



Conscious Life presents

Biohacking, Longevity, Psychedelics, Neurofeedback

Guest: Dave Asprey

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[00:00:13] Meagen Gibson

Welcome to this interview. I'm your host, Meagen Gibson. Today, I'm speaking with Dave Asprey.

Dave has spent his entire adult life studying and self-experimenting with longevity earning him the title as the Father of Biohacking. He says he's deeply committed to elevating global awareness on Neuroscience and Longevity. Part of that interest includes the study of non-ordinary states of consciousness, whether that be breathwork or neurofeedback.

He also has experimented with different types of psychedelic drugs, which he'll tell us about more today. He's the founder of 40 Years of Zen, a facility with state-of-the-art technology and neurofeedback to help make controlling your body and your energy cool. Dave Asprey, thank you so much for joining us today.

Dave Asprey

Meagen, it's my pleasure.

Meagen Gibson

Dave, I wanted to talk to you because as someone who spent nearly your whole career experimenting with and trying things, then sharing the results with the world, you definitely have a unique perspective that most people at the beginning of their journeys don't have. Looking back, if you were at the beginning again, could you have gotten to where you are today without the experience of ayahuasca, and what benefits did you take from that experience?

[00:01:22] Dave Asprey

Well, I have mixed feelings about ayahuasca. I read about ayahuasca, a book called *DMT: The Spirit Molecule*, about research done in the early '70s in Albuquerque, where I was actually born. I went to Peru in 1999, and I started asking around, trying to find a shaman who could do this. And they looked at me at the guest house where I was staying, and they said, "You're white". And I said, "Well, yeah, I noticed". They said, "No, it's only for locals. You'll throw up. You won't like it". I said, "No, I've done my research. I know the right diet. I understand MAO inhibition. I actually want to do this".

And so they connected me with someone who is trained by the Shipibo people who have been doing this for thousands of years. I was in a tent that the shaman set up, and he put a circle of stones around the tent. I didn't think anything of it, I was relatively new to the world of shamanic exploration. And I finished early, in fact, I did a double dose. My body seems to process this stuff really well. So the other person I was with was still floating out there, and I just felt really good.

I said, "I'm going to go for a walk. I just want to integrate". He said, "No, you're not ready." I stood on one foot and I touched my nose. I said, "I'm fine." he looked at me like I was stupid. He said, "Do you see those stones?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "They're not there to keep you in. They're there to keep other things out. If you cross the stones, I'm going to have to pull all that stuff off of you. I don't want to do that. It's a lot of work. So could you just stay put?" And I was like, okay, computer science guy, I'm like, this guy's probably crazy.

But then I thought about it, and what do I know about this world versus what does he know where he's been immersed in it for a long time? And the interactions I've had with ayahuasca since then, I've never been called to do it again. I did have an expansive experience, but I just had interactions that are double-edged. And having actually received some shamanic training, I'm not a shaman, but I have some ability skills that you learn from just working with them for a long time.

I believe that ayahuasca installs malware in your brain if you are not doing it with someone who is an exceptionally competent shaman. Their job is to act like a firewall to keep out the negative aspects of the plant. And yes, it is a conscious plant. Not all plants are that conscious. To allow the profound feminine healing aspects of ayahuasca. And how much of this can I talk about brain waves with, or whatever else?

Look, we are in a world of brain waves. We are rational beings, and we're simultaneously irrational beings. And there are layers of reality that our biology filters out by design because it's too much work to survive in a quantum reality when you can sense everything because our brains can't handle that.

So I would just urge caution. And when I see influencers saying, "I've done ayahuasca 87 times". I'm like, Bro, when are you going to figure out that it's not working for you? Because you're not on a shamanic path. You're just using it a lot, and you're feeding your spiritual ego.

So I look at ayahuasca as actually the last psychedelic you should try after you've explored those areas of energetics and those areas of spirituality and those areas of yourself. Then when you do it, at least be in nature, ideally in a jungle, and hire someone who has received proper initiation in the sacred use of ayahuasca versus recreational use.

[00:05:25]

I honor everyone who's working to serve others using this plant compound. You might be doing it before you're ready is the thing that I worry about. I also see people targeting very wealthy and powerful people with ayahuasca, and I'm not certain that that's overall good for society.

In the world of biohacking, when I started this movement, I talked about ayahuasca because it was unusual and it was part of my spiritual path. I've also studied with gurus in Nepal and Tibet and from ancient Chinese lineages and other types of psychedelics, as well as working directly with Stan Grof, who's legendary in the world of psychedelics because he treated 3,000 patients with LSD, legally. And he invented transpersonal psychology along with his wife. And when they made it illegal, he said, "Well, can we get there with breathwork?"

Well, sure you can. And I've had more visions from breathwork and from neurofeedback, especially past life things and some more profound things than I have with Aya or even LSD or mushrooms, all of which have their place. They increase neuroplasticity. They can all be good. They can all be bad. But I have just known too many people who've had months-long spiritual damage and had to bring in the big guns to fix themselves after Aya.

So was it a part of my journey? Yes. Was it as impactful as the other altered state's work that I've done? I would say no. I've done Aya twice in my life, once when I turned 50, actually the night I turned 50, with appropriate people in the room. I had a really magical experience. I hate to see newbies to the world of spirituality go out and do something that dramatic without understanding what they're dealing with.

Meagen Gibson

Yeah. I love the way that you talk about it, because while you're admitting, this is something that I've done. This is something that I've tried. Also extraordinary caution. There are a ton of, not protections, but the legalities, and there's places in the US where there's ayahuasca churches, and there's all of these loopholes that are available for people now outside of the context that you're talking about, which is really responsible, experienced shamanism.

I have not had one of these experiences, but I'm just so cautious for people, and I don't want anything that we're doing to sound like, "You should go out and find somebody that has my ayahuasca and try it," because it's serious.

Dave Asprey

I recommend, if you're interested in that, do DMT. DMT will take you to a similar place. It's an eight-minute journey. You don't throw up or shit yourself, and the risk is far lower. So if you're going to do it, that just seems like a better way to do it. Frankly, DMT he doesn't have that weird energetic "How do I get in there?" kind of a vibe that I do believe that Aya, without an appropriate shaman, can have.

[00:08:39] Meagen Gibson

I want to go back to the point that you made about the first time that you tried Aya, and there was the circle of rocks outside, because I actually love that story and want to know how you've incorporated it, because obviously, it's a story that you tell often when you talk about your experience. But then the principles of protection, of not only protecting the person who's inside, but protecting them from what's outside, how have you incorporated that into the work that you do and your project with 40 Years of Zen?

Dave Asprey

Well, 40 Years of Zen is a company that's now 11 years old. I started it because of the altered states of high performance, the things that advanced Zen masters can do, what we call the yogic cities, if you start studying this. This is 40+ documented abilities of humans to do things that most humans can't do. I'm like, well, these have to be valuable, but just personal evolution, I don't have time to meditate for 2 hours a day.

And I'm a guy who's done Art of Living breathwork every morning for five years. Then I had kids. I'm like, man, this gets harder when you're really, really busy. And then I built the biohacking movement and \$140 million a year company, which is one of five other companies. Two hours a day is a lot to invest, and I'll do it if I have to. But do I take that away from my kids, from my relationship? Where does it come from? And I said, there's got to be a way to do this faster.

So I started working with neuroscientists around the globe, and I would bring some of my executive coaching clients with me, and I would put together nootropic stacks and nutritional protocols, meditation, and incorporate neurofeedback. And pretty soon I realized, if I want to take my brain to where it can go, I'm just going to have to do it myself.

So I started building my own EEG hardware and software for looking at my own brain waves. I began that journey 25 years ago when I bought my first EEG machine, actually before I did ayahuasca even. And what I learned is that it's possible to go to some of these very, very esoteric states just under the power of your own brain. It's just that there's no knobs and dials and instrumentation that we're aware of, they're in there.

So if you can use a computer to say, get louder when you're closer and you're measuring a thousand times a second, it's probably going to work better than what I did at the monastery when I was studying Buddhism in Nepal and Tibet. And there, you sit there for 10 days and you're silent. And every day the monk or the lama who's teaching 50 people in a room, you're all sitting, your back hurts and people are on a vegan diet, so they're farting all the time.

And you sit there and if you hit a new little nuance in your meditation and the lama is paying attention and picks it up and your eyes are open and he raises an eyebrow at you, there you go. You've got your feedback. It's just so slow. And this is why it takes so much time.

Well, we can do better with technology. So people come to 40 Years of Zen, it's a five-day intensive program that involves altered states. What we're doing is we're teaching you techniques that you would learn if you studied for 10+ years of regular meditation to reach these states that start with empathy, take you to compassion and ultimately to equanimity, which is a higher spiritual state. And that's a state where you choose your state and you can hold it no matter what happens

in the world around you. It makes you unprogrammable by anyone except for you. This is what the masters do.

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In order to get there, though, some of the things that you hear about when people describe their psychedelic journeys or just as they're becoming more aware of their true potential, it's things like gratitude, things like forgiveness, things that are taught by world religions, things like being vulnerable.

How do I get a CEO of a big company or these really powerful people who come through 40 Years of Zen. We've had more than 1,500 people go through this program. Well, it's the results you get because every time you can remove a trigger, something that gets under your skin, well, what that means is the electricity, the energy that goes into that all of the time, it's now free to do something else. It goes into transformation. It goes into the behaviors you want in the world. It means you can show up differently for your company, or for your kids, or for yourself because you're not wasting energy.

One of the things I like to talk about is, think about your mobile phone. You've got a phone, and if all of the apps are open at the same time, it runs slower. And if you have alerts going off all the time, you can't use it. Like TikTok here, and Instagram here, and email here, and text messages here. So most people at some point realize maybe I can't do anything if that's happening. Your nervous system has alerts going off all the time. I teach, just in the world of biohacking and at 40 Years of Zen, that it's logical that this happens because all life follows a basic algorithm. And this algorithm starts inside your cells.

Each cell does this, hundreds to up to maybe 15,000 locations in each cell, and then it does it millions of times a second. And what these little ancient bacteria called mitochondria embedded in your cells, they look around, they're bacteria, so they're stupid, and they can only do a few things, but they're environmental sensors, they're compute nodes.

And a lot of the work we're doing with psychedelics or with altered states, whether it's from breathwork or from neurofeedback, like the way we're doing it at 40 Years of Zen, anyway, it really comes down to seeing the world through their eyes instead of your eyes. What the distributed network of mitochondria throughout your body does, it forms a collective consciousness with itself. It's very fast, but it's very dumb.

The first thing it does is fear. Because all life, whether you're a bacteria or a cactus, doesn't matter. The first thing is, if something is scary, you have to protect yourself. Run away, hide, kill. Generally, what we do. So that's fear. The first F word takes a ton of energy. If you're afraid of criticism, you're going to be at full energy all day long. Every time something sounds critical, you're not going to have the electricity available because the system that happens far faster than you can think will take action. And when I say far faster than you can think, this is neuroscience.

There is something called evoked potential, and we measure this as a marker of aging. When you're 18 years old, if I do this, I clap my hands. If you've had eighth grade science, you go, "Oh, well, there's a speed of sound. When the sound hits my ears, then I hear it." That's a lie.

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When the sound hits your ears, a quarter second later, your brain will give the first signal that it received the sound. That means there's a quarter second where your body decides whether it's going to let you hear the sound and the mitochondria are making that decision. Was it worth it? And after your brain gets that electrical signal, then you still have to interpret what was the sound. And that's another lag time.

But as you age, it gets to be about 350 milliseconds. So between a quarter and a third of a second, that's your delay on reality. If you do the stuff that I do, biohacking and neurofeedback, I still have the response time of an 18-year-old. My evoked potential is that low.

But this is the direct evidence that there's something going on in there that we can't see because it's empowered to hide itself from us. When you take psychedelics or do any of this altered state's work, you start dropping into the reality that your body sees because certain networks get turned off and it looks really weird. But it's those states that allow you to go in and reprogram the priorities and the alerts that are inside your body.

If the first priority is fear, the second priority biologically is food. These are bacteria-level behaviors. They're not very smart computers, but they sure are fast. If it's scary, try to kill it. Then the next thing is, can I eat it? We have fear, we have food. Then all life on Earth has another F word that it has to do. Can you imagine what that one is?

Meagen Gibson

I can. I know where you're going with this, I think.

Dave Asprey

What is it?

Meagen Gibson

I'm not saying it.

Dave Asprey

You're not going to say fertility? Oh, you're thinking of the other F word.

Meagen Gibson

Yeah. Anybody who knows me knows which F word I was thinking of, yes.

Dave Asprey

Yeah. So your body, before you have a chance to think about anything, has already determined, should I be afraid? Should I be hungry? Or should I try to hump it? And I just explained every bad thing you've ever done. In fact, I just explained where the ego comes from. And when you do psychedelic or altered state's work, you're really becoming aware of your ego.

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The ego is an emergent phenomena from mitochondria, forming a distributed, very fast intelligence inside your body. It's your meat operating system. In my last book, that's how I describe it. Well, ego awareness comes from spiritual development or sometimes from psychedelic use or other altered state's work.

So I teach people, here's how to not be hungry all the time, because the average person, a third of the thoughts in their head are about what's for lunch, and there are studies that show this. So you waste a third of your thoughts on tacos, and we can do better. So a lot of the intermittent fasting work that I've been writing about for a long time, or the time I fasted in a cave led by a shaman for four days, which led to my book on fasting, the spiritual and emotional as well as physiological effects of fasting.

It's important to understand this is also an ancient spiritual practice because turning down fear can happen from forgiveness and compassion and gratitude. But turning down hunger can come from just showing your body that you're not going to die if you skip lunch. The body will tell you you're going to die, but the reality is you have 60 days, at least.

And then the intimacy thing is a big... It's a source of nourishment for us, but it only happens if you're not hungry and afraid. And that's right where you get other altered states work, because about 20% of people report meeting God during orgasm. So you can use intimacy as a profound spiritual experience of personal growth, or you can use it like junk food. It turns out each of these things are signals you can put into your biology.

And there's a fourth F word that all life does. So we have fear, we have food, we have fertility, or what you would call it. Good eye roll. And then we have friend, the next one. All life supports its own species and other species appropriately, naturally, without any brain being in there, without any thinking having to happen. This is actually how life force works. This is the only algorithm that can work for life to sustain itself, no matter what kind of life it is.

So when we're doing spiritual work in these altered states, it doesn't really matter what compound you're on. You're always accessing some part of that system, and you're seeing reality from that. And it's turning off things like the default mode network, and different drugs can change levels of different brain waves. What we're doing now at 40 Years of Zen is new in the field, and it's now a trademarked term. It's Ketamine-Assisted Neurofeedback.

The reason that I'm working with ketamine is that one of the steps of the reset process, that I teach people to turn off these alerts in their brains, involves learning how to consciously and intentionally feel profound gratitude. Feeling gratitude is different from thinking gratitude. And some compounds are better at turning on that state.

Since ketamine is perfectly legal, it's been studied for 60 years, we understand it very, very well, it's pharmaceutically available, so you know what you're getting. And it has the side effect, like some other psychedelics, of turning on very high levels of neuroplasticity for about 72 hours after administration.

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This is one of the reasons ketamine works so well for treatment-resistant depression. Well, you have an experience with ketamine. It's usually a healing experience, but not always. And then as you come out of it, depending on the dose, but usually there's always a phase of this where you just feel this sense of awe and gratitude for all kinds of things. That sense of gratitude is the thing that unlocks the door to really deep healing states. You will not let go of a fear if you haven't felt gratitude first, and this is a core teaching at 40 Years of Zen. That's why people actually keep coming back.

We can take you to deeper and deeper states. But the most important state for anyone starting psychedelics is learning how to reprogram your fear response. Ultimately, all fear is fear of death. If you are no longer afraid of death, you're not going to be afraid of criticism either. And it's not like it's one big gratitude, forgiveness, reset. It's going after each of the things that programmed you to be reactive the way you are, because if you're not reactive, you're in charge. If I can trigger you, it means you're programmable.

So why don't you re-edit your triggers so you don't have any dumb ones in there? I would have said when I was in my 20s as a tech entrepreneur, "I don't have any triggers. I'm rational." No, you're not. You just feel like you're rational, because one of the things your brain does that's really annoying is it's working to save energy all the time because it knows you might run out of food just in 10 seconds from now. It doesn't really know, it's bacteria thinking here. So it's developed dozens of ways of making a decision. And some of them are just fantastically stupid, but they all feel real.

So for instance, we know that water is good for you. So more water is better. Every year, dozens of people die during marathons from over-hydrating or people drowned. So we know rationally that more water is not better, and there must be an ideal dose of water. But when we just look at it and say more water, better, right?

Or exercise is good for you. So I should exercise every day for 90 minutes a day to lose weight. I did that for 18 months straight, and I didn't lose a pound. I was trying to lose 100 pounds in my 20s. It turns out more exercise isn't better. The right amount is better, but it takes a lot of thinking energy to determine the right amount. So what we do is we convince ourselves that our simple decisions are as good as our complex decisions because our brain doesn't want us to waste energy on complex decisions. And this can lead to all sorts of problems.

But one thing that makes this easier is you start getting rid of these useless alerts in your brains, the ruminations. And when you do that, there's enough energy left over for you to do deeper thinking. And there's enough energy left over to turn your love life into something epic and sacred and nourishing and enough energy left over to support your community and your family, and enough energy, even after that, to power your evolution and upgrading of yourself as a human being. Being stuck in fear sucks and is the most mind-numbing.

So what would happen if you had Ketamine and neurofeedback? Well, you'd be able to experience this profound state of gratitude, which you can't be afraid and grateful at the same time, and you have a flexible brain like a young person, so you can learn the new states more quickly. And this is a really powerful addition that layers on top of the already transformational program that is at 40 Years of Zen.

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One of the inspirations for me to do this change is that I had a recent graduate of the program come out and say, "Wow, this is like the best plant medicine ceremony I ever did, except without plants." I do recognize these altered states, whether I'm going to one of my friend Joe Dispenza's amazing breathwork workshops. Oh, look, I'm going into that state that I also experience when I'm doing 40 Years of Zen, but the paths are different.

What I've also found from, at this point I've had electrodes glued to my brain for six months in one week periods, developing the program for 40 Years of Zen and leading it, is that when I do psychedelics, I have never had what people call a bad trip. I don't even identify that there is such a thing in that when people experience something like that, they're usually experiencing something that happened when they were very, very young or in the womb or sometimes a past life trauma, whatever it is. But they're re-experiencing a trauma that needs healing.

With a little asterisk, there are some true bad trips that are physiologically bad, something called serotonin syndrome, that with certain genetics or certain diets or certain medications like antidepressants. If you do that and have ayahuasca, you can blow a gasket. Your heart rate goes up to 180, your blood pressure goes really high, and that's a true medical emergency. So that's a bad trip.

But when people say, "I saw scary stuff", it's like, great, now you can heal it. And the level of safety, and the level of awareness and level of control of your states that comes from doing advanced neurofeedback means that if I try a new psychedelic and it's going somewhere, I could see how that could be dark. Either I'm not going to go there or I just use curiosity. And there's a deep sense of groundedness and safety that comes from knowing how your nervous system works.

I think neurofeedback teaches that more than taking a heroic dose of whatever. And I've done a lot of heroic doses at this point of one or another. But I don't do this stuff all the time. People sometimes think because I've been public about this since early days. "Dave does a lot of drugs." Yeah, I go to Burning Man. Maybe that week I will have some fun experiences. But generally, this is something that's once every month or two in the right context. It's not an every weekend thing. Except for maybe microdosing. And we can talk about that if you want to as well. But I feel like I'm just rambling at this point.

Meagen Gibson

No, not rambling.

Dave Asprey

I will stop and have a cognitive enhancing substance.

Meagen Gibson

Yes. While you sip and spray. I don't know what that was.

[00:29:43] Dave Asprey

I was sipping this one. Do you recognize the molecule?

Meagen Gibson

I do.

Dave Asprey

What is it?

Meagen Gibson

Only because I've heard you say it before on other things. Yeah, I'm a cheater. Sorry. I do my research.

Dave Asprey

I have a tattoo on my arm that everyone thinks, "Oh, is that oxytocin? Is that DMT?" I'm like, dude, it's caffeine. Because now I run Danger Coffee because who knows what you might do. And before that, I started Bulletproof, but I'm not involved with the company in any way. And so her original psychedelic drugs, I would argue, well, maybe mind altering, not necessarily really psychedelic. It's caffeine, followed by what I sprayed, that was nicotine. And if I was going to get another tattoo, it'd be nicotine on the other arm. Because these two profoundly affect how your brain works.

And they are what has powered the vast majority of great art, great books. And I feel like we have a moral obligation to use every type of intervention that we can in order to choose the state we are in. It includes chemicals, it includes natural molecules, it includes lifestyle, sun exposure, vibration, sound, whether it's Tibetan bells or drumming, ecstatic dance, did I already say breathwork, blinking lights, electrical stimulation on the brain, pulse magnetic fields on the brain and anything else we can think of. Oh, Tantric practice, all of it. And that we have an obligation to do that so that you are always in charge of your state.

You want to be calm and grounded and focused, and you want to be able to choose your state and switch from one to the other, well, have the tools and learn the skills. And what I just described is an awful lot like the definition of biohacking.

So back in 2011, I wrote the first post on biohacking, and the definition was the art and science of changing the environment around you and inside of you so you have full control of your own biology. That includes the state of your biology. I don't care if I have to internally generate a state, or if I can drink it in my coffee. I just wanted the results so that I could focus on building something new or learning something new or creating an experience for people I care about. I just don't want to waste time.

I believe it's rational and actually moral to say, "Hurry, meditate faster." Sometimes people get really mad, especially my meditation teacher friends, until we talk a little bit more. And then I say, well, did you hear about that time in the late '90s where the Dalai Lama offered a \$100,000 bounty for neuroscientists who could help him get into a certain state that he needs to get into? He's like,

"It takes me four hours. I don't have four hours. If you can get me in the state in under an hour, I will pay you money." Well, that seems like a really good idea.

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One of the problems we have, especially in the West, is that our culture comes from Puritans. "Well, hard work and struggle makes you a good person. Therefore, it's unethical to do things that work. You should do things that barely work so that you can suffer enough to get the results." I just reject that outright. And some people get really offended. "Well, Dave, you have to struggle. You have to suffer." Actually, no. You can do hard things and fail without struggling, and you can experience pain without suffering.

I believe that neurofeedback and appropriate use of psychedelics teach you the difference. The difference is, if you ever pick up a puppy and it's just wriggling all over the place, and you just hold it, and pretty soon, it melts. Struggling is squirming all over the place and not getting any results. You could also just melt and have exactly the same result. And one of them was suffering and struggling, the other one wasn't.

So teaching my nervous system to accept what's happening versus to tell myself a lie about what's happening so that I'm more comfortable, seems like a more functional way of living in the world. Psychedelics can help, breathwork can help, electrical fields can help, and certainly neurofeedback can help. All it is, is helping you have a better view of what's really going on in there. The fact that I see similar states from psychedelics and from appropriately programmed neurofeedback is a pretty good sign that we're really looking at what's going on in there.

There are other researchers out there who said, "Alright, well, now we know how to reliably reproduce altered states, sometimes from meditation and breathwork, sometimes from psychedelics," but they do this cool thing like they did in the first experiments with DMT. Well, let's give it to a bunch of people. Let's not let them talk to each other. Let's have them write down or talk about what they saw, and then let's compare notes.

I don't know about you, but that sounds an awful lot like science.

Meagen Gibson

All right, I have follow-up questions. The component that you talked about, there's two things I got to come back to, which is the energy component and the unprogrammable component.

The energy component, I had to take the long circuitous route to discover this, and for a lot of reasons we don't need to go into, but I had to go the long route to healing and getting my nervous system regulated. So I took the slow boat.

But what nobody told me, and that would have appealed to me as more of a directive, more of an incentive to focus, was how much energy I would reclaim when I wasn't terrified all the time, when I wasn't thinking about food all the time, when I wasn't going after those basic needs and protecting myself. Because fear, we could talk about actual physical fear, we could talk about perceived fear, we can talk about the fear of being socially acceptable. All of those things are real in our fear instincts.

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And so this energy component is something nobody talks about. And it's the one I want to talk about all the time. And if somebody could have told me eight years ago when I started this journey to reclaiming my energy and healing, that I could have done it much faster and efficiently in the way that you've just described, I would have leaped. I would have been on the first plane. I would have been like, "Please, let's go there."

Dave Asprey

It's funny. The easiest thing you can do to evolve more quickly is have more energy. And one of the things is stop wasting energy on inappropriate fear responses designed to keep an animal with no brain alive. Your mitochondria can't keep time. They can't think about the future. They can't plan. In fact, they can't even process a negative operator the way our most basic computer chips can do. But they do have intelligence and consciousness that's independent of you. They have them individually, and they have a collective consciousness.

And the problem with riding around in one of these meat bodies is that that fast-but-dumb collective consciousness filters reality, and it decides how much energy you get after it's done. So if you can just teach it to calm down, you get more efficiency.

And when you add in the biohacking techniques that actually increase the net amount of energy available in your cells because biohacking makes it so that your body can more effectively turn air and food into electricity and heat, well, then suddenly you have a larger amount of resources to allocate, and you're wasting less of them. And the difference in happiness and joy and the quality of life and the ability to have an impact in the world, it's huge.

And there are people out there like, "Dave, let me get this straight. You have this digital mystery school, 40 Years of Zen. Oh, and you have Upgrade Labs with 28 locations where people are increasing their biological energy, reversing their age. And you have a podcast of 400 million downloads, and you've written eight books, and four New York Times best sellers, and 3,000 blog posts, and the list goes on and on. Oh, and then there's Danger Coffee. You built this big consumer brand, Bulletproof. And you must be miserable."

I'm like, no. I have a girlfriend. I have teenagers. I have a beautiful life, and I'm not stressed all the time. I've suffered a lot because as soon as you become successful, people will come, out of their own trauma, to try and steal it or break it. And I've dealt with more than most people will ever know. But thankfully, the work I've done with self-awareness from neurofeedback and from studying with masters all over the planet before I learned about neurofeedback and after. But all of those techniques, including the psychedelic work, it creates a resilience.

It's not hustle culture resilience, where how do you burn the candle at both ends and in the middle? I did that in my 20s, it works. I made \$6 million when I was 26 years old. I lost that money when I was 28, which happens commonly if you're doing the hustle culture thing because there's no room for self-awareness or growth or service to others or all the good stuff. But I'm doing all this now in a way that's sustainable for my biology and for my spirit and for my emotions. And sometimes I'm really busy, but not always.

[00:39:54]

And there's a sense of inner-generated peace that humans are capable of, and it requires that you don't waste energy on fear and on hunger and on feeling lonely. And I said feeling lonely versus being lonely because one of the things I dealt with, actually dealt with all this as a young man. I was 300 pounds, which means you're hungry all the time because your cells aren't working well. And it means you don't have very much energy left at all, so you're emotionally reactive. And I felt lonely no matter who was around me, that was my own programming. It was designed to keep me safe.

And I actually had PTSD. I was born with an umbilical cord wrapped around my neck. So I came into the world thinking something was trying to kill me, and I probably never really stopped. I was about 30, and I started doing this kind of work.

So for anyone listening to this, there are levels of peace that you can internally generate. We're like, oh, I'm safe. No matter what happens to my body, no matter what happens in the world around me, no matter what politician's telling me carbon is going to get me, but not talking about glyphosate, or whatever narrative has taken up residence in your head. It only took up residence in your head because you're programmable, because you're afraid.

And when you take control of that, well, my new coffee brand, Danger Coffee. It's called that because who knows what you might do? The kind of people that I'm interested in spending time with and the kind of change that I'm working to make in the world is to make everyone profoundly dangerous. You're like, "What? That's shocking." In fact, for some people, that triggered you right there.

News flash: If I can trigger you, you need a therapist. Because here's what danger really means. It means you can do anything. Someone who's truly powerful can choose to be peaceful, and kind, and of service to others. They're powerful enough to stop bad actors in their tracks. But if you're saying, "I'm going to be peaceful by being weak." Which is the other path to peace. "Well, I'm peaceful because I can't do anything." I don't think that's the world that any of us want to live in.

When I see people, whether they're just confused, well-meaning or maybe just evil, trying to put food policy in place, environmental policy or laws or anything else that enforces biological weakness, and then try to take over your mind with social media algorithms and all that stuff. There were times in my life where I would be angry about that. And I see them spraying poison on our soil, and there were times I'd be angry about that. But being angry is just another manifestation of fear, and it doesn't work very well.

So when you get to where I am working on getting, and where I am some of the time, that's not acceptable. But you don't have that Greta Thunberg, how-dare-you victim energy at all. What you have is, that's not okay, and I'm not going to allow that to happen. And I'm not going to allow that to happen because I am at my full power. Yes, I am dangerous, who knows what I might do? I am going to make the world the way it's supposed to be.

And if psychedelics can get you that level of focus and that level of knowingness, then do it. And if breathwork is your path, then do it. And if talking to a therapist for 20 years for an hour a week will

get you there, then do that, too. I just don't think that works very well. I love therapy, and I have so many therapists who are friends. Most of them now use advanced techniques like EMDR or psychedelics or breathwork because they want to get you there faster, too.

[00:43:52] Meagen Gibson

All right. Yes, to everything you're saying. I want to come back to the unprogrammable part because a lot of the techniques that you named separately, we're talking about our spiritual practices, meditation, mindfulness, different types of eating, separately, can be just another form of programmed control. I studied cults for several years and made a documentary about a cult.

Dave Asprey

Which cult was it?

Meagen Gibson

It was Andrew Cohen, the EnlightenNext cult. They had a big magazine called What is Enlightenment?

Dave Asprey

Oh, my gosh.

Meagen Gibson

They were like the model community because there was no alcohol, there was no drugs. They were financially clean and on the up and up. It was just this model community that everybody looked toward as being what everybody wanted to strive towards. And it turned out to be just a cult like everybody else, like every other cult, right? But they were meditating and doing prostrations 20 hours a day and all of these things in the effort to elevate their consciousness.

I want to come back to that unprogrammable part because that's the trap that a lot of people fall into when they're seeking and they're looking for... I think most people, if they're even the tiniest little increment of conscious or aspiring to be, and have the ambition to be, they're trying, they're looking at what's available to them and the practices that are within reach for them on a day-to-day basis and just falling into another way to be programmed from some perspectives.

How do people that are watching at home start today? What can they do today to get closer? Especially because there is an affordability wall in your services, things like that. How do we get closer to being unprogrammable fast from where we are?

Dave Asprey

Well, I've been a member of two cults so far. The first one was the vegan cult. And I fell into this with pure intentions. I wanted to fix my biology. I was tired of the brain fog. I was tired of being fat. I thought this ought to work. There's enzymes, and it's wholefoods, and it's plant-based, and all that stuff. So I did it hard core for 18 months. I shattered three teeth, I did lose weight. I gave

myself autoimmune conditions. I had terrible brain fog and anxiety, but I believed that it was working for me.

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And then early on, before I even started the biohacking movement, I was a member of the low carb cult, where if anything is a carb, then it's bad for you. Anything not a carb is good for you. And funnily enough, I could lose half the weight I needed to lose on that, and then I would get stuck, and I would get brain fog, joint pain, and all the same stuff.

What keeps you from being in a cult is biohacking, because biohacking is based on data. The rule for biohackers is, decide something that you want to change, choose the measurements that show you it's working, and then only do stuff that works for you.

Oh, I forgot the other big cult I was a member of. The exercise cult, the gym cult. I went to the gym religiously, half weights, half cardio, 90 minutes a day, six days a week, except Sundays, no matter what. I could be sick, I could be in final exams, I would miss a wedding. It didn't matter. I was going to do it because just getting my health back was so important. At the end of all this, I still weighed 300 pounds, and I could max out all but two machines at the gym.

And it was sitting down at a Carl's Jr. with friends, and they're eating double western bacon cheeseburgers with fries. I'm eating the chicken salad with no chicken and no dressing because of calories. I'm like, "Wait a minute. I exercise more than all my friends combined, and I'm the fattest one." Maybe it's not working. Or maybe I'm a moral failure because I'm eating too much lettuce. I actually went through that as well.

What these are, is these are belief systems that are not working. If you're not curious about yourself and about whether what you're doing is working, then how are you going to know whether it works? If you can get data on something, you know whether it works or it doesn't. Look at your lab work. Do you believe that your vegan diet works? Well, let's look at the numbers.

And any one of the longevity doctors I work with, and I've written one of the major books on longevity, have been active in the extending human lifespan field for 20+ years. And you look at the numbers when functional doctors are working with people and they're saying, "My vegan patients are the sickest." You went into it maybe because you believe that it's better for animals. I don't want animals to suffer.

I remember I made fun of a lama in Tibet because he had a yak skin on his prayer pole, and I said, "Hey man, you preach no killing, yet you have a dead animal skin up there." I had just been a vegan, then a raw vegan before that. I wasn't attacking him. Tibetan Buddhists love arguing or debating. It's an art form for them. And he just laughed at me, and he goes, "One death feeds everyone." And I actually calculate deaths per calorie, and I feel very comfortable eating grass-fed beef because if one animal dies he feeds me for a year. And then you can know the farmer who raised it, which I do.

And you're going, "Oh, hold on a second. How many baby deer and frogs and salamanders and butterflies were chopped up by a combine for me to have tofu? How much farmland was

destroyed? Oh, wait a minute. My impact on the world isn't what I thought it was" because deaths per calorie is a real thing. So you start looking at numbers.

[00:50:14]

And then, "Maybe I was vegan for my health" which was my original thing. Well it didn't work. And so "You didn't do it right." No, I did it right. I've written major books on nutrition. I'm very well-educated on this, and I did do it right. And then, "But there's that one guy over there who did it." Yeah, what would happen if he was properly nourished? And then there's another argument about environmental stuff, which is frankly just nonsense. I'm not going to go into that here. But being curious, being willing to be wrong keeps you from being programmable.

And most of the time, in fact, this reminds me of one of the conversations that made me most just happy as a father, it was with my son when he was about 14, and he was arguing to be right in a thing where he clearly wasn't right. And I'm just like, "Why are you doing this? We have the facts here. We know what's... You're saying you didn't do something, but there's a video of it." He wasn't lying about something like that, but it was one of those things where it's very clear.

And he had made the same mistake that I had made. And it was that if you are wrong, it means you're bad and it means you're not lovable. And if you're not lovable, what your mitochondria think is that if you're not lovable because you made a mistake, you will be ostracized from the community, which means the lions will eat you, and you will starve to death without your community.

These aren't rational thoughts that you're making. These are things that are built into the very DNA that drives your behavior, your mitochondrial DNA. And so we had this beautiful conversation about how it's perfectly okay to make a mistake, and that it's not a moral judgment, and it doesn't affect how lovable you are. But the vast majority of adults are running around going, "If I make a mistake, if I'm wrong, no one will love me, and then I'll die."

We don't know that that's why we don't want to be wrong, but that's what's behind it. Whether you learn that on a journey with psychedelics or from breathwork or neurofeedback, it doesn't really matter. But you just realize, "Man, I've made all kinds of mistakes in my life." And I tell people all the time, if you're stuck in a programmed cycle that says, if someone that I follow, some guru of yours or someone that you like, if they say something you disagree with, you can't trust anything they say. That's bizarre. That's low energy thinking. It's the brain going, well, it's an easy algorithm. But believing that any one person is always right...

One of my favorite videos on my [Instagram](#), Einstein, five years before nuclear power happened, saying, "We will never be able to harness the power of the atom for energy". Or J. P. Morgan's banker, one year before the Wright brothers flew, saying, "Humans will never fly". Or the latest one, Peter Attia, who's a surgeon, who's now charging a quarter million dollars for longevity, but in his books, he says, "We will never extend human lifespan" because he doesn't actually believe in the longevity movement. Because he doesn't think it can happen, even though there are people like me who've reversed our biological age by 20 years, and we are extending human lifespan right now.

I'm like, that's so weird. All of these are programmed responses from people who are afraid of being wrong, afraid of making a mistake. And you can be curious. So how do you start with no

money? Well, on the neurofeedback side, this is an expensive program with neuroscientists, executive chefs, and a custom-built facility. It's over the top because this is like Formula 1 mechanics for your brain. And if you want to come to 40 Years of Zen, it's 40YearsofZen.com. I'd love to have you.

[00:54:27]

To make it more accessible, we've taken the neurofeedback technology from it. And now it's at Upgrade Labs. There's 28 locations opening, and there's more of them opening because it's a franchise. It can scale very quickly. And you can do half hour sessions of neurofeedback that are way more effective than half hour sessions of meditation without technology to help you know when you're doing it right. That's to make it more accessible. And we're in the late stages of being able to help you do this at home as well with facilitation.

Just like eating a bunch of mushrooms over the weekend, you're probably going to get some results from it. If you work with a psychedelic facilitator or integration specialist, you will get 10 times more results. And it's the same with neurofeedback. I see these companies make little home neurofeedback devices. Some of them might help your brain, some of them might not, depending on what your actual high performance states are. News flash: I've got the data, not all of us need the same states.

It's like, you ever hear that song where they say "We're going to make a song that everyone will like." They make the most average song ever with the average beat, and no one can listen to it, it's terrible. Well, you don't want an average brain. Your brain has some things that you're really good at and some things you suck at. Well, if we were to try to take your brain in some other direction, it wouldn't work very well. Being curious about yourself, being curious about what can I do? Well, maybe home neurofeedback, but I would say home neurofeedback with facilitation so that you don't forget it.

Most people know when you wake up and you remember a dream, some part of you erases the dream, and we like to say that you forget the dream. In my world, your mitochondria, your ego, they erase the dream because they don't want you to remember it because you're not supposed to remember it. You're supposed to live in the reality they show you because that's their job.

Well, when you tell someone about your dream, you now have a witness. This is why you want to do your psychedelic integration with another person. Because you can't forget it when there's a witness because now you're mitochondria, "No, man, if there's a witness, I can't hide it from you anymore."

This is why when people come to 40 Years of Zen, we do it in small groups, in part because you learn from other people's progress, and in part because they're just serving as a witness so that you don't forget the progress you made. We do notes. So you go home and you leave yourself a video. So half your challenge in psychedelic work is being able to remember what you did. Just like you forget your dreams, you forget your psychedelics.

And there is a risk, especially when you see these ayahuasca bros doing, "I've done ayahuasca 87 times, and now I'm a God in the Bedroom" kind of vibes. Every time you do psychedelics, you gain new knowledge and new insights, but almost all of it gets erased by your ego. Do you think your

ego forgets all that knowledge? No. So the risk of overdoing psychedelics without integration, or frankly, overdoing neurofeedback without integration, is that you will strengthen your ego in an invisible way, and you'll think you're getting the benefits, but you're only getting a tiny percentage of what's possible with good facilitation and integration.

[00:57:48]

And so that's why I'm working on making it available. But let's say you want to do stuff with no money at all. I would invite you to go to DaveAsprey.com, where you will find 1,200 hours of interviews with top experts, including Rick Doblin, the founder of MAPS, who's brought MDMA and mushrooms, actually, to be working tirelessly to make them legal. I wanted to shine light on his work back in, I think, 2015 when he first came on the show, and a variety of shamans and other people and neuroscientists talking about this.

But it's only 1,200 hours. And then there's 3,000 articles and eight books. Oh, that's as much content as a two-year college degree in biohacking. I don't think most people are going to do that unless you're like, "I love this stuff." So you can follow the podcast, or you can join the email and read the stuff you like.

And in very short order here, I will have an AI tool available on the site that knows all of my content and all of the research that my content relies on, so you can just ask it what to do for a specific goal. And I believe at the end of the day, all of us are looking for enlightenment or equanimity, is another word for that.

"I just want to be in charge of myself no matter what." Well, okay. The first thing you can do that I'll teach you to do for free is, how do you get better sleep? If you could just get more sleep in less time or just get good sleep in any amount of time, the effects on your consciousness are profound. The effects on your energy are profound. The effects on your aging are profound. It doesn't cost anything to learn how to get better sleep. It's habits that you're doing wrong.

Or you wanted more energy. If you have \$6 a day to eat, you can allocate that in a way that gives you more energy or less energy. If you don't know it, but you're eating some compounds that affect your neurochemistry in a negative way and give you cravings and give you brain fog every day, maybe that same \$6 could buy food that doesn't do that. So it doesn't matter whether you have a lot or a little to spend. It's doing it in a way that provides the most benefits with the least cost in dollars, the least cost in time, and the least cost in suffering.

If you do that, very soon, even a week or two weeks after you get on the biohacking path with me, you're going to find you have more energy. And then you can allocate that energy towards eradicating fear, towards taking care of your family, towards getting a raise, towards improving your life in whatever way is most important to you. Maybe like me, you're on an aggressive longevity path to live to at least 180. Or maybe you want to get there, but right now you just want to lose the 100 pounds, the same way I was in my early 20s.

Or maybe you're just anxious all the time and you don't know why. Well, 10% more energy every day is 10% more energy that you can spend on solving that problem. I have solved far more biological problems in myself than most humans are ever going to have to.

[01:01:05]

I had all the diseases of aging before I was 30, arthritis since I was 14. I had fasting blood sugar of 117, which is called prediabetes. My lab said there is a high risk of stroke and heart attack. I had chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia, three knee surgeries, all before I was 30. I bought disability insurance, even though my career was taking off because my brain wouldn't work no matter what I did. In a sense of just anger and anxiety and all that stuff. It's all hackable. And the first step is to get 1% more energy and put it back into yourself. And when you do that, you find, wow, maybe I want to spend \$12 on a tool that I think is going to give me another 1% more energy.

Then you wake up five years later and your career is on fire and you have healthy relationships in your life for the first time ever because you did some work. Maybe then you want to go to 40 Years of Zen, or maybe you're like, "That sounds crazy. I don't want anything to do with it." But you'll be called to things. If you're just curious, you'll notice... In fact, most people, if you just look at this one thing. If three different people tell you to read a book or talk to a person or watch a video, that's probably something you should do.

I believe, after long experience, that the universe really does try to set you up for success, all you have to do is be curious about it, and then you notice. But if you're not curious or you think it's impossible, it isn't possible because of your mitochondrial network, it only shows you things that you think are possible. So, I don't use 'impossible'. I don't use 'can't' in my thinking, in my communications, unless they're very consciously used. The reason I do that is I don't want my mitochondrial network to hide magical things from me or things that I would have believed were impossible.

It reminds me of a conversation with one of my kids when they were much younger. And I was saying, "We're not going to say 'need' unless it's a life or death situation." You don't need to go to the store. You could actually have someone deliver the groceries, or you could just fast. You just want to go to the store, or you're going to choose to go to the store.

But I said, "So don't use impossible." "But some things really are impossible." And I said, "What?" He said, "Traveling to the middle of the sun right now without a spaceship." I just looked at him and I said, "Sure, it's easy. Change the laws of physics." And he looks at me all frustrated and goes, "Well, I don't know how to do that." I said, "Exactly. So we don't know how to do that, but I don't know that it's impossible. And it might be more work than it's worth in this life to solve that problem, but we do not know it's impossible."

And that's because proof of nonexistence, you can't prove anything doesn't exist. That's like a basic logical theorem. I am a computer science guy, at the end of the day. I choose to live in that world where anything is possible. We just don't know how to do it yet. And man, if you do that and you're curious, in your own life, anything is possible.

And one of the coolest things you can ever do, whether it's from any of these neuro-enhancement technologies, is learn how to take a peek inside your body and see how your body sees the world. And it's pretty freaking weird, but it's also magical. And there are things that humans can do that are well-documented that you probably think we can't do, and you probably think you can't do, but you could do if that's where you allocated your energy and you had enough energy.

[01:04:40]

So you build a life that supports life. And when you do that, you have more energy. And I don't care if you use psychedelics or any other techniques, mantras, ecstatic dancing, fasting in caves, all of it. Pick the first one that seems interesting to you and try it. And if you don't like it, don't do it again. If you have the opportunity, go with a friend who's done it lots of times. Find a master of that technique.

Here's the cool thing, the people who know these things, we just want to share. That's why I put out so much free content or very low-cost content. I just want you to be happy. I just want to be happy. I want to live in a world full of people who are happy. Because when we have enough energy and we have turned off enough of our programmable fear responses, we're wired in our bones to be kind to each other. Not to be nice, because being nice is actually gross. It's being kind.

You can have firm boundaries and be kind. But if you're in a state of fear, you're not going to do it. You will not speak the truth, and you'll go along with whatever the crowd's doing. Frankly, crowds do really stupid things.

You should do what's right, even if you're the only human on Earth doing it, and feel comfortable in your choice to do that and your ability to do that. And that's just how I want the world to be. So that's the world that I'm going to make.

Meagen Gibson

Fantastic. There's nothing else I could add. At this point, you've already told us, but tell us one more time, DaveAsprey.com, 40YearsofZen.com, DangerCoffee.com.

Dave Asprey

Yes. And let's see, I'm on all the [Instagrams](#) and [TikToks](#) and all that stuff. And you might want to check out [The Human Upgrade](#). That's my podcast with 1,200 interviews with some of the best minds in the world, talking about sometimes longevity, sometimes consciousness, how our brains work. I'll interview shamans. I've interviewed a few people from the world of Tantra.

Anything that's going to get you into these ecstatic, altered states where you're really able to transform yourself, it's fair game. Anything that makes us better humans is what I'm interested in.

Meagen Gibson

Absolutely. Dave Asprey, thank you so much for being with us today.

Dave Asprey

Thanks, Meagen.