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MBS ([00:02](#)):

I'm Michael Bungay Stanier. This is 2 Pages with MBS, the podcast where brilliant people read the best two pages from a favorite book. And as you now know, there's a twist because I've got a new book coming out on January the 11th, *How to Begin: Start Doing Something That Matters*. So the brilliant person reading the two pages from his favorite book is me reading from my favorite book of the moment. Well, honestly, a bit of a love-hate relationship in the lead up to a book launch. But the brilliance actually comes in from who I get to talk to.

MBS ([00:34](#)):

And as some people will know, I was in a mastermind group for many years, like 15 years. We were a gathering of people who had something in common, mostly around we work in a coach-like way with people, but mostly a bunch of



stuff not in common. We had different businesses and different business models and different spiritual practices.

MBS ([00:58](#)):

But another thing we all had in common was how skeptical we were about a mastermind group. We were all of the inclination we'd never belong to any club that would have us as a member, to use that Groucho Marx quote. And I think that's one of the reasons that we hung around for so long, is we had 15 years of going, "I don't know if I'll show up again next time, but maybe I will. We'll see in the morning."

MBS ([01:20](#)):

And really an enduring friendship from that time is my friend, Eric Klein, somebody who is very precious to me who I love having in my life and is a teacher and a friend and just a [inaudible 00:01:35]. So, Eric, welcome.

Eric ([01:36](#)):

All right. Well, thank you so much. I'm so happy to be here. I think I'm happy to be here.

MBS ([01:42](#)):

Excellent. Who are you, Eric? How would you talk about who you are now?

Eric ([01:50](#)):

Actually who I am now was defined by you very beautifully in this book of mine that's coming out in a few months. And you said, "Eric Klein is a spiritual teacher and an artist." And I really loved the way you were able to sort of cleanly sever the past for me because I had 35 years of doing leadership development and mindfulness kind of in corporate spaces, but now my heart and soul and work creativity is focused on this offering called wisdomheart.com. And that's where



Devi, my wife and I, teach spiritual practices, meditation practices for people who want to really infuse their everyday life with that awakening presence.

MBS ([02:35](#)):

What's at the heart of your spiritual practice? I mean, awakening presence, that's a big phrase that's hard to quite get my arms, head, heart around.

Eric ([02:47](#)):

Beautiful. I think the practice, I'll say the heart of it, it has sort of two ventricles. How about that? One of them is the formal inner ritual of cultivating an inner capacity to do two main things, to dissolve whatever the current identity structure is into unformed, radiant potential, and then to reform that in a slightly upgraded way that has more love and more wisdom in it than the last one.

Eric ([03:31](#)):

So that's the inner work. The other ventricle is to carry that into your relationships and your community life.

MBS ([03:42](#)):

What, you actually have to practice love and wisdom?

Eric ([03:44](#)):

So actually, you have embody it. So we say to realize. Actually, realization is the easiest part of the practice. The embodiment and the expression of it, that's where it really is the challenge, which sends you back to the cushion.

MBS ([03:59](#)):

Right. One feeds the other.



Eric ([04:01](#)):

Yeah.

MBS ([04:02](#)):

This is an impossible question, but that's what I like to ask of you. What does it actually mean to embody love?

Eric ([04:10](#)):

Yeah. I'll have to check with my wife [inaudible 00:04:14]. I think it means at least three things. One it means to perceive and to feel through the surface display of your life that there's a goodness that's coming towards you from everyone and everything.

MBS ([04:38](#)):

Oh, I love that.

Eric ([04:41](#)):

So that's one. Two is to sort of [inaudible 00:04:45] realize that goodness is inside you at the very center of your being even though you're totally confused. It's also coming through you out, right?

MBS ([04:57](#)):

Yeah. Yeah.

Eric ([04:58](#)):

And then I think the third thing is this, which I think actually your book is supportive of, is like given that's what's happening, actually you are offering of conspiracy, then how do we breathe that together into some way of being in the world together?



MBS ([05:19](#)):

Beautiful. And of course conspiracy means to breathe together.

Eric ([05:23](#)):

Exactly.

MBS ([05:23](#)):

So I love that you're making that connection for us. Thank you. So it's interesting, a spiritual teacher and an artist, and the chapter you asked me to read from was chapter six, which is about weighing up the journey. And this is the chapter where people decide or not to fully commit to their goals. And we've had somebody else ask me to read from this chapter. I read a couple of different pages for that. So this is a beautiful kind of supplement to that.

MBS ([05:51](#)):

So I'm going to plunge in and read from page 118 onwards. And this'll take me a couple of minutes, I guess, a bit longer perhaps, and then we'll have a chat about why these two pages and what's important about them for you. So here we go.

Eric ([06:08](#)):

Okay.

MBS ([06:10](#)):

The framework is to say, look, to weigh up the journey, you'll have to, once again, start with prizes and punishments. And the question is, if you start with prizes, how might you win? What benefits might accrue? Should you take on this worthy goal? And it turns out there are external and internal benefits, and that's set up from the previous page.



MBS ([06:32](#)):

External, goals and status.

MBS ([06:39](#)):

"The external benefits are most obvious, most shiny, and least guaranteed. I mean, you may of course achieve your goal. I mean, in my case, I'd be able to say I had a top 3% podcast. Woohoo. Closely following that comes status, real or imagined. I can swagger into any podcasting conference in the world. Joe and Tim and [inaudible 00:07:02] are now on speed dial. I'm financially better off. I got at least 10 reviews praising my insightful interviewing and ability to blend humor and compassion and insight. I've got a bunch of reviews that say both my show and I suck, which is, you know, truly a measure of success, where super fans have tattoos of my initials and so on.

MBS ([07:22](#)):

"I'm being a little facetious of course. You've worked really hard to craft a worthy goal. That's thrilling and important and daunting. So you're going for important, interesting, and mostly desirable outcomes, but you may need more than these as your prizes for undertaking this worthy goal."

MBS ([07:40](#)):

Internal needs.

MBS ([07:42](#)):

"The central mantra of this book is you unlock your greatness by working on the hard things. To strive to become your best self is a lifetime's work.

MBS ([07:52](#)):



"To catalog the prizes of taking on your worthy goal, start by going as deep as possible and connecting your commitment to the worthy goal to essential human needs.

MBS ([08:02](#)):

"This draws on the work of Marshall Rosenberg, creator of nonviolent communication, who in turn drew on the work of economist Manfred Max Neef. Rosenberg says there are nine self-explanatory and universal human needs, affection, freedom, participation, creation, identity, protection, recreation, understanding, subsistence. Most likely you'll be able to see the through line from your worthy goal to one, two, or maybe more of these essential human needs. It will show you at a foundational level, how taking on your worthy goal will nourish you while serving the world."

MBS ([08:45](#)):

And then the final subheading, internal qualities.

MBS ([08:49](#)):

"From the foundation of needs, we move to qualities. If needs are universal, your qualities are deeply individual. There are parts of you that are already true, part of how you orient to the world when you're at your best. Taking on your worthy goal will amplify these qualities. They'll be acknowledged, strengthened, brought into the light and burnished.

MBS ([09:13](#)):

"This is where that phrase you've heard from me before, we unlock our greatness by working on the hard things, can chime like a clean, struck bell. This is where you start to see and acknowledge what is great about you. It's a powerful exercise and I'll hope you'll give it a wholehearted shot. And I say that because, for many of us, the process is a little weird or awkward or uncomfortable. I mean, I'm not really one for the woo-woo. It doesn't take



much to bring out the skeptic in me. I've got some British friends in mind for whom this exercise is lightly the acme of their worst fears, but it's okay. You can do this exercise in private. You don't have to tell anyone. It's just between you and me, and not even me really, just you and the book. You've come this far, let's see what's there."

MBS ([10:05](#)):

And then of course we set up to an exercise to help people plum that kind of hierarchy that needs the qualities, the status and the goal. Why those pages, Eric? What struck a chord for you?

Eric ([10:18](#)):

I've read a lot of books on achievements and leadership, and for decades I'd say, because I've been in this game for a while, most of them were on the outward.

MBS ([10:35](#)):

Right.

Eric ([10:36](#)):

Then it was like this huge breakthrough probably in the '80s, late '80s, early '90s probably really where there was sort of a recognition of things like needs or emotional intelligence, like there is an inner life and somehow it happens all the time and not just when you are home, and it's part of the thing.

Eric ([11:03](#)):

But you took it to the third level, and that's why I picked it, because you took it to the qualities. And that, in terms of sort of wisdom traditions around the globe for all time, that's where their oriented and that's sort of the teaching and the message of spiritual traditions and wisdom practices, is that there is an individual greatness that you're here to incarnate and express and live out. But



that, again, can become amorphous unless it's got that through line, you call it, down to the thing that you're working on.

Eric ([11:41](#)):

So that's why I picked it because it is the through line. And I think if any part of that trio is missing, it's going to be a less than fulfilling and less than authentic and less than powerful offering.

MBS ([11:56](#)):

That's beautiful. Thank you, Eric. Eric, how do you think of your own qualities [crosstalk 00:12:01]

Eric ([12:01](#)):

I knew you were going to ask me that. I'm like, "No." Okay.

MBS ([12:06](#)):

"Now why did I just agree to do this?" One of your qualities is elusiveness. So you'll know how to kind of answer and not answer this question.

Eric ([12:15](#)):

Yeah, really.

MBS ([12:17](#)):

Because you are a person in my life who is, I think, wonderful at being expressed in the qualities of who you are in terms of your individual wonderfulness.

Eric ([12:27](#)):

Yeah.

MBS ([12:27](#)):



And I'm curious to know, you have a spiritual practice that you have practiced for many, many years without fail every morning. I've left it a little late for that, but is there a way you think about helping yourself or helping others step into and own those qualities?

Eric ([12:51](#)):

Oh, okay. Yes, I'll start with I do think one of the qualities I have is the quality to perceive things like this, the through line. Like I have an ability to see from the surface display to the deep and then just notice-

MBS ([13:12](#)):

That's true.

Eric ([13:12](#)):

Where there's like disjunctions along the way, so why the greatness isn't actually showing up as powerfully. So I have that ability and it's sort of a patterning capacity, but it's also that sort of discernment of the through line, that's a gift. And I think I have a way of communicating to people in, I'm a translator in a lot of ways, into whatever their worldview and language and sort of framework of understanding. I can work with it and still communicate to them what I'm trying to say about the deep through line of their being.

Eric ([13:55](#)):

So I do think that's a gift of mine. The shadow of that is that I can see a million perspectives, and that can become problematic in terms of just sort of following my own through line actually because I can see so many possibilities and so many ways of seeing my myself and what I'm up to that it can be disorienting. I don't know if that answered the question.

MBS ([14:28](#)):

It answered a question.



Eric ([14:28](#)):

Okay. Good.

MBS ([14:31](#)):

But it really makes me want to ask about this, and you're the perfect person to ask around it, which is can you tell us more about the shadow side of qualities?

Eric ([14:41](#)):

Yes.

MBS ([14:41](#)):

Because so often this stuff gets posted, it's all about the shininess and stepping into the light, and it's always most interesting when it's the light and the dark.

Eric ([14:53](#)):

Yeah. That's really good. C.G. Jung, one of my heroes, Carl Gustav Jung, the great psychologist, mystic really, he really emphasized this idea of the archetype. Every archetype has a light and a shadow side to it. And I think the qualities is being akin to the archetypal energy, like the capacity to take perspectives, if we think of that as a archetype or maybe what's coming to mind now is just discernment as an archetypal energy.

Eric ([15:27](#)):

So if discernment is then in its trajectory from being kind of a pure transcendent, archetypal quality down into our human experience, if it gets enlisted in the service of my emotional program, then it'll still go, but it gets deviated into this darkness of criticism. And I'm not discerning anymore, I'm slicing and dicing you up to prove I'm right and you're wrong. Wasn't that discerning of me to notice how wrong you are?

Eric ([16:15](#)):



So that's one of the ways that the archetype in a certain way and the quality in a certain way isn't going to care how it comes about. It's going to follow the architecture of your psyche into the world. Because our inner work on our needs, that's where the needs come in. If we haven't really clarified our needs, which is maybe a cousin of our values, but definitely if we haven't clarified our needs, then we're picking our goals to try to get our needs met, but the goals aren't really going to do it because we haven't clarified our needs on the same time as the quality flows down and we haven't purified and balanced and authentically looked at what do we really need. I don't need my mother to approve of me. I need something more fundamental that wasn't in the nine, right, if then the qualities are going to flow through that unredeemed, emotional program and distort their expression.

MBS ([17:24](#)):

So in short, do the work.

Eric ([17:26](#)):

Do the work.

MBS ([17:28](#)):

Keep doing the work.

Eric ([17:29](#)):

Yeah.

MBS ([17:30](#)):

Do the work and the work will do you or some-

Eric ([17:31](#)):

Yeah.



MBS ([17:32](#)):

Yeah, it'd be phrase like that. Eric, you are a great spiritual teacher. You have a community. For people who want more of your work and perhaps to tap into some of the stuff you have to teach, where can they find you?

Eric ([17:46](#)):

People can find me at wisdomheart, that's one word, dot com.

MBS ([17:52](#)):

Eric. Thank you.

Eric ([17:53](#)):

Thank you, Michael.

MBS ([18:00](#)):

Hey, it's Michael here. Thank you for listening to one of the How to Begin episodes, part of the 2 Pages with MBS podcast series. So you're either listening to it before or after January the 11th, which is the launch of the How to Begin book, *How to Begin: Start Doing Something That Matters*. If it's before January 11th, if you're happy and willing to make a pre-order of the book, I would certainly be grateful. The pre-ordering kind of really matters to authors. It's our chance to kind of get some notice of the book to kind, of get a bit of buzz going around it. It's one of those great gifts that a reader can do is to pre-order a book for an author.

MBS ([18:39](#)):

I wrote the book because a line came to me, which is we unlock our greatness by working on the hard things. And when I think of my own personal growth and the difference I've made in the world and the impact I've had, it's when I've



taken on something that feels thrilling and important and daunting. And I wanted to share and write about a process to help others do that.

MBS ([19:00](#)):

So if you're looking to be more ambitious for yourself and for the world, to kind of connect to that ambition, and if you're really wanting to rethink goals as a liberating force, and if you just want to be the best version of yourself and do work that makes a difference, whether that's work at work or work just in life outside your kind of a career, then I think this book might be for you.

MBS ([19:26](#)):

You can find out more about the book at howtobegin.com. That will give you bonuses. That'll give you pre-launch extras if you're listening before January the 11th, and it'll just give you additional resources if you're coming to it after January 11th. Thanks for your support. You're awesome and you're doing great.