife multi purpose tool. That's your inner voice. It does really simple things for you. Like lets you keep information active in your head. Like you go to the grocery store and you think about what you're supposed to buy. You go down the list. Z's, yogurt, apples. You tend to do that silently, not out loud. Your inner voice lets you do that. You sometimes go over what you're going to say before an important presentation or, or maybe interview or, or when you were a younger date, did you ever do that? Like he went over in your head, the talking points. That's a question for you.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Oh. I mean, you know, I went on a lot of dates. I don't, you know, , I, I just kind of let it flow, I guess.

DR. ETHAN KROSS: Well, it's been incredibly common. Like people will often rehearse like what they're gonna say right before they go on. Like, I do this before big, big, big talks. I. I just, I go over how I'm going to open it up. That's my inner voice. I use my inner voice when I'm working out. I coach myself along. You got this, you know, three more sets, three, two, one. And we use our inner voice to make sense of our lives. Like we use our inner voice to make meaning out of terrible experiences. We create stories with our inner voice. The big catch is that this is an incredible tool, but it often jams up on us. So when we're really struggling with adversity, sometimes we reach for this tool to try to come up with a new explanation. Like, what does this mean about me and my future?

We don't come up with clear solutions. Instead, we start spinning. And we get lost in this experience of what I call chatter, which is a dark side of the inner voice. So, you know, chatter is getting stuck in a negative thought loop. It's worrying about the future, ruminating about the past. How do you know you're experiencing it? If you ever find yourself trying to work through a problem in your head, but not making any progress. You just keep turning it over and over and over. Or, sometimes you may criticize yourself, like berate yourself incessantly. I'm an idiot. Such an idiot. Those are two telltale signs. And, I think it's a big problem we face because it makes it hard for us to think and perform, creates friction in our relationships, and it can undermine our health. So, a lot of what we do in my lab is try to understand the tools that people can use to manage that, that kind of emotional condition and many others too.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Amazing. Thank you for shedding some light on, again, this is something that for most of us, it's on autopilot. We never think about it. It's just like, we think that that's who we are. Like, that voice in our head, and when you mentioned talking to yourself, again, this is the human condition, because it can sound like a "mental condition", if you got a voice in your head. Matter of fact, it might be multiple voices, but this is, and you can have a whole conversation in your head. And I, I thought about, for example, when I'm speaking to myself, like one of those moments and when you mentioned working out and one of the things that I say at, at when I'm doing the last set right before I do every last set in my head, I say last set, best set, I say it like out loud in my head. Sometimes I literally say it out loud, you know, and again, this is one of the things.

DR. ETHAN KROSS: It's motivating.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah, and it's one of the things that we evolved to have and we also can have a relationship with this, and this leads to how do we feel in response to the thoughts that are going on in our head. And this is opening the door on us understanding what our emotions are, and this is a huge topic. And I'm going to actually share from your book. This is one of the things that really jumped out to me. You said in your book that emotions are central to our existence, yet no one is sure what they actually are. This is central to our existence, yet most of us have no idea what they actually are. So what are emotions?

DR. ETHAN KROSS: Yeah, well, let me before I answer that, and I promise you I will not do in the classic politician pivot here. I will answer that question, but I just want to punctuate how central they are and how big of a deal it is that you struggle with it. So I think few listeners would contest that. They've been experiencing emotions throughout their lives, probably even before when they were in the womb, they were having little emotional reactions. So like, we are bathing in these emotional reactions from the time we are, we are growing right in the womb. And yet, when I ask a new class on the first day, "All right, who wants to come up here and define what an emotion is?"

Everyone kind of looks at each other and just gets really uncomfortable, right? And it's, it's this, on the one hand, very familiar universal experience, but we don't have really like a vocabulary to talk about it. So what are they? I think emotions are tools. They are tools that help give us the best chance of navigating the circumstances we are in. Let me get drilled down and tell you a little bit more about that. So we experience emotions in response to events, circumstances that we judge to be meaningful to us in some way. Sometimes these are things that happen to us in the world. Sometimes these are thoughts that activate in our minds or even sensations we experience, but we interpret them as meaningful.

And then when we interpret them as meaningful, a loosely coordinated response is activated in our bodies, in our behaviors, and up here in our brains. And so what do I mean by that? Let's take an emotion like anxiety. So if I become anxious about something in the future, I'm going to have a characteristic fight or flight physiologic response. For me, that really manifests itself in terms of some gastric distress, i. e. like I'm right in the toilet, like right away, you know, any one of my family knows if I'm experiencing some anxiety. Cause you know, I'll spare you the details, but you can hear the flush, right?

SHAWN STEVENSON: Hit the evacuation button.

DR. ETHAN KROSS: Right? Like preparing me to deal with a threat that exists happens super fast. I'm also cognitively zooming in now. Narrowly, focusing on the thread at hand, putting the blinders on to really everything else. I've got my eye on this thing, it's really important. My motor behaviors, my facial expressions are also often being activated. So I'm clenching up,

and you can tell if someone's anxious often, like you could see it in their face. All of those different responses are really designed to help you in this situation. If the response is activated in the right proportions, not too intensely, not too long. When I think back, I do a lot of public speaking, and I think about the times a talk didn't go very well.

It's typically a time when I didn't feel any anxiety before. Because there was nothing to cue me, to prepare, to give me that little bit of arousal, to energize me, to really stick the landing here, right? It's when I have a moderate level of that kind of anxious arousal that I really, I really nail it. So that's what emotions are. They are, you can think about them as these like little software programs that get activated that are designed to help you achieve certain goals that you have. But sometimes, it can be hard to navigate those programs, right? Like they just start acting up on you and in ways that are not particularly helpful.

And unfortunately that happens a lot of the time for a lot of people. And that's where the importance of understanding how to manage your emotions is, is so useful. And I'll just say one more thing and then I'll turn it back to you. On the one hand, we evolve this capacity to experience all of these different emotions to help us in the world, right? So anxiety we talked about, but we could, we could talk about the utility of lots of different emotions like sadness or envy. But we also co evolved tools to rein those emotions in when we find them taking over, and I think that's kind of cool, right? So, it isn't that we just evolved the capacity to feel. We also have all the capacity to regulate. And the real opportunity we face is to learn about what those tools are.

SHAWN STEVENSON: It's powerful, powerful. So one of the big takeaways is that our emotions are data. That's what I'm hearing and also they're catalysts for action. And this might not necessarily be like external action, but even as you mentioned regulating, and being able to take internal action and to associate with things in a more helpful way. And so you mentioned how we evolved to have these emotions and would you say this is one of the things that really makes us human?

DR. ETHAN KROSS: Oh, absolutely. I think emotions are fundamental to the human experience. It is in some ways the essence of our experience. There's this one study I love. I

quote it in my book, the experiment, the experimenters tracked people over time and text messaged them throughout the day every day. And each time they texted them they asked them to just check. which different emotions they were experiencing, a bunch of positive and negative ones. People reported experiencing some kind of emotion approximately 90 percent of the time. So most of the time we're awake, we are experiencing an emotion. I would argue that we're experiencing emotions when we're sleeping too.

It's a little bit harder to document that, but I certainly experienced some wild emotions when I'm sleeping. So, we are fundamentally emotional species and yet what's astounding to me is we're emotional. Sometimes if emotions get the best of us, I think we've all had those experiences. And yet we don't have classes in elementary school and middle school and high school teaching us about the scientific tools for managing those responses. And we have knowledge about what those tools are. And that was a big motivation for, you know, writing this book. Just to, just to kind of put in perspective, how important a problem this is, one of the things I did in the book is I, I got to look at the history of emotion and emotion regulation. And one of the things that I found unbelievable is that if you look back in time between eight and 10, 000 years ago.

We invented the first surgical technique. It was called trepanation, and it involved drilling holes in people's skulls. One of the reasons why this was believed to be used was to help people manage extreme emotions, right? Like, back then, our understanding of emotions wasn't as sophisticated, so something was, if you were really anxious or depressed, maybe you had an evil spirit inside you, let's let that spirit out. First surgical technique ever developed was used in part to help people manage their emotions. That just puts in perspective for me, just how big a problem this is.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Right. So again, humans have been pondering this for a long, long time. And can you, and this is just a sidebar question. Are our emotions, what we feel like is, is there a difference with what we're feeling and the emotion itself, or feelings and emotions, one thing.

DR. ETHAN KROSS: No, they're, they're, they're a little bit different. So let me break it down. You can think of emotion as the umbrella term. So when you're experiencing emotion, there are different parts. There's what's happening in your body physiologically. There's what's happening cognitively in your mind, your thinking patterns, how you're making sense of the circumstances. And then there are also these motor behaviors and expressions. that are often part of an emotional experience. A lot of what I just described, you have no awareness of what's going on when you are experiencing emotion.

You're not actually sure how your, you know, immune system is responding to that. It's happening outside your awareness. The part of an emotional experience that you are aware of, we call that your feelings. So in the same way, like when you're physically ill, you have the flu, You're not aware how your organs are functioning differently, but you are aware of the fever you have and the chills you're experiencing. That's what our feelings are when it comes to our emotions. It's the part of the experience that we are consciously aware of.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Oh, wow. Thank you. That makes so much sense. Now, I think Just based on what I've learned from you, you know, reading your book and studying your work, and even this conversation, what makes us unique as humans is because other species obviously experience emotions and feelings as well. But it's our ability to think about our thinking, to think about our emotions. Why am I feeling this way? Why am I feeling this sadness? And being able to go through and to process things, to think about things, to attach to things. We can consciously and, of course, unconsciously attached to these things, but I think that this is part of our superpower, in a way, is to be able to think about our thinking, to be able to analyze our emotions, and not let our emotions control our life. Would that be adequate to say?

DR. ETHAN KROSS: Absolutely. Yeah. There's a, there's a technical term for that. We call it metacognition. So it's thinking about thinking. And, you know, in a certain sense, that's what we're talking about doing here today, right? It's, you don't just have to be at the mercy of your emotions. You can, you have agency. You have the capacity to intervene, to manage their trajectory. Sometimes people debate whether you can actually control your emotions. And

there was a study, I'll never forget it, that I came across several years ago. They asked participants to indicate, do you think you can control your emotions?

About 40 percent said you can't. And, you know, on the one hand, I found that really surprising because my professional life has been devoted to identifying ways to help people manage their emotions. When I really drilled down to think about it, I realized that those participants, there was some logic to what they were saying. On the one hand, we can't control the emotions that are automatically triggered often as we live our lives. Right? You pass by a foul smelling object or person on the street. Like, you're going to experience an emotional response out of your control, right? You're going to sense, have a sensory experience that's going to motivate that.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Or a skunk, by the way.

DR. ETHAN KROSS: A skunk.

SHAWN STEVENSON: I don't know. I guess it's because of the fires. But I saw a skunk walking down my street. Here in the valley. I didn't even know they were out here like that as you were saying.

DR. ETHAN KROSS: Yes stay away, right? But like that's one example Yeah, Shawn I'm gonna guess that every now and again you experience a dark thought that you would probably be ashamed or embarrassed to say out loud and it just pops in your head. You're not really sure why is that a fair assumption to make.

SHAWN STEVENSON: If you're gonna put me on the spot, yes, we all have some crazy thoughts. Like what? Why did I think that? Why did I think that?

DR. ETHAN KROSS: Look, yeah, we've never talked about this, but I felt pretty comfortable asking you that because there's been a lot of research on this. We know that that's, that's a near universal experience, like I have those thoughts too. And what I realized is that's a, it's a natural byproduct of how our brains work. There's nothing wrong with me when I experienced that. Oh boy, you know, really unpleasant thought. I don't have control over that.

I can't predict when I'm going to experience that dark thought that may lead me to feel a particular way.

I don't have control over when I'm going to randomly just cross paths with someone who smells really great. And maybe, you know, I, I take in a scent that makes me want to approach them or stay away. I can't control those experiences. And a lot of our emotional lives is filled with those kinds of automatically triggered emotional responses. We don't have control over them. What we do have control over them, where our playground resides is once those emotions are activated, how we can modulate their trajectory. Whether we amplify or diminish them, whether we prolong the emotional episode or cut it short.

That's where the real opportunity zone is for getting in there and managing our emotions. And you know, there's a lot of good you can do if you know how to use the tools that are out there to manage those emotional responses. It's kind of like the way I like to describe this to folks that I think hits home is, let's say you have the goal to become physically fit. And so you get a gym membership and you show up at some new shiny gym and, and you know, all of a sudden you've got all these shiny machines. You've got to learn first, like how to use the machines, right? And then figure out what combinations of exercises serve you best. That's really what is, that's really the prospect here when we're talking about our emotional lives and becoming emotionally fit. It's learning about the different tools that are out there and then finding out which are the, which are the ones that uniquely work well for me.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Right. And that's the key. It's uniqueness. And we'll talk more about that. But I want to get into the, I want to get into the deep stuff, all right. The stuff that, again, this is like happening and sometimes even controlling our life, and we never step back to think about it. We have this concept in our culture of good and bad emotions, all right? We want more of the good. I just want joy. I want happiness. I want, I want overriding feelings of fulfillment and love. We don't want the anger. We don't want the sadness. We don't want the depression. We don't want the grief, right? We've kind of created this dichotomy, right? This binary this or that.

These are good emotions. These are bad emotions. Run away from the bad emotions. Run towards the good emotions. And reading your work, it really brought right in my face this idea that these emotions are, bad or good, is a misnomer because in what it did, I asked myself a question, inner chatter again. I asked myself a question. If this emotion is bad, why do we have it? Why do we have it? Why do we have all these so-called bad emotions? And if you could, can you talk about this dichotomy? Is there such a thing as a good versus a bad emotion?

DR. ETHAN KROSS: I don't think there is. I think all emotional experiences are useful when they're activated in the right proportions, not too intense, not too extreme, because they provide us with useful information and motivate us to manage particular kinds of situations. This is true of even the "bad emotions". Part of what makes those bad emotions so amazingly functional, so useful, is that they draw our attention in. The badness, the negative feeling makes it hard to ignore them. Just to really like make this point abundantly clear, I'd love for us to just talk about one of my least favorite experiences, physical pain.

Shawn, you don't know me that well, but, you know, despite my imposing stature on this podcast right now, you know, I'm a giant baby, giant baby. I do not like physical pain, right? Like my, my, my, well, I'll leave it at that. I'm giving you the edge. I will do a lot to avoid physical pain. And yet I'm not given physical pain up in my life because we know what happens to people who don't experience physical pain. They die, young. So there are babies born into this world every year and due to a genetic anomaly, they're incapable of experiencing physical pain. Life is not blissful for them because what happens is their arm gets caught in the stove and they don't, they don't experience any sensation that directs them to pull their arm away.

As a result, they suffer tissue damage or they start scratching that mosquito bite and they keep on scratching it even after they break the skin and it becomes infected. Physical pain provides a very, very useful signal that benefits us as we navigate the world. The same is true of all of those different negative emotions that we have. They draw our attention to particular circumstances that are important to us, that require action. What I do wish for myself and everyone else is that we can experience those emotions, derive the usefulness of

them and then move on without bathing in them. That is a less desirable state, but all emotions in their right proportions are quite useful.

And so, you know, you hear a lot about this idea, this kind of toxic positivity angle that is swept through society of just being motivated to live, live a life for the rest of any, any negative emotion. You know, do I think that's a great goal to have? No, I don't like to judge goals, but I think this is probably not a good one for two reasons. Number one, I think it's impossible. And number two, I think it's actually suboptimal. You know, I'm not as good at what I do if I don't experience anxiety at times. I'm not as good of a parent as I can be if I don't sometimes experience a ping of anger when I see my kids doing something really dangerous that might affect their well being.

Anger is an emotion we experience when we register some violation of our understanding of how things should be and there's an opportunity to fix the situation. So if I see my daughters riding their bikes without their helmet, a little bit of anger is going to motivate me to intervene and correct that situation. And we can go down the list of negative emotions and talk about their different functionalities, but the whole idea is that these negative emotions, they're a gift, they're a tool. And here's what I have found in talking to people about this over the past several months. People actually find this message liberating because these negative experiences are an inevitable part of our lives and if you experience them from time to time, there's nothing wrong with you.

To the contrary, there's everything right with you. Embracing that idea, I think, can be really comforting and is the first step to then really thinking about, okay, if these negative emotions are a part of my life, how do I incorporate them into my life most skillfully? And that's where the management piece comes into play.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah, I, I love this already. There's a couple of things I think in our culture that's fighting against us, applying what you're talking about. One is kind of a disassociation from our emotions, you know, and our, where we spend most of our time as children, going through, you know, the education system. It's about all of these external things. It's externally directed. And there is inevitably going to be an internal soup of all kinds

of emotions and all kinds of things going on and like your social adaptation is like a separate subject. Are they adapting socially but most of the time is spent educating us about things that are outside of us.

And there is very little, if any, education about understanding what we all are really experiencing every moment of every day, which is this internal terrain, understanding our emotions, understanding what they are, you know, you talking about this is central to our existence, and yet we don't talk about this. If you're lucky, you know, once you maybe get into college or you take a fringe high school class, maybe. We talk a little bit about emotions, but this is something that we're just, it's not a part of our culture to educate. It's changing. It's changing. So that's number one. And number two, being that we don't talk about these things, and because of our cultural programming influences, we might be led to believe that having these, what we label to be negative emotions, is a bad thing. And it can become this vicious circle.

And what happens is we have a culture that largely medicalizes our emotions and doesn't focus on, again, helping us to better relate to them. Now, of course, you mentioned there are extremes when you get caught in, you know, extreme versions of these emotions. But how about we have the tools that help us before we even get there? You know, for the majority of people, I think that that would be very helpful, but we don't have, again, a culture that educates us and supports us in doing that. So I think those are a couple of, couple of things that are fighting against us having this awareness. And this is why I think your work is so freaking important, especially important right now, is this directing us back inwards and giving us some of these tools?

DR. ETHAN KROSS: Well, you know that we see eye to eye. That is the whole hope here. The hope here is that we could begin to shift the culture around these issues to get this information. Into people's heads so they could start benefiting from it. I remember, so I had a real turning point in my, you know, life, I should say, not even my career. Maybe about nine or 10 years ago, I was teaching a class to undergrads at the university here at Michigan. And it was a class on, you know, many of the tools that I wrote about and shift and in my previous book, chatter. And the way the course was structured every week, students would read,

they'd come to me and ask some questions, we'd have a great conversation, we'd repeat it the next week, and then the final assignment of the semester was for students to come with questions for me. Anything, you know, they were now experts, alright, what's on your mind before you leave?

And I'll never forget, this one girl raises her hand to start the class and she says, Why are we learning about this now? And I had no idea what she was asking me. And you know, when you teach a course more than once, you kinda come, you know what questions you're going to get. You just, it's, you know, you, you know, you, you, you sit there. Oh, that's a good question. And then you answer them. You go through the motions, but, but you know what to get, what you're going to get. This was a question I'd never gotten before and I didn't know what she meant. So I asked her to elaborate and she goes, you know, well, you've been learning about all these things we can do to manage our emotions and think and feel better.

Why didn't anyone teach us about this earlier in life when they could have made a difference? So the first thing I did is I added some humor to the situation where I tried to diffuse the seriousness. I said, fear not, there will be opportunities you have to manage your emotions once you leave college. And, and then I, then I, then I did something that you might describe as somewhat cowardly or evasive. I paused and I looked at the class and I said, what does everyone else think about this question? And I let them try to answer it because I had no freaking idea. And so after that class, I started doing some introspection and I decided I wanted to shift my career a little bit more towards addressing that situation and teaching people about what we know.

From the scientific point of view about how to manage our emotions, because, you know, a lot of complexity has gone into that work, but I think the take homes often are really, really simple and clear, and they have the potential to benefit people in terms of how they address an issue that is currently plaguing society. Our inability to manage these emotions and has for some while.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Wow. We've got a quick break coming up. We'll be right back.

This episode is brought to you by the incredible team at Organifi and their phenomenal superfood blends. Not only does their bestselling green juice blend have the most powerful green superfoods, it also has a therapeutic amount of ashwagandha. A double blind randomized placebo controlled trial published in the journal of psychological medicine had test subjects with a history of chronic stress to consume ashwagandha or a placebo. Over the course of the month and a half long study period, the group that received ashwagandha exhibited a significant reduction in scores on all the stress assessment scales compared to the placebo group.

And the serum cholesterol levels of the test subjects were substantially reduced in the Ashwagandha group. Again, this is just one of the ingredients in the Organifi Green Juice blend. Some of the green superfoods include spirulina, chlorella, maringa, and never sleep on spirulina. A recent study published in Plus one revealed that spirulina has a potential to, one, improve neurogenesis in the brain, and two, reduce neuroinflammation. And right now you're going to get 20 percent off of their incredible green juice blend. When you go to Organifi.com/model, that's ORGANIFI.com/model for 20 percent off. Plus you'll also receive their 60 day money back guarantee. So you have nothing to lose and better health to gain. Head over to [Organicom/sh model](https://Organicom/shmodel). Check out their variety of superfood blends, their green juice blend, their red juice blend, their phenomenal collagen that we use all the time. Again, 20 percent off at Organifi.com/model. And now back to the show.

SHAWN STEVENSON: You know, I think this is a good point for us to put an exclamation mark on why this matters. And I think this, this is really well highlighted in the Dunedin study that you shared in the book. Let's talk about that.

DR. ETHAN KROSS: So the Dunedin study is, or you may be pronouncing it correct. I always get it.

SHAWN STEVENSON: I don't know. Shout out to everybody listening. That's down under much love.

DR. ETHAN KROSS: That's right. But we may have gotten it wrong. But it's an amazing study, one of the most famous studies, shaping up to be one of the most famous behavioral studies of all time. And so what this intrepid group of researchers started doing is tracking these kids from the time they were babies and they meticulously index their ability to manage their emotions and exert self control at various points during their childhood and adolescence, and then tracked, kept tracking these kids. Every few years they would assess them on a variety of different outcomes, ranging from how well they were doing in work and school and life, to their physical fitness levels, to, you know, their brain health and how, you know, their organs were aging. And what they found across the board was the kids who did better at emotion regulation earlier on in life, kids who had better, they call self control, but managing yourself.

Across the board, they fared much better. It predicted a host of positive outcomes later on in life. So this really matters. And, and what was really inspiring about that study is, well, some may think, Oh, based on that finding, well, that just means if you're good at self control, great. The future is your oyster. You could do whatever you want, but if you're not good luck, you're in trouble. But that's not exactly what they found because what they found was that some kids got better with their emotion regulation as time progressed and some got worse. And as they got better or worse, so did the different outcomes they were tracking. And so what I love about that study is it really, it illustrates just how consequential this capacity to manage our emotions is.

For really all that matters in our lives, we know that how well you manage your emotions influences how you think and perform. Think about that for a second. Thinking and performing. That's like, okay, that's the work bucket right there. Right? That's the achievement bucket, the school bucket. It influences the quality of your relationships. When we're having trouble managing our emotions, we know that this can exert real strain on the relationships we have with other people in our lives. Relationships are one of the best predictors of long term well being, right? And then there's our physical and mental health, and we know that not managing your emotions well, that can predict a host of physical problems of the sort that, you know, you've gotten into with lots of guests before and I've written about to, let's, you know, sleep is a big one, of course, like how many people have trouble sleeping?

Because they can't manage their emotions well. This is pervasive, like across the board. Like I, you know, during talks and workshops, anyone ever find that they have some trouble sleeping? Because they're dealing with a big emotion that they can't quite get their handle on? Every hand in the room goes up. So, thinking and performance. Relationships. Subjective well being, physical health. How you manage your emotions has implications for all of those experiences in our lives. It's a really important thing you want to pay attention to. It's probably not surprising that one of the most famous stories and the bestselling book of all time is a story about the pitfalls of not managing your emotions well. I mean, you know what I'm saying, trivia here, Jeopardy mode. What is the bestselling book of all time, Shawn?

SHAWN STEVENSON: I'm going to guess the Bible.

DR. ETHAN KROSS: You got it. All right. You're one for one. Now I'm going to tee up one more question and then you're free. So what is the most famous story? In that bestselling book of all, all time involving two other people.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Involving two other people. Is this the story of?

DR. ETHAN KROSS: And a serpent.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Oh, Adam and Eve!

DR. ETHAN KROSS: All right, there we go. Two for two. You see, I, you see, we're a good team here. Story of Adam and Eve. What is that a story of? Don't eat the forbidden fruit or like temptation and the inability to manage our response to that. We can look at those cultural artifacts and we see our ancestors repeatedly emphasizing how important it is to manage, to understand how to manage our emotions well. And, you know, last time I checked, the statistics are in the introduction. We, we've made some progress, but we've got a long ways to go and, and that's where this knowledge is so powerful.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Absolutely. So again, just to reemphasize this, our lives can be exponentially more rewarding, fulfilling, healthy, successful, good relationships.

All these things is seen in one of the longest running human studies. It's like this is a big deal, based on our ability to healthfully manage our emotions. And the good news is, this is something that isn't static. You don't get here with a certain, you know, EQ, you know, and then it's just, this is all you can do about it. It's just like, you got this, this is how you deal with your emotions, and that's your lot in life. This is something that we can improve over time or it can deteriorate over time. And getting yourself educated is a big part of this and just learning, having some self inquiry. And I think that this is a good opportunity to talk about one of the things that many of us experience, at least at some point in our life, which is getting trapped in a negative emotion, right?

Having an experience more than likely that makes us feel stuck and we start to have that chronic experience of maybe this is depression. Maybe this is something related to fear and anxiety. And maybe again, there's a catalyst and you give great examples in the book about, you know, like the mom on the, on the plane and experience with her child and how that one experience started to color her entire life and put her into a perpetual loop of negative emotions. So I want to ask you, number one, please share that story. And number two, how do we stop these negative emotional loops? That is the million dollar question.

DR. ETHAN KROSS: Yes. So the story I tell in the book is about a mom who, you know, was on a plane with her daughter, like so many of us have been with our children. And all of a sudden she looks over and realizes that this, this really tragic event has occurred. Her daughter eats one of the snacks and the daughter has like a peanut allergy and, and the snack had the toxic substance in it for her daughter and all of a sudden she starts going into this, having this allergic reaction. And you know, she has to react super fast. She whips out her EpiPen and jams it into her daughter's thigh, and ultimately her daughter recovers pretty quick. Modern medicine is pretty amazing. But after this experience is over, the mom can't get out of her head what could have happened had she not had that EpiPen. Or what could happen if her daughter somehow comes in contact with the allergen in another context.

Maybe it's at a birthday party where another parent isn't being vigilant. And these worries that she has about her daughter begin to really mushroom and metastasize in her mind to the point where it's really dysfunctional. She's having a lot of trouble focusing on all the

things I mentioned before. She's having trouble, you know, focusing. She's not performing well at work. She's talking about this incessantly to her partner to the point where the partner is getting frustrated because he's trying to be supportive, but there's only so much support sometimes you can give before you start feeling frustrated yourself, and it's influencing our health and well being.

And so I think that, that story that I use in one of the chapters to talk about what are the different parts of our emotions that we can versus can't control. It, it just, it taps into, I think, a very common experience that lots of us have at times, which is sometimes we find ourselves going down the rabbit hole. You know, there's, there's an experience that may lead us to become upset and it makes a good reason why we have an initial emotional reaction. But this is what I mean in terms of that reaction, that being out of proportion, it sticks around way too long and becomes too intense to the point where it is no longer functional.

In fact, it is dysfunctional. And once you find yourself slipping into that state, this is where we need to intervene. I'm going to say, tell you something, Shawn, now that could either be interpreted as a huge bummer, or amazingly, an amazingly uplifting message, which is when that happens, there are no one size fits all solutions. I am often asked by journalists, what's the one thing you should do to manage your emotions in this situation? I genuinely cannot answer that question. I can tell you what the one thing I do is to manage my emotions. But we know from lots of research that different combinations, combinations of tools work for different people in different situations.

We did this research during COVID where we were looking at what are the tools that work well for people to reduce their anxiety. Each day that they're going through COVID. We looked at this over time. What we found is first, most people don't do just one thing. They do like three or four. Secondly, the three or four things that I do, we're very different from the five or six that, you know, my best friend did or the two or three that my wife did. There's enormous variability in which tools we bring to bear and manage those emotional experiences. Embracing that, I hope is not a bummer for people. Because there's no simple solution, I think it should be uplifting because it means that if you've tried a tool that works for someone else,

but not for you, like meditation or being in the now, lots of us talk about the importance of that.

No big deal. There's lots of other stuff you do. You know, no one questions this, this kind of reasoning when we talk about physical fitness and health. Right, like I'm going to guess if you and I were to compare notes about what we do at the gym, we're going to have different routines that we engage in and that's fine as long as we're achieving the goals that we have. No one questions the fact that when I go to the gym, I do seven or eight exercises on a few days of the week and then I mix it up and I do some entirely different things on other days. Because we know that's a routine that works optimally to help us become mentally fit. And there are different routines for different people. We are learning that the same is true of emotional fitness. Different tools work for different people. And I think we really need to embrace that from the outset.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Alright, so you're my guy. Alright. This is the truth that sometimes again we don't want to hear, but it can be empowering. And it's that there isn't a one size fits all solution for just about anything, right? They're going to be..

DR. ETHAN KROSS: Like, yeah, that's right. They're going to get me animated. I'm in, I'm in, I'm interrupting you because you get me so excited. You don't even have to put the journey on in the background here. Keep going.

SHAWN STEVENSON: I was just going to say that, you know, there, there are things that are similar, right? We have, they relate. And this reminds me actually of having dinner last night with my family and my youngest son grabbed these conversation cards. And, you know, we went around and answered a bunch of these different questions, talked about some different things like, you know, talk about a caregiver who really inspired you or really helped you in a positive way. And what's one thing that they, you wish that they would have done differently, right? So that was one of the questions. Another one of the questions involved, appropriately, emotions.

And it essentially asks, like, what is one emotion that you enjoy feeling on a regular basis, right? And so, of course, everybody shared, like, more of a positive emotion. And then what is an emotion that you would rather not experience very much, right? And then everybody kind of shared what we deem to be a negative emotion. But because of this, you know, I dug in on these negative emotions and how valuable and okay they are to have. And I shared this insight with my family that no two people and the history of humanity have ever experienced the same emotion.

DR. ETHAN KROSS: It's how you know. There's a colleague of mine, Lisa Feldman Barrett, an effective emotional scientist. She's described emotions as our emotional lives as being akin to a fingerprint, incredibly and utterly distinctive and unique. And you know, that strikes me as quite true in the sense that there are, you know, that our own personal experiences are shaping the way we interpret the world around us and, and how we respond emotionally to that world. And there's beauty in that complexity. It's beauty that we shouldn't become dismayed about. It, it, it, you know, given, given how unique our emotional lives are. Why would we expect there to be one thing we can do to manage them across the board? It just, it doesn't actually make much sense. And you know, I'm like, Shawn, where the, when the hell did we come up with this assumption that you have to have a simple one size fits all solution to our emotional lives?

Like, you know, I, we built our house. I'm using we very, very generously. I did nothing to build the house personally, but I was involved in the process. But you know, you look at the people who built the house, they come with lots and lots of tools, not just one tool, lots of tools. Of course they have multiple tools. I would be extremely concerned if a carpenter or plumber I hired came with one each. So why, when it comes to something as infinitely more complicated in some ways, managing our emotions, right? Like we don't have a blueprint we're following to do that. We're trying to just figure this out. Why do we think that there should just be one thing we can do? There isn't. And, I think the more we embrace that, the better off we'll be.

SHAWN STEVENSON: This leads us to, because of course we want people to be able to walk away today. With some tools. To feel more of how we want to feel, to experience and to

process our emotions, manage our emotions in a more helpful way. And what you deliver in the book on multiple levels are these tools and insights. And we had this going, you mentioned journey. All right, before the show started, we were playing journey in here, inspired by you. And these are these perspective shifters, right? Being able to shift. So let's talk a little bit about what you mean with shift, which is the title of the new book. And let's talk about some of these tools. What can people utilize in their lives on a regular basis to more healthfully manage and relate to their emotions?

DR. ETHAN KROSS: So, we all have, so I, so when I, I use the term shift to convey that once an emotion is activated, we can push it around in different ways. We can increase or decrease its intensity. We can make it last longer or shorter. Sometimes you could shift even from one emotional experience to another one altogether. And so then the question is, okay, well, how do you do that? And that's where the shifters come into play. Shifters are tools, tools that we all possess, that if we know how to harness them, we can use them to steer those emotions around in the directions we want. Rather than the opposite, having those emotions just take us wherever they're going to go.

There's some shifters that exist inside us and then there's some that exist in the world around us. And I'll just, I'll just go through a few of them and then, you know, maybe we can dig into some. There are three shifters inside us. One is sensation. Our sensory experiences powerfully shift us. We all know this intuitively. The research shows that we don't always act on this knowledge when we can benefit from it. One of the way our senses, one of, you know, we make sense of the world, sight, sound, taste, touch, smell. One of the way those sensory channels work is through emotion. So, you ask people, why do you listen to music?

Close to a hundred percent will say they listen to music because they like the way it makes them feel. Right? It's an emotional enterprise. I went to a Taylor Swift concert a couple of months ago, and I sat there with my daughters and wife looking around. And, you know, here's this amazingly talented artist on the stage with a guitar, and I'm thinking to myself. I'm in this baseball stadium. Everyone here just paid, I don't know, collectively tens of millions, maybe more money to have an emotion regulation experience through sensation, right? This one person is strumming their guitar and singing and those sounds are powerfully,

powerfully captivating our emotions. So music's a powerful one. But if you look at, well, when people experience different negative emotions, do they instantly reach for music to push their emotions around? The answer to that question is no.

And so we've done studies on this. We asked people last time you were angry or anxious or depressed, what did you do? Only between 10 and 30 percent of the participants reported using music. I was guilty of this too before I had an experience with my daughter that highlighted for me the power of music and it goes back to our, our favorite, I guess we'd call it an 80s power ballad band, Journey. You know, I was taking my daughter to soccer practice, to a soccer game and she was in a funk. It was bumming me out. Journey happened to come, you know, play on the radio, and I start feeling it in my bones, and I'm bopping my head, and I'm starting to sing. And then I look in the back, in the rearview mirror, and I see my daughter.

She's probably like, five or six at the time. And I see, she's bopping her head. And I see a little smile come on her face and then I'm like leaning into the experience with her, right? And, you know, I'm opening the window and jamming out and she's a little embarrassed but having fun. And the next thing I know, she's super animated. We pull up to a soccer field and she darts out and, you know, has a great game. Ever since that experience, I have been much more deliberate in how I utilize sensory experiences in my life. I've got playlists on my phone for pumping me up, calming me down. And I will go right to those when I need to achieve those regulatory goals.

I don't look at, you know, the duty free shop anymore in the international airport terminal, the same way. I used to just see this as a store to get a discount on items. Now I see it as an emotion regulation store because what's in those shops is just tons of colognes and perfumes. Why do, why do we spray ourselves with perfumes and colognes. Impact the way how other people feel about us. Sometimes even how we feel about ourselves. Those are pleasant smelling, you know, hotel chains, they capitalize on this effect. They pipe sense through their ventilation systems so that their premises smell good. So you want to be there, right? That sensation, touch, affectionate touch in the right context.

Let's say that again for effect, like in the right context, but affectionate touch is great. Like, and we're not talking about necessarily the salacious stuff, you know, where some people might think it should, a hug, a pat on the back, a fist bump. Research shows that affection embraces release this, this cascade of stress fighting chemicals. You're reminded that there are people care about you. These are like little psychological. Or emotional jujitsu moves that you can use to just effortlessly push yourself in a different direction that you want to head towards. The effects aren't going to be necessarily long lasting, but that's okay because there are other tools you can use to achieve that. But this is a powerful shifter in our toolbox.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Absolutely. And thank you because most importantly is just awareness is often the first domino for so many things. And I know that I've had experiences where I forget. How powerful music is and just like, I remember like, why didn't I put this on earlier? Like this immediately shifted, you know, how I'm feeling and just understanding this entire universe is just teeming with rhythm and vibration, and you know, our atoms and like sound really does deeply impact us and if you even if you're just thinking about the context of listening to music, right? This is a, this is a miraculous process where the data these tiny bones in our ears are like doing their thing and we're creating these electrical signals in our brain and like music literally becomes a part of us.

It literally becomes a part of us. It gets into our bodies and so being more intentional and using that. And maybe also again steering away from things that might make you feel bad, you know, maybe there's a certain type of music or maybe it's a certain type of message. You know, that's coming through the news, which there are times when the news is valuable, but a lot of the time they're fishing for things to keep you worried, to keep you in fear. And it's because this is just, we have this sort of negativity bias as a species. Being aware of this, you can start to feed yourself, because literally, again, it isn't just you are what you eat, it's you are what you listen to, it's you are what you breathe, like we're made up of the things that we associate with. And so I appreciate that so much. This is, this is just one category of these shifters is sensory, so let's talk about another category.

DR. ETHAN KROSS: Well, let's just to stay on this theme of, you know, you are what you associate with another kind of shifter, one that's not internal, but external to us, outside of us

are, is in our environments, our spaces. And I think this is another place where we often take things not necessarily for granted, but like. There are tools that are hidden in plain sight that we just don't think about sometimes. And again, like I, I include myself in this category before I knew about some of the science. So our physical environments shape our emotional responses in a few different ways. One way is In the same way that we develop attachments to other people, so there's some people in our lives that we feel really safe around and secure and when we're struggling, being in their mere presence or even just thinking about them can make a difference.

I'm looking at a picture of two right now on my side. I've got two, two picture frames. You see, I just did it, Shawn. I've got, I have designed my space. With pictures of my daughters and wife, where I can just look at them and get a little dose of resilience each time I do, and research shows that this benefits people. What I've done there is I am, I'm designing my environment, to make it an environment that helps me live the kind of emotional life I want to live. Helps me be more resilient. So after we, earlier in my career, we did all these picture studies where we get people to think about negative experiences in their life, to stress them out.

And then, and then we show how just looking, just glancing at an image of someone that you are close to can really help you repair your emotions more quickly. After that research, I went on a shopping spree, bought all these picture frames and populated my different offices with them. I'm putting things in my environment now to help give me that emotional boost when I need it. Plants are another, are another cue, right? Like green spaces. And we know that enhancing your exposure to green spaces improves our ability to restore our limited cognitive reserves when they become depleted, right? It can be really restorative to go for a walk in a safe, natural setting. And if you can't do that, glance at, glance at a picture of a tree or, or look at a tree. There's some research which shows that even the pictorial representations of nature make a difference.

I also try to design my space so that it can shift me where I want by removing things that pushed me in an emotional direction I don't want to be. So we're talking right now. My cell phone is turned over. I don't have a face up where I could see my emails pop up. I have a real

weakness for a delicacy called pizza. No matter what shape or form or temperature it comes in. I will eat the damn thing and when I do it triggers an emotional reaction that I don't want to have. You know, sometimes it's shame, you know, because of my indulgence.

I do eat it at times to be clear, but I don't want to eat it at nine o'clock at night. When I glance at it, when I open the refrigerator to take some water upstairs. So what do I do? I don't keep it in the house. Like I avoid the queues. That's me again, interacting with my environment strategically to shift me where I want to be. The last, last thing I'll mention about shifting with your environment is, goes back to this idea that we develop these positive or negative associations with places. And when you are struggling, navigating to those places can be a source of resilience. So in my neighborhood, there's the local arboretum, there's the tea house where I wrote my first book, there's one of my offices.

Every time I'm in that space, I feel safe and secure and it modulates my emotions. Now there are some places that I'm less positively attached to that I try to avoid. Cause when I'm there, they don't make me feel as good. So that's just another example of how it's not just about things inside us. Yes, of course. And I, I talk about this in the book, there are lots of tools you can use to sift your attention and change the way you think about things and even relate to other people that can help you. We want to avail ourselves of all those shifters but there are also simple things you could do just in the world around you that can make a difference as well.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Amazing. Amazing. Thank you so much. What this is, is stacking conditions, right? Stacking conditions in your favor and external conditions. Let's finish with, and again, there's a lot more in the book, with one of those internal shifters that we can utilize.

DR. ETHAN KROSS: Okay. So let's, let's close it down with, with a perspective shifter. And this is one of my go to tools. I think a lot of people probably heard that if you're struggling, just change the way you think to change the way you feel, you know, sounds really simple. And, and in fact, like if you can do that. That's a really, really useful tool. You know, we are unique in on this planet for our ability to reframe things, to look at things in a new light that can put us

down a totally different emotional trajectory. The problem with this was eloquently summed up by a close friend of mine on trip back from Detroit. He and his wife were in a car with my wife and myself. We're driving back home after dinner. And this friend of mine is talking about a problem he's encountering at work. And it's really, it's a source of stress.

And his wife says to him, somewhat frustratingly, I'll just, Just focus on the bright side, just think differently about it. And he looks at her with a tiny bit of revulsion and he goes, Yeah, easier effing said than done to communicate something that I think is, you know, something that we all resonate with to some extent, right? Like sometimes it's not so easy to reframe, right? Sometimes it's a lot easier for us to tell other people what to do, but when we try to do it ourselves, we struggle, right? Do as I say, not as I do. That's a popular phrase for a reason. And so what we've learned, though, are there are tools that exist to help you reframe.

And we call them distancing tools. And what they involve doing is having people take a step back to think about their experience from a broader perspective that does make it easier for people to work through their experiences when they're struggling. And there are a couple of ways you could do this. I'll just rattle off a few to be really tactical here. One thing you could do is talk to yourself silently. Like you would give advice to someone else and actually use the word you to address yourself. Alright Ethan, how are you going to manage this situation? Here's what you're going to do. I think many people have had this experience of finding it easier to coach themselves, coach someone else through a problem than themselves.

And when you use the word you to address yourself, it's essentially getting you to relate to yourself like you would be talking to another person. Because most of the time when we use the word you, then we're thinking about referring to someone else. So when you use the word you to address, to think through your own problems, it's shifting your perspective, it's putting you into that advice giving mode. Makes it a lot easier to work through your problems well. Another thing you can do is jump into what I call your mental time travel machine. You could go into the future or the past to help you. So if you're struggling with a big problem, think about how you're going to feel about this five days from now, five months from now, five years from now, most of us have lived through a life of lots of emotional experiences that have at times felt really intense, but as time has gone on.

Their intensity has subsided. We lose sight of that in the moment that we're struggling because we zoom in on the worst part of that experience. Simply reminding yourself of going into the future reminds us of, hey, whatever I'm going through, as bad as it is, It will eventually improve. And that does something really powerful for us when we're struggling. It gives us hope that things will get better. That turns the temperature down on our emotions. You can also jump into this mental time travel machine and go back in time. When I'm struggling, I will often go back to the 1930s and 40s when my grandparents were running away from the Nazis in Eastern Europe and Poland.

Their families had just been slaughtered and they're, you know, moving from one ghetto to another, living in the woods and freezing conditions. And I will spend some time hanging out with them back then. And, then I'll come back to the present and I'll compare the experiences. And I think to myself, man, what are you worried about? Right? Bubby and Papa. They just had their whole family murdered in front of them and they were homeless for years and came here with nothing. And they didn't just endure, they survived and thrived. And you're upset about a bad email? Now that's not to trivialize, that's not to say that my experience of being upset is unworthy.

It is worthy, but it sure helps you put it in perspective. And that's what we're trying to do with these shifters here. Shift that perspective. And so those are just a few things you could do and show what I love about all these tools is, you know, someone asked me recently, have I gotten better at managing my emotions as a function of knowing these tools? And the answer is an unequivocal yes. I think if you were to chart my trajectory of emotion regulation improvement, it would look a lot like the stock market moves. So it's like, it's not a straight upward line. It's, you know, it's a little jagged and there's some big victories and sometimes some, some losses, but it's going up.

It keeps going up. And the reason why there is that upward trajectory is I continue to learn about not just new tools, but how to fold these tools into my life profitably. So when I'm struggling, I don't have to, I don't have to sit in futz and, and, and, and think about, Oh my God, what should I do? Or I don't know what to do. I know exactly what tool to turn to.

SHAWN STEVENSON: This is so powerful, you know, in many ways. We don't experience life. We experience our thoughts about life. We experience our emotions in relationship to our life. We're all unique. And that experience is something that we have a say in. And I think that many of us feel disempowered today because we think that we are a victim to what's happening in the world around us. And we don't have a say in our experience. That's the thing. Again, not to say that bad things don't happen, challenging times, beautiful things, but our experience of them is something that we have a huge say in.

DR. ETHAN KROSS: Absolutely.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And that's why this work is so important and I want to encourage everybody to pick up a copy of Shift right now. It's available everywhere that books are sold. Is there somewhere in particular that you want people to go and pick up a copy. And also, where's somewhere that people can connect with you, you know, maybe social media, just to get more information?

DR. ETHAN KROSS: Yeah. Well, thank you for that, Shawn. It means a lot coming from you, that message and, and it resonates really so strongly with me. If, if people want to learn more about me or the book, they can go to www.ethanKross.com with a "K" and I'm on Instagram and LinkedIn. Put updates there all the time. And, yeah, pick it up wherever copies are sold. And, and, and, you know, if you find it useful, share it with other people, because I think we all have a hand to play in changing the culture surrounding this issue, which, you know, I write about in the book, I think this is one of the big problems we face and critically it's, it's a problem that we can, we can solve. And that's, you know, a really motivating space to be working in. So, so thank you for having me on.

SHAWN STEVENSON: It's my pleasure. I'm glad that we can pivot and make it happen. And I'm just grateful. You know, again, I want to reiterate this book is very shareable. It's incredibly universal because our emotions, again, are very unique, but it's something that we all experience and live life through. And so, helping people to direct some of their intention, intention and attention within, and to pick up some of these tools, and they're very shareable, they're great stories, there are little jokes in there as well, but it's just a, it's a great

read, and it's very friendly. And it's also, again, just really ripe with these ah ha moments of understanding one of the most universal things in our existence. So Ethan, I appreciate you so much for hanging out with us today.

DR. ETHAN KROSS: Thanks so much, Shawn. Look forward to doing it again.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Thank you for tuning into today's episode. I hope that you got a lot of value out of this. If you did, you already know what to do. Share it. Share it with the people that you care about. It's one of the most important conversations and education that we can have is regarding our emotions. And so this is definitely one to share with a friend, family member, your significant other. And the list goes on and on. This is for everybody. Alright, so you can send this directly from the podcast app that you're listening on. Or you could take a screenshot and share this on social media as well. And if you do that, please make sure to tag me. I'm @Shawnmodel on Instagram and tag Dr. Kross as well. And show him some love. We've got some Epic masterclasses and amazing.

World leading guests coming your way very, 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 themodelhealthshow.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.