



**EPISODE 900**

# **Use Neuroscience to END Mental Fatigue & Unlock the Power of Your Mind**

**With Guest Dr. Srimi Pillay**

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

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Welcome to the Model Health Show. This is fitness and nutrition expert Sean Stevenson, and I'm so grateful for you tuning in with me today. This episode is fire. I'm so excited to share this with you today, and I'm telling you it couldn't be more fitting for episode 900 of the Model Health Show. What, how? How did this happen? How did we get here? It's been an amazing journey. It does not feel like it, like it's been 900 shows, but we are at episode 900, so many invaluable conversations, wisdom, insights, tips, tools, strategies, revelations. Have taken place on this platform, and I am eternally grateful. I'm so grateful for you being a part of this mission, and I'm so grateful for you sharing your time with me today. And we've gotta make sure that this is valuable for you, that this translates into something rewarding and enriching in your life. And I'm telling you, I guarantee it. I guarantee it.

This episode is going to be just that today we are going to be talking about one of your most precious resources, which is your attention, your focus, the incredible capacity of that, amazing mind of yours, and how to use it with intention to create the life that you truly want to create. Our special guest, yes, Harvard trained yes, had this amazing stories, impacted the lives of so many people, but he will tell you, when he was in medical school, he was using his brain like a teenager, learning how to drive. It was herky jerky. It was a little bit scary for the people around. He just didn't know how to use it.

And this scenario holds true for all of us. We are gifted with this amazing capacity, this amazing, brilliant human mind. And yet we don't have any kind of guidance, a roadmap, an instruction manual of some sort to help us to get the results that we want. We have the capacity truly to create anything that our minds can conceive of. And I'm telling you right now, one of the secrets that should not be a secret is going to be unlocked for you today. And it has to do with not your focus, but your ability to unfocus. Now, this concept was something that I was like, what does this even mean? How? How could this translate into better results?

But after digging into this research and applying these things in my life, my life has changed. My life is forever changed. As a result of this incredible researcher, neuroscientists, and specialist in the field of health and wellness, many different domains. What he's going to share with you today is an absolute game changer. Now, really quickly, one of the things that

he briefly talked about was this phenomenon taking place more than ever in our society is something called decision fatigue. Now, there are several studies on this phenomenon, but essentially as we're making decisions throughout the day and we're trying to wrangle our focus and get stuff done and making decisions, we are draining our brain.

We're just siphoning blood glucose with each and every one of these big decisions, medium sized decisions, and a lot of small and micro decisions, but it's just zapping our brain of glucose. So what does the average person do in our modern society when they're feeling that drainage? They go and grab something to get a flood of blood glucose back into the body. It's gonna be in the form of candy bars, soda cakes, cookies, chips, you name it! There's so many different options to turn to to get a flood of glucose back into our system to try to get a little bit of "energy". Now you know what happens, undoubtedly with that scenario, you get another spike, but then you go right into a crash.

And more often than not, an even deeper crash, we wanna get out of that cycle and not look at sugar as a means of getting our blood glucose back up to par. In fact, numerous studies are affirming that refined sugar in these ultra processed foods. Are the opposite of brain healthy. And so from the nutritional domain, we wanna focus our attention. If we're looking at fueling our brain, and literally we're building our brain out of the foods that we eat, we're building our brain and the fuel that our brain is using from the foods that we're consuming. We want to eat real foods. And within real foods, you're gonna find a variety, a plethora of different micro and macronutrients to help to regulate our blood sugar, to again, build our tissues of our brain and our body, and also to fuel our bodies.

It's not just glucose, it's also essential fatty acids. It's also amino acids. But if you're wondering, well, what about sweetness? What about a sweetener getting away from the highly refined sugar and all the stuff that we typically find in ultra processed foods? What should we look towards as a sweetener if we're looking for something sweet? Well, there's one sweetener that should not be labeled as merely a sweetener. It is in the truest sense of the word, a real food. It's been utilized for thousands of years, documented for thousands of years, and it has some remarkable benefits when it comes to the human brain and body. For instance, research cited in the journal, evidence-based, complimentary, and alternative

medicine determine that honey, raw honey in particular has antioxidants that have nootropic effects, such as memory enhancement.

Plus a randomized double-blind placebo controlled study published in the peer-reviewed journal nutrients. Details how raw honey intake can actually improve our fasting blood sugar levels, improve fat metabolism and reduce the risk of various diseases. Additionally, the researchers noted that it has a vast array of antioxidants and anti-inflammatory properties when utilizing raw honey. Now you've gotta keep in mind that honey has some amazing properties. But today there's the honey gate scandal. There's some sketchy honeys out there that aren't really honey or they're cut with other things like various sweeteners and cane syrup. So you wanna make sure that you're getting your honey from a truly reputable source.

And the honey that my family's been utilizing for years that you will always find in our cabinet is from Beekeepers Naturals. Their superfood honey goes beyond mere honey. It's third party tested for over 70 plus pesticide residues that are common in many bee products, and also screened for a wide variety of heavy metals like arsenic, lead, mercury, bacteria, like e coli. We wanna make sure that you're getting the very best honey possible without all the stuff that is integrated itself into our environment today. Plus beekeepers, superfood Honey also has some propolis, some royal jelly in there, some pollen. All of these well-noted superfoods all in one source. Head over to [beekeepersnaturals.com/model](https://beekeepersnaturals.com/model) and you're going to get 20% off their phenomenal Superfood honey.

Plus you get 20% off store wide. So we're talking about their award-winning Propolis throat spray, their phenomenal honey based cough syrups, their nootropic, their brain fuel product that is based on Royal Jelly and so much more. Beekeepers Naturals is now the number one honey based therapeutics online in the world. They are absolutely taking over. We've been rocking with them for many, many years, but it's so good to see that more people are utilizing Beekeepers Naturals. Go to [beekeepersnaturals.com/model](https://beekeepersnaturals.com/model). That's B-E-E-K-E-E-P-E-R-S [naturals.com/model](https://beekeepersnaturals.com/model) for 20% off storewide. And now let's get to the special YouTube review of the week.

**YOUTUBE REVIEW:** Here's another YouTube review from pageFerrariC6Q. I absolutely love your witty humor. Keep it rolling with that and be you. You have helped me grow tremendously. I grew up in a traumatic environment and didn't have any positive influences in my life. And I would say you were the first role model, even though I never met you, that helped my life and inspire me to be something great and I'm well on my way.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** That's amazing. And that's what this is all about. My story is very similar, not necessarily having what we would consider to be some good role models in the environment that I grew up in, but having mentors from afar. And this is one of the great gifts that we have access to today, is that we can learn from the very best people in their respective fields. We can learn from people that we resonate with, that we connect with, and who help to bring to life our potential so we can see it and we can embody it ourselves. Having role models and having mentors is incredibly valuable. It's really priceless. And so I'm very grateful to have a small part of your amazing story. And thank you so much for sharing your voice over on our YouTube channel. And if you have to do so, pop over to the Model Health Show YouTube channel and subscribe over there. We've got some exclusive content over on YouTube, and of course you get to hang out in the studio with me and my team and all these amazing guests.

So I appreciate you so much. Regardless of where you're listening, if you're listening on Spotify, you can leave a comment there with the episodes. You can rate and review the show as well as on Apple Podcasts. It really does mean a lot. And without further ado, let's get to our special guest and topic of the day. Dr. Srini Pillay is a Harvard trained psychiatrist, brain researcher, and bestselling author as the leading resident in Harvard Psychiatry. He directed the anxiety disorders program at McLean Hospital and spent 17 years as a brain imaging researcher. Dr. Pillay also pioneered transformational neuro coaching and advises Fortune 500 companies, the UN and the World Bank, among many other companies globally.

Dr. Pillay unites art with science and play technology with human interventions and multi-organ function with psychological and spiritual dimensions to advance our longevity and unlock our true potential. Let's dive in this conversation with the one and only Dr. Srini Pillay. All right, Dr. Srini Pillay, thank you for coming to hang out with us today.

**DR. SRINI PILLAY:** Thanks so much for having me. It's, it's already been a blast.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yes. We're gonna keep this going. You've changed my life. You've changed my life already and really helping to unlock some dormant capacities and really kind of gave me permission to see things in a different way. You've been really helping everyone to reassociate how we think about focus. In fact, you talk about the power of being unfocused. Can you talk a little bit about that?

**DR. SRINI PILLAY:** Yeah. Well, you know, firstly, the idea of changing our life is sort of an amazing thought, but I've already gotten a sense that there's a lot of creativity to unlock in you, and I can't wait to see the different ways in which it's gonna manifest. So a lot of people think that focus is the way to get through the day, right? Everyone talks about focus, it's like focus, focus, focus, fatigue, and then you're out for the count. But the problem with that is that, is that the brain there are two circuits which are often competing with each other.

There's the focus circuit, which is in the prefrontal cortex where, which we use to go through lists, you know, figure out when to come here, how to write a book. But at the same time, there's the Unfocus circuit. And the unfocus circuit is, we used to, we, it's called the default mode network. That which we used to think was a do mostly nothing network, the DMN. But now we realize that that network is super important. It's the network in the brain that allows you to juggle multiple things at the same time. It allows you to think abstractly. It's also called the crystal ball of the human brain. And so if you start focusing, you turn that, that part of your intelligence off, which is sort of, most people think intelligence is just focusing and absorbing information, but intelligence is also associating things.

Intelligence is also knowing that you have enough brain energy and focus can take that energy away. Also, you know, when you overly focus or this, you know what a lot of people don't realize is that, is that when you're focused on one thing, you're not paying attention to what's around you, right? You might be focused on your work, you might lose a girlfriend because you just didn't pay attention. You might focus on one invention like Anne Wang did, and when Anne Wang focused on, on making the word processor, version two, the PC was happening, but he wasn't looking around him and so he became bankrupt. Also, if you focus

with your nose to the grindstone and you're like, no, things are gonna stay the same, I'm just focused on what I'm doing.

You're not paying attention to upcoming trends. So you're, you're not gonna know, you know what AI to be aware of. You're not gonna know, you know, what, what to pay attention to. That's, that's coming in the future. And what people, a lot of people don't realize is that in the brain, the part of your brain that makes up the story about who you are, the autobiographical self is actually the unfocused network. So, you know, nobody is their LinkedIn profile. You go to a LinkedIn profile, you're like, what is that? Like, sometimes people will, will introduce me, like my LinkedIn profile and it'll be like. Yeah, that's like what I did, but it's not necessarily who I am. What we know is that the focus network will not allow you to collect the important elements of your life story to make up a narrative about who you are, but the unfocused network does.

So what? The unfocused network and also when, when you're focused, you're focused on one thing. But as you know, you know, I think a lot of your books have been this way. When you are unfocused, you make associations other people would never have thought to make. And it's when you are unfocusing that this creativity comes out. So what I wanted to tell people was that unfocusing is a way of refueling your brain for more energy. It's a way of becoming more creative. It's a way of paying attention to what's around you so you don't miss out. It's a way of paying attention to future trends, and it's also a way of connecting more deeply with who you are. And I think one of the greatest tragedies that I've seen is that people will just focus, focus, focus, and then pass out. But they don't take advantage of this unfocused brain that can take them through the vehicle of imagination into parts of themselves that they might never have known.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah, yeah. You know, in our culture today, more than ever, we are obsessed with trying to focus, you know, trying to find a way to get stuff done, to focus. And it's, it's very, it, it's very rewarded in our culture. But as you mentioned, we have this whole other capacity that actually in many ways, and you detail this in the book, it makes focusing on the things that we wanna focus on even more fulfilling and rewarding. You. You great.

Gave a great analogy of focus being like a flashlight. Right, and, but that's just looking at one specific domain. There's all this happening in the periphery that we can miss out on.

**DR. SRINI PILLAY:** Yeah, absolutely. And I think what, what a lot of people, I think in the age of AI, being able to unfocus is particularly important because AI is, you know, think about chat, GPT, you, you basically can ask it pretty much anything you want to ask and it will do it. So there's real estate that's not getting used in your brain, and if you think of use it or lose it, then you have to ask yourself, if I'm, if I'm not thinking about the stuff anymore, what's happening with that part of my brain? If I'm not remembering then what's happening to my memory center? And then all of a sudden people are saying, well, there are alarming rates of dementia, or there are increasing rates of suicide amongst the young.

Well, if you don't have a meaning making in your brain, which is created largely through the unfocused network, then you're not gonna feel like life is anything. So I think it's, it's super important to not just have that focus flashlight, but to recognize that you can explore the depths of your own being through the techniques that I outlined in the book. You know, when, when I wrote the book I was, I was sort of like, I argued with my agent for a while 'cause I was like, no one's gonna know what this tinker, dabble doodle tries. And she said, no. But I like the, I like the ring of it because I think people are, are actually yearning to play. But a lot of us when we grow up, we're like, I dunno, plays when you're younger, when you grow up, maybe you can play with your kids.

But playfulness is something that we lose. And I think it's a tragedy when you lose the capacity to play. And, and people don't even realize that, that the capacity to play involves fantasy and fantasy is what happens when you're like, ah, let me imagine. Like, what if I were something? And what's interesting, and we can get to this at a, at some at some point, is that that kind of fantasy actually protects the body. It it, it actually helps you become more physically. Well the, the, there's a para psychosomatic institute that studies the connection between the mind and the body. And one of the things they said was that people who engage in fantasy more are actually physically better off as well. So I think the unfocus network in the brain is one of the. Key networks that doesn't just improve your psychology, it has the potential to improve your biology as well.



**SHAWN STEVENSON:** That's so powerful. You also share some fascinating data. There's a ton of studies that you referenced in the book as well, but one of them was really interesting in looking at how focus can actually handicap us in other things that we see as valuable, like compassion, right. And you shared a study where being hyper-focused actually led to study participants being less likely to help other people. Can you talk about that?

**DR. SRINI PILLAY:** Yeah. So this was a study in which, they, they took two groups of people and they expose them to a video. And, and so one video they, one group they asked to focus intensely and the other group they said, just look at things the way would ordinarily look at it. And then at the end of looking at it, they gave them a challenge of people needing help in a particular scenario. And they said, you know, what would you do? The people who focused. They couldn't care less. They're like, I dunno, they can drown. Like, I, I just don't care. And so many people feel like this at the end of the day.

Yeah. You know, you when they're driving home or they're like completely wiped out and you're like, what would you do to help someone in some country need? They're like, you know what, I don't care. But when they fed that group glucose, they started to care again, indicating that it wasn't, that they were fundamentally not compassionate, they had just drained their brains of the ability to care. You know, we, we call that compassion fatigue. And so focus can really exacerbate compassion fatigue. And a lot of people don't recognize this. They don't even recognize this what their own spouses, you know, when, when a spouse is working all day just super focused and they come home, they're not necessarily meaning to ignore the other person, but the other person's like, you know.

What's with you? Like where's the compassion? And so what happens is they end up not having the energy to care. And I think caring is another, I'm gonna make another leap here. 'cause I, I think caring is something that is related to human relationships and connection, and it is among the top variables that is associated with healthy longevity, having good relationships, people who have good relationships live longer. And it's, it's as important as cholesterol, as important as a lot of things we think of more concretely. So if you, if you have a brain that is being wired not to care, again, you're compromising not just your emotional state, but you're compromising your physical state as well.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** That's phenomenal. By the way, you didn't know this, but really focusing on relationships and the impact that they have on our health has really been what my work has been centered around the last few years. And, you know, just even referencing, Dr. Waldinger work outta Harvard and the longest running longitudinal study on human longevity. And he's a skeptic, which is like, I could relate to that because he didn't believe the data himself, that what stood out the most was having warm social relationships or healthy social bonds stood out more than anything at beating exercise. Not to say that they're not valuable, exercise, good nutrition, you know, dealing with stress. It was a quality of relationships that determine how long people are gonna live more than anything else.

And that's because from my perspective, and I asked him about this, like, what do you think it is? He gave the example of it really helps you to metabolize stress if you're able to offload and to connect with other people. And it is a buffer just to know that somebody's there, somebody's got your back. For me, it's expansive. Every decision that we make, whether it is with my nutrition or with my sleep habits or whatever, my wife is the most influential person in all of that stuff, you know? Right. And so the quality of our relationships are so important, but we are finding ourselves more and more depleted in our society today. And not, and, and you talk about this term that you call inattention blindness, right? You, me, you mentioned this a little bit earlier. You kind of just went through it, but I'm so focused at work, but then you lose a girlfriend.

**DR. SRINI PILLAY:** Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Right. Yeah. And so how often is that happening in relationships today? Just because we're so depleted? Because we're trying to be hyper-focused to get stuff done so that we can be with the people that we love, but we're not showing up as our best selves.

**DR. SRINI PILLAY:** Yeah, I think it's, well, firstly, people are so amazingly complex, right? And if you don't spend time hanging out with people, you're gonna miss out on some of the most important things about who they are because they're not their LinkedIn profile, they're not their job title. You know, there's all kinds of amazing things about people you love. And so hanging out is a way of letting that information arrive, right? Right. It's, it's a way of, it's a

little bit like when we were speaking earlier, and we only spoke for a short time, but as you were speaking, I was like, what's the music beneath?

This person's utterances. 'cause I can feel there's a kind of musicality underneath what you're saying because there's a poetic mechanism that's involved in associations for you. And so that's not something you're gonna say. You're gonna say, you know, hi, I'm Sean, I have poetic associations and there's a musicality that's underneath. But by just hanging out, you get that sensation and you don't even necessarily have to say what that is. So intimacy I think is, is something everybody wants. But we're living in a society that I think is very driven by, you know, how people look or, and there's nothing wrong with caring about how you look or how somebody else looks, but there's much more to life than just caring about that. There is the ability to really feel this kind of intimacy that, that I, I think Waldinger talks about 'cause he even says it's not necessarily about your primary partner, it's also about the people in your life.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Right.

**DR. SRINI PILLAY:** Now, if you think about one mechanism, which I think is. This is one of probably a hundred that I could potentially think of. If you, if you think of the fact that we have mirror neurons in our brains, and what these neurons do is they, they are, they act like mirrors to other people's emotions. So if you're in a toxic relationship, your, your brain is automatically representing that toxicity. And so it's, your emotional state is already taken in that direction. And when your emotional state is taken in that direction, you might do one of several things. You might suppress your emotions. You're like, you know what? I can't, I'm just, the person I'm with is so toxic. But if I say something, they're gonna say something. So I might as well just say nothing. But emotional suppression has been associated with a higher chance of dying over a 12 year in, in a 12 year study. And so people who don't say what they're feeling. At greater risk, there's a greater risk of cancer. There's a trend towards greater problems with cardiac disease. I don't think about, you know, people will sometimes are taken aback as they're like, wait a minute. Like, what? What do you mean you don't believe in psychiatry?

And I'll say, well, because I don't believe the brain stops functioning at the level of the neck, that you wouldn't be able to move your right foot if it wasn't 'cause of the brain. Your brain is connected to your adrenal gland. It's connected to your gut, it's connected to your heart. So when you're having emotions, these emotions are in your brain, but whatever you're doing with this activation is spreading to the rest of your body. It's, it's one of the reasons I co-founded Rue, which is an AI driven platform that helps people make mindset shifts. Not just so that you can go from being distracted to being focused or pessimistic to optimistic, or uncertain to confident. But I just recently wrote a paper with colleagues from Mayo Clinic showing that every one of those mindset shifts is associated with a change in your biology.

You know, optimists have 11 to 15% longer lifespans, people who are distracted, not strategically unfocused, but people who are distracted. People with a DHD have twice the rate of death before the age of 46. So your mindset is not just about what's in your mind, it's, it, it impacts your genes, it impacts we, we just know from so many other things that, that the, the ability to be related to someone is the ability to be present. And focus is not the only way to be present. You know, if you've ever hung out with somebody, you can be in a totally unfocused mode and still be present. So I think relationships are key to our overall health. And I think relationships are, are underestimated in the importance in terms of our physical health as well.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yes, yes. So being that we can deplete ourselves just throughout a workday of just trying to be focused and get stuff done, does this speak to the existence of like a brain reserve or a certain amount of energy that our brains have to make decisions and do stuff like that throughout the day?

**DR. SRINI PILLAY:** Yeah, you know, I, I often will say to people, let's say you have a hundred units of attention. And if you fill the, let's say you get up in the morning and you're like, oh, let me read the news. Let me scroll through social media. All of a sudden you've used up 70 units of attention and then you go to work with 30 units of attention and you're like, why can't I solve this problem? Well, you just sold your attention to the world in the attention economy. Your attention got bought and you sold it for not a lot of money. You know, metaphorically. So the 30 units of attention that you have left, that's what you've gotta work with. And I think

we live at a time when, because of so many distractions around us, strategic unfocus is highly preferable to random distraction. And just focusing the whole day is not something that's gonna allow you to take care of your own depth of your relationships and your physical and emotional health.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Let's dive in and talk about what's going on in the brain when we unfocus. 'cause you detail all this in the book, by the way it's called Tinker Dabble Doodle Try: Unlock the Power of the Unfocused Mind. Available everywhere books are sold. And you talk about when you are unfocusing, it reduces amygdala activation and creates calmness. Let's talk a little bit about what's going on in our brain and changes in biology when we unfocus.

**DR. SRINI PILLAY:** Well, I think unfocus can, like everything in medicine, everything in its opposite can happen. So we do know that unfocused can cause, like, mind wandering, can be very anxiety provoking and can make people feel more depressed. But when you are hanging out, when you have what, for example, we're calling positive constructive daydreaming, which is different from just daydreaming at your desk. You're doing something low key like knitting or gardening or walking, and then you let your mind go and you start imagining something wishful, like, you know, maybe running through the woods with your dog or lying on a yacht, and immediately your mind goes into this unfocused, more relaxed state.

When you're in, when you're in this relaxed state, you are no longer at the mercy of your anxious mind focusing on all the negative things in your life. You know, you are, you are actually recognizing that you have the ability to tune into other frequencies. And when you do, UNFOCUSING turns on this default mode network. And when it turns on the default mode network, this network is connected to multiple regions in the body. And, and, and one of the regions that it's connected to is the emotional processing regions in the brain, the limbic system, and part of which is the amygdala. So the amygdala is one of those areas in the brain that starts alarming whenever you're under tremendous amounts of stress.

And when you do, because it's connected to your thinking brain, it disrupts your thinking. And anyone who's been very anxious noses, right, or you're going to fight or flight mode, you're

like. Where do I run? How do I go, what do I do? I'm putting out fires. And when you're in a putting out fire state of mind, you, you have lost your connection with yourself. You've lost your connection with who you are. And so this moving away from this hyper amygdala activation, there are a number of ways you can do this. There are more cognitive ways like there's a, there's a thing that I teach a monic called Circa, which is five steps to access your brain to turn down this alarm.

So the first C in circa is chunking, which means you break things down. You don't just get up on a Monday morning, you're like, oh my God, I have like 5 million things to do this week. What do I do? So chunking is essentially breaking things down and not just feeding your brain like a ton of information at the same time, it's also ruthlessly prioritizing. So telling yourself throughout the day, there's some stuff I have to get done. There's some stuff I hope I get done, and there's some stuff. If I don't get to it, it's not gonna be the end of the world. And chunking is also about delegating, right? It's about telling people, saying to yourself, I can't do all of this.

You know, somebody else can do that, somebody else can do that. So it's about breaking stuff down. And what people don't realize is that when you get up in the morning and you fill your brain with your whole week's schedule, and then you, your brain goes into a freakout and your amygdala starts over activating. So just using self-talk or sitting down and saying, lemme just spend one minute and see what I have to do now and what I have to do later, that immediately calms your brain down. Then there's the eye for ignore mental chatter, which is essentially mindfulness. And, and you know, the way you practice that is you, you close your eyes, you place your attention on your breath, like a flashlight, and if your mind starts wandering, you gently bring the flashlight back to your breath, which, you know, sounds like.

Like, so what? Like why would you do that? Well, studies have shown that not only decreases amygdala activation that can also protect your genes. So if you look at the ends of our genes that are telomeres, which as you get older it, they get shorter and shorter, and eventually we get illnesses and then we die. Well, Elizabeth Blackburn and her colleagues have found that by practicing mindfulness regularly, you can protect these genes and prevent these illnesses and

live more healthily into later life. But if you're someone who says, nah, I don't like meditation, I don't wanna do that. Well, there are other ways to do this.

It was a recent study at Stanford that showed that cyclic sighing is one way you can begin to regulate what's going on inside you. It's another way to ignore mental chatter. And the way you do this is you breathe into three quarters of the way, and then you breathe in right to the top, and then you breathe out slowly. And if you just do that for five minutes, that study found that it was even more effective than mindfulness meditation. So the idea of ignoring mental chatter has, you know, a lot of deeper ramifications as well. You know, I think from a spiritual perspective, the yoga sutras of Patanjali would say that we think we are the noise of our minds, but when the noise of our minds are still, the real US is available to be experienced.

And so a lot of the anxiety we experience is from the false self. It's from the chatter of the mind. Whereas when we get beyond the false self, we get to this place where we can actually be connected with this more ethereal, maybe even intangible aspect of who we are. The R in circa is reality check, which is basically, this too shall pass. You use self-talk. Let's say you say you have something horrible, you miss a deadline, you messed up in some way. There's no way to put a positive spin on it. It's good to remind your brain that this is not gonna last forever. You know, 'cause your brain, once there's something negative, it immediately creates this illusion that it's gonna be there all the time.

They're like, oh, you know that money you didn't have, you're never gonna have that money. And so your brain goes into an even greater freak out. But if you say, well I don't have that now, but I'm gonna, that this, this is gonna pass and I'm gonna get to the next step. Just doing that calms your brain down. Then there's control check, which is, uh, essentially like the serenity prayer. What's the stuff I can control? What's the stuff I can't control? And knowing the difference between the two, you know, a lot of people will be like, oh, you hear what's happening in this country or that country? What's happening?

Well, are you gonna do anything about it? Because. If you wanna suffer, I cannot legitimately tell you there are not enough reasons to suffer. There are plenty of reasons to suffer, but if

you, if you are committed to having a life that is, that is more elated, joyful, that is more connected to bliss, then you have to be committed to that. And to be committed to that, you have to, you have to ask yourself, what can I control? What can I not control? And if I can't control it, why don't I let go? You know, another version of this was Lady Gaga who reached a point in her career where she spoke to Yale students and she said, I didn't feel like singing.

And they were like, what do you mean? She said, I just didn't wanna sing anymore. They were like, but you know, you're so talented, so well known. She said, 'cause I was having to like, make other people money. I had to sell perfumes and I didn't wanna sell, but I don't even like perfumes. You know, I had to, I had to take selfies. And she's like, you know, I'm, I'm an artist. I have more to give the world. And slowly she said, she started to say to herself, I better say no to some of this stuff. And the more she started to say no, the more she re, the more she respected herself. And she said, I went home. And I looked at myself in the mirror and I said, you, I can sleep with any day.

It's, you've got integrity. You know what you stand for. And I think so many of us think, well, you know, we're not Lady Gaga. We can't say no to everything. Sure, I get that. But there's at least one thing in everybody's life they could say no to. And that's what that, that sees about in decreasing the amygdala activation. And then the last day is attention shift. And attention shift is how do we shift away from the problem to the solution? You know? 'cause we're, we spend so much time talking about our problems, but we don't, if we don't know the solution, we don't go to the land of where solutions live. And this morning in my meditation, I had this realization of a common thought, which, you know, I've thought about in many ways before many other people have said this.

But for some reason it really hit home when I realized there, there were two metaphors that converged simultaneously. One was that. I was in charge of whether I wanted to open the channel of joy, and that if I turn that channel open, it will open the channel for joy to arrive through it. And another metaphor of that is, is frequency. If I make a decision to commit to the frequency of joy, then, then I'm, then that's what will come to me. Now, some people would say, but I'm not feeling joyful. I can't just switch. Actually you can, you, you, you can say, why don't I spend five minutes? Maybe I'm miserable the rest of the time I don't care.



But for five minutes today, I'm just gonna open up what that channel is and let my life be affected by what that is. And if you're struggling, if you're struggling to think of, think of joy things, some very simple things out there. Look at the sunrise, look at the sunset. Look at dogs running on the beach. There's some amazing things. I have believe, even though I have plenty of stress up days, I do correct. If I'm not in a blissful state, I feel like I'm not connected to my real self. And so I feel like, you know, there's this whole term in Hinduism, which is such it ananda, which is being consciousness bliss, that our fundamental nature is bliss.

And we forget that because we are distracted by the happenings in the world. And I think if we can, every time you're feeling not blissful, if you say to yourself, wait a minute, did I just lose contact with who I am? You know, 'cause I think maybe I did. It will train your brain to remember that bliss is something you can correct too. And you know, as I said, there are all kinds, you can do that in a, in an elevated way. I used to have joke around that I was somewhere between martinis and meditation. So I feel like there are things you can do to help yourself get there. As long as you don't think that that's the age agentic bliss you're looking for. But these, these five steps chunking, ignore mental chatter, reality check, control check and attention shift are five brain-based ways in which you can target your brain. And these have all been shown to decrease amygdala activation in the brain.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** This, this is a mic drop already. This is so powerful. If we just take those tools on, it could change our lives. You know? And when you were talking about just this, we get kind of caught up trapped in worry and forgetting. You know, to feel how we wanna feel, to experience our true selves. It got me thinking about habitually worry and this state of contrast avoidance that some people have. Like they're just, they have a problem for every solution. They're always looking for something to worry about. Can you talk about contrast avoidance a little bit?

**DR. SRINI PILLAY:** Sure. So, so in my, in my first book, life Unlocked Seven Revolutionary Lessons to Overcome Fear, I talk a lot about. I looked at the research like, so why do people worry? And the finding was both remarkable, but also like kind of interesting to think about more deeply. So the leading theory for why people worry right now is called contrast avoidance theory. And what that means is that in life we have peak moments, right? When

you make money, fall in love, go for the most amazing swim, and then you have these trough moments, these low moments where you lose a job, lose a loved one.

People who worry keep themselves in the miserable middle because they're afraid of the contrast between elation and despair. So they're like, if I'm slightly miserable all the time, if something bad happens, then at least I could it, the fall won't be as much. And so they avoid that contrast. And you might ask, well, why would people wanna avoid being elated. It's because being incredibly happy and free is not as easy as it sounds. Kierkegaard, the philosopher said anxiety is the dizziness of freedom. He said, we all say we wanna be free, but look around you, every, every one of us, the first thing we do is how do I put a ball on chain in my life? And then how do I limit my freedom?

And then say, oh, well, you know, that's life. You can't be free. But no matter what the ball and chain in your life is, and I guarantee there's not a single person on earth who will not be able to identify that. Ask yourself, how can I still have freedom? Because freedom is intimidating. You know, when we think of freedom at its height, we think we're just wild losing all our relationships, doing whatever we wanna do. And I think that that is not necessarily what freedom is. You know, freedom is the ability. It starts with the ability to connect with something much greater than ourselves and then to learn how to tolerate what's happening at that frequency of energy. I think anyone who's meditated would tell you that meditation in your evolution, it's terrifying at certain points 'cause at certain points you're like, what's happening here?

Am I in free fall? Like, is this, but once you learn to tolerate and understand and accommodate that freedom, you realize, you know what? This thing about being committed to sucky things, maybe I shouldn't be. You know, my, my biggest beef about psychiatry right now and medicine in general is that the tone of most messages is I want to help you lead a slightly less lame life. Like, what kind of life is that? Like most people want to kick ass life. Most people want, like, they wanna be on top of the world, they wanna be energized, but we have an epidemic of a loss of vitality in our society. Most people don't realize, but they've, they've given their energy away. They're like, ah, whatever.

You know, I don't, I don't have that feeling or maybe like, maybe once in a while. And then there are some people who will say, you've got a juice, or you've got to eat health. All these things, as you said, are important, but vitality doesn't have to have this condition associated with it. We are afraid of our most vital selves, when in fact, as Marian Williamson said, we should not be afraid to shine because when we shine, we give others the permission to shine too. And so I think that contrast avoidance is one of those things that is super important for us. Anyone who's listening to this, what I'd love them to ask themselves is, do I have enough kick ass moments in my week planned? Whether it's a great meal, amazing time with someone you love doing something extraordinary.

And if you don't ask yourself, am I committed to the miserable middle? And if I am committed to the miserable middle, how can I give that up? Because the truth is, some of this takes acceptance, right? Profound acceptance that there are gonna be amazing things in life. And there are some very tragic things that happen. And if we can begin to understand that we are in control to a certain extent, but not entirely, we can begin to find a different kind of bliss in surrender.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Oh my gosh, I'm, this is so fascinating. So fascinating. 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 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% off of their incredible green juice blend when you go to [organifi.com/model](https://organifi.com/model). That's O-R-G-A-N-I-F I.com/model for 20% 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 [organifi.com/model](https://organifi.com/model). 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% off at [organifi.com/model](https://organifi.com/model). And now back to the show.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** You know, this got me thinking about some of the current state of affairs, you know, and in addition, this got me also thinking about Barry Schwartz, the paradox of choice. So with relating focus and all of these options that we have, right? And just being and, and you're trying to tell yourself, I need to focus. I need to focus. But there's so many options, right? So relating anxiety and freedom is something that I don't think many of us do. There's many flavors, of course, of anxiety, and this is something else that I admire about you, is that you know that there isn't a one size fits all anxiety or depression or any of these, you know, physical or mental conditions.

And also the separation of the two is ignorant and understanding that we need to pay attention to ourselves and we have the very best data. On how to get to from where we are to where we want to be. It's within us already more so than any study, more so than any book. And we're big fans of studies and books. But the truth is it's within you and it's unique to you. And so if we can be aware of the situation that we're in, where we have immense freedom, so many different things to choose from, some of us can get overwhelmed, some of us can be paralyzed. But this can bring about more of a reason for us to kind of, again, take back control of our minds and use our focus with intention, but also use our unfocus with intention.

And so I want to talk a little bit more about this and just to share really quickly some quick hitters on the default mode network. You talk about this in the book. So this really important, valuable aspect of the human brain, it acts as a distraction filter. You shared that it builds mental flexibility. It integrates the past, present, and future. It helps you express your

creativity. It helps you to dredge up intangible memories and connect cool things. So there's a lot that this default mode network does, but we are not accessing that if we're hyper-focused and depleting our focus. And so what I wanna talk about now is how do we utilize unfocus with intention and you give some strategies to Unfocus. So I want to go through these right now and give everybody these insights on how to get there, right? And it's gonna be different for different people, but these are some pretty practical science back ways to get there. One of them is a reverie. Let's talk about that.

**DR. SRINI PILLAY:** Yeah. So reverie is essentially similar to what I described in positive constructive daydreaming, where you are in a state of wishful imagining and you give yourself permission to just keep going with the pleasure. So, you know, let's say you say, well, I'm lying in a field, and then you're thinking, oh, this is kind of amazing. Somebody I truly love kiss me gently on the forehead. And then we ran through a field together, holding hands and then saw a pool and when we saw the pool, we decided to dive in and we were laughing. And as we were laughing, we saw a bird gently fly down on, onto a plant and a butterfly, and we looked up at the sky and didn't realize that out of the blue, these clouds were coming over and it started to rain.

And we gotrenched, but we were ecstatic in being. So I just, I'm just building the story of I could go on and how often do we let our minds build their own stories? You know? 'cause you, if you could go on with that story, and it could become quite profound. You could say, I was lying next to this person and didn't understand why I both loved and hated them at the same time. And then, and you could be like, oh man, that's the, my reverie took me there. And, and you're like, yeah. And then I realized that. That whatever the physical was, was an illusion. And that actually the reason I was here on earth was to allow that ecstasy that I experienced on earth to open the door to the possibility of something more.

And so reverie is the doorway to possibility. And what a lot of people do is they live in a highly probable world where they, the reality determines their commitments. Now, if reality determines your commitments, life's just gonna suck. And you're just gonna say, there's nothing I can do. But if your commitments determine your reality, now you're training that commitment with reverie, because you're saying actually, life can be pretty, life can be

amazing. Now, when I say that to people, people say, oh, that's not realistic. And what I say is, you have to take the responsibility to be the architect who draws the blueprint for your life. If you take your blueprint from life, it's not gonna get you very far. But if you have the courage to actually draw up your own blueprint, and if you say, this is the blueprint I have, this is the ideal self that I want.

Studies by Richard Boyatzis at Case Western have shown that people get much further on in life, not if they're putting out fires, but if they take the time to formulate an ideal self. And if you formulate an ideal self, it becomes the blueprint for your brain to say, oh, this is not part of the plan. This is part of the plan. This is not part of the plan. So when reverie opens up the door to possibility, you know, and, and people will say, well, that's not highly probable. Well, think about it. If you want an exceptional life, it's an exception. And so no exceptional life is highly probable. It's if your life is highly probable, you are not on an exceptional track.

You, you really wanna live a life of low probability. And the way to breathe in a life of low probability is to breathe through the lens of possibility of saying to yourself, okay, let me ask myself like, what is possible? You know, what in, in what world can I pursue this? And, you know, I often will tell people the story of two career moves in my life, which I feel really exemplify possibility for me. One was, I was in South Africa at a conference and I went to this great talk and I was sort of nerding out about water intoxication in schizophrenia or something, standing next to the speaker waiting for a car to pick me up. And I just looked at him and I said, you know, I really enjoyed your talk.

And he said, oh, thanks very much. And I said, I'm just getting a major vibe here. I feel like you could change my life. And he looked at me and he said, well, what in what way? And I said, I dunno, I'm just, I'm telling you what I feel. And he said, well, what, what are you interested in? And I said, well, I'm really interested in the brain. I'm really interested in human emotions and trying to understand how I can bring physiology and emotion together. He said, well, I'm at the University of Stellenbosch. It was during apartheid in South Africa at the time. He said the, there's a fellowship, the scholarship that's due tomorrow, we've never given it to a person of color before and we've never given it to anyone in the field of psychiatry.

The chances of you're getting it are very low, but if you do get it, it will change your life. And I said, well, can I send an application? He said, yeah, sure, but I just know it's not highly likely. And so I sent the application to him. He walked it over a few hours later, gave me a call and said, congratulations and welcome to Stellenbosch. And I was like, what? Like how? How did that happen? And then I went to Stellenbosch for a year. I was in this tiny dorm room and I had my own little sort of electric frying pan and a small refrigerator. And then I remembered my examiner, it was two years before that my final examiner in South Africa happened to be from NYU.

And so they would invite external examiners and I had done particularly well. And he said, you know, honestly, you should be at Harvard. And I was like, we have to like take another exam in America. I was thinking of maybe going to England and then I didn't even really know what it was, but on one particular day in a state of reverie, I was like, I dunno what it would be like to be at Harvard. And so I called up Harvard and I said, I wanna speak to the head of Harvard. And the person was like, head of Harvard what? And I was like, well, if you wanna get in, speak to the person at the top. And so they, they were like, um, okay. Head of Harvard. I said, how about medical school? So I get through the medical school, they were like, you know, there are lots of departments here.

Like head of what I said, how about psychiatry? And the head of department of psychiatry happened to be walking past his secretary's desk. He happened to go to the bathroom. He almost never picked up his phone. He picked up his phone and I said, hi, my name is Srin Pillay. I'm just sitting here in a small dorm room in South Africa thinking, boy, wouldn't it be great to be at Harvard? And he said, he told me later, I thought you were crazy, but I thought that, you know, what, can I stop? It had to be decent. So he said, well, why don't you send me a CV and a note and I'll pass it around. We'll see what happens. And then a couple weeks later, I get a call saying, Dr. Jonathan Cole, who's the father of psychopharmacology, wants to interview you.

I get a phone interview and then a couple weeks later I get a FedEx saying, congratulations and welcome to Harvard. Now, there are a lot of people who would, who've done well, and I did do well. So it opened the door for me. But there, but most people who did well would not

embrace that possibility. And it's an extreme example. But imagine if in your life that equivalent is waiting for you and you just didn't dare to ask for it. You know what, what, why not ask for the greatest possibility? And you might say, well, you know, I can't get there 'cause I'm in reality. Well, that's where reverie comes in. Save some reverie time. Let your mind flow.

Let your body join you in what feels real for you. And as you said, the most intuitive things can, can light up for us. I mean that in those instances, they were allowing my intuition to take over. Now have I used my intuition and being wrong a million times? You know, probably a billion times, but it's those few times when you get it right that actually make a difference in massive movements in your life. And so I think when reverie opens the door to possibility, it not only activates the default mode network, but it allows that network to communicate, gathering all these little bits of information to put together a plan about how to get where you want to get to. And it's not all conscious, much of it is outside of conscious control.

So I encourage reverie as a habit. I encourage possibility thinking, which is another way of activating this default mode network. I, you know, you can, if you wanna start simply five to 15 minutes of napping, gives you one to three hours of clarity. So why wouldn't you when you're dragging in the middle of the afternoon, give yourself that, that gift, a positive, constructive dreaming, which I mentioned earlier, is another way of activating that unfocused network. And, another technique that I cover, and there are, you know, many more than that in the book, but is a technique called psychological Halloweenism, which is a term that I coined to describe a phenomenon where they gave two, they gave the same person a creative problem to solve. They said, now I want you to be a rigid librarian and take on whatever you think the stereotype is.

So they were like rigid librarian standing there, and they were statistically significantly less likely to solve the problem if they were a rigid librarian than if they were an eccentric poet. So if you put on a cloak and you walk around like a, like a poet, all of a sudden your brain has the permission to be creative. So when we cannot solve problems in life, it's not because we don't have the horsepower to do this, it's because we are stuck in a frozen self. And the default mode network codes for that self and tapping into that unfocused network can allow you to



change these different and rearrange these different components of yourself to be able to get to that next level.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** It sounds like a superpower.

**DR. SRINI PILLAY:** Yeah, and we all have it. We, we have it. We, our brains. It's waiting there. It wants to be accessed, but you know, it just hasn't been marketed well.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Right. That's why you're here, you know, truly. Reverie and accessing these intuitive hits, right?

**DR. SRINI PILLAY:** Correct.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And you also gave a great breakdown of what intuition is. You know, for somebody who is very solid in their thinking in the book, and I often considered intuition to be kind of like advanced pattern recognition, right? And to get access to that, we've got to unfocus and build this into our day. And again, there isn't a cookie cutter way to go about this, but one general recommendation that you give is 45 minutes of focus work and give yourself, you know, 15 minutes, 20 minutes of unfocused time and spend some time in reverie and some of these other strategies that we're gonna talk about.

But this is being intentional and what's gonna happen is, I love this analogy as well, and thinking about our minds and our capacity, like a light bulb. And if we're just trying to jam all of this focus energy into it and blowing a fuse versus intentionally dimming the light bulb and turning things down. And with that version, we can turn it back up whenever we want to and focus and the light is there versus blowing it out. And that might just have us cooked for the rest of the day or even longer potentially, if we're just constantly trying to force ourselves to focus. And one of the other cool things that you share is that our brains are looking for a way out all the time anyways. We're spending almost 50% of our day unfocusing on accident and then trying to grab our focus back.

**DR. SRINI PILLAY:** Yeah. Yeah. It's a, I mean, that's why when people say, I don't have time to meditate, or I don't have time to unfocus. I'm like, you're doing it 50% of the day. Your, your

mind is not staying on task with, there's a need for it to try to go somewhere. Why not interact with whatever that journey is? You know, it's a little bit like if your, if your dog is on a leash, pulling you in different directions, you, you might submit just to see what it's trying to show you. Your mind is trying to show you the way, but if you try to overly control it, you're not letting it take you there. And I think what a lot of people don't understand is that the ability, this network is so crucial in guiding us toward things, but it's also very crucial in letting answers arrive. So an example is Albert Einstein, who talked about his theory of relativity and who said that it was not a logical process for him.

It was, it was a musical perception. He said it, it arrived. And then I, then I, then I try to make sense of it. But a lot of the great things we're looking for in life are things that need to arrive and remember, intelligence is having the ability not just to pursue, but to allow things to arrive. And I think if we, what the unfocused network does is it creates a mechanism for this arrival to have impact. You know, Kerry Banks Mulis is a person who founded synthetic DNA. And, you know, he was, his lab mates hated him. They were like, he's not a real scientist, he just does whatever he is making all these leaps. He's not following a linear progression. And on one particular day, nobody knew how to do this.

He was driving with his girlfriend from Berkeley to Mendocino, and he was like, he stopped by the wayside and they had a little bit of wine and they stopped. And then he scribbled on a rock face, eventually went up to their small cabin and Eureka suddenly this. This whole idea arrived and he recognized that he had made a major discovery of the century. That kind of arrival of an idea. If you ask yourself, why am I not open to the arrival of amazing ideas? I think, I think it'll, it, it's a really good question for us to ask ourselves. You know, one, one of the many ways in which I sometimes frame intuition is that I feel like intuitions are the whispers of God asking to be heard.

And if we can listen to them rather than ignore them and do what I call insular mapping, where the intuition is activating multiple parts of your brain, one of them is this region that is related to the self. If you're getting some kind of thing like, ah, I got a hunch. You know, like, people will often say to me, people show you who they are in the first nano 10 nanoseconds of meeting them. Why would you not follow your intuition? Well, 'cause maybe you are

wrong. Well then you don't have to be committed to it. But don't ignore your intuition. Your intuition is not some vague thing that only a few people have. We are all wired for intuition. And so I think to the extent that we are wired for intuition, we want to be able to use this intuition to discover this way of opening up a think the world of hunches.

Because often the things we want don't come through connecting concrete things. You have one hunch and another hunch and another hunch, and all of a sudden you've arrived somewhere. So I think intuition is a capacity that is served by this brain network, which I think if we really cared about expressing our full intelligence, we would take unfocus seriously. So we can allow intuition to do its thing.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah. By the way, Kerry Mullis won a Nobel Prize, and also you mentioned he was doing a bunch of other stuff, like he wasn't consistent in his field of "science".

**DR. SRINI PILLAY:** Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And he was like a, he opened a bakery or something like that, like just all these random things. But it all kind of, this conglomeration of life experiences came together with something that changed the world. And same thing with, with Einstein, like he was working in a patent office.

**DR. SRINI PILLAY:** Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** You know, he wasn't this prestigious scientist and all these things, but just being in these different situations and I, and I remember him talking about, and I read his biography years ago, just doing these thought experiments and just going on kind of daydreaming, like seeing life through these different perspectives in his mind. And coming up with these formulations and just radical, seemingly radical ideas that change the way that we do things today. And so giving ourselves permission, because in our society today, it's really beating us into this perception that you've gotta focus, you've gotta do this one thing. But we're not, and just, again, just to reiterate this, we're not sh\*tting on focus.

Focus is incredibly valuable aspect of humanity and of our potential.

But we are so much more than that. We're so much more. And to be able to pull in all of our deepest resources. We need to practice allowing ourselves to unfocus as well. And so I want to ask you about another one of these. So we talked about reverie, a little bit about imagination as well, mind wandering. So what's the difference with reverie and mind wandering?

**DR. SRINI PILLAY:** So, so I think mind wandering is a more neutral term than reverie. Reverie has a certain kind of like a kind of wisps of nostalgia, sort of, you know, wandering through your mind with an attitude. I think mind wandering could just be your mind going wild, and that's the negative side of mind wandering or it could be mind wandering to in search of ideas. So they're very similar except that I think reverie, the term reverie comes with an emotional nuance. You know, reverie is something that's, that's super important. In psychotherapy, for example. Ogden wrote a lot about this in. When we were trained in psychotherapy, when I first went there, you know, the way that if you look at the internet, people would think everything is like, well, reframe this, change this, rethink it, distract yourself, do this.

But what Ogden found was that creating a space for mind wandering as the reverie variant of mind wandering allowed people to discover things they would never have discovered. And so in that state, you know, I think reverie is a form of mind wandering that helps people to unearth things about themselves that they never would. Now you might ask, well, how does that happen? But I think you sort of alluded to that earlier on when you talked about the fact that, so the way that I think about, about this metaphorically, is I think of the focus network as eating stuff with a fork, right? So you're like, you pick it up, it's solid, you can eat it.

But with the unfocused network, you now are introducing a spoon to taste the, the delicious melange of flavors in your life. You know, the scent of your grandmother, the smell of apples in the fall. You know, you also have these chopsticks, metaphorically, which are like making connections across. So now you don't just have a fork, you have this ability to go across your food and metaphorically, you also have a kind of marrow spoon. So you're going to the nooks

and crannies of your brain. There is, there's so much that is valuable that mining for your intelligence is paradoxically facilitated by being more passive, by being in this reverie form of mind wandering, because then all the little things about yourself suddenly start coming to the fall.

We were talking about going to the movies. The other, one of the things that I think is so cool about the movies is there are scenes sometimes that just affect you and you're not really sure why. You know, there's no logic. It, it's just out of the blue, you discover a part of yourself that you've never known before. You know, I have a patient, I was at a pretty prominent position in medicine in the world, and when I first saw him, he was referred to me be, they were like, we know you'll, you'll know what to do with Guy. And I'm like, what? Why? What's the issue? He go, he just can't stop smelling books. And I was like, what do you mean he's smelling books?

He, they're like, he loves to smell books. And so when I first saw him, I asked him about it. I said, and they were like, you know, we think maybe he has OCD 'cause he can't stop doing this. Because when I asked him, he said, I'm compelled by the smell of books. Every book has a story of the past. And when I smell the pages and I have it close to my nose, it just makes me feel like I'm in a different world. And subsequently, I found he liked smelling everything, you know, in the session he'd be smelling his fingers. And some people would be like, you know, that's in society, we're taught that the sense of smell, it has a special place in society. You know, fragrance maybe, but not, not the notion of like what is real about who you are.

And, I think what what that did was he used his senses to let him go into the state of reverie where he'd be making up all these stories that were not even sensible. You know, our, our stories don't have to make logical sense. Words don't have to be tied by logic for us to have stories. Some of our stories come in smells. Some of our stories come in, tastes some, some of our stories come in touch. And the more time we give ourselves to realize that, the less likely it will be that we will be on our deathbed saying what happened to me? I can't tell you how many people I've seen over the course of my life who are incredibly well-known people who've done an amazing service for society who later on in their lives, they're like, I don't know what happened to the last 30 years of my life.

I literally don't know. Like, I feel like I, I, I feel like I can't be on earth anymore because I feel like I just wasted my life because I never took the time. What, what this does, what reverie does and mind wandering does, is it gives you time to savor. You know, if you, if you just, I remember my dad used to be like, with chocolates, I used to be, I'd give him a chocolate that I loved and I would be like, oh, you gotta taste this lint pistachio. He'd be like, oh yeah, this tastes good in chomp on it. And I'd be like, what? What are you doing? The chocolate?

He goes, it's tasty. And I was like, no, let it linger in your mouth. Just like, for, for what? It's gonna melt and and so I, that for me is a metaphor for what happens when you're mind wandering or when you're in reverie. Mind wandering and reverie are opportunities for savoring life. And when we savor life, our level of appreciation becomes much greater and gratitude becomes more than a cognitive construct. I'm not a fan of gratitude as a cognitive construct. I think it, it's overused in a certain way. So when people are like, you know, oh, I have gratitude, I feel slightly like, ugh, I dunno if I want to like, connect to that. It's like gratitude. Like, but, but when gratitude is like, oh man, like I, this is amazing.

You know, like when you feel that thankfulness. And it's not just a cognitive construct or a habit of like, what am I grateful for? Like most people that do that, you know, yeah, you can come up with plenty of things you're grateful for. But the depth of gratitude is, I think it's a feeling that is akin to a bow. When there is greatness, a force that is greater than you. When you are in a position of awe, the most beautiful thing about it is the experience of what I call the spiritual bow. It is, it is bowing before greatness that allows us to feel connected to something greater than ourselves. And that I think is where gratitude plays a role.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** I love this. I'm grateful for this. I'm so grateful for this.

**DR. SRINI PILLAY:** Well, that's a high.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Alright, I've got a and little fun fact by the way, when you're talking about the smelly guy. It's the, as far as our senses most related to our long-term memory. Right, this olfactory sense, our sense of smell. And this is why, again, you smell something today and it might remind you of something 40 years ago, you know, from your childhood.

It's very, very deeply. But music can do the same. There's so many things, but our sense of smell is very, very powerful. And it's one of the things that's uniquely human. Like our flavor palette is so dynamic and it has a lot to do with our nose. I remember in school even being taught about this taste buds.

You know, you got these little, but it's really our sense of smell. And if anybody wants to have like a visceral experience of that when you're sick and you can't really smell a sinus, congested food tastes super weird 'cause your smell isn't there kind of like navigating the party. And so after you broke down a little bit more, what mind wandering is, it kind of got me thinking about being free range. Just letting your mind be free range. If that's a good analogy for it.

**DR. SRINI PILLAY:** Yeah, 'cause there's a, there's a territory. Through which the mine can wander, that it's far greater than the real estate that we give it. You know, most of us confine ourselves to these very small spaces of exploration.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Factory farmed.

**DR. SRINI PILLAY:** Right. Why wouldn't you go far and wide? Why wouldn't you think of the most improbable things? Why wouldn't you? And this is not just about hope, by the way. This is about conditioning your brain. So there was a study, for example, that gave people the same paste, neutral paste, and they labeled one paste, lidocaine for pain relief, and the other one capsaicin the act of ingredient in chili. And then one was neutral. When they gave people the lidocaine, it was a neutral paste. People were like, oh, this feels like kind of calming. So pain relief, and you look in their brains and the reward center was turned out. When you gave people the capsaicin, the act of ingredient in chili, people were like, ah, this kind of stings. And you looked in their brain and the pain center was turned on. So in that instance, it was not the reality that was changing their brains. It was the expectation that put one brain in a state of reward so it would keep going and it put the other brain in a state of pain so it would stop.

So when we are thinking about possibility, when we are thinking about upping our game, what we wanna do is keep ourselves in a rewarded state so we can keep exploring beyond

just the narrow confines of our mind. And you know, as we talked about earlier with relationships, it gets even funkier 'cause now you're in a state of entanglement and you're in a state of exploration where you're exploring together and you go off on your own and you come back together. It's an amazing way of being. So, I think if people could recognize that they're falling into this trap of physical real estate, when in fact their minds were metaphorically built to fly wherever they want to fly.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yes, yes. Just a couple more. And there's so much more. This is one of my favorite books. It just like, shot right to the top.

**DR. SRINI PILLAY:** I'm so glad you enjoyed this.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And, you know, but certain, certain books as well, it is timely. Right. I'm at a place where I fully receive this and, and the ideas and just, there were so many affirmations, you know, things that I was doing on accident and showing up with certain results, and then certain things were just like giving me permission as well. And so we'll talk about a couple more of these really quickly. The strategies to unfocus there again, there's several more in the book, but another one is using your body to unfocus. Talk about that. How, how does that work?

**DR. SRINI PILLAY:** Well, a lot of people think that intelligence is only in the brain. And I think one big advantage we have over AI in its current form is that it doesn't have a body. And I'll, so if you just think about one simple thing, when we talk about stress, we talk about the hypothalamic pituitary adrenal axis. So immediately we're saying there's an intelligence that's not just in the brain. When we talk about the gut brain connection, immediately we're saying there's an intelligence that's not just in the brain. It's connected to the gut. And now it is pretty widely believed that human intelligence exists throughout the body. And a lot of times people feel like the only way in which they can get through their troubles is to think through it. But we now know that physical exercise, for example, is an amazing treatment for depression.



You know, you can't always use an emotional route to treat an emotional problem. Sometimes you use a physical route to treat an emotional problem, you know, on, on the rule a platform, because I wanted to make sure that we didn't just have, we have videos and we have videos of celebrities. We have videos of nature, of geometry, of fractals, and we've designed all of those based on science and how the science shows us what it impacts in the brain. We're now developing an embodiment platform, and what I want people to recognize is that when you embody something, it elevates you away from the state of what you're saying. For example, imagine saying yes enthusiastically if you say yes. You know, yeah, there are ways you can emphasize that. But if you're like, yes! All of a sudden the yes is in your body and you're not just stuck in the mind of your yes, your, the yes is distributed throughout your body.

So when I talk about unfocusing through embodiment, I'm asking people to recognize that intelligence, like helping your depression, helping your anxiety can come through, walking through exercise. That actually intelligence is widely distributed in the body and being able to embody your feelings. This is why we enjoy actors, right? We enjoy great actors because they're not just saying things beautifully. You can feel it in their bodies, you know, when they're, when they're committed to that, you can feel it in their bones. And so a question to ask yourself, is your points of view, the things you love, have you created space in your life to feel it in your bones?

Where we were like, oh, you know, this is such an amazing thing. Or, you know what, I think we've outsourced our emotions for the most part. I mean, how often have you heard someone say, oh my God, that's so funny. I'm like, what if it's funny? Why are you not laughing? They're like, I, that's, it's like, oh, wait a minute. I can say it. So why express it through my body? You know? 'cause people, people are like, oh no, I, I can't like jerk around and why not? You know, so unfocusing reveals I think a coherence and a congruence in our bodies. And, you see this in great sports players when they're in the zone, there's no mind body split.

It's, it's all operating in the same way. I could sense from when you were talking about smells that you probably have moments when you're cooking where it's all one. And when you're in

that, so you just know that the thing you're making is just gonna be. The bomb because it's a, there's something about the way you're not technically adding two teaspoons of this and three teaspoons of that. It just comes together in a certain way. But in that moment of the stirring of the pot, that is love. That is intelligence. I'm a firm believer that changes how the food is created.

And the more you can give yourself to that embodied sensation, so it's not stuck in your brain as just a thought, you know, you're not just putting, sometimes you to learn a recipe, it's fine to do two teaspoons of this and three teaspoons of that, but at some point you wanna let yourself go so that whatever you're making can, the heartiness of it is embodying who you are, and you can feel what that is in your body.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah. My mother-in-law, I know she's listening right now, and this really speaks to her, you know, she's never made the same thing twice when she's making our favorite Kenyan dishes, celle scma wiki, and it never tastes the same because she's just going off of what feels, you know, how, how certain things feel. And I've had some of the best food experiences of my life and sometimes I have expectation of like, I, I'm expecting it to taste this way, but then it's totally different. And just being open to that and receiving that love.

**DR. SRINI PILLAY:** Oh yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** That's transferred over in that food. And we know even through the Phantom DNA experiment that humans. Our attention changes the very stuff that reality is made of, you know? And so the fact that we impact and, change food with our feeling and our, and our emotion is very real. So thank you for sharing that.

**DR. SRINI PILLAY:** But you know, there's another example, which is a, it's, it's an preliminary stages. But I was intrigued by the lab results. So when people talk about the frequency of love, they often refer to this 528 hertz. I don't fully understand that, but it's a, it's a certain frequency that's been identified as embodying what love is. Well, they took two dishes with brain cells in them astrocytes, and they passed that frequency through one dish not the other. And both of the cells were bathed in alcohol at the, at a level of toxicity. What they

found was that in the dish that had the frequency of love going through it, or 528 hertz, even if you don't wanna call it that. That dish had a hundred percent less free radical, toxic radical.

Showing that frequency can change the nature of cells. We are now understanding the sound can change what cells are. And so, I think we pay too much attention to the concrete in the world. And the concrete is, it's cool it there, you can see it, it feeds your sense organs. But there are many more things than your sense organs. And the default mode network is one of those really cool parts of your brain that will expose to you that you are more than just your senses. You are this complex, integrated, highly intelligent being that can experience and integrate these heightened states of awareness. And I think love is one of those things that immediately elevates one to this heightened level of awareness. Whether it comes from a person or through a dish, you can feel it, in an instance.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yes, we have access to that at all times. That's so powerful. So powerful. You know, I was gonna ask you about one more strategy to assist us in unfocused. Again, there's many more in book so it's hard for me to pick from the list here, what to ask you about. But one of them is to create a tinker table. Let's talk about creating a tinker table.

**DR. SRINI PILLAY:** Well, I often think about people create these fixed agendas, and if I don't stick to this agenda, I'm not gonna get stuff done. As you said, focus is an amazing thing. It's fine to have focus in different parts of your calendar, but once you start to give yourself a little bit more permission where you're not procrastinating, you're living in a dynamic dance of your life. You're essentially tinkering with your timetable, and your saying, oh I think I moved the 10 to 12 here. Oh, I think a friend called me the other day and I was sort of like just got to the place where, and I was sort of like, ah, I just need another seven hours and I will be caught up. I was like, ah, it's a sunday..

And it's a particular friend I particularly like, and when he texted me he was like, why don't you come down? If I go down now, I'm not gonna get this work done. Now, in certain instances I wouldn't go the deadline were the next day. But I knew that the deadline was further up and so I did not regret saying this chunk of time, I'm gonna redistribute, i'm gonna tinker throughout the day. I'm gonna tinker from different parts of my calendar. And once you

stop thinking of this as procrastination, but start thinking of this as the dance of your life, you will realize that our time blocks do not have to be ever cemented representations of what we need to do. Some things are, you know, like this, like sitting a meeting time. I'm not gonna be like, well, you know, maybe I'll come at a certain time. I hope you're there. But there are many things in our lives. And if you don't have those, I'd ask you to look at your life again. Because I think everyone's life should have the ability to have the flexibility to tinker around with their times so that they don't have these fixed tables.

And, you know, which is why I've given people an access to a tinker table. And I'd encourage anyone who's interested in it, we have a process through getting the book, that the tinker table can be a super helpful way of learning how to not just reorganize your life, but add a dynamic quality to your life 'cause as long as we're alive, we might as well be dynamic. You know, why stay in a rigid sort of, you know, fossilized existence. The fossils are for later. Now is the time to feel alive.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yes. Yes. So can you let everybody know where to get a copy of the book? And also you mentioned these additional resources as well.

**DR. SRINI PILLAY:** Sure. So you can get a copy of the book on Amazon, on Barnes and Noble, pretty much anywhere online. You can get it to the local bookstore. I would encourage you to try to get it from Amazon and if you're interested, once you have the book in getting the tinker table and other resources, feel free to email us at [solutions@neurobusinessgroup.com](mailto:solutions@neurobusinessgroup.com). So it's solutions at N-E-U-R-O and then the word business. All one word group. All one word. So neuro business group.com. And we'd be happy to walk you through what we have so that you can use that in conjunction with the book to take your life to the next level.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Amazing. You mentioned Reulay a couple of times. Can you talk a little bit more about what people. Can look forward to with Reulay?

**DR. SRINI PILLAY:** Yeah, absolutely. Well, we'll, we'll have a link on, on your site. So Reulay is an app and it's AI driven and it's personalized video therapeutic experiences, which we've shown at Mayo Clinic can help to lower emotional distress, anxiety, and improve focus. So if people

sign up to Reulay, they'll be able to get these experiences that we've shown, can help people. And the more you tell the app what you like and what you don't like, the more it will find personalized experiences for you. And we didn't get into sort of fractals and geometry, but all the art that we've created on the platform is art that has been structured based on how the body responds to the art.

So, geometry, for example, as an example, the brain doesn't really like upside down triangles because they're unstable. So it tends to prefer stable base or fractals, which are just repeated patterns in art can actually restore sort of tissue wellbeing. So we've created scientific methods to expose people to these different kinds of art and, we're seeing a decent amount of success in it. So I'd encourage anyone who's interested in having a mindset shift on demand when you're just not feeling good on a particular day. You just need three minutes of a, you know, a reset. Please check out Reulay and see, see if it's for you.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Amazing. And also, of course, we'll have that for everybody in the show notes, but if you go to [themodelhealthshow.com/reulay](https://themodelhealthshow.com/reulay), which is spelled REULAY.

**DR. SRINI PILLAY:** Correct.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** You're gonna get access to an exclusive discount as well. So [themodelhealthshow.com/reulay](https://themodelhealthshow.com/reulay) for a special discount. This has been phenomenal. I am enjoying myself so much. There's so many other things I want to talk to you about. I would love to do this again.

**DR. SRINI PILLAY:** Yeah, I love it too.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** It's your work has been so impactful in my life and it's just like, it's so exciting. Like you've activated or helped to activate by creating this resource, just a new level of inspiration and fun. Right. I feel like I'm activating a fun season right now and just changing the way that I'm viewing reality. And often that's what life is all about. You know, these shifts in perception, right? And they can come from some really unexpected places.

Sometimes they can come from a conversation, sometimes they can come from reading a good book, and this is one of my favorite books. Jump right to the that top list of my favorite books. Tinker, dabble, doodle try. Everybody pick up a copy. Thank you so much for coming to hang out with us today.

**DR. SRINI PILLAY:** Well, thanks for having me. It's been more than a delight.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** The one and only Dr. Srini Pillay, everybody. Thank you so much for tuning into this episode today. I hope that you got a lot of value out of this. I've got a special message for you, a special request. This is episode 900, episode 900. If you've been rocking with me, if you enjoy the Model Health Show, please to celebrate episode 900. Please leave a review for the show. If you're listening on Apple Podcasts, leave a review, share your voice, and also Spotify as well. Leave a review. Share your voice. Share your voice in the comments. You can rate the show as well. That would mean so much to help celebrate. This very special milestone. And listen, we are just getting warmed up.

I'm telling you, we've got so much more in store. I'm so excited. And episodes like this, conversations like this, help to really add fuel to that fire for transformation and I'm just so excited. We've got some amazing world-class guests. And powerful masterclass is 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 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.