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

When I first published the Advice Trap back in 2022, I created a bonus course to go with it. It's called The Year of Living Brilliantly, and it's 52 different teachers, each teaching one powerful lesson on video. Now, honestly, it didn't have that much to do with the book, which is all about taming your advice monster. Well, I had the idea, and it was an excuse for me to reach out and collaborate with all sorts of people with whom I admired. People like Ed Schein and Debbie Millman, and Susan Kane, and Tasha Eurich, and Desiree Adaway.

MBS ([00:35](#)):

Now, the course is currently under reconstruction. It's going to open up again sometime in early 2023. But if you've been a participant, you'll know today's guest, because his episode is one of the most popular. And if you haven't yet taken the year of living brilliantly, well, look, you can go and get on the waiting



list so you'll know when it opens. Just go to [yearoflivingbrilliantly.com](http://yearoflivingbrilliantly.com), put your name down and you can sign up there. The good news, if you haven't taken it yet, you're about to meet one of its brilliant faculty members.

MBS ([01:07](#)):

Welcome to Two Pages with MBS The Podcast with brilliant people. Read the best two pages from a favorite book, a book that has moved them, a book that has shaped them. Now, Bobby Herrera is the author of *The Gift of Struggle*. It's a short, excellent book and leadership, and he's the co-founder and president of Populist Group. Populist as Latin for people, and that is absolutely where Bobby's focus is.

Bobby ([01:32](#)):

You're at my core, I believe, that everyone deserves an opportunity to succeed. I'm a front row fan of the underdog. I'm a student of struggle. I'm number 11 of a 13 from a large Mexican immigrant family.

MBS ([01:45](#)):

Number 11 of 13? I mean, I'm the first of three, and even that was too much competition for me. I can't even begin to fathom what that might be like.

Bobby ([01:55](#)):

Well, for one, I still eat with my elbows on the table. I still protect my bacon. And as number 11, I actually thought one of my missions in life, Michael, was to try to figure out something that my parents hadn't seen yet. And you know how difficult that is to do when there's 10 ahead of you that are also quite mischievous. So I think that's where my entrepreneurial skills started getting developed.



MBS ([02:19](#)):

Now, it's something of a contrarian myself, I can really appreciate that. Now, one of Bobby's great loves was sports, but as the son of a migrant and farming family, you faced immediate challenges.

Bobby ([02:32](#)):

I would miss summers, because we were off working in the fields, and traveling from state to state, handpicking the fruits and vegetables that many people take for granted. And I remember then thinking, "Wow, I'm missing out on so much, and so I have so much ground to make up when I would get back," that I had this fire in me to try to catch up. My family had so much less, and I always felt that I had to do so much more with less, or do less but better.

MBS ([03:06](#)):

Bobby's story could have taken several paths. I mean, I can imagine bitterness, or anger, or resignation, or just this general frustration with his situation. But that's not the path Bobby chose. And actually, here let me share a clip from his Year of Living Brilliantly lesson, because it's the story of a man on a bus who changed everything in Bobby's life.

Bobby ([03:32](#)):

When I was 17, my brother and I, we were on a return trip home from basketball game. And along the way, we stopped for dinner. Everybody unloaded off the bus, except for me and my brother Ed. At that point, we didn't have the means to play sports and afford dinner. It's just the way things were for our family. Well, a few moments after the team unloaded, one of the dads at the other players steps on board the bus. And he teased me a little bit because Ed had outscored me that night. And then he said something to me that I will always remember, "Bobby, it would make me very happy if you would allow me to buy you boys' dinner so that you can join the rest of the team. Nobody else has to know. All



you have to do to thank me, is do the same thing for another great kid just like you on this bus."

MBS ([04:14](#)):

"Do the same for another great kid." That man on the bus probably didn't realize it, I'm sure he didn't realize it, but he had began a ripple, one that started in Bobby's life and has spread outwards even till today.

Bobby ([04:29](#)):

It's interesting, something about that story is, yeah, I did at that point in time in my life, I had more reverse role models than I care to admit. I'd seen choices at my older siblings had made, many that were very unwise, and were quite frankly shortcuts. And there were a lot of opportunities for me to choose the easy road, take some shortcuts in life, but that kind act, it helped reframe how I saw not only my own story, but how I could one day make a difference. And people have often asked me, it's like, "Hey, Bobby, do you think you would've figured out had that moment not happened?" And I have to be real honest with myself in that that's not a real comfortable thought for me, Michael. And I think that's part of the power of that kind act in that you never know. You never know how I can change a trajectory of a confused kid who may be feeling socially invisible.

MBS ([05:35](#)):

Bobby, what book have you chosen for us?

Bobby ([05:38](#)):

I have chosen The Wisdom Pyramid, by a gentleman named Brett McCracken.

MBS ([05:44](#)):

This is not a book I'd heard of before. So how did you come across this book? How did it cult to you?



Bobby ([05:50](#)):

Yeah. Well, I'm a very spiritual man, very private about it, yet live my life imperfectly around that. And it was through a conversation that I had with my pastor just around my leadership journey, my teachings, and coaching around leadership. And we were having this conversation, and he very kindly paid me some compliments around some of the wisdom of my teaching, and he recommended this book to me. And the essence of it is quite simply a question that I had been asking people for quite some time. When I interact with him, I always ask him, "Hey, tell me about what your sources of wisdom are."

MBS ([06:34](#)):

That's such a great question.

Bobby ([06:37](#)):

Yeah, and that's the essence of the book. It helps you reflect on, "Hey, what are your sources of wisdom? And in what order are you taking them? And how are you absorbing and leaning into those sources to climb that mountain that you're on, per se?"

MBS ([06:52](#)):

I love that. And can you remind me what the subtitle of the book is?

Bobby ([06:57](#)):

Feeding Your Soul in a Post-Truth World.

MBS ([07:01](#)):

So what does feeding your soul mean to you?

Bobby ([07:06](#)):

For me, it means where am I getting that intellectual, emotional, and spiritual energy that's going to help me in that journey that I'm on, live a life that helps



me do what is deeply embedded in my purpose, and that is to give more than I take, and pay forward that kind act that man on the bus gave me that night.

MBS ([07:36](#)):

I love that. How did you decide what two pages to read? That's always tricky. You might have a great book and you're like, "How do I pick what to read? There's so much that's good in this book."

Bobby ([07:44](#)):

That wasn't an easy exercise, I'll tell you. As I discerned through the book, I actually picked a segment that really helped me understand the difference between wisdom and knowledge in a simple palatable way, because my observation has been that, I know I myself haven't been great throughout my story of really understanding the difference, and how each serve me. So that's why I ended up making that, if that's been a struggle of mine, maybe reading that will help somebody.

MBS ([08:23](#)):

Right, exactly. It's one of those truths which is like, "I'm probably not the only person who's wrestling with this." I'm excited to hear this, Bobby. So over to you reading two pages from The Wisdom Pyramid.

Bobby ([08:38](#)):

And with your permission, I'm going to start with a real simple quote that starts at the beginning of the book, and I think it'll set context.

MBS ([08:43](#)):

Yeah, fantastic.



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

"Our world has more and more information, but less and less wisdom; more data, less clarity; more stimulation, less synthesis; more distraction, less stillness; more pontificating, less pondering; more opinion, less research; more speaking, less listening; more to look at, less to see; more amusements, less joy. There is more, but we are less, and we all feel it."

Bobby ([09:14](#)):

"What wisdom is and isn't. Wisdom is not knowledge, nor is it information. This is abundantly clear in the world where we have more knowledge and information than ever, but less wisdom. To simply accumulate more knowledge is not to be wise. Robots will one day have far more knowledge than the smartest humans, if they don't already. But robots will never be wiser than humans. Wisdom is not a matter of mere data processing. There's no algorithm for it. Wisdom is also not necessarily the end result of education, though it certainly can be. Some of the most learned people in the world are not wise, and some of the wisest people in the world are not educated. Wisdom is known what to do with knowledge gained through various means of education, how to apply knowledge and information and everyday life, how to discern if something is true or not. How to live well in light of truth gained."

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

"Wisdom is not merely known the right answers, it's about living rightly. It's about determining which right answer is best. It's a moral orientation, a developed sense of intuition, and intuition for discerning right and wrong, real and fake, truth and falsehood. The ability to weigh greater and lesser goods and make complex decisions involving multiple, sometimes competing truths. Wisdom is not something you can Google, or download in one fell swoop. It is accumulated over time and through experience."



Bobby ([10:51](#)):

"Wisdom and knowledge do have a symbiotic relationship. We can become more or less wise depending on the good or bad knowledge we take in. But the more wisdom we have, the better we become at filtering out bad knowledge and turning good knowledge into spiritual nutrition. Wisdom is sort of like a healthy kidney. It retains what is nutritious, and it filters out the waste. A. W. Tozer compares wisdom to a vitamin, in that it does not nourish our body in itself, but if not present, nothing will nourish the body. A vitamin will make everything else work."

MBS ([11:33](#)):

Love that. Thank you, Bobby. So what's the wisdom in this passage for you?

Bobby ([11:38](#)):

Yeah, as I unpack that and have reflected on that from the first time I read it to through my rereads, and for me, I tend to use a real simple formula when it comes to knowledge that I'm gaining. I often say that whatever you read, whatever you consume, that's the 1%. However, the magic happens in the application, then that's the 99%. And my observation has been, and I encourage people that I either coach, or lead, and myself all the time is, how am I applying what I'm learning? And for me as I unpack that, that's really the essence of it. Knowledge is that 1%, and then wisdom is that 99%. That application, that repeated application where the magic happens.

MBS ([12:37](#)):

So Bobby, how do you decide what knowledge to act on? Because there's so much knowledge. I mean, you said as much in the start, is relentless, and I'm just looking at the pile of books on my floor here, which I haven't read, all of which I bought because I'm interested in them, and I'm like, "I don't even consume the amount of knowledge that I want to get through, yet alone then





be discerning to decide on what to act upon." So how do you choose what to act upon?

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

I reverse engineer it. At least for me, Michael. What's tend to work for me is, first of all, I'm an organizational nightmare. There's often not enough, I'm a seven-year-old after two o'clock in the afternoon, all I want to do is play. So I have a limited attention span as it is. So for me, I've had to build a system and process for myself around being real intentional on what I want to learn. And for me, that is being very essential around what's a single biggest problem, or impact, that I want to make, and that I need to make, and then reverse engineering from there. And I will consume a disproportionate amount of the knowledge that I want to consume around that, whether that be around my journey, above all, I want to be an all-pro dad. So I tend to read a lot about how to be a better father.

Bobby ([14:17](#)):

So when it comes to that, I'll take one or two nuggets, and then I will ferociously apply it. And very imperfectly, clumsy as a kid, learning to ride a bike, and then I just repetition some other skills. So those are some of the observations I've made for my own journey. And I think you understand that real well.

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

I do. Well, one of the things that I've come to learn around what wisdom is, is, what am I going to stop doing as it is, what am I going to start doing, because the fault is always, what do I need to begin? What do I need to add on? What's the new thing? And so often, actually you can just make that much more progress when you go, what just needs to stop? I'm wondering if there's something you've stopped recently that has felt like an act of wisdom?



Bobby ([15:18](#)):

Yeah, that's a great question, because I agree, it is an editing exercise, and part of that reverse engineering. I mean, I think that could be really, really broad, because as I reflect back on the last couple of years through this bizarre chapter that we're in, I think a lot of the peripheral that often used to distract me around running a business, running a large business that I'm very fortunate to do, I would get often overly consumed with a lot of that noise coming in, a lot of that pressure coming in from external sources from the business. And I have a term that I use as I've led my organization through this bizarre chapter. I call it managing the VUCA. And it's about the volatility, the uncertainty, the complexity and the ambiguity. It's a military term that I learned in the army.

MBS ([16:17](#)):

That's right.

Bobby ([16:19](#)):

I've completely stopped focusing on anything that I can't control when it comes to the business. And I wasn't as good as I thought I was at that two years ago. Whereas now, and it's been liberating.

MBS ([16:38](#)):

As much as you're willing to share, are you able to tell us what therefore got moved from that? Because I get what you're doing, there's some things you're like, look, I can't control this or influence, I just won't even think about it, and it's fine. And then you've got some things where you're like, "This is clearly what I control or influence, so I'll focus on that." But there's always that kind of short list of things somewhere in the middle where you're like, "Do I do not? I'm not sure, maybe I do." And it feels like you are clear that you've moved some of those out. What have you moved off your table so you don't worry about that anymore?



Bobby ([17:09](#)):

Yeah. Well, I think I'll give you a real tangible example that I think is a very obvious significant pain for a lot of business leaders out there right now, whatever you want to call it, whether it be the great migration, the great resignation, all these...

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

Great reassessment, whatever you call it. It's like it's hard to hire people, it's hard to keep people.

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

Initially, there was just this wave of, "You have to do this," "You have to do this," "You have to do that," "You have to do this." And I finally, Michael you just said, "You know what? No, no. Long game. We're playing the long game. This is what we're going to do. This is what we can control." I will be receptive and listen to things that can help us in this wonderful story that we're narrating. However, I am not going to just expose myself to all this external noise from all these experts, so-called, on why this is happening. It's like, I just turned that inward and said, "Hey, how can we help make great people better people? How can we help create something that makes them feel like they're part of something bigger than themselves? How do we help them stand out? How do we help them fit in?" And focusing on those things instead, not that those elements aren't important that were coming our way, but at a certain point, it's information overload.

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

I love it. That phrase you just said, "How do you help people stand out and fit in?" I'm always drawn to paradox, and there's something in that phrase, which is a delightful paradox, which is like people want to fit in, and they want to stand out. They want to be part of a tribe, they also don't want to be swallowed up and be anonymous, they want to be seen for who they are. Knowing that you



have founded and run a significant organization, how do you help people achieve both of those things fitting in and standing out, a juicy thing to be able to do?

Bobby ([19:21](#)):

And it's simple, not easy. I mean, at our core, I believe that we all share a three-basic desire, that is to stand out, to fit in, and to be a part of something bigger than ourselves. And I think embedded in that is, number one, making sure that, are they clear on the story that I'm narrating? Are they clear on the purpose and the invisible force that drives me? And am I intentionally inviting them into this story? And as part of that invitation, getting at the heart of your question, I ask myself other questions like, am I making them feel seen? Do they feel heard? And do they feel like I can hand them the pen, per se, so that they can narrate their own story, and contribute to this one? And those are some of the questions that I ask myself as I am self-assessing. Am I helping them fit in? Am I helping them stand out? Because my observations have been, if you're intentionally addressing some of those questions that I rattled off, it will give you signals on where you need to lean in more.

MBS ([20:35](#)):

Bobby, how do you then navigate for yourself the amount of control you have in your organization? Because all of those acts, which are granting autonomy, which are acts of empowerment, reduce the amount of autonomy and power you have. And everyone's like, "Oh, I'm pro empowerment," and then you go, "But wait, I have to give up power for that to happen? That's not so great." And I'm curious to know how you've discovered the art of giving up control and giving up power.

Bobby ([21:14](#)):

Well, one through many hard lessons, first and foremost, because I wasn't always that way. And often as I reflect on, one, I think empowerment is different



than trust. It's one thing to empower. However, how well are you connecting trust, and therefore even maybe raising the standard on that dangerous trust to that? So my observation isn't many leaders will empower someone, but then they don't hitch the trust along with it, right? So for me, are both of those connected?

MBS ([21:54](#)):

Can you say more about that? I mean, how do you hitch trust to empowerment? What does that look like?

Bobby ([22:00](#)):

Well, for me, it looks like, first and foremost, making it crystal clear from the beginning that, for example, whether it be an executive on my team, or I call my employees climbers, whether it be someone, a climber in my organization, I think step one is, hey, let's walk through exactly what great looks like. What exactly are we making progress towards, and where are we now? Making sure there's no discrepancies in our thinking there. And then for me that's where I'm going to give you the pin. So I metaphorically, often, Michael, will take a pin, and it's usually during a whiteboard exercise, or something, and I will have the pin, and I'll say, "I have chosen you for this because your gifts are..." And then I fill in the blanks. "And I think you're better at this than I am. So I want to hear everything that you're thinking. I don't care how big, I don't care how small. Here you go. And I want to see it all right."

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

And doing those symbolic, intentional, vernacular matter types exercises, I think that's where you hitch the trust to it, and really making them feel seen and heard around, "I'm going to give you this, and I'm also going to attach the trust along with it."



MBS ([23:32](#)):

And how do you sit with betrayal? Because when you trust people, you will be let down by people. It is just part of the deal. It's not even really personal, it's just the system. I'm curious to know how you've learned to sit with the disappointment of being let down and having trust broken, and that sense of betrayal perhaps?

Bobby ([24:06](#)):

I love that question, Michael, because I was horrible at it for a long time. In my book, I wrote a chapter titled Not Everyone Will Summit. And at the heart of that is embedded deeply in that is that disappointment. And I used to take it real personal. I would give, and I would give, and I would empower, and I would trust. And I had the naive story in my head that there's not going to be any disappointment here. And so when it happened, I was surprised, and I was upset, and I took it real personal.

Bobby ([24:45](#)):

And quite a few years ago, I finally matured enough to make the connection that, "Okay, I can't have it both ways." So I've come to expect it. I still don't like it. However, I will also then do a very objective truth telling tally and say, "Okay, where has it served me more than it hasn't? Am I allowing that one or two disappointments?" And for example, at the beginning of this call, you asked me, "Hey, how are you?" And I said, "Hey, I have more blessings than burdens." And I will literally, "Okay, this has been the blessings and these have been the burdens. And if you keep that real honest ledger, that ledger doesn't lie."

MBS ([25:31](#)):

Well, basically one of the things that does is helps overcome recency effect, which is two good years get spoiled by the final two months, where the wheels came off and you're like, "It is so bad." And you're like, "You know what, 22 great months and 22 months where blessings outweighed the burdens of it."



Bobby ([25:53](#)):

And that that's hard to do, because we tend to migrate to the bad. That's that horror movie that plays our mind. And I'll often tell it's like, "Well, you know what? This is also true. This is also happening. It doesn't come without a lot of work."

MBS ([26:13](#)):

I'm perhaps known by a few people for my catchphrase, which is at the end of my email, I go, "You're awesome and you're doing great." People love that. But I think I got that idea, I'm just remembering, I got that idea from your catchphrase, which you sign off in your emails, which is like, "Give is greater than take," or, "Give more than you take." Which people are experiencing in this conversation with you and me right now, how you're so generous and how you're so giving. And I know you have been asked this before, but Adam Grant, famous for his book Give and Take, and he goes, "The people who thrive are the ones who give, but also the people who tend to be at the bottom of the list are the ones who give." And the difference is knowing how to give sustainably rather than not sustainably. You had to give from a place of sufficiency, rather than a place of depletion, or sacrifice. I'm wondering how you've learned to be so committed to giving and still remain whole.

Bobby ([27:21](#)):

Yeah, another great question, because that too was riddled with hard lessons and disappointments in the beginning. I tend to use a lot of metaphors and analogies to remind myself, I give myself a lot of reminders, and one of those reminders for me is, "Two is a trend." And I've learned over time that when I'm extending my generosity, or giving, as part of my leadership or my journey, it's synonymous with that, "Hey, first time, shame on me, second time shame on you," type of thing. Or vice versa, however it goes. I will stop any trend in its tracks at two, and then I will then have what I call a kind truth-based conversation.



MBS ([28:06](#)):

Nice.

Bobby ([28:08](#)):

I will then sit with that person or whoever and say, "Look, I want to make sure whether we both see things the same way here. Here's what I've contributed, here's what you've contributed. Now, this feels a little unbalanced to me. How can we correct that?" Because I want to continue being generous, I want to continue being a front row fan of your story. However, if it continues along this trend line, I'm not going to want to be. And that's a hard conversation to have, Michael, but you have to, and that's why I call it the kind truth.

MBS ([28:45](#)):

Yeah, I love that. One of the things I've appreciated about this conversation, Bobby, is how you go, "I made a lot of mistakes along the way." I didn't just arrive fully formed in a place of enlightenment around how to be, and how to do, and how to manage. And it feels like it connects back to your reading around The Wisdom Pyramid, I'm figuring out knowing what to translate into wisdom, into practice. Who do you draw your wisdom from? Who do you look up to as a teacher?

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

Yeah, great question. I have a few foundational sources. A gentleman that became my second father, this gentleman named Dr. Joe, he's a struggle ridden student himself of wisdom. He's been a source for me, he is become like a second father for me. He's forgotten more about leadership and human behavior than most people know. My good friend Pat, who you mentioned earlier, Pat and I have developed a great friendship over the years. Another gentleman who actually Pat introduced me to named Daniel Harkavy, he wrote Living Forward along with Michael Hyatt. So those are three great examples that I have that I ask them so many questions about so many things in my life, and





these are just people per se, people that I've intentionally chosen to learn from, but my spiritual journey, my community, other sources of wisdom for me, or many that I go to well before I hit the search bar on my phone.

MBS ([30:28](#)):

I think that is one of the things I'm learning from you is, I feel that you find good teachers. I tend to go, what's the books I can read? And I feel like maybe I should ask and be in conversation with some more people. So thank you.

Bobby, I've loved the conversation, as I knew I would. As a question to tie things together, or do something, what needs to be said in this conversation between you and me that hasn't yet been said?

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

Michael, I too always enjoy our conversations. I think perhaps leaning into some of the wisdom I've gained from you is, I try myself not to be an advice monster, and I think perhaps instead of something that maybe hasn't been said, maybe a question of encouragement around our topic is, encouraging anyone who listens to our conversation to ask themselves, what are your sources of wisdom? And how are you applying those sources to create a better story for yourself and others? I think perhaps just spelling that out more intentionally as a reflective question of encouragement could do some good.

MBS ([31:58](#)):

In the conversation I mentioned how much I admired Bobby's sign-off, his email sign-off, "Give is greater than take." I mean, I love it for what it says, and of course it partly, it reminds me of Jacqueline Novogratz's phrase, which I quote all the time, what if you could give more to the world than you take? But I really love it because it reminds me of Bobby, it's my experience of Bobby. He is relentlessly generous. Part of why I think he lights the way for us all is he practices this core mantra, give is greater than take. And he does it all day and he does it every day. The question I'm asking myself, and let me ask you as well,



so have you got clear on what you want to stand for? And how well are you living up to that in the minutia, and in the heartbeats, of everyday living? I know that's a hard question. It's got me looking in the mirror and going, "I don't know, Michael, how are you doing with that?"

MBS ([32:59](#)):

If you enjoyed the conversation with Bobby, let me suggest a couple of others to go back to. Zach First, To Manage With Courage. Bobby's done some really interesting things as a leader of his company. Zach First, part of the Drucker Institute, has some wonderful insights about what it means to work with other people. And Chris West, who read one of my all-time favorite books, Where The Wild Things Are, that conversation is called And the Walls Became The World. It's aligned from Where The Wild Things Are. If you want more about Bobby, I mean, his organization is called The Populist Group, but for Bobby himself, I suggest you look up his website, which is [bobby/herrera.com](http://bobby/herrera.com)

MBS ([33:45](#)):

You'll be able to pick up a copy of his book there, although, of course, it's available in all the places you normally buy books. Here's also an opportunity to click with his LinkedIn there at the bottom of that website. Thank you for listening. I love this conversation. Bobby is somebody I admire greatly, and it's lovely to be able to chat with him again. I hope you enjoyed it too. If you did, please pass the episode along to one other person who you think might like it. Thank you for your reviews, for your support, for those nice notices, those nice emails. I really appreciate your encouragement. You're awesome, and you're doing great.