

Announcer: Bulletproof Radio, a state of high performance.

Dave: You're listening to Bulletproof Radio with Dave Asprey. Today's cool fact of the day is that a healthy relationship starts with we. Now Dave, that's not a cool fact of the day. That's some sort of new generation whatever platitude, but I'm talking about research that really grew our body of evidence saying that the pronouns that you use can actually predict good relationship outcomes. This is research by UC Riverside psychologist Megan Robbins, who emphasized the power of first person personal pronouns like we and us in relationships, so if you say we, it's an indicator of interdependence, meaning that partners affect each other's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. If you shift from that self-oriented I to the relationship-oriented we, it makes a difference.

Dave: Robbins and her team looked at 30 studies of 5300 participants to say that couples who say we and us are the ones who have better relationships. About half the people that they studied were married. They looked at relationship outcomes, relationship behaviors, mental health, physical health, and other health behaviors. In all five of those categories, across all context and almost perfectly equal for men and women, apparently, we is greater than I or, to put it the other way, there is no I in we.

Dave: Speaking of relationships and things like that, whenever Game Changers, a book that summarizes the wisdom and knowledge of almost 500 people who've done something noteworthy enough to come on Bulletproof Radio in their careers and in their lives, the research showed that there's three big categories that people pay attention to. They focus on being happier. They focus on being smarter. They focus on being faster. The power of relationships came out in several of the 46 laws of high performers.

Dave: If you haven't had a chance to read Game Changers, it will save you 500 hours of podcast listening time to read this book. It is the highest ROI of all the books there. You want the nuggets, the wisdom, not podcast transcripts boiled down, I'm talking actual analysis of data to tell you what the people who do the biggest things pay attention to, what they value the most so you can reorganize your priorities, read Game Changers and, if you'd be so kind, leave a review.

Dave: I say that because we're going to be talking about writing books and about being an author because I have one of my favorite authors, who's an inspirational guy and, well, sometimes branded as a bit of a dirtbag, but it's totally not true. I know him. He's smiling right now. And someone who's been on the show before and who's actually featured in Game Changers, none other than Neil Strauss. Neil, you've actually-

Neil: I've never been called a dirtbag, at least to my face before.

Dave: Well, it's just what we say when you're not in the room and I thought-

Neil: Oh, by the way, quick note on your fun fact of the day because I have an issue with this, but maybe you don't, when a male says, who's in a couple, says we're pregnant, does that ever strike you, according to your fun fact, that's a good thing, but to me, I always

think no, she's pregnant, dude. You're just going to be cheering it on, but couples say that. It always rubs me the wrong way.

Dave: I think when a woman says it, it feels a little bit different. When a guy says it, I'm like are you sure it's yours? No, I'm kidding. I don't actually think that. Yeah, it is weird. It's like maybe our family is pregnant or whatever. We're expecting a baby feels good, but we're pregnant.

Neil: We're expecting a baby, but she's pregnant.

Dave: I don't think I ever said we're pregnant. It was always like Lana's pregnant and I'm really happy about that. The reason I was joking when we called-

Neil: Well, we're really happy about that, by the way.

Dave: Exactly. Now, the reason I was jokingly saying you were a dirtbag is because you're well-known because you wrote *The Game* and you immersed yourself in this pickup artist community and so there are people who read your book, which is pretty shocking and a fantastic read, which makes sense because if you look at what you've done as a writer and journalist, you've had just fantastic career. You know how to tell a story like few people do. You read that, you're going oh, my god, this pickup artist community is pretty profoundly disturbed.

Dave: You could've been branded as that, but you came out. We talked about this in your other two interviews on the show, but you came out of that after a while and you said, "I'm going to write *The Truth*," which is the opposite of that. For people that didn't hear those other two interviews, who don't know your backstory before you got into your new project we're going to talk about, your new podcast, tell me about immersing yourself in the game.

Neil: Sure. Yeah, no, it's interesting. I think a lot of people who say that *The Game*, it's like an interesting phenomena separate from me. You can't control what happens with a book after you write it and it has become this symbol of all that's disgusting about just whatever, that male kind of culture. Even when I wrote it and again, I don't know what it is since I haven't read it since I wrote it. I never read a book once it's published because I might want to change something.

Dave: I know. I'm the same way.

Neil: Yeah, and because it's so old, I'm sure there are appalling things that I've written that the intention when I wrote the book, it wasn't like a pro rah, rah, this culture. This is what you do. It definitely was like a journey into and out of the darkness of this manipulative, predatory world, so it's funny. What people think the book is, is different than what I intended it as. What it actually is, I don't know.

Dave: You're an investigative journalist. You've won big awards. *The New York Times* for a decade. You've written for *Rolling Stone* on Elon Musk and Tom Cruise, so you're the big deal as a journalist, very successful.

Neil: It's interesting because our culture is so obsessed with sex, but if you do something about sex, it just eclipses everything because we're so tied in knots around the concept of sex and sexuality.

Dave: I was blown away because your first book, Neil, it was called *Emergency*. I don't know if that was your first book, but the first book I read, anyway. It was this fantastic story spanning probably five or 10 years of how you learned to become self-sufficient. It inspired me to do the urban escape and evasion, kidnap for training where they teach you how to pick locks and what to do if you're locked in the trunk of a car and all this stuff. You lived all this stuff and then you write this story immersed in it. Then you did the same thing for this world of pickup artists, but you did get branded as this kind of low moral sort of thing because you immersed yourself in it to write about it.

Dave: What blows me away is then you come back with the truth and now you're so focused on this level of rigor on relationships and on not being good at picking up women, but actually becoming in a healthy relationship with them. That arc is outside of your storytelling, but that's actually what you did as a human being, but you immersed yourself in these different things and then you told the story. I think that you completely changed the perception of yourself as a human being by doing that, which is something few people get to do.

Neil: Right. It wasn't the goal. I think it was the goal when I [inaudible 00:07:38]. My goal with *The Game* was I was just lonely, wanted to know what am I doing wrong. Why don't women like me? That literally was the goal. With *Emergency*, it was like I'm scared. The world's going to hell and you can't trust the system to protect you. What am I going to do in dealing with that fear? The truth was why don't my relationships work out? Why do they always end in disaster? How can I fix that? To me, it started the question and once I found an answer, it became a book, versus oh, I'm trying to ... A lot of people, when they come up to me and ask questions and I'm sure you, too, they're like they want to get an idea that makes money or an idea that's successful. You start with something you just really want to do, whether it's succeeds or not you win if you do it.

Dave: Yeah, because you've got to do it, which is the thing.

Neil: Right.

Dave: I'm like that with this whole anti-aging thing that I've been doing for 20 years. It's what I like.

Neil: Exactly. Exactly. Winning is living longer. You win. Like a book, it doesn't matter. Exactly. That's the thing is like people, I'm sure a lot of people listening, too, maybe this is cliched advice, but it really is true. Whenever someone asks a question, it's like what you do anyway if you didn't get paid for it? What would you do anyway if it wasn't

successful and feel like it was an accomplishment? If you ask yourself that question, there's no losing.

Dave: Yeah. That-

Neil: It's the Joseph Campbell quote. Oh, go ahead.

Dave: There's a Joseph Campbell quote about it, but it's not really-

Neil: It's not the follow your bliss one. Sorry to cut you off. This one's not as popular. I think it's more important than the follow your bliss quote. It's like the insecure way is really the secure way. The thing that seems not safe is safe, but the secure way, like I'm doing this for money, is really insecure because if you lose the money or you don't make money, you have nothing.

Dave: The experience can't be taken away, but the money can.

Neil: Exactly.

Dave: I certainly learned that one when I made and lost \$6 million before I was 28 and like yup, I wasn't a lot happier with that money, but it sure was more convenient. If I'd have spent that money on experiences, I probably would've been able to tell stories at least as interesting as *Emergency*.

Neil: Right. Exactly. Exactly.

Dave: It's a bit scary and I look at *Game Changers* as what I would've liked to have known when I was 20. If someone had just told me this is what the people get to where you want to get, this is what they pay attention to, this is what they care about, it would've saved me a lot of tilting at the wrong windmills sort of thing. I'm always scared of that advice here, do what you love, because I know some people in their 20s and what they really love is nude figure skating or doodling on the beach or getting really, really high. You're like, it's got to be somewhat useful.

Neil: It doesn't have to be useful and here's an important distinction. It isn't like live by the pleasure principle. Again, those kids who play video games are now huge e-sports guys and women. There's a lot of money in cannabis world.

Dave: Fair point.

Neil: There's an important distinction, which is people think we're saying you have to love it all the time and as you and know, and I remember when you opened the cafes and the first one wasn't opening or when I was writing *The Truth*, it's not it is if you're doing what you love, you are miserable during 3/4 of it, but you do it because it's worth it in the end.

Dave: Writing a book, I-

Neil: You do it because it's worth the misery, not because you're never going to be miserable.

Dave: I'm in the late stages of my next book after *Game Changers* because if you're going to write a book every 12 to 18 months, you're always writing. That last like six weeks of going through everything that you've written and compiled and rewriting it, I usually don't get enough sleep. It takes something out of you, but then when you're done, you're like okay, now I really understand what I just wrote about. I'm guessing you must have a similar process when the deadline's near you're all in, but it's not always fun, right?

Neil: Oh, no. No, it's tough. I say never again. I'm never doing this again. I'll read it and I'll say this is horrible. Why do I waste my time? You go through so many different emotions that you get into that place where you're happy with it and it's all worth it. You just work at it like nothing you've worked at before. You go through because you care about it so much. It's like parenting. Parenting's not always the greatest, most fulfilling, rewarding thing, but it's worth it.

Dave: You wrote something right at the start of the year. You wrote, "Sometimes your passion isn't fun. Sometimes it's grueling, soul-searing, self-doubting, time-consuming work, but stick with it and don't give it up because it's worth it in the end." Then you say a few more things and you say, "When experts tell you that you should just do the fun things and they tell you to look at something else when it's not fun anymore, those are the experts who start looking for a new passion. You say these words, but sometimes it's just work. Stay out of your head and do the heavy lifting. Stick with it. Get better at your craft because it's worth it."

Dave: It's funny that you posted that at the beginning of the year. We started talking about it and realized oh, wait, I've actually got this in my prep notes for our interview.

Neil: Oh, that's funny.

Dave: It was already there.

Neil: Much better said. That's why I'm a writer. That was much better said.

Dave: I want to ask you this as someone who's been successful. When I say successful, I talked a little bit about your journalism stuff, but you've also written Marilyn Manson's book and who's the large comedian you worked with?

Neil: Oh, Kevin Hart.

Dave: Kevin Hart. Pretty much-

Neil: I did one called *The Dirt*, which just come out on Netflix, but I just realized this one called *The Dirt*, so I guess that is dirtbag.

Dave: *The Dirt*, there you go.

Neil: Yeah.

Dave: You've just done this over and over, so I want to ask you as an acknowledged expert in sticking with it even if it's hard, as someone who's done it over and over and over in your life, why do so many people go off track when they're working on finding their passion, their purpose, and why don't you, so two questions there.

Neil: Yeah. Yeah. I think there are two reasons why people go off track. One is they can't find the starting point and other is they're afraid of the ending point, so we can cover both really quickly.

Dave: Yeah.

Neil: Well, I think the people who can't find their starting point buy into the myth of I have to figure this thing out and it has to be the right thing. It has to be the perfect thing. They get stuck. They're like well, I don't want to waste all this time doing it if it ... They get stuck in analysis paralysis. There are so many people like that, not realizing that you walk yourself into your passion. Where you start is not where you end up, but you just start doing something.

Neil: My advice for the people who can't start or trying to ... If you locked someone in a room for five years and said figure out your passion, they're not going to leave knowing their passion. You have to do something, so my advice is do something you kind of enjoy and don't hate. Just start there and then just be open to flow where it takes you. I've seen even my own journey and I'm sure your journey, you just start doing something and slowly, if you're just staying aware. I think awareness is so important and just paying attention to the responses you're getting, how you're feeling about things, the course of life drifts you to where you should be going and you find it. If you don't start, you never get anywhere, so that's one. It doesn't have to be the thing. It'll lead you to the thing. There's no time wasted if it leads you there. That's one.

Neil: Two is I know so many people who start something and passion about it. You're like they're going to do great. Then halfway or 3/4 of it or even 9/10 of the way through, they get super passionate about something else and they never finish that thing. I think that is because fear of success or fear of failure. They're like if I do this and it fails, what does that mean about me? What does that say about me? Or there's the undeservingness for success and they'd rather live in the illusion that they're a genius than put something out in the world, not have it get the ideal feedback they want, and then have their whole ego self-crushed.

Dave: It makes a lot of sense because if that whole fear of having ego crushed, people don't necessarily label it that way. You do it because you've studied personal development. We've sat in cars and chatted over dinner and all. You've done some heavy duty digging, like I have, too, where you get to that point you actually know it's your ego, but for someone who hasn't necessarily realized oh, that feeling of I really hate this, I really want to die, I want to hit that person, that that's actually your ego.

Neil: Right. That's your shadow. That's a side of yourself you don't like. When you see someone you instantly don't like right away, you're looking in the mirror and that the side of yourself you're afraid that you're presenting. It's so true. I love the psychology stuff and we can go down that rabbit hole. It's the stuff we're talking about, the fear of failure, it's implanted early on. I know a lot of people who are like the prince or the princess in their family. They could do no wrong. Then they're out in the real world and they don't want to do something in case it's wrong so they can live in that illusion of being still the hero or people who are so heavily criticized that their inner critic is always on and beating themselves up.

Dave: It's funny. I've never, at least consciously, praised my kids for being smart because I don't want them to get that entitled thing. What I do is I tell them you worked really hard. You did a great job. That's what earns the praise is the working really hard. I'll praise them for winning, like you worked hard and you saw results. Great. You did it. You earned it versus it was an intrinsic thing that happened. I'm hoping that's one of the ways I can prevent my kids from falling too heavily into that trap that I think all humans fall into.

Neil: Yeah, because you self-identify as smart and you're afraid to be wrong, yet you only learn by being wrong.

Dave: Exactly, like let's not take any risks ever again because I'm too smart to take risks. You're like that's not going to be [crosstalk 00:17:31].

Neil: It's the saddest thing to see someone who can't admit when they are wrong because they're like there's no growth and there's no point in having a real discussion with them. It's really tragic. I was going to write a book at one point. I wrote like four chapters. I'll probably do it, so don't take this idea and for all the million ... Not you, but it's fine. You guys can take it. It was going to be called *The Power of Low Self-Esteem*. It's all about how not thinking you're good enough and thinking you're wrong propels you to do more. I studied Martin Luther King, Mother Teresa. Martin Luther King told his congregation, "I don't think dreams come true." Mother Teresa, in her journals, wrestled with her faith in God and whether she believed He existed or not.

Neil: What I realized is people think that these cultural icons and, again, I've interviewed the people of our time, just got it all together and supreme confidence. What they don't realize is you just have to be 51% confident versus 49% insecure. You just have to have a little bit, enough just to get yourself over the finish line.

Dave: Yeah, the running from failure versus moving towards success is a very different mindset. Your book *Emergency* is such a long period of time in your life, at least it sounds like it is, from when you started to when you finished it. It sounds like you actually went from a lot more of a place of moving away from fear, at least when you started this thing. You're like I want to feel safe and here I am this intellectual New Yorker and I realized I couldn't take care of myself, so I'll go hang out with some Hell's Angels and kill a goat and all the other crazy stuff you did. You actually decided to instead of running away from your fears, you were going to turn around and actually

face your fears and become good at the things you're afraid of. Would you advise people listening to this show today to go out and do the same thing?

Neil: 100% percent. I think because your brain, if it's scared of something and it realizes there's nothing there, starts to rewire itself. You expose yourself enough to this thing and it starts to be like oh, that's okay. It's interesting. I'm fascinated, fascinated by how beliefs get implanted and reinforced. If somebody maybe is abandoned by a parent and they think well, I'm unlovable. Then they get into a relationship with the belief I'm unlovable and maybe someone really loves them and they say, "Oh, I don't think you really love me. Oh, prove. Who's that calling you?" The person eventually gets frustrated and really leaves them and they say, "Oh, see, that proves I'm unlovable," and so we just keep reinforcing this belief. For some people, it's really facing the fear that you are lovable, just believing you are. Sometimes fear is actually an awesome thing.

Dave: I had two big buttons because I was obese for a lot of my life and I also was really afraid of being alone. I'd rather be in a bad relationship than be alone. Of course, I didn't know that either of these were really operating on me. They were subconscious, so when I finally became aware of them, I said all right. I'm going to go spend four days fasting in a cave with no one around for 10 miles. I had an energy worker friend drop me off the middle of nowhere with some water and a sleeping bag and a lighter at a cave that had been used spiritually for a long period of time, so I did that.

Dave: Man, I tell you, being starving and completely alone, those are two of my biggest buttons, so I'll just push them all the way down and hold them there for four days and see what happens. Now, I didn't die and so my nervous system went okay maybe those are tolerable things. It does cause changes in your synapses. It has to.

Neil: It does, and to tweak what you said earlier, it's like we think we're facing our fears. What we're really facing is discomfort. We're facing anxieties. Two things I was thinking of saying. One is one thing I've realized more recently is that we go through a lot of pain to avoid pain. The fear of being alone hurt you more than actually being alone did. Or people, the fear of feeling sad or depressed, people turn to drugs. Being a heroin addict is more painful than just feeling your feelings. I realized willingness to tolerate discomfort and the willingness to tolerate uncertainty will get you so far in life and people who need certainty and need comfort just become controlled by their fear and their anxieties.

Dave: Winston Churchill said it, "the only thing we have to fear is fear itself." It's true that a lot of the human suffering is you're worrying more about the surgery than it actually hurt during the surgery. You see it in a two-year-old. They have a splinter and they're just losing their shit. Come on, it's a splinter. We're just going to pull it out, but you can see the pain, 10 minutes of screaming for half a second of a little twinge. It seems like that replicates into adults, but it becomes invisible to us.

Neil: Here's the difference. I did a story for *Rolling Stone* on fear and how it controls us. I met with a scientist named Joseph LeDoux. He's the guy who discovered the amygdala, which most people had misunderstood his research and say that's your emotional center of your brain. It's not, so when you hear self-help people or scientists saying the

amygdala, this little almond sorts the emotions, it's actually not. What he figured out is that fear and anxiety are totally different and we give things a lot of power by calling them fear when they're not. Fear is just a survival thing. If you're out and you see whatever, a rattle snake, then your amygdala kicks in. Your body has certain autonomic responses and you're feeling fear.

Neil: Anxiety happens in a different part of the brain. Stria terminalis I think is the name. I'm not sure, but it's a different part entirely. Anxiety is just a future projection. That thing, if I go walk in the forest, I could see a snake and it could bite me. That's just anxiety. You can recognize that anxiety is just a made up future projection. You can let go of it and giving it fear gives it so much power because it becomes about survival.

Neil: One related note because I'm fascinated by fear because you look at the culture right now, so much is fear responses. I was trying to figure out why does fear control us so much. I talked to a guy you had on your show, I think, Andrew Huberman.

Dave: Oh, yeah, I love Andrew.

Neil: Yeah. Yeah, he was saying how the brain is wired not for happiness. It's wired for survival, like me being happier is not going to me, but I got to look for the threats and find what the threats are. I can ignore that sweet, innocuous animal, but that saber tooth tiger, whatever, I got to pay attention to, so we're wired for fear first, so we just over respond to these fears and anxieties, but we're not in that world anymore.

Dave: It's something that they don't teach you in high school. They don't teach it to you in university. It's something a lot of people die with never having understood. The role of podcasts like this and a lot of the books and just a lot of people working on the personal development side, including you, is to let's just own this as humans and get over it so we can do something more interesting than being afraid all the time.

Neil: Yes, it's so true. It's like it's so sad and all the things, like they've studied fear so much and nobody looked statistically about what to be afraid of. There's something called probability neglect. You know what that is?

Dave: No.

Neil: Probably neglect is we don't look at the probability that something might happen. We look for what makes the greatest visual impact, so we're more worried about plane crashes and smoking, whatever, car crashes. We're more worried about terrorism than hospital-borne infections because the hospital-borne infections, even though it's way deadlier. I would vote for the president who was talking about how can we deal with hospital-borne infections? How can we deal with unhealthy eating, obesity? How can we deal with smoking? These are the things that are the hugest killers, but they're not in the papers. The probability neglect, we have so much fear about this ridiculous stuff that will most likely never happen to us.

Dave: It all comes down to that feedback loop. If it has immediate feedback, you really pay attention to it, but if it hits you in five years, it doesn't matter, even if it's certain.

Neil: Here's the deal. If you're listening to this and you're texting and driving, you have no right to be afraid of anything anybody else is doing in the world.

Dave: That is a rational, true statement which makes me happy.

Neil: Right.

Dave: You have an unusual mind, which has led you to be in addition to a written word storyteller and having your little cameo appearance on *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, you had your podcast with Gabby Reece called *The Truth Barrel*, where you were taking interesting people and putting them in a really hot sauna until they told you the truth. Your oral storytelling is really good. You've got a new podcast we've talked about a couple times and it's bothering me because I said, "Hey, Neil, why don't you come on and share some of your wisdom. Talk about your new podcast that I'm really excited about." Every time I talk to you about it, you've changed the name of the podcast. So far I've heard Gonzo, which for God's sake, that's a terrible name. Don't do that. I've heard To Live and Die In Los Angeles. I've heard Lost Angeles. You had one other one didn't you?

Neil: Oh, yeah, Sins of So Cal, SOS.

Dave: Sins of So Cal or SOS. Tell listeners what your podcast is about and then let's talk about how-

Neil: At about titling.

Dave: ... as authors we title things and this is valid for you listening even if you're not an author. Just our thought process here is going to be important for how you present anything you do. All right. First off, what is it so everyone can think about why you're naming it.

Neil: Okay. I was saying earlier that I just start with curiosity. I'm not trying to write a book about anything. I just have a problem I'm trying to solve. One day, I lived in Malibu and someone went missing in Malibu and nothing was happening. Ingrid, my wife, had just had a child and she was struggling. Just she'd left her job. She wasn't doing anything. Actually, this is getting what the podcast is about. She read about this missing person and started offering help to the family. Next thing I know, myself, Ingrid, and two neighbors, this guy Mike Einziger who plays in Incubus and his wife Ann-Marie, who's amazing violinist, plays with Hans Zimmer, people who are not crime fighters, let's say, suddenly said "how can we help."

Neil: The next thing, we found ourselves swept up in the investigation and I learned a lot, just the same with *Emergency*, same with *The Truth*, same with *The Game*. I started to learn how the system works, especially when people go missing. Consequently, it led to a

couple other thing, like just helping families when this happens because if you go to the LA police website, it says if someone goes missing, first thing they say is don't worry about it. They'll probably show up. Then the second thing is if they don't show up, come to us, but recognize we have tens of thousands of cases very year. There's probably not much we can do. You should get a private investigator.

Dave: Wow.

Neil: Then it says if you can't afford a private investigator, go to the Salvation Army. That's literally what it says on the website.

Dave: The Salvation Army.

Neil: Yeah. It really says we're overloaded. We don't have a lot of people working. Missing is kind of a vague area. It's not like there's a body. We can't even prove there's a crime, so good luck. Consequently, I've just been literally the four of us have just been helping families, raising rewards locally, getting press conferences together, getting the press there because they know what to do.

Dave: Do you guys have tights and capes and stuff like that?

Neil: We should, right?

Dave: I'm sort of this team of four crime fighters, the bloodhound gang, is that more ...

Neil: Yeah. It's very Scooby Doo, right? It's interesting because first of all, no one's prepared for that kind of thing. Then let's say there's a learning curve to what you do when someone goes missing. By the time you learned it, 30, 45, 60 days have passed. All the security camera footage expired. Phone pings are hard to get. It's really tough. I really was thinking of starting maybe a nonprofit foundation where people can get help within 24 hours versus having to wait all this time to make sure that they're really gone.

Neil: Anyway, so you were asking about the podcast. It's just one of the most insane stories about a missing person I got swept up into and ended up I don't know how to describe it.

Dave: Sounds like you describe it in the show, so your show is sort of a serial story about what happened in this Malibu missing persons case.

Neil: Right. I guess this is right until it comes out, so I'll say it was about a missing actress who went missing and a private investigator called me and said, "Hey here's what we're looking at. Here's what we got. Can you help?" Next thing I knew, literally, I was parked outside the home of the person who we thought did it. Not the home, the place he was hiding out, alone in terms of confronting him because no one else was going to do it. It was really intense. I got death threats, everything.

Dave: You confronted him?

Neil: You'll have to listen. You'll have to listen. It's a crazy story. There's so many things I can't ... It's weird when you're doing one of these things because you can't give it away.

Dave: I would predict that you did because I know you somewhat and because I've read *Emergency* and that's something you would do, but also, there's got to be some amazing twist in there.

Neil: There's a crazy twist. The other thing about it is a lot of things, they're like here's a cold case, an old case we're looking into. This is all really going on and you really get answers at the end. There's a point where we knew a piece of information before the police or the public or the journalist did. We had to hold off. Not the police, but the entire media so that we could find out what happened to this person. It's very intense.

Neil: I think the other part is you want to do good and when we give advice, we're doing this abstract good, but here it's like if you can help friends and a family who's suffering have some answers, some closure, some justice, you really know you're making a difference. My mom always said the worst thing someone could ever experience is to lose their own child and so you're helping people in what could possibly be the worst point of their life, speaking of uncertainty.

Dave: Talk about giving back in a major way.

Neil: The last point is that in this day and age, a citizen can have better resources than the police have and can do more. I think it might be an opportunity or place in the future where citizens go to get together and really do a service for keeping neighbors and community safe.

Dave: It's an important thing and it's one of those things who would've thought and the number of people are going to need it is relatively low, but the impact on their life is just immeasurable, even just one or two people where you make the difference.

Neil: When I did *Emergency*, I was an EMT for a while and being there for ... Go back to parenting. What creates the love a child has for a parent? It's not the parent who's always with that child, the parent who that child has the most fun with. It's when the child's in the most pain, what parent is there for them in their worst moments? That's when the love bond happens and same thing with people. Who are you going to be there for in the worst moments of their life, whether it's their emotional lows. In this case, they're living a nightmare and a horror story. It's like someone having support in their lowest time is what brings us together as a community or a species.

Dave: I love it. That's going to be a powerful show because you're telling the story and you're talking about it, but Gonzo? Why would you call that Gonzo? Oh, my god. I've got to say that's the worst name ever. For context, after we record this episode and people, when you're listening to this and you're listening to this a week or two after we record it, so Neil is minutes away from submitting this to his final publishing process to put it out there. Neil, you've been agonizing over this name since the last time we talked a few weeks ago, so it keeps changing. What is your thought process? As a very well-respected

writer, how the heck do you title an article or how do you title a book? Tell me your thought process there. I'm going to use your own thought process on you about Gonzo, which the word never-

Neil: Again, [crosstalk 00:34:53]. Okay. By the way, one other note that I'm loving about this is the storytelling element. I've always told stories through books, like we're saying and telling stories through interview clips, through sound, through music, like it's really a composed story, so it's like a book. I'm really loving learning a new form of storytelling. I'm more excited about it than the next book. It's so amazing versus here, I get anxiety free-flowing conversation because I'm like it's interesting the whole time. My head you only go when I write a book or I do the podcast is how can I make each moment interesting so you just can't put it down, whereas here there's a surrender to someone's just eavesdropping on a conversation.

Neil: Titling, yeah, titling is an interesting thing because the title of whatever you do, whether it's a company or the podcast or the book, the title is the lure that gets the fish hooked, right, that gets the fish hooked. With this particular title, I knew the title from the beginning. It was always going to be Lost Angeles. Then the producer I'm working with, a company called Tenderfoot who are amazing, everything they did has been number one, Up and Vanished, Atlanta Monster, Sworn. They've done three. They've all been number one. They're great, so I trust them. They know that work.

Neil: They didn't love Lost Angeles because they thought it was punny, hard to remember you're saying Lost Angeles. Then they texted somebody big up at iTunes who had the same concerns. It's that challenge of do you go with what speaks to your heart or do you listen to the feedback of people who maybe know better? It doesn't have to be Gonzo, though. They like Gonzo because they just thought it was cool. It was one word. They like the gonzo reporting style where as you were saying earlier, okay, let's start all over. Let's have a discussion about the title, which is knowing how I am as a writer reporter it's like I'm dogged. I don't give up and I go all the way. They thought Gonzo captured that. What would you call it?

Dave: If you've never heard of gonzo reporting, you're probably not alone because gonzo reporting is this idea no I'm not claiming to be unbiased. It means I jumped right in with both feet and became a part of the story and told you what it was about, which is exactly what you've done in all of your books. You're like this is what it was like when I went and hung out with these white supremacist prepper people knowing they might want to kill me because I'm Jewish, but I did it anyway because I wanted to. That's a story you can't put that story down.

Dave: I look at that, I'm like okay, that's definitely gonzo, but what I do when I'm naming something, whether it's a product or my books or Bulletproof or whatever it is, before you think of something, there's always a picture and a feeling with the picture. You could go to Google and you could type gonzo. In fact, I'm going to do that as we're speaking right now and I'm going to tell you what comes up.

Neil: I know what you're going to do. I know what's going to come up.

Dave: I'm going to go to images. Okay I'm now-

Neil: This whole podcast is named Shaming Me On My Podcast Title.

Dave: By the way, so the first thing that comes up on Google under the words, the cognitive thinking, it says associated with the journalistic writing of exaggerated, subjective, and fictional lifestyle or maybe bizarre and crazy. Okay. That's pretty good, but now I'm going to go to images. Oh, my god, an entire screen of Muppets. There is nothing that is not a Muppet on this screen and I've got it on small font, too, so I've got 16 Muppets. That's what people are going to imagine when they hear the word Gonzo, which is why I don't think unless you want associate yourself with Muppetry, that that's the right-

Neil: Everyone likes Gonzo. But it's interesting. This dialogue that Dave and I are having is like it's a great dialogue because all that feedback is important. I love getting that feedback because me respecting you and knowing all the thing you think, that's huge. That's weighing so heavily in terms of not naming concept. By the way, could still be concept, but I still got my producer to contend with.

Dave: All right. Well, let's play this back for your producer. Now, you gave me a little bit of anxiety because I'm like I haven't actually Googled image search for Bulletproof. I have no idea what's going to come up.

Neil: Well, let's see it. Let's do it. Can you do it?

Dave: I just did and I was like whew, maybe it's customized for me, but I can tell you that you see Bulletproof Radio, Bulletproof Diet, and Bulletproof Coffee all over the place, along with a couple an action movie from 1996 with Damon Wayans and Adam Sandler. I can hang with Adam Sandler.

Neil: Oh, good, it's amazing. No, same here. It's pretty amazing you took a word like Bulletproof and ended up holding that in Google because you'd think there's Bulletproof glass. There's a lot of Bulletproof things that are more Bulletproof.

Dave: I thought I would just see a Kevlar vest, to be perfectly honest. I was going to make fun of myself, but okay, so my advice holds now. The idea, though, I'm sure if we typed lost Angeles it isn't going to give us anything unless there's some sort of vampire movie with that name.

Neil: Yeah. It's pretty amazing. That's pretty amazing.

Dave: Actually, there's a 2012 IMDb hit for it and a bunch of random pictures of LA, but they're all about LA, which is good because you're basically talking about Malibu, which is part of LA, so I would like that, but the-

Neil: When I was going to name my book *The Game*, people said don't call it *The Game* because there's that Michael Douglas movie, so you have to take everything with a grain

of, so I just thought well, it's the right title and I'll just own The Game. Gonzo may not be the right title.

Dave: All right. We nailed that one. Okay. Now you're talking about Sins of So Cal, SOS, or you're talking about Lost Angeles or you're talking about To Live and Die In LA. We really are talking about living and dying and missing persons and being a detective and all this stuff, so as a creative and best in class creative or, at least, one of the top guys in your class, whatever you want to call it, but world recognition, how do you know, like in your gut, how do you know which of those is the one that sticks? What's your thought process?

Neil: Yeah. It's different for me than for you in the sense that if you have partners. If it's a book, I'm going to say a really important thing for everybody who works with other people, I've talked to a lot of writers who they're like I want to leave my publisher. They don't get it. Every writer argues with publishers over title and cover. It's always a big thing. It's different than naming your own company. You just want the best name, but here you have these partners who are investing a lot of time and money in you.

Neil: I love nonviolent communication. It's one of the most important things I ever learned. The big idea in it is you have to recognize that no two people have different needs. It's just that they have different conflicting strategies, so no two needs are ever in conflict. If I want to call it Lost Angeles and they want to call it Gonzo, we both actually we just want a great, successful podcast. They're my partner, so I'm not butting heads with them.

Neil: I just have to think of putting our heads together and how we have the same intention and how can I join forces and create a great and I think what I said, even if you're not titling something, it's important to recognize that if you're in a relationship, well, both people have a need to love and be loved. If you're in a business, both of you want to be successful or all five people or however many people there are that your needs are the same, your strategies are, even politically there's everybody wants safety. Everybody wants fairness. They just have different ideas for the strategies of what's going to create whatever safety, quality, freedom, and recognize that we have the same needs. We just conflict over the strategies helps you come together with people, so you have to figure out how to get out of strategy lock.

Dave: It's one of the most painful things that I go through and not necessarily as creative or as painful as the end of the creative process where you're just cranking out the final edits and all, but that do I have the name right because if you name your podcast wrong, a third as many people my benefit from your art as would if you do it right. We talked earlier about fear, your fear of failure and all that stuff. Is fear a part of your naming process that you do to go through naming one of your books? Do you go through that, here's the pain of naming it wrong, or are you more positive than that?

Neil: No, it's a good no. It's a good no. It's interesting you were saying earlier, I think it is true people are either like they either try to avoid failure or they embrace success, but either way, you end up at the same place. No, for me, I think it's more like I want to fit. It's like someone can have a great personality, be really smart, but they wear really dirty clothes

that are five sizes too big. It's going to be hard for people to talk to them and find that out, so the same thing. I have this beautiful personality of work I've done. I want to find the clothes that fit so no one's turned off right away and they get to know it, so it's a fit thing.

Dave: Okay. That makes sense. You sort of knew.

Neil: Right you know, like with *The Truth*, it was going to be called Game Over for a while. It was going to be called The Game of Love. They want to exploit that. One day, I just all of a sudden, The Truth came to me as a title and it just sounded right and that it fit and I thought we're done.

Dave: I've had some good titles come to me. Just I wake up in the morning, that's it, so I don't want to-

Neil: We got too lost on this. Can I say one point for creatives because I was giving someone advice earlier today for creatives. I'll tell you another big mistake people make is that the title is a marketing discussion. It's not really a creative discussion. It's a marketing discussion. People make the mistake of procrastinating from doing the work by thinking about the marketing instead, so if you're writing a book about to become or whatever you're doing, wait until you're done with the creative work before you focus on the marketing, how you're going to promote it, what the title is going to be. That should come later. It becomes a very effective form of procrastination.

Dave: I knew one startup entrepreneur, a failed one, I might add, who blew something like 25% of her budget on having a custom font made for her startup that wasn't making any money.

Neil: Exactly.

Dave: That's an example of do the real work and then pick a good name. I like that mindset. You still, though, you're at the end of the real work. You're ready to launch your podcast. You have four names. I think hopefully we eviscerated Gonzo and he's now hanging out with Elmo. You still got these other ones. Are you going to just like take a stand and say, "All right, publisher partner people, I'm the man and here's my title and that's how it's going to be," or are you going to let them make the call?

Neil: I love Rick Rubin. He's one of my favorite people in the world.

Dave: Oh, Rick is so good. I love that guy.

Neil: He talks about collaboration and he says that you should never compromise. You should never sacrifice. You should wait until everybody agrees, so the simple-

Dave: Rick, really? Rick is such a peaceful guy.

Neil: What he's saying is don't compromise. He's saying everybody should be happy with it first. He's not saying don't compromise. Take a stand. He's saying everyone should be happy. Let's find a title that everyone agrees on, even if it means letting go of one you like.

Dave: Do you think that happened when Run DMC, when he introduced rap as a genre and took it mainstream, I'm pretty sure that a lot of people didn't agree and were pretty pissed off about that, but he still did it because it was the right thing to do.

Neil: I'm sure like Run DMC and what was the DJ's name? Anyway, I'm sure the three of them all agreed on the music. What everyone else thinks doesn't matter. [crosstalk 00:47:02].

Dave: Oh, okay, so it's the people working together. All right. That is 100% Rick. I believe that.

Neil: Yeah, what I'm saying is myself and the producer ... Yeah, yeah, sorry, myself and the producer when we're both happy. He did threaten though if we didn't have a title that we'd have to postpone it.

Dave: Oh, don't do that. All right.

Neil: It's weird to talk about this. This is so inside, but the fact is these are literally the things we talk about. If we're having dinner, we wouldn't be talking about that other stuff. We'd be talking about this.

Dave: This is what we'd be talking about, for sure.

Neil: It's fun. It's fun.

Dave: Yeah, it's fun, but this is actually what the Neil Strauss, this huge author and *Rolling Stone* writer, this is actually what's going on in your head. This is the stuff that I think about when I'm coming out with a book, too, in addition to all the CEO and father and parenting, all the other stuff that you're also working on. If you have either one of us up on a pedestal thinking that we don't work hard and do this kind of stuff, this is actually real life.

Neil: Right. This is just the title. Then we got to get into subtitle. Then there's the cover. There's the spine. Then there's the back cover copy. In the end, two things are the details met. I think people feel when someone's really painstakingly cared about the details and B, in the end, you have no control over whether it succeeds or fails. You have no control over it and it has to be something you're happy with in the end.

Dave: Ryan Holiday wrote a book about just the perfection and pain of creativity. You must know Ryan.

Neil: Yeah. I was laughing because his last book, I think, *Perennial* or something [crosstalk 00:48:38]-

Dave: *Perennial Seller*, that's the book, yeah.

Neil: I had some arguments with him over the title. I kind of Dave Asprey'd him about that title.

Dave: Well, I can say *Perennial Seller* was an awesome book. If you're creative and you're listening to Bulletproof Radio right now and you haven't read *Perennial Seller*, just go read that. It's like even if you're not a creative, if you just want to create something, even if it's not creative work, whatever he wrote in that book, he nailed it. The angst that comes out about making something that's worthy, I don't know. I was [crosstalk 00:49:07].

Neil: I totally Dave Asprey'd him on that title.

Dave: What did you tell him it should be?

Neil: Oh, no, I was just saying *Perennial Seller*, no one's like oh, I just wrote this book. I hope it is a perennial seller. I was saying that doesn't speak to the heart of-

Dave: You know what? I did the same thing when I interviewed him. I'm like *Perennial Seller*? That can't have been one of your best sellers with that title. I actually said those words.

Neil: That's funny.

Dave: To his credit, it did sell well, so he was right. We were wrong.

Neil: Well, we'll go on Amazon and see it's outselling *The Obstacle Is the Way*, which is a great title.

Dave: Oh, yeah, okay. I'm with you there. Well, whatever the name of your new podcast eventually is, I'm going to insert it post production here.

Neil: To Live and Die In LA.

Dave: So you guys did that? I just went back in time.

Neil: Now I just want to make it Gonzo so you have to say Gonzo.

Dave: Oh, no. All right. So Gonzo, I'm going to say it in a weird voice, but whatever it is, we're going to know before this episode hits the air because, well, Neil's work is worthy in and of itself and I'm super excited to hear the whole story and how he tells it, so I'm hoping that you'll download it along with me.

Neil: I can't wait. I really can't wait for you to hear it. The funny thing is it brings everything full circle because we said this is an illustration what we were saying in the beginning, which is do the stuff you care about, but it's not always fun and it's not always easy. This

is an anxiety-ridden conversation, but we also love what we're doing. It's super fun and charged up conversation, so this is a perfect example what we're saying.

Dave: If you get your title right, you do your magic, the difference could be millions and millions of downloads. Bulletproof Radio just end of 2018, we passed 100 million downloads. You get the name wrong, it can be like a make or break all the work and pain, so it is an anxiety-ridden conversation. It's also fun because-

Neil: It's fun because we care about it and we care about what we do and that's why we want it to be right.

Dave: I'm dying to know and I'm also dying to hear it. Neil, I appreciate you as a human being. I appreciate your work. It's had an influence on me. I love your storytelling and I hope to one day be as good of a storyteller as you are. I'll keep working on that in my little world of mitochondria and human performance. Thank you and thanks for being a guest. Just keep doing it.

Neil: Yeah, no, thanks for having me on. I really feel apologies to the listener for hearing us talk about the title for 15 minutes. I hope there's some value in there for you.

Dave: I would cut it if there wasn't value, but we deal with Bulletproof Radio. There's got to be a return on investment and I want people listening-

Neil: But you got to understand I'm doing murder mysteries or missing persons mysteries and crazy things. Yeah, so anyway, yes. This is it. Okay.

Dave: If you want to know what life is really like when you're working at that level, this is the kind of stuff that happens. I think this is-

Neil: No, it's everybody. It's Tim Ferriss. We go back and forth on the titles. He says something. Then he polls with you, with me, with Ryan, Robert, everybody. These are the discussions we have.

Dave: Yeah. It's also because we care because none of us wants to waste our time creating something. The worst thing would be to waste your time as a listener or reader with something. I'm leaving this in there because I don't think it's a waste of time for people. If I thought I was going to waste your time, I would cut it and so would you, too, from your podcast.

Neil: Right, so to put a bow on it at the end, it's do something you love enough that you care about each detail of it. You care about every little detail of it. I know people who are like that with cooking. I know people who are like that with their car. Then maybe that's how you know it's your passion.

Dave: I love it and that is sage, sage advice. We will talk soon, hopefully in Malibu, if we have any of our friends who still have houses there.

Neil: Yeah. Yeah. We should and to wrap that point, too, then we'll shut up, but two points I'm having just about the fires that I was thinking you were talking about *Emergency*. One is it's interesting that lot of stuff other than *Emergency* came into play here, having Thermo-Gel which can protect your house from fires. Nobody knows about that. I got a real swift example, but in an emergency, the services are not there for you. The big thing I learned maybe ties it all together is when you're faced with losing your house or all my friends have lost their houses, I thought I did, you realize that all this stuff is just stuff and it doesn't matter. What's important is the relationship, so more important than the title is this chat we get to have and the connections you have with people.

Dave: You nailed it. It is all about the relationships and the Thermo-Gel, by the way. I'm Googling that to see if I should get some for my house.

Neil: If it's a fire risk, get it. All right. See you.

Dave: If you liked today's episode, you know what to do. Head on over to Neil's new podcast called ...

Neil: To Live and Die In L.A.

Dave: Then listen to it because it's going to be worth your time. You'll be amused and you'll learn about a hidden world that you didn't know anything about. If you think it was worth it, leave Neil a review for his podcast. Leave him a review for one of his books, or leave me a review because one of the easy things you could do to express gratitude, which makes you live longer and lengthens your telomeres, is just say thanks. When you say thanks like that, Neil and I, we see it, so keep reading, keep listening, and keep telling us what you think.