

Announcer: Bulletproof Radio a station of high performance.

Dave: You're listening to Bulletproof Radio with Dave Asprey. Today's cool fact of the day is that we've got a new way of solving problems. The International Conference of Machine Learning in Stockholm just had an announcement of a new kind of algorithm that windows out possibilities instead of one at a time basically 10 at a time. This was something out of Harvard University. They're doing problem solving 10 times faster than standard things for really complex problems.

One of the interesting problems they looked at was how do you devise an alternate route for cabs in New York City. They found that they could do it six times faster than existing technology. The reason this is a cool fact of the day is that this type of algorithm can speed up data processing for everything from drug discovery to social media analytics to analyze genetic data. Its one little data point in something big and transformative that's happening. It's that the amount of technology we have is creating exponential growth in our knowledge about what it means to be a human, what it means to be a high-performance human, and even how organizations work and how they function and how we work as teams with other people.

I believe after writing headstrong about mitochondria that we're fundamentally wired at a subcellular level to be kind to each other, to specialize and to cooperate. This is the same thing bacteria do when they make yogurt. It's not just one bacteria, it's a network of bacteria doing different things. The same thing happens in kombucha or in a biofilm or when you even get an infection. It's not like they're bacteria all doing the same thing. They actually lineup and protect each other. We're wired to do the same thing to each other as a species and computer algorithms like this let us see our behavior in new ways which is incredibly cool and exciting to me. So, look forward to the next five years of being full of just breakthroughs and knowledge about what it means to be us.

Today's guest on the show is someone who looks at organizations and leadership and doesn't necessarily use computer algorithms to do it, but has spent 15 years helping companies connect with their employees and with their consumers in the ad agency business. You can say, "Why the heck am I putting someone like that on the Bulletproof Radio Show?" The reason is that he started his own research and learning organization at the height of the last recession because he just felt something was missing and has spent almost 10 years looking at what the world's best companies do differently and has started sharing that knowledge.

So, whether you're an entrepreneur or you just work at a company, I think what you're going to find in this interview is that there's something really important about having a mission and knowing why you do what you do and why your company does what it does and how that can impact your performance as a human being. Today's guest is Ryan Estis. Ryan, welcome to the show.

Ryan: Thanks Dave. It is great to be here.

Dave: Now, you've worked with some pretty impressive clients, the National Basketball Association, Mayo Clinic, Ernst & Young, AT&T, all these different big companies and you're actually a faculty member for the Institute of Management Studies. You've spent a lot of time looking at how companies do what they do. I got to ask you first and foremost, why do you care? Why did you do that versus all the other things you could have done?

Ryan: Yeah. I think I got interested in it during my time at the ad agency. We worked with such a broad and diverse client roster. We were working with them and I became fascinated buying about meaningful work. It's such a big part of our lives. I think it has such an impact in our identity and who we are as people that it became an interest of mine and a passion of mine. I got to do it with the ad agency. Now I'm doing it I think in a more meaningful and impactful way on a daily basis so that's where it came from. Both my parents were teachers so maybe I have a little bit of that sharing knowledge implanted in me early in my life.

Dave: So, you just got interested early on and you stuck with it. You also did something similar to what I did. You had a high-paying executive job and you decided to, I don't want to say the height of your career, but as you're doing really well in your career, say, "Screw that noise, I'm going to go be an entrepreneur." Why did you decide to do that?

Ryan: Yeah, I think something was missing in me my quest for my own more meaningful work. It was an interesting time. It was probably the worst time to do it, because I did it at the height of the great recession, but I always say the great recession turned out to be my greatest gift, because there are some real challenges at the ad agency during that time like there were for a lot of companies. It really caused me to kind of hit the pause button and look inside. I was in my late 30s. I was single. I thought, "Wow, if I'm ever going to take a shot, now is the time." I didn't want to run a mediocre company sideways for the sweet spot of my career. I wanted to see if I can launch out of my own and do something significant, meaningful or something that mattered to me. It wasn't easy getting that off the ground, but it turned out to be the best professional decision that I've ever made.

Dave: There are a lot of people have seen the Bulletproof Radio now and I know this from social media and just from talking to people when traveling and speaking and whatnot, who were in the same mindset. A lot of the Bulletproof coaches at the Bulletproof Training Institute are saying, "Should I go start my own company now?" Now that you've done it, would you recommend it to other people?

Ryan: Everybody is different. What I would suggest to other people that that's something that's burning inside you. I think it's better to try and know than to live with the regret of never having tried at all. What I'd recommend to anybody is if you have an idea or a vision or something that really is calling to you, if there's a way to test that, to try it, to take a small step forward, incubate a side hustle and iterate the idea forward in some small way while you still have some semblance of security, that's not a bad way to test the idea and get a little feedback before you go all in like I did. My departure was very abrupt. I don't know that I recommend what I did to anybody else, but certainly my journey has been rewarding. Not really for what I've been able to achieve but I think

part of it is why I've been able to be calm over the last decade. I think that's part of why it's been so meaningful.

Dave: When you go to speak at a conference and you do this quite often several times per week, you're talking to large audiences tell them how they can perform better. What's the first thing that you tell them to pay attention to?

Ryan: Yeah, I think a lot of it comes down to their relationships. I think that's a big, big part of it. Their mindset towards change, I would say every organization that we deal with is trying to achieve some level of breakthrough. They're focused on innovation. Competitions coming from everywhere. A lot of people feel very overwhelmed and exhausted so we talk a lot about relationships, collaboration. I talk a little bit about self-care when it comes to leadership and then our attitude towards change. I think those are some of the big themes that large organizations are navigating with and dealing with and that's some of the focus of our work.

Dave: I have my crazy theories which I think are true about where a lot of our unconscious behaviors come from. That they're algorithms inside our bodies. The first and most important algorithm that a single celled bacteria will do is run away from kill or hide from scary things. So, we do that with all of our focus, at least most of our focus, all the time. We do that simply because if something eats you right now, it's sort of game over, get to try harder later. So, I say, "Well, okay we have that going on in quadrillions of locations in our body millions of times a second in each location."

So, this is a fundamental human condition. We have this personal and organizational thing that resist change, and as organizations grow, they have something that I describe as an immune system where it will push out new ideas. This is why innovation sucks at older bigger companies almost always. If you want to create innovation, you create a little skunk works. You don't tell anyone about it and you give them a budget and you shield them. Why is it that ... well, I think I already have the why. Given that people do resist change individually and in groups, how do we make people more comfortable on a personal level with accepting change?

Ryan: Yeah, big part of it is how we manage around mistakes and failure. If you're going to be innovative, you're going to make mistakes. You're not going to get everything right the first time. That's very counterintuitive to large publicly traded companies. I think success and legacy success has a tendency to breed complacency. New ideas aren't accepted and they're certainly not embraced especially outside of that environment. I think we have to talk about it, create awareness around it. I think particularly from a leadership perspective, get really conscious and intentional around how we coach and manage around mistakes. We do research around this stuff. Over 50% of employees in North America don't believe their company supports innovation because mistakes aren't treated as learning opportunities. They're treated punitively. I think it's a real leadership charge to conduct experiments, take risks and understand that success in the future is going to be more iterative. It's the different way of thinking and working.

Dave: It is funny. Earlier in my career, I was a cofounder of a part of a company that held Google's first servers. This is the only stock ever to split three times in one year on the

NASDAQ. It was called Exodus Communication. This little business unit, I was one of three founders of it, the organization tried to shut us down. We blocked that, but we ended growing to \$100 million a quarter in revenue.

Ryan: Wow!

Dave: After they tried to kill it.

Ryan: Wow!

Dave: They tried to kill it for all these dumb little reasons. It wasn't a strategic decision. It's one of these emergent annoyances. In this case, we had our own set of financials and we're able say, "Well, we look like we're making money. Maybe you could let us live and we'll just be more supportive." We played the game and ran the gauntlet, but for every one of those success stories, there are probably hundreds or thousands of really good ideas that get kicked out of companies, and then get done as startups that go on to disrupt their companies.

Ryan: Well, it's so true. My own business today was very much that way. If I was given the runway, I would have incubated this idea inside of the agency and grown it into some type of a learning organization, and I think we would've been able to grow and expand it. We have relationships large organizations all over the country but it just wasn't what we were doing. It wasn't a traditional way we approach business. I think there are examples of large progressive organizations. I think AT&T would be one. Red Hat would be another where they really focus on being more of a meritocracy, where they allow good ideas inside the organization to bubble up, get voted on, analyze, gain support, resourcing and then actually if there's merit, they move forward into a business. I've seen examples of that, but I would say to your point, it's right. For every story like yours, there's thousands of flares that go up and die quietly on the vine because they don't get the support they need.

Dave: Now most people listening to Bulletproof Radio aren't running companies although there's a good number of entrepreneurs and seniors execs who do, but all of us or at least most of us work for a company. Its my experience that if I work for a company that supports innovation and embraces failure without punishing you for it, that I'm generally happier. I look at the times in my career where you could say, "Well, here's the plan." We bought off on the plan and it didn't work and so we'll do something else, but it's not that your personal failure going to get fired because the plan didn't work unless it really was your fault and you did something you shouldn't done kind of thing in which case well you get what you earn in that case, but we're not talking about that. We're talking about you did what you said what you're going to do and the outcome was different than what everyone planned. How do people go about finding a job? How do you spot a company like that?

Ryan: I think part of it is don't necessarily focus just on finding the job, focus on finding the manager. So much of this comes down to who you're working for and those kinds of relationships. I really give that counsel to young people early in their career, emergent

in their career. Then I think for anybody that's looking for a job and a lot of people are because they're not satisfied where they are, I think you have to evaluate those things and interview both the management and the employer as much as they're interviewing you. Those are two suggestions that I'd have for anybody that's thinking about a change and a lot of people are.

You're right. The vast majority of people aren't happy at work. It's unfortunate because we spent a significant number of time there and that has consequences on the rest of our life. There's a Stanford professor researching just wrote a book called Dying for a Paycheck. He wrote about the catastrophic health consequences of feeling so unfulfilled and disengaged in our work. That's a reality today.

Dave: It's something that I've certainly done early in my career to work that you don't think is particularly important or exciting and you work for someone who doesn't necessarily have your best interest at heart. You fast-forward 20, 25 years and I'm working every day at Bulletproof to have a culture where our managers and our leadership actually is kind and cares for and helpful and supportive of the people who report to them, because it's just so easy to default into the standard madmen top-down hierarchy where you yell at people who don't do what you want and you send nasty emails late at night which is a habit that I had earlier in my career for sure. What it does though is it eat outs the soul of a company if you allow that to happen. Your advice there as well look at the person you'd be working for. So, you interview your boss during the interview, your potential boss, but how do you know that your boss isn't a good boss working for a company full of abusive managers?

Ryan: Well, you don't necessarily so you have to do additional due diligence. There's more ways to do that now. You go on a site like glassdoor.com. You see if you have any second or third connections on LinkedIn where you can get feedback. You ask questions. It's like doing research, homework and due diligence. There's more resources and channels and ways to do that than we've ever had before. So, I would say consider the research project. You want to land in a place like Bulletproof that has a leader, that's saying those kinds of things, that has core values that you can identify with and you come prepared when you're in an interview with thoughtful questions about how they manage failure.

You ask those things and I think there's a way to vet some of that out. Look, there are great examples of companies that are doing this like you. Companies I work with, a company like Mayo Clinic that's about purpose, values and culture. A company like Edward Jones that cares about their people and puts people first and in 2008 during the financial crisis where they were certainly not going to make their numbers, they did not lay a single person off. You hear these stories in these examples and they're out there. So, you just have to be thoughtful I think in your quest to find a place like that.

Dave: I want to know how Glassdoor deals with failure, because they mixed the Bulletproof account with some Bulletproof consulting firm. So, now we have some-

Ryan: You have bad reviews that aren't yours?

Dave: Yeah, exactly. I love that. Hey Glassdoor, if you're listening, maybe you could fix that. We've been calling them forever saying, "Could we only get the reviews that are actually ours?" Anyway, I'll go out of my soapbox there. To your point, checking out the social cred of the company is important. Are there specific questions that people might want to ask a manager to help determine whether they're the right kind-

Ryan: I think so. Yeah. I think you have to ask questions you care about. So, things like autonomy and flexibility are important to you, ask questions about that. I would be asking questions about innovation and how mistakes are treated. I would ask about challenges and opportunities and upward mobility. In the research we do, we look at these drivers of engagement, what makes people happy in their work. Confidence in management, confidence in the future of the organization, and being invested in having an opportunity to grow and develop. So, you can build effective open-ended questions about all those things and things that are personal drivers for you in your work and I think gain some pretty good insight into what the experience is going to be like. That's what you need to do. You need to walk out of there with a realistic job preview of what the experience is going to be like on a day-to-day basis.

Dave: One of the reasons I invited you onto the show is that you talk a lot about connecting to your why and companies have a why, but people also have a why. What's your advice for individuals to help them find their why and how do you define that?

Ryan: There was a wonderful exercise that a business coach put me through when I was on the cusp of my transition. She asked me to think about my life five years into the future and pick a random day, a Wednesday five years from now and open my eyes and wake up and just make some notes about the day. What I did, what I was experiencing, who was around me, how I was working. It was a vision for my life into the future. What I realized and of course first pass at this I got it all wrong. I had these goals and what my business was going to do and how much money I was going to make. She said, "No, no, no just wake up and open your eyes and have a great day in your life." What I realized was a lot of the choices I was making in the short term weren't moving me to align with the person I wanted to be. the place I wanted to be five years into the future.

That I was going to have to confront my reality and make some tough decisions in the short term and accept some challenges to course correct and moved down the path of my why. I think early in your career finding your why, what your passion is, what motivates you, you experiment. You try things and ultimately hopefully through a bit of trial and error you get really good at something that you enjoy and that you're passionate about, but I think I'm certainly living proof, you're living proof that I would you my mom was 80 years old is living proof that it's never too late to course correct, and if you're off-track, to consider making a change and moving forward in a different direction. We change. Life changes. Opportunities come and go and that's okay too. It's never too late.

Dave: Have you read Clayton Christensen's new book How Will You Measure Your Life? This is the guy who invented the term disruptive innovation or sorry disruptive technology. He's been a guiding light in my career, even Bulletproof I'm disrupting big food right now. Like, "Hey guys, fat is more important than sugar which is why you want to be

eating that not sugary crap." That's disruptive in all of tech, but his new book has nothing to do with that, has to do with exactly what you just said. Is that something you've come across?

Ryan: I have not read his book. No, but I will. I will put that on my list.

Dave: It's worth it. You're telling the story, the consultant who helped you think through this sounds a lot like one of my business school professors Stew Friedman who's been on the show. I was getting my MBA at Wharton. I was about 30 and he had us do exactly some exercise. He had us go 20 years in the future. He had us even write letters to ourselves that he would send us I think one year or five years after the class and envision not how much money we had but what did our day look like, what was bringing us joy.

That included family and did we have kids, what our relationship look like, where did we live, what do we do for work, what brought us happiness. Man, that's some scary stuff because you realize you have no idea, and then once you realize you have an idea and you realize where you are and the short term decisions, you realize you're totally doing it wrong, but without the vision of the future, I certainly wouldn't be where I am now if I hadn't done that work. So, you got someone do that for you. I had someone do it for me, but most people listening probably haven't done that.

Ryan: It's a powerful tool. We did go a few layers deeply. One of the things we also did it and I think this is very helpful when you're doing a visioning exercise like that is when you land on this would be a great vision for my life. Now it's okay if a vision changes but you have to have a starting place that you're moving toward. It's also kind of identifying what are the consequences if you don't make the changes that you need to make today. The consequences are you may miss a window or you may end up not having the partner, the kids or you may end up divorced or whatever the consequences are but also accepting some of the reality of "Hey, we're all moving forward here and time is a finite resource." I think it is our most precious finite resource. It's nonrenewable. The decisions we make each day eventually cumulatively began to add up and shape our lives and our destiny. That was a powerful exercise for me and putting those words on paper and confronting it really was the catalyst for me to make some major life changes.

Dave: I got to ask you a question about that.

Ryan: Yeah.

Dave: I used to think that time was my most precious resource, but now I think energy is my most precious resource, because if I have lots of time and I'm tired and cranky, the time is of almost no value. My ability to show up all the way in the time that I have is more precious than the time itself. Does that resonate with you or not?

Ryan: It resonates with me in an absolutely significant way. Yeah I think ... when I look at the trifecta for me, a lot of this comes down to meaningful relationships, meaningful work and wellness, mind-body wellness. I've got to be healthy and be able to ... and the way I

describe it as I want to show up consistently as the best version of myself. So, I certainly do think the quality time maybe a better way-

Dave: There you go.

Ryan: ... to describe that. Yeah.

Dave: What do you do? So, you're a CEO. You travel all the time. Both of those are shown to shorten your lifespan. So, how do you manage your own biology? Not only that, showing up on stage for people, who haven't done much public speaking, it takes an enormous amount of energy and focus to be in front of 1,000 people and actually bring it all the way, way more than it takes to show up in a conference room and do it. I don't know that I can tell you why but it's a big thing that you do.

Ryan: Thank you.

Dave: How do you manage your energy when you're on airplanes and all this stuff every day?

Ryan: So, energy is a word that we use a lot. It's actually a word that I think is associated with why I get hired. I'm with the National Basketball Association. Today, kicking off their annual revenue meeting and the words they used were "We want your energy." So, managing ... energy is an asset of mine. So, I have to have some discipline around how I manage it. It's some of the simple stuff. It's a lot of the stuff that you talk about. It's being rested. Its self-care. It's maintaining meaningful relationships. Then it's what goes in my body. Staying hydrated, managing my diet. I haven't missed a week of five workouts and coming up on three and a half years. So, no matter what, I am carving in an hour to exercise five days a week minimum. That gets put in my calendar. That's as important as any meeting with the CEO that I have and I mix it up. So, I have to feel good. I have to stay healthy. My job and the revenue of my business is dependent on it. So, it's a priority.

Dave: All right. So, you prioritize it, but what do you actually do? How do you wake up at five in the morning two time zones away from where you'd like to be or where your body wants you to be and show up at full energy? That's something most people haven't mastered.

Ryan: Well, I have routines and rituals. So, I have a pretty disciplined morning routine of waking up, drinking water. It includes some meditation. It includes some journaling and part of that journaling routine is a gratitude practice. Depending upon my schedule, it would include perhaps some light stretching or movement or that could transition into a full-blown workout depending on if I'm ... this morning I had to be down early for a sound check in the speech. So, the workout is going to come at the end of the day. So, I have some flexibility around it, but some of those is consistent ... then it usually includes Bulletproof coffee. I bring it with me when I travel which we talked about offline.

That's a practice that it makes me feel good and I experiment. I know something you've talked about and I read about it using cold therapy. Immersing myself in cold water or

cold showers or if I pick up an idea from somebody else about tweaking my morning routine, I'll do that. When I'm on the road, I also love to opt in, drop in at workout classes. So, if it's a yoga studio, a cycling class, a bar class, a boot camp, to get around other people and create some human connection, but I do those things and I think that puts me in a spot where I'm ready to show up and contribute.

Another thing is I love what I do. The idea that I'm with a company like the National Basketball Association, 300 executives are interested in what I have to say and they value that. That's their hour not mine and I owe it to them to show up as the best version of myself prepared for impact. So, I take it seriously. I consider myself a pro and that's how I prepare.

Dave: How often do you do yoga?

Ryan: Once a week minimum. So, I mix up my workouts.

Dave: When I'm home, I do yoga three mornings a week. I have a teacher come in but I travel probably around 150 days of the year so I don't know if that works out too, but I said I'm at least once a week as well. What do you get out of yoga, you don't get out of some other form of exercise?

Ryan: Yeah. I think yoga is as good for the mind as it is for the body. So, certainly for me is some flexibility. I spend so much time on planes and airports that the lower back and the body, the stretching and holding the poses is great, but there's certainly something internally that's calming and centered. For me, I think that's tremendous benefit. I should do it more than once a week. I've got a studio that I love at home, but like you I'm on the road more than 150 days a year. So, that's where it gets challenging, but I will. I'll drop in on studios when I'm traveling too. I think it's a good practice. When I'm doing it consistently well, I feel better.

Dave: Yeah, same here. I would like to do it more when I travel but I haven't mastered that art yet. Give me time. Now, you spent a lot of time teaching companies about leadership which means teaching leaders about leadership. It's one of the things that everyone benefits from understanding. The reason is that some of us will evolve over time to become leaders but almost everyone is a leader in some aspect of their life. You may be leader of your household. You may be leader in a group of friends. It may be a leadership of three people or 300 people, but the idea to recognize your own potential for that and also to see a good leader in action versus a bad leader is a skill that everyone benefits from. How do you define leadership in your practice and in the way you teach companies?

Ryan: Yeah. Leadership is earning followership and it's really that simple. I would agree with you. It's not about title or tenure. It's about having the ability to inspire other people to want to change, become more of who they are. When we talk about leadership, I will say that it's not a job, it's a responsibility. It's not about us. It's about humility, sacrifice, service and helping other people become the best they're capable of being. I think parenting is leadership. I think friendship can be leadership.

I think there's all kinds of leadership opportunities in our community. I think everybody at some point through the journey of life is going to step into the opportunity to lead and to have impact. So, I always encourage leaders to consider two questions at the end of the day. The first one I like to consider is, who did I impact today? Then the second one ... Because so much of leadership is about impact and so much of what fulfills us is about impact. Then the second one is, how will I be remembered by the people I work with today? I know that cumulatively over time the answer to that second question will define and shape my legacy as a leader and as a man. So, I think about it in those terms and then it forms how I show up to serve each and every day as well.

Dave: I knew you'd be an odd duck here, but I remember early in my career I was probably 27 and I went to work for this new sales executive. Sales executives are the people you mostly focus on they're a different kind of breed leaving a group of people to go out and sell things, even really good things that help people. It's just a different mindset than say leading an accounting team. Different styles of people. This guy took me for a walk and he's like, "Dave, what do you want your legacy to be?" I scratched my head, being the slightly Asperger's engineering kind of guy working in a sales organization as a sales engineer I said, "I don't really care." You could tell it really pissed him off which probably wasn't the right answer. The other day I was interviewing Gary Vaynerchuk, a big name.

Ryan: I know Gary. Sure.

Dave: Yeah, Gary is great. He always speaks his mind. Same thing, he said, "What do I want my legacy to be?" I'm like, "Gary, why do you care?" He said, "Actually, I think it's just my ego." So, I appreciate that. I don't care if anyone remembers my name. When I'm dead, I care pretty much if my family and close friends remember me and think I did good by them, but all the work I'm doing isn't for my legacy. It's not for me. So, am I low in that my legacy is just irrelevant?

Ryan: Yeah. So, the way I talk about legacies we shouldn't wait to leave a legacy, we should begin leading one right now. You lead one today through the impact that you have on others, the culture you were trying to build, the opportunities you're trying to create for people, the disruption that you're bringing to help people live longer, healthier lives. You're leading that in your life and in your service. I would agree with you 100 years after I'm gone, I don't really ... I'm not like Gary in the way where I don't give a shit what everybody thinks of me. I want what I'm doing today to matter today. So, those two questions help frame it in that way. Who did I impact today? How will the people I work with remember me today? Beyond that or 50 years after I'm gone, that's not a scoreboard I concern myself with. I want my-

Dave: So, you're looking at real time legacy basically like "How am I impacting now?"

Ryan: Yeah. So, I tell leaders, "Don't worry about leaving one, lead one right now."

Dave: Okay. I can resonate with that exactly where if even if you go somewhere and get a lunch. How did you treat the waitress? Were you kind? and things like that. I value that

greatly. I don't care if she knows my name. It doesn't matter like was her day slightly better that sort of a thing. All right. So, that's how you define it.

Ryan: That's being intentional, right? So, you decide how you show up. Your intentional the way you move through life and in your interactions and your relationships. I certainly think that's a better way to be.

Dave: All right. Cool. Let's switch gears to innovation because you talk about in companies. We touched on it earlier. Innovation is a core thing that I do. Sometimes I feel like some of the most innovative thinking I do happens when I'm not working and it just appears. The outline for my book on fertility and how to have a smarter healthier kid, I came out of many hours of a very altered state neuro feedback work. I just picked up a pencil and I wrote down the entire outline for the book. It was in there somewhere, but I'm not sure that it was a conscious thoughtful process. So, how would an individual person whether they're part of an innovative company or not be more innovative?

Ryan: So, here's a thought around this. When I'm doing a seminar, I always ask the question kind of the question that you were considering is, "Where do you do your best thinking, your most creative thinking? Where do your best insights come from?" You start to hear the answers. When I'm doing yoga or when I'm running or in the shower, in the middle of the night which maybe anxiety and not good thinking but whatever. What never is, what it never is, is never in the office. It's never during work, because we're overwhelmed and we're distracted and we're switch tasking. We're not concentrating and doing the work.

So, I always suggest is you've got to schedule some white space in your calendar. Jim Collins who wrote Good to Great and Built to Last he has a formula for this. For every two weeks of work schedule, 10 hours of white space where you think about your business and you think about your problems. Virtually nobody in management and leadership at large companies is doing something like that. They're working in the business. They're grinding through their 300 emails. They're at their desk or in meetings back to back to back to back for 10 hours and then they're getting to their email at night. So, they're not giving themselves that time to think, to relax. It's different for everybody. You had your way of doing it. I'm going to Jackson Hole for four or five days at the end of this week to hike and spend time in nature and do digital detox. I know that it'll put me in a state where my thinking is clearer and I'm more creative and I'll probably come back and produce a lot of work after that.

Dave: That's probably the hardest thing for leaders including me. Every minute of my day is scheduled because there's huge demands on my time and I've got some big things I'm working on. I'm grateful to be able to do that, but yeah, there's a certain point where you can look back over the last month and say, "I actually didn't have an hour of unscheduled time." I know that that's not particularly healthy but sometimes it emerges and that's a function of working with the people who help you schedule your time. I can tell people listening I haven't mastered that one yet. So, if you have any good advice for me Ryan, I'm all ears on that one.

Ryan: Well, Dave, my bit of advice on that is what gets scheduled gets done. So, if white space is a priority, you've got to put it in your calendar. Get the people that are managing your calendar to put it out way in advance and incorporate that into your project work. I agree with you. We can all sprint for a little while, but there is a point where if you keeps sprinting, will have a diminishing return on your efficiency and your productivity. So, you want to balance that. Look, certainly, I think anybody that's busy, that's trying to do big stuff deals with that. My recipe for dealing it is to protect blocks of time in my calendar.

Dave: I put them in there but then some sort of work-

Ryan: [crosstalk 00:37:37].

Dave: Yeah, some reporter for some big magazines. "I have to have this interview to make the deadline." I'm like, "All right, sure." Right in the middle of my white space and then you have two small blocks. I find that there's a task switching time. You want to get into that white space mode. It takes you a little while. So, putting 15 minutes of white space four times a day is different than one hour of white space. A day of white spaces is very different than two half days. It's the fragmentation of white space that I'm working to combat on my calendar.

Ryan: There's a book Cal Newport wrote called Deep Work and I don't want to butcher his research, but I think it takes ... when you get distracted, I think it takes over 20 minutes to on board to get back to the same level of concentration around whatever your project is. So, I've experimented with things. I've had a 10 o'clock rule for periods of time where I've told my team "During this period of time, no calls, no meetings, no interruptions. I won't be on email before 10:00 a.m." So, the 6:00 to 10:00 a.m. time frame and I'm early riser, that works for me, is protected. That gives me four hours of deep work. Other people can do that. My brother can do that at night. He can sit down at 9 o'clock at night between nine and midnight or later than midnight he can lock in and grind. That's not my most creative time. Everybody is different in that regard. I think you have to tap into what works well for you and where that creative energy comes from.

I'll tell you another thing to for me. Doing a full digital detox a couple of times a year. I've done it as long as eight days. More recently, I did one for four days. I'm going to do it this weekend in Jackson Hole for two. That is a huge reset for me. I know there's been a lot that's been written and talked about with respect to technology and addiction but that constant just competing for my attention, I just know I enter a different place. My mind body feels differently when I shut that off for four or five days.

Dave: I went through this very interesting process. When I first did neuro feedback maybe 20 something years ago, a phone rang during the session in this doctor's office. I watched my brainwaves just go completely crazy. He laughed and said, "Look at your brain. That's your fight or flight response to my phone call." I was like, "Wow, every time the phone rings, I actually do have this sort of anxiety response." Then I realized with email alerts and all that stuff, so for many years, I don't have any alerts turned on in my devices. If you text me, I get an alert. Other than that, I'll look when I want to look.

Even with text messages, I've got to the point where I'll look at it when I want to look at it, like I see it's there, but the inner stress response is just gone where I truly at a visceral neurological level I don't care about a text message anymore which has reduced my burden from that stuff, but I'm going to go spend a few days in the desolation sound. I'm pretty sure there's no cell phone coverage anyway. So, we'll see if an actual digital detox versus neurologically program it myself to know, "I might miss something important in a text message but if there were no text messages, I would've missed it anyway. I'm not going to die no matter what happens on text messaging." I feel like when I know that viscerally my stress level goes down, but that was years of internal programming to get to the point where I feel like I'm not paying the toll I used to pay, but I don't know that for a fact. I could just be deceiving myself.

Ryan: You know, interesting. All of my alerts are off on my phone too. So, after the detox, I made that change. I think it's helped a lot, but the device is still on me physically. It would be interesting to catalog how many times I actually touch it or engage with it on a daily basis particularly when I'm traveling, but I found that that extended period of time where it was simply accessible, where I could just be. So, it's having more time to be instead of do. I think like a lot of busy people, we end up in doing mode and being mode gets lost a little bit. So, capturing some of that being time back was important to me.

Dave: I think that you've got a good point there. Ryan, if someone came to you tomorrow and said, "I want to perform better at everything I do as a human being." What are your three most important piece of advice for me? What would you offer them?

Ryan: Number one, create a compelling vision for what you want, perform better. Success I think it's defined differently for everybody. You get to do that to yourself but I'd say be kind to your future self. We talked about having compelling five year vision. Number two, stay in the learning line. Leaders are learners and so whether that's hiring a coach or accessing good information on your own, you got to constantly be challenging yourself to grow, stay in a growth mindset and then the third thing I would say and it's a big part of your focus is take good care of yourself. For me, that means meaningful relationships, meaningful work and mind-body wellness. If I'm doing all of those things, I tend to find that I'm making progress, I feel fulfilled that I'm moving my life in a productive direction.

Dave: Well, thank you and thanks for being on Bulletproof Radio. Your website is Ryan Estis, E-S-T-I-S.com and for the entrepreneurs amongst our listeners or people interested in innovation and leadership, you've got a bunch of good stuff up on your blog where you go deep on things which is why I wanted to pick your brain on the show today. Thank you for showing up.

Ryan: Thanks for having me. Appreciate it.

Dave: If you like today's show, I have to ask for you. One, let me know. I'm always trying to figure out how much do you want to hear about leadership and innovation and the entrepreneurial side of things because some of the world's top performers are entrepreneurs but a lot of them aren't. The second thing is if you like the show leave a review. So, hit me up on social media. Hit me up on Instagram, on dave.asprey and tell

me, "Yeah, I really like the stuff. I want more of it." or "I want more neuroscientists because I'm listening and I love all the stuff." I'm going to be a better human being not just in my brain but in the way I show up in the world and I talk to guys like Ryan to pick their brains and hopefully you're getting some value out of the interviews as well. So, thanks for letting me know what matters to you and leaving a review about it.