



How To Heal Trauma Through Movement

Guest: Aaron Alexander

Alex Howard So welcome, everyone, to this interview. I'm talking with Aaron Alexander. Aaron, thank you very much for joining me.

Aaron Alexander Thanks so much for having me, man. What a great thing.

Alex Howard So in this interview, we're going to be talking about the importance of movements and the impact of trauma on our physical body. Just to give people Aaron's professional bio, Aaron Alexander is a manual therapist and movement coach who has worked with the world's best athletes, celebrities and everyone in between. In addition, he hosts the Align podcast - ranked number one in nutrition - featuring the world's thought leaders on the mind body relationship, and is the author of the bestselling book *The Align Method*, which I've been doing my reading of this weekend, it's a great book, so I highly recommend it to people.

I was saying to Aaron before we started recording that I always know it's going to be an interesting interview when a number of the people that we're also interviewing on the conference are referenced in the book, and we definitely seem to have a lot of shared perspectives here. So I'm really excited to get into the story.

Aaron, I think I'd like to start if that's okay, with a little bit of your own personal story with movements and exercise. I know that you were into fitness from a young age and that you talk about, in the book, that one of the ways that you were using it was a way of compensating for self-esteem issues. And I think that sometimes people can appear to have a very healthy relationship with exercise because they're doing it all the time. But actually, the place it can be coming from can actually be causing as many problems as it's solving. So, yeah, I'd be really curious to hear a bit more about your background story.

Aaron Alexander Yeah. I mean, so I try to hold my grasp on stories loosely, including like what led to this - or the chicken or the egg and what have you. Because I think that at this point I've told the story of that enough times in various different mediums that it's almost starting to lose meaning for myself. And I'm like, oh cool, that's good, that's probably a good sign, but the story that I have held and I held at the time of writing the book, was that I grew up in a small town in Pennsylvania, very England-like actually because there were the same people inhabiting it.

And I was kind of like skinny, lanky, awkward baby giraffe body type, bald cut, crooked teeth, the whole thing. So insecurity from that place. And then had some interesting stuff with my dad getting into drugs and ended up like going to jail and all sorts of weird stuff. And he's doing much better now. But it felt to me as though in retrospect that because my physical home felt unsafe, I guess you could say, it felt unstable. It ended up leading to me adding on this compensatory stability and support and safety and size of my physical body.

And so I got really obsessed with bodybuilding and just packing on as much weight and muscle as I possibly could. And so from the outside, it looks really impressive, like I was doing a good thing and I would be applauded for that. But then it would slowly, just like the imbalances aggregated and stacked up until eventually joints started dislocating and there was like chronic pain and anxiety. And I had kind of experienced this like anhedonia, kind of like apathetic disconnection type sensation that was really interesting. That at the time just felt like, whatever I'm 17, like what else would you do?

And now in retrospect, I'm like, oh, that's really fascinating that I had to experience that. And so now over the last, I guess, maybe 16 or so years, it's been a process of unwinding those patterns, which are still not unwound. I'm still working on the tendrils of all that stuff. But it's been more of a process of observing how can I start to release some of those contractions in order to get to a place that feels more whole, more at ease?

Alex Howard One of the things that strikes me as your talking about it is it sounds like there was a movement away from exercise being something that you do to your body. Like it's an imposing of your will upon your body as opposed to a more collaborative, and a listening to your body and working with your body.

Aaron Alexander Mm hmm. Yeah. So, I mean, that's what you see with like developmental patterns in a child. Before they have all the systems and the rules and the ideas, that you get - your knees need to be X amount of degrees this way and your ankle, and the plantar flexion and the hip. You have all these ideas of what the body's supposed to be. You're just working in perfect union and relationship with gravity.

And so you start off and you're on your back, and then you do this kind of spiral reaching across pattern, and then you're on your belly, and then your spinal extension, and then you get up on your knees, and then you get up on your... And then you fall over and then eventually you stand up. And that's the only way, because you don't have all of those compensatory patterns formed yet. The only way for you to stand within gravity is to find a perfect midline in all these various different scenarios. And now my foot's up here. OK, how do I find mid-line? OK, now going down steps or rolling down a hill, whatever it may be, I've got to stand back up.

So all of those are opportunities to essentially almost be like massaged and coaxed by your environment. In this case, just this blanket of gravity. And then you start to develop this story of who you are, who you're supposed to be, what parts of your body you should be ashamed of, what parts of your body show you should be proud of. And then that's when things get really funny and that's what starts to form the structure. And then you can start getting into a process of coming back to more of that. That more like genuine truthful place while maintaining the lessons that you learned along the way.

Because if you just maintain, being an infant your whole life, you wouldn't really serve culture. So they think like from this hive mind, we're all working together. We're all trying to build whatever the hell we're trying to build, exactly. But you want to be able to build beyond that infant stage, but also maintain the lessons that you get from both being an adult and being a child. Both are valid. It's like yin, yang, light, dark. They're both two sides of the coin I think.

Alex Howard Yeah. And you sort of kind of touched on Bessel Van der Kolk's book, it was a great title, *Your Body Keeps the Score*. And one of the things that you touch on in the opening chapters in your book is the impacts of both, big traumas but also micro traumas, on the body. Like each experience that we live is stored, is impacted in posture, in ourselves.

Aaron Alexander I think, every moment that you feel a certain way, that you take on that shape in your physical body. In an embodied way. I don't necessarily know that fear is stored in the liver, or your mother issues in your hip. I don't really personally feel that, some people have more relationship with that. And I can trust them, but I personally don't feel that. But what I can, a million percent feel and anybody listening can a million percent feel - just go into, maybe a method acting class or improv class, and say, OK, take on fear. So okay, you're about to get run over by a by a bus, Ahhhh jump! Your shoulders go up and you tighten your sternocleidomastoid and your trapezius and your scalions and your masseters. And all these anatomical terms, and your pupils dilate, and the blood pulls out of your organs and into your muscles to be able to run and get the heck out of there. So there's this physiological reaction to that sensation. If you're a really good actor, you can actually take that on and so that's really interesting.

So just in that moment, I'm replicating that scenario and then my physiology is following suit with my belief in that moment. So now, take that time since you started believing a story about yourself. So whenever that moment that story came up that - I'm ashamed of this or it's not good to be big and myself in this way, or I shouldn't act this way or whatever it may be or I'm afraid of what's to come. Some scarcity mindset, I don't know if there will be enough. I need to kind of guard.

So there is some interesting research that I bet you probably heard of, where people were, I don't know where this came out, you will have to Google it, but it's an interesting idea, of people shopping in grocery stores. The people that would be pushing carts versus carrying baskets, the people that would push the carts, they would end up being a bit more impulsive.

Alex Howard Is that right? Wow.

Aaron Alexander Oh, no, no, sorry. It was the opposite. Because if you're holding the basket in like a crunched up way. If you fold your shoulders in such a way, it puts you into a more of a defensive position and it puts you in more of this scarcity. "Oh, my God, I need to get the sugar, I need to get the fat". There was a similar thing with people that are pushing doors open, versus pulling doors. So if I'm pulling the door open, it's I want what's inside there.

Alex Howard Wow.

Aaron Alexander So our bodies continually being played by our environment and our thoughts and our emotions and all that stuff. It's a really interesting little orchestra.

Alex Howard Yeah, there's a great quote, actually, that jumped out at me and I underlined it and I thought... It's always a bit awkward when someone quotes your book back at you. But I think it really captures it, you said "it's as though our endocrine system is deciphering our postural positions, like a person reading Braille and actually changing

our mood based on the signaling of our movements." I really liked that quote. What's happening in our body is directly impacting and shaping how we feel.

Aaron Alexander Yeah, yeah, yeah, absolutely. And that's what you see when people are in hunched over positions. There's all the research with Amy Cuddy in Harvard, which there's, I get into that and there's been some contention back and forth of what's what with that. But there's been endless research showing when people are in hunched over postural patterns. It's an indication that they are feeling low, feeling defensive, feeling emotions like that. And so that Amy Cuddy, research that people may be familiar with already, was people being in hunched over positions for just a couple of minutes was the way they did it.

They would take saliva samples and they would measure cortisol levels and testosterone levels from just being in these different positions for a couple of minutes - when they're in a hunched over position, they found that their testosterone levels would decrease and cortisol would increase. Cortisol being one of the stress hormones. And then the inverse would happen when they are in a more stacked, upright, strong position. And so within that, it's just another interesting example of how people, it's not just your physical body affects the way that you feel.

There's a physical manifestation of your neurochemistry and your hormones and all of that. And even your acquisition of memories, another study that I believe I reference in the book. It was done in San Francisco State University where people, if they were in this hunched over position - really similar to the Cuddy stuff, but this is more memory acquisition - when they're in that hunched over position it was easier for them to remember more painful depressive memories. The memories that you would express or the moments that you would express in that physical position.

So you put yourself back into that physical position and then your mind goes flips to that part of the library that says, OK, we'll open up the times that I felt kind of hunched depressed, in the literal definition of the word pulled down. And now I pull myself up into another physical position and all of a sudden the catalog goes back over this other place of OK, when were your shoulders back? When did you feel safe to expose your vital organs? And why did you feel like it was safe to be as big as you could be? And take up as much space as you'd like? Okay, let's go back to those memories throughout your life. So it's a physical thing, it's a chemical thing, it's a memory thing, it's all wound up, it's very very cool.

Alex Howard I think not only is it fascinating, I think it's often one of the things that can really get missed when people are working on healing trauma or processing the impacts of the past. Because I think people can really get into the idea of, I need to talk about what happened, I need to process. And of course, that can be really important.

But if we've learned to breathe in certain patterns, to move in certain ways. We can do all the talking therapy in the world, or even all of the trauma processing in the world, but if we keep holding on to those postures and holding onto that in the body then somehow we can just keep going back to that place. And I think that it's, sometimes people can really miss, sometimes the most basic thing. Which is looking at posture and movement and actually the real time impact that has on how people feel.

Aaron Alexander The body just wants to move, like it wants to have purpose. So when you are in a relationship, if you feel like you have a role to fulfill - you're a man, and your woman might be playing you. She knows how to fix the dishwasher thing or whatever. But it's like it makes me feel like a man. And you show up full, man, you're like, yeah, I'm gonna fix that thing. It turns you on.

And so in the physical body, we've done such a tremendous job at outsourcing most of our mechanical function, our physical body, it's kind of like a man that's got to put his tail between his legs it's like, okay, honey, I guess you've got it. Your body's like, shoot, man. I've been structured for millennia to pick up that water, and your hunch all the way down, and then carry it, and then throw my kid on my shoulder, and then maybe I wrap a little hammock thing around him, and walk him from tribe to tribe or whatever it is. I'm building a fire or building shelter. Now I'm using my senses to look out into the distance and I see those clouds coming in and, oh, what does that mean? Oh, now I'm smelling the air. It's your whole body. It's this electrical storm and your body comes online. And if it doesn't have the opportunity to do that, then those senses, they start to atrophy just like any muscle.

When any muscle starts to atrophy, you start to kind of wither up and lose purpose. And purpose could just be a story. I mean, in fact, it almost is, but when we have that story of purpose, our body shows up. And when you start to remove that, then the body starts to, things get funny. And then conversations like autoimmune diseases and things like that, things that are like outside of my scope, but I find really fascinating. It seems consistent that perhaps the body might start to almost perhaps even turn on itself depending on the situation. It doesn't have something to do, it wants to gather water and chop wood.

Alex Howard I think one of the things that happens as well is that when people are in a state of anxiety or when the nervous system is over activated - that often people try to think their way out of that state of anxiety. They try to think their way to a place of calmness. The problem is, the more that they do that, the more they tend to activate the nervous system and the kind of more wired everything gets. And sometimes the most powerful way out of the mind is actually to start moving the body. And suddenly things start to rebalance or recalibrate as a result of that.

Aaron Alexander Yeah. And I think the more that you lean on thinking your way out of things, like movement essentially is meditation. So if you can bring your awareness, your full self into the experience of a movement, like there's been research around this with just washing dishes. For example, where people just spending time saying, OK, like, I want you to wash the dishes, but I want you to pay attention to the glistening of the light coming off of the bubbles, and the water temperature, and the weight of your feet in the ground, and the clinking of the plates.

All I want you to do is, I just want you to pay attention to what you're doing. That's it. You're like, oh, okay that sounds silly, but yeah, I'll do that. And then so what they find is that people - just by bringing that attention into their movement, which everything is movement, including stillness - by bringing attention into that movement, they end up scoring higher on creativity tests and then also reporting less stress and anxiety.

So stress and anxiety ends up being diminished just because a person only has so much bandwidth. So a person that does have some practice of starting to gain relationship with their thoughts, the chatter that sixty to eighty thousand thoughts that stream through their head each day. Whatever percent, 90 percent of those are just habituation

of the past. If you start to gain some semblance of relationship with that of something as simple as just okay, I'm just going to focus on actually bringing myself into deep attention with this task right now. Then what that does is it starts to train the mind to not be just essentially a slave to all of that hurricane of thoughts. And as long as we are completely dependent on our thoughts to get us out of things, I think it's just like it's a slippery slope, but it's expanding the conversation of movement.

I think sometimes in the conversation it's like OK, cool, I need Tibo and P90X and I need to get out and do a salsa class. Yeah, all those are great. But it can be literally as you're listening to this - you're just paying attention to the weight being distribute through your hips. You're paying attention, you're noticing that maybe there's a breeze in your house from a fan, or maybe you're outside and you're noticing the feel of the wind, or the sound of the wind in the trees. All that said, people have been saying that for forever. Any yogi or martial artist or philosophical, anybody who's been like, you've got to do that. And the science backs it up. Yeah, by the way, that actually really literally changes the structure of your brain as well.

Alex Howard Yeah. And one of the things, again, that jumped out to me as I was reading your book is you talking about just unraveling the impact of each day. So it's not being stored in the body. So there's this kind of processing the trauma of the past. But there's also just no stacking more on that, like coming home from work or busy chasing after children all day, whatever it may be. And the kind of gradual working up of the nervous system and tension held in the body of just being sure to undo that and to let the body come back to its equilibrium.

Aaron Alexander Yeah. I think people just need to be - by people I mean me - be honest with themselves. For one thing, an analogy, like where does your trash go? It's easy, especially being, I live in Santa Monica - I've got a trash thing and trash person comes every... I don't even know as somebody else takes the trash - I just put it out and it's gone, but it's not gone it didn't go anywhere, it doesn't just disappear. It goes and gets sorted out and there's probably a bunch of. Now, I do compost, thankfully, and for a lot of people, there's a bunch of compost stewing up in there, bubbling up and creating all these emissions. It doesn't just go, it goes away out of your visual field temporarily and then sneaks right back up with you at some point, or the greater community, which has a connection to you anyway. So eventually it all circles back.

So the sooner that a person can really be honest with themselves. At the end of the day, I think it's a great time to really check in. Like, how was today? How did I do? What could I have done better? What were the victories? How can I improve? Maybe now's a good time to not just check in more mentally - like I'm kind of suggesting now - but check physically. Say, what was the positions of my body? Do I have stiffness in my back or my hips, or my knees, or ankles, or do I feel like my nasal passages are compressed down, or my eyes are sore and I'm still looking at my phone before I go to bed. All of those different things, if you go to sleep with those contractions, then you program that in. And then it affects your sleep state, the quality of your sleep.

Then you wake up and there's one layer, it's like imprinted, it's like a ring around a tree. So you have one ring, poof, and then next day another ring, poof. Then the next day after that, you have three hundred and sixty five rings. So my strong preference would have each of those rings to be somewhat like a really good rain year, each ring, that was a good ring that one. The way that you do that is in the morning you check in, you pay attention,

you say what's going on? The same way the person washing the dishes, you check in say cool, how's my breath? And say, cool, how's my mind? Maybe do a simple little 10, 15, 20, whatever minute meditation thing, kind of just start practicing that muscle of thoughts come in and then. Okay, cool. I can be OK with those thoughts. And I come back to my breath. I come back to my body where it may be and then specifically scheduling in - I'll stop rambling in a second - but specifically scheduling in like a walk. And when you're doing that walk, make sure that you are not looking at your phone.

Alex Howard Like zombies walking down the street reading phones.

Aaron Alexander Totally man, and then that's you programing your body, your locomotion for disorientation. If that's the way that you walk. If you walk and you're staring down and your eyes are looking down to the right, like they've been for the last ten years or whatever, you're literally shortening the muscle. You could think of your visual muscles almost like reins on a horse. So you pull the reins to the right and it pulls the horse off to the right, and then pull it up. So paying attention to opening up, it's like the yoga of your visual system. You want to take your eyes up into the left and up into the right and straight up. You want to be able to exercise that panoramic vision as well. And you could be exercising panoramic vision even if you're in a room. It would just be allowing your vision to go kind of like spacing out.

If you're in a room and you're feeling maybe kind of stressed it would be a great time to say, OK, maybe I'm going to do a long exhalation, which activates more that parasympathetic calming rest digestive type side of the nervous system. And maybe I'm going to allow my vision to just gaze out the window or maybe I don't have a window in here, so I'm just going to kind of space out for a second take in the whole entire room. And that's all wrapped up back into your autonomic nervous system as well. And now from there, maybe I'm going to pay attention to, where's the location of my shoulders? Oh, shit. My right shoulder is jacked up to my ear and I didn't even know it. Oh, my phone was up here as I was doing it. It's the same pattern. So all those things, they're consistent patterns.

Alex Howard Yeah.

Aaron Alexander And if we start to realize, I mean there's a couple threads. One is realizing that fitness is everything, your whole existence is fitness. Right now you're listening to this, this is a fitness experience. What are you doing with your eyes? What are you doing with your breath? What are you doing with your posture patterns while you listen to this? And you're literally practicing being yourself. You're also informing yourself of what's going on, there's other things too but I think that's a fine starting point.

Alex Howard Yeah. And I think that's great. And also, you kind of bang the drum hard in the book - which I really liked - about the importance of play. And the danger of rigidity and being just stuck in a sort of consistent kind of, held kind of pattern. But also maybe say something about neurogenesis and actually the real impacts of play on selves and or more than just feeling good.

Aaron Alexander Yeah. So you'll have Stephen Porges on here who gets really deep into this and the value of that social interaction and play. And if your nervous system, I describe in the book, I think I call it something like the top of the movement hierarchy or

something like that. If you come to a place where you can be playful. You are compounding so many different movement variables. So you're interacting with another person, so just say, two people playing tag or something like that. It's not just that you have a dumbbell in front of you and it's just you and a dumbbell and you're pulling it up, back up, and up. You're playing with his whole social dynamic of, did I offend this person? Like, how do I keep this person in play? How do I keep the game alive?

So from a neurological level, that's a lot more electricity that's happening for you to be able to maintain that social interaction happening. Not to mention that from just a social dynamic perspective, you have to be able to do the equations of, OK, is that person going to go this way? Is that person going to go that way, is it gonna go up and down? So now all of a sudden you're a mathematician analyzing what's this person going to be doing? There's just so many different compounding elements to the act of being able to play with somebody. It's actually a super, super high level of fitness you could say.

And so it's just one of those things, it's like you want to stack variables anywhere you can and so what we come from, speaking as we as in Western culture, whatever that would represent. Where I come from is much more of like a supplement type mindset. OK, there's a supplement for that, there's a pill for that. How do we isolate, myopically hone in on that thing? OK, cool, sweet. You've got an issue with your back, all right got to turn on teres major, minor, rhomboids or lower trap, or whatever? Sometimes that's correct, especially when it's working with a system that's been so isolated throughout its approach to life. Sometimes it can be helpful to say, by the way, this place in your body, we do need to isolate it.

Because if we just put you into playing right now, you're so disconnected play is not even really safe for this body right now. It's too dynamic, it's too complex. So we're gonna have to train you up, draw it back, and we're going to strengthen these specific muscles and maybe straighten these specific social dynamic muscles, maybe strengthen these specific hand-eye coordinate, whatever it may be. And then we can slowly introduce you back into that place of like, okay, cool, full on play, game on. But because we didn't come from if it, if you go to a lot of developing countries, places where they don't have a lot of stuff, they have a flattened soccer ball and some cans to kick around or something like that or sticks. Their minds, they need to be creative because they need to figure out how do I make this stick become a Ken doll, and a and a gun, and a sword, and all these different things. They can start to adapt in their mind to creating that.

Alex Howard Yeah, it's amazing that drive within children to play, right? It's like even children in the most impoverished environments will find something to play with, something to create that kind of movement and that kind of spontaneity from.

Aaron Alexander Because it's a healing mechanism. I think it's a similar thing of why we do almost anything. A lot of the kind of just natural inclinations or patterns that we end up doing, I think a lot of it is just feeding back into a biological need. So when we're laughing, it's like, oh, there's a lot of energy that's built up, I need to get that out. It's like it's inside. It comes out and we all accept that as like he's laughing, but it's like no he's calming his nervous system. He didn't expect that to happen and he's pressing the purge valve, so he's got to decompress the nervous system. And when you decompress the nervous system you allow a lot of potentially, previously held contractions to start to come out.

Alex Howard And that's why sometimes trauma that's held in the body just comes out as laughter. It's fascinating, people sometimes do trauma release. People think, oh, it's going to come out the way it went in. But sometimes it comes out completely the opposite of the way that it went, it's just that release that's happening in the body.

Aaron Alexander It doesn't matter how it comes out or how it comes in, it's all stories. All that matters, and that's the interesting thing. So my background is Rolfing and different forms of manual therapy. And so in that I used to really care about people's stories. I'd put it in the soap notes or whatever, I'd have the situation like, okay I'm writing it down. And now I'm like, I don't care. I care because I care about you as a person and I want to acknowledge you and I want to have a good relationship with you.

But as far as your story around what happened with the reason you have tension in your hip, or your back, or your shoulder or whatever. It doesn't actually matter, all that matters is here's the body, I feel this is happening, let's go to work. And then from there, whatever comes out, maybe some thought or some sensation or color or something like that will pop up. I think it's really cool when that stuff happens, but I'm not attached to any of it.

Alex Howard Yeah.

Aaron Alexander So it's acknowledging and respecting the story because that's probably at least the polite thing to do. But also not becoming overly attached to anything, including my own story of saying, oh, this is why this. I don't know, man. I'm like a pinball getting slapped around through this life experience.

Alex Howard Yeah. And I think in fact one of the people we're talking to as part of the conference is Caroline Myss, who wrote a very famous book about *Why People Don't Heal and How They Can*, and one of the big pieces in there is exactly this. The stories and the identities that people take on that actually can be the block to that healing happening because they're so identified with it.

I want to change tack slightly towards, how people can get started with movement. And I think there'll be people watching this that are in different categories. There'll be people watching this that already do loads of movements and in a sense, this is just reinforcing and kind of re-inspiring and reigniting that.

There's going to be others that sort of do some movement and hopefully it's helping them realize that movement is not just a physical practice, it's a critical part of having a healthy mind, emotions, and digesting processing the past. But I'm particularly also sensitive to those people that may have had difficult experiences previously with movement. They might have an identity that, I'm just not a sporty person. Or that they perhaps they've had shame around sport or exercise where they just have always struggled.

People that are hearing this and watching this and going, I realized the importance of movement, but it's something that I struggle with. How do those people get started? If you're working with someone one on one who's had a long, difficult history with movement, how would you start to open that up or open up that potential?

Aaron Alexander Yeah, I mean, that is literally like who I wrote the book for really. Is people that you work in an office or you're not a professional athlete or a motocross person or whatever. You are right now, as we already kind of referred back to, you're always practicing being in this physical form. So something that I would do is I would start to look at your physical environment and see what is the shape of that environment? How would it shape the cells, the beings inside of that place?

I was re-reading the Biology of Belief from Bruce Lipton. Because I am going to do a podcast interview with him, coming up after the apocalypse is all sorted out. So I was re-reading that, that was one of the things that he pointed out in there. And that was one of the first books that really turned me on to a lot of these perspectives, so I really have a lot of appreciation for Bruce. One of things in there was that in cellular biology, if you have a cell in a petri dish, you're not so concerned about the cell itself if you need to create change. It's saying what's the environment that the cell is submerged in? So if you're a goldfish in a pond, in a bowl, and the bowl is filled with whatever it's filled with, maybe toxic stuff, maybe good stuff, whatever it maybe. If it's filled with toxic stuff, it doesn't matter what supplements you give to that goldfish, the stew that it lives in is forming it.

So I would say to give yourself a little bit of momentum, maybe start adjusting your sitting situation in your house, maybe grant yourself, right now as we're doing this conversation, I'm sitting on the floor. I have a little foam roller under my butt, but I have floor cushions back behind me here, I've got an infrared Biomet thing on the ground. So it encourages me and guests or whoever to go down towards the ground. I have a yoga swing hanging up back behind me. I'll get in that thing at least once a day. I'll get it in before I go to bed, pretty much every night. So those little phases, I become my space. So start to just look around your space right now, your home, your office, your car, your neighborhood, your relationships, your community. You become the product of the five people you spend this time with, Jim Rohn put.

Alex Howard Yeah I think it was.

Aaron Alexander It says start looking at, what's the shape, what's the structure, what's the goo that my cell is living in? Is there's some way that I can start to look at it as not so much as a me thing, but look at this more of a what if I just start to look outside of myself, and look at my environment and relationships and all that stuff. And see how that will start to move my body in a different way. Throw a pull up bar in-between a doorway that you go through with regularity.

And then, in the book, I have a whole chapter about hanging. So I suggest hanging for 90 seconds a day. And so just that process, that's like 10 seconds a bunch of times, 15, 20 seconds, whatever. Just walk through the door, do a little swing, maybe twist your body out a little bit, open up your lungs, put yourself into those positions that we're already referring to previously that are shown to change your physical, mental, emotional, physiological, neurochemical, hormonal structure.

So it's like, wow, cool, that thing doesn't just stretch my shoulders out. But it literally it starts increasing the function of my lungs. My respiratory efficiency gets better because I just swung through my doorway and I opened up all that tissue that's been bound up and hunched over for the last however long it's been. So now I shifted my environment in that way with those subtle things that cost me next to nothing. And now as I move into

now, I'm walking outside, I've got a little extra chip in my step, my hips feel a little bit more mobile because I was on the ground a little bit. I ate my breakfast or check my emails while I was sitting down on the ground on that cushion on a comfy rug. And so then that spills into the way that you interact with other people.

Now, all of a sudden you're more playful because you spend your life down low in the ground where kids and animals play. So now you start to go into the world with this more playful perspective and all now we're spilling into Stephen Proges's work. Before we were spilling into Peter Levine's stuff like *Waking the Tiger* and just shaking yourself out a little bit, hanging and twisting and all that, the issues are in the tissues.

So if you can start to just adjust your environment ever so slightly then your environment naturally massages you by you just being there, then that's a really effective way to create momentum for you to go into any sporting activity. And then eventually you start maybe gaining enough confidence to take a yoga class or to take whatever it may be. And now okay, now we're rolling.

Alex Howard One of the things that kind of popped out for me when I was reading your book over the weekend as well was, I was reading that you had about standing desks. For a while I was thinking it would be good to get to get a standing desk. And then what really kind of landed for me was, that can just become another rigid pattern. It's like I go from sitting at my desk to now I'm standing. And what I'm really hearing and what you're saying is that something about that fluidity and that responsiveness and that kind of constant kind of moving and adapting as opposed to any kind of overly rigid structure.

Aaron Alexander Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. I mean and that movement again. It's just humans have been hardwired, they've been developed over millennia, this is where we come from. And then in the last very recent, suddenly it's possible for you to hunt and gather energy by hunching over and staring into a screen. And you can gather a lot of energy by doing that, you can hunt all the woolly mammoths by hunching over and staring at a screen and your body is like, wow, it's not ready for that. It takes longer to evolve into that.

So by you just adding a little bit of, say something I recommend in the book as do like a Pomodoro Technique type thing. So work for twenty five minutes then take a little five minute break where you can go, take a quick walk. And what that walk does. Not only is it going to be helping with circulating lymphatic fluid and blood in general, but it's also going to be helpful in turning your muscles on and mobility and all that stuff. But it's also be helping with consolidating memories. So your whole body is tied into the way that you think and the way that you feel and the acquisition of memories, and such as we talked about before.

So you, if you want to be a creative person, there's been research around this as well. When people are walking out and about, they're getting to move and circulate their bodies. That will be beneficial or helpful with them going into more divergent type thinking. So thinking outside of the box and when you close your body in and you hunched over the desk and you focus on that scantron, ABCD, you're focusing more on those memories that you already have.

Alex Howard Right.

Aaron Alexander So if you want a new idea, if you want to be inspired. It might be really helpful for you to throw on some Shakira or whatever you're into. And like shake your hips a little bit and kind of let those ideas start to naturally flow through your whole physical body.

Alex Howard It's funny. A while ago I noticed that when I do a day of patients at the clinic, I do six hours of patients in a day and I'd go to the loo pretty much between every session. I was going to the loo every hour and I was like, I don't normally wee this much normally in a day. And I realized what it was, I didn't actually really need to go to the loo. I just wanted to move and it was by walking down a flight of stairs, going to the loo, going back up. It was just a chance to move and shake off.

Aaron Alexander That's why I let people smoke cigarettes.

Alex Howard Right.

Aaron Alexander Cigarettes, a big part of it's like the tobacco it messes up my taste buds and it kind of hurts my throat a little bit, but the ceremony around it. I would take the ceremony, I would rather have a person that smokes cigarettes, this is obviously pretty contentious, but that smokes cigarettes with people and they go outside, and they take a walk, and they put their phone down, and they look up at trees, and they reflect, and they take that in, and they really smoke 100 percent of that cigarette.

They're really paying attention with it, like the person washing their dishes. I would take that person, their health, I'd rather have them on my kick ball team or whatever, over the person that's stuck in front of their computer screen in their office and is doing the healthy thing. And is not gonna go outside and do that. It's the ceremony around that stuff that's so valuable. And so we're social creatures, we need to connect, we're outdoor cats, we need to go out, that's where we come from. So ideally, it's not something that's a net negative of a cigarette.

But some other stimulus. In your case it was I got to take a pee. But that's like, okay I take a pee, I take a walk. And we start to anchor those traditions into those states.

Alex Howard Yeah. Aaron I'm mindful of time. But just one other thing I wanted to ask you about. Because like a lot of these things, people can think, well, if this thing is good for me, then I should just do as much of it as I possibly can. And it's probably a minority people watching this, but I think there's also a category of people where there's a kind of sense of overtraining. And maybe this is perhaps a little bit where some of your fitness journey began. When there's a trying to compensate for things or the sense of almost escaping how one feels by constantly kind of training. Can you just speak a bit to that? We touched quite a bit on the under movement, but also the risk of it being used to extremes in an unhealthy way.

Aaron Alexander I agree and I think that acknowledging that stillness is a really powerful form of movement. This is kind of diverging a little bit away from your question. But I just took a walk, so my mind's diverged and so that's the way it is. But also really respecting stillness, I think is immensely valuable. So in a lot of people in the fitness industry, a lot of most elite fit athletes, say ultra-athletes, ultra-runners, people running long distance, I just keep running, I run and, run and run. A lot of those people are literally and figuratively running away from something. And a lot of people are

fitnessing themselves to the point of adrenal fatigue, because when they stop having that motion, that movement it becomes more of like a drug addiction than anything else.

So I think that for everyone, it's a really helpful and healthful to occupy both sides of the coin equally. So your rest practice, that's when you get strong. So you can tear your body down and all that stuff. That's mostly catabolic, that's like cellular destruction. If you would look at your body after like a huge CrossFit workout or after a big race or whatever, you would think someone lit a or set a nuclear bomb off inside of your body like, oh, what have we done? But then you go to sleep and the body gets that stimulus to say, OK, this might happen again tomorrow, we need to be ready. And so that's when it builds up and makes you stronger and better because of it. But if you stay on, it's 50 50, man. It's like how we started the conversation, it's the whole yin/yang black/white, two sides of the coin. You have to respect both sides of the coin.

And so by having a healthy stillness practice, which could be, it could be anything, meditation, I think is really valuable, but whatever your thing is. It could be listening to music and just taking a walk and kind of just being still with yourself listening, feminine side of the coin, like having that nurturing listening side, take a bubble bath, garden. Anything that puts you more into like an introspective, listening, healing place. If you can really fill that side up, then all of a sudden you have the other side is fully exposed to be able to take advantage of that side. And now wow, you go full at whatever your thing is, and then by you actualizing that other side, more that yang active side, now that, it brings you back for a more, more fuller experience instead of the ying. So I think that, if you want a better fitness, movements, whatever practice, maybe look at your rest practice. And if you want a better rest practice, perhaps look at your movement practice.

I think we can go from different angles. Everything's connected and it's the same thing. If you want your mind to work better, your emotions, whatever it maybe, maybe look at your movement practice. And if you want your body to work better, maybe look at your mind. You have all these spokes and they're all coming back to the hub and then one person finds out that one spoke, worked for them, and then they write a book about it and they get on top of the highest hill, and then yell at everybody, this is it, it's the answer. That is one spoke. Another person has their spoke and then they start fighting about which spoke is more powerful. In the end, let's just respect all the spokes and be willing to be a scientist, be willing to experiment, be willing to see a therapist, be willing to see a physical therapist, be willing to see a massage therapist. Be willing to put yourself in vulnerable situations that maybe make you uncomfortable or make you shrink up. And perhaps that might fulfill something, it might spill back into one of those other spokes and you wouldn't even realize it.

Alex Howard I'm mindful of time. I love the fact that's where we kind of came to, because I couldn't agree more the importance of integrating those different pieces. But I think this is a piece that was really important to bring to the overall kind of picture of the conference as well. So thank you, Aaron so much. For people that want to find out more, obviously your book is a great way to do that, The Align Method. Do you want to say a bit more about, you mentioned your website and your podcast and, yeah, where people can find out more about your work?

Aaron Alexander Yeah. Thanks, man. So Align Method book would be the obvious place, it was my proudest thing, which was really a great experience and then we created the addendum to that, which is the online program also called The Align Method. And so the

first week of that is completely free. So if people are interested in exploring that, it's at AlignPodcast.com/TheAlignMethod or it's in the link in the bio at the Instagram page.

Everything is Align podcast, so you'll see that link for it. And that the first week includes breath practices. So teaching people how to up regulate, trying to stimulate their nervous system, also calm the nervous system and some self-care practice to get your head to be stacked back on top of your shoulders. So if you're a person with a forward head, posture and all that stuff, we kind of focus on some of those things. So everything's Align Podcast if you're interested, just type in Align Podcast into the internet and you'll find your way.

Alex Howard That's awesome, Aaron. Thank you so much. I really appreciate your time and contribution. It's been really great.

Aaron Alexander Thank you.