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

How do you navigate the big decisions in your world? I mean, there's a maxim you might've heard, "On matters of style, swim with the current. On matters of principle, stand like a rock." That's Thomas Jefferson, and it's one of those quotes that I instinctively and immediately agree with. Yeah, of course, swim with the current, stand in matters of principle, only for it to start getting slippery and elusive once I kind of poke at it, once I sit with it.

([00:34](#)):

What's hard is not the swimming or the standing. What's hard is knowing what's just style and a kind of fad of the moment, and what's principle? I mean, what's non-negotiable rock? If I had to point to a principle of growth, I guess in my life, I'm actually trying not to ossify. Ossify, a fancy word for turning into a rock. I'm trying to stay open to adjust and to learn and to unlearn, to notice my judgments and assumptions about the world and wonder if they are in fact



principles, or whether they're just moments of style? But what do you put aside? What you let go of? What do you stay open to, and what do you stay firm about?

[\(01:25\)](#):

Welcome to 2 Pages with MBS, the podcast where brilliant people read the best two pages from a favorite book, a book that has moved them, a book that has shaped them. Ryan Hawk is a fellow podcaster, and the host of The Learning Leader Show, with over 500 episodes in the can and still going strong. He's a keynote speaker and the author of two books. Welcome to *Management: How to Grow from Top Performer to Excellent Leader*, and *The Pursuit of Excellence: The Uncommon Behaviors of the World's Most Productive Achievers*. Now, his body of work, his speaking, his podcast, his books, has earned Ryan a fair number of accolades from esteem sources like Forbes and Apple. But it's not in topping lists and getting prizes that Ryan wants to build a reputation on.

Ryan [\(02:17\)](#):

I would hope people would say I'm known for following my curiosity with great rigor of asking questions of people from a wide variety of backgrounds and having deep long-form conversations with others and then have the willingness to share those so that others could learn along with me. I don't really view myself as a teacher, I would say more as a student who's learning in public and sharing what I'm learning as I go.

MBS [\(02:46\)](#):

Behind this, or maybe at the foundation of this is someone who honors where he comes from.

Ryan [\(02:53\)](#):

First and foremost, when you ask me who I am, the people that I think about first are my family. I am a person who is very fortunate to come from a home



with two amazing parents who still play a huge role in my life, Keith and Judy Hawk. Two brothers, an older one and a younger one who are amazing supporters and great friends.

MBS ([03:16](#)):

And now Ryan works to bring that same gift to his own family.

Ryan ([03:20](#)):

And now I get to live in a house with a wife who is a 1,000 times better and farther ahead than me named Miranda. And we're trying our best to raise five daughters to hopefully leave people, places and things better than they found them.

MBS ([03:36](#)):

This is more than just a story of a happy intergenerational family, or that is definitely to be celebrated. It's a lesson in leadership as well. Ryan's youth was shaped by his first leaders, his first teachers, his parents, and it's now come full circle.

Ryan ([03:53](#)):

The way that they taught me was by example. I think my dad, especially as a guy and me being a guy, he first taught me how to treat a woman, and I still see him do that today with my mom. I think that's important when it comes to how I try to treat my wife Miranda and really all people, but especially as a dad of daughters, I want them to see that. I think first leadership is about modeling the right behavior first, about leading yourself first before you can lead anybody else. So, teachers both play a huge role. My mom and dad both continue to play a huge role in my life when it comes to modeling the way we should be, modeling the way we treat people, modeling the way that we try to be positive contributors to society. And I think they're the ones who I think of first.



MBS ([04:42](#)):

I hear that. It feels like they're important people and they in the best way cast a shadow over who you are today.

Ryan ([04:53](#)):

Definitely, definitely.

MBS ([04:55](#)):

And what have you had to unlearn?

Ryan ([05:03](#)):

I think, man, I love the way that, Mike, you're asking these first, and I know you can edit this a little bit if I struggle to get there, especially on this one. From a leadership perspective, when I was, prior to my show starting I had assumed what a lot of people did of what you think of as a leader. You think of the guy, usually the guy who would stand on the table and yell and take command and ownership of the room, "I tell you what to do, you go and do it." Like that type of leader. And as I've been fortunate now to talk to 500 of the world's most effective leaders, including you, I've learned that it's so much more than that. I learned the importance of diversity of thought, of diversity of experience, of people who come from different places and have been enriched by those in their life and have not maybe had it as fortunate as me as well.

([06:07](#)):

It's helped me with perspective. It's helped me become much less judgmental. I would say I was a pretty judgmental person, Michael, before I started my show, and I'm not proud to admit that. But one of the things I think that happens, and I'm sure you gather this after interviewing hundreds of people over multiple podcasts that you've had, is I think when you're exposed to people from all different viewpoints in different parts of the world and different upbringings, you become more reasonable. You become less judgmental, you become more



curious. You realize the world is not black and white, it's really gray. And that people are messy and we all have our messes and we're all working through them. And so, I would say if you asked me what I had to unlearn, I think I've become less judgmental than I was before all of these conversations that I'm so fortunate to have.

MBS ([07:02](#)):

There's such an interesting tension, I think in leadership. There's paradox around how do you lead but not control the room? How do you have a vision and values, and yet not be judgmental and perhaps play the infinite game to pick up on Simon Sinek's stuff, or his reinvention of other people's stuff, if part of what you are doing is putting aside judgment, what do you use to navigate your world?

Ryan ([07:37](#)):

I think one of the ways, one of my business partners I work with named Brook Cupps, he helped introduce this idea of really getting your values set and not only setting the words but then the behaviors to match up with what you value. And at the beginning of that exercise when we established mine, he asked me to just name people in the world, some that I know and some that I don't, that I look up to and what it is that I value about the them. And through the course of that, I get inspired by those, as mentioned, some that I've read about and some that I've been fortunate to meet. And when we came up with my values of being thoughtful, thankful, curious and consistent, and if I live those out every day that I'm, it's going to be a good day.

([08:27](#)):

I think that's one of the prompts at the end of the day to ask yourself, did you live out your values and what behaviors matched those? I think that's partially how I've done it. So, whether it's people in history that I've read about or those that I've talked to, I get inspiration. I think I'm probably pretty easily inspired,



maybe given what I do, that's a good thing. But easily inspired by stories and by people. Even just a recent one, I don't know if you're watching the World Cup, but the Japanese-

MBS ([08:58](#)):

Australia, Australia's gone through to the-

Ryan ([08:58](#)):

There we go.

MBS ([09:01](#)):

... next round.

Ryan ([09:03](#)):

Australians, but the Japanese did as well. And I read a story about them recently that inspires me when it comes to my thankful value, and I'll share. The Japanese are known for when they're done playing of leaving the locker room spotless, they clean it.

MBS ([09:19](#)):

And their fans as well. Their fans clean the stadium.

Ryan ([09:20](#)):

And their fans go around and pick up in the stadium. And sometimes I've heard they've even picked up in stadiums when they didn't even play, but they also leave these origami swans and they write a thank you note in Japanese as well as the language of the home country, because they've done this at multiple World Cups and multiple different places. And to me, the way that I show that I'm thankful the behavior that matches that, at least for me, I don't know if this is for everybody. Is to leave people, places and things better than I found them. My hope, Michael, is by the end of our conversation that you feel I've left you



better than I found you when we started. And I think that's the intentionality of me showing gratitude for the exceptional privilege I've had to grow up with amazing parents and brothers in a good house who still support me like that.

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

As I've gotten older, I've realized is not the norm for everyone, and that's very lucky. And to me, I have to make the most of that good luck and that good fortune of having that. And I'm really inspired by that. And that's part of why thankful is one of my four core values. And why the action and the behavior that matches being thankful is to leave people, places and things better than I found. When I see the story of the Japanese team and what they did, and what they always do apparently. I'm inspired by that. And it makes me want to do it even more. And so I'm always on the lookout for stories like that, for people like that. I want to talk to them, I want to record with them, I want to do that. I want to share what I'm learning with others. And so I think that's how I try to live that out.

MBS [\(10:53\)](#):

How do you navigate a clash of values? I don't know your wife, Miranda. She sounds amazing. My guess is that your values are overlapping but not identical.

Ryan [\(11:10\)](#):

Right.

MBS [\(11:12\)](#):

There's got to be a core alignment of stuff, how you see the world and what you believe to be important to maintain an ongoing happy, successful relationship. And this just made me projecting, I feel the same about my wife, which is like we have really aligned some values, but there's some places it's all a bit kind of, it's just slightly different. And so you've got this tension around being values-based. And how if you can live those four core values on a daily basis, it's



a good day. And the people you interact with are slightly different in terms of how they see the world and how they live in the world. And you're trying to move away from being judgmental. I'm just curious to know how you navigate? How you show up in the world when you are working and living and loving people who see the world slightly differently?

Ryan ([12:05](#)):

You're right that I think part of a good partnership is that you do have to be relatively aligned from an integrity and value standpoint. But that doesn't mean you're exactly the same or that you view the world the same or that you behave the same. We're actually quite different. Miranda is much more of the serendipitous go with the flow, less regimented type of a person. Whereas I am the same every day. Wake up super early, I write, I put the mask on my face to make sure my eyes can't look at my phone. All these things I have in place, she has none of that stuff. And also, she's the one who's much more fun at a party or a wedding. You want to hang out with her. You probably, some people might hang out with me, but it'll probably end up being a one-on-one longer conversation, whereas she will be dancing with 25 different people. So, in a way I think-

MBS ([13:08](#)):

Maybe I could just talk to Miranda. She sounds a lot more fun than you.

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

She's way more fun, dude's, more enjoyable. And I think honestly it's a real thing if we go with couples and dinner parties, I think there are people who are interested in what I do and we'll get into it. And I am curious about people, so I ask them a lot of questions too. But I think she's probably the more our youngest daughter, Charlie who's eight, her personality is I'm so glad she's like her mom. And has that, but also then has some of the quiet I'm going to go get



you when she's on the soccer field. She's got probably a good mixture, whereas that's on my parents when I played sports was like that, I'm going to go get it.

(13:48):

I guess I almost just celebrate our differences. I don't know if that fully answers your question of being different. I would say when it comes to parenting, there are some things where we're pretty aligned, but at times we're not. And that gets hard. For example, I grew up in a home with very loving parents, but very hard disciplinarians. We could not stray much from the line, and we didn't, because we knew if we did, it was really bad.

MBS (14:14):

More consequences, yeah.

Ryan (14:16):

And so I am kind of like that. And she's not all the time. And it's hard for her to be like that. And in that case there are times where we have disagreements if I feel like the discipline is not what it should be when a child doesn't do what they should be doing. And sometimes I go overboard. and I know that and I screw it up, so I'm glad. But there are other times where I think, "Okay, my line of thinking here is probably correct. I would say if there's ever tension, that's where some of it happens at times is when it comes. I mean, parenting is so hard, man. And so I think that's the thing that pops up every once in a while.

MBS (14:58):

Yeah, I mean, I'm happily child free, so I just salute all of you doing that whole parenting thing. Good luck with it. Let me not offer any advice, because I don't know how to do it.

Ryan (15:10):

That's great.



MBS ([15:11](#)):

Hey, Ryan, tell me about the book you've chosen to read for us.

Ryan ([15:14](#)):

I've chosen *The Wright Brothers* by David McCullough. Happy to go into why, if you'd like.

MBS ([15:14](#)):

Yeah, I'd love to hear why.

Ryan ([15:20](#)):

One, I love David McCullough. He's one of the greatest storytellers. He just recently passed away, one of the greatest storytellers of our generation. The Wright brothers grew up in Dayton, Ohio. I live in Dayton, Ohio. Their bicycle shop is about 15 minutes away from where I'm standing right now.

MBS ([15:41](#)):

Amazing.

Ryan ([15:41](#)):

They still have kept it intact. You can go visit it and everything. I have a kinship for Orville and Wilbur Wright because of where they did a lot of their work. They would actually work on their flying machine in their bicycle shop here in Dayton and in other places around town. And then they would go down to Kitty Hawk, North Carolina where they would test it out. And so there are a lot of books in *The Wright Brothers*. I think McCullough's, at least of all that I've read, is probably the best. It's the one that's most memorable. I've reread it multiple times. And I've gained a lot from it. When you asked which book that was the first one that came to mind, I did think about looking at others, but that was the first one that came to mind.



MBS ([16:26](#)):

And in fact, you start your latest book telling a story about The Wright brothers as well. There's a nice connection to that as well. I'm excited to hear what you're going to read from us. How did you end up picking the two pages?

Ryan ([16:40](#)):

Do you want me to say that before or after I read it?

MBS ([16:42](#)):

Oh, okay. Let's say it afterwards. Yeah, let's just jump right into it.

Ryan ([16:44](#)):

I would start, if I started giving you the answer, it would kind of cut into what I'm going to read.

MBS ([16:49](#)):

Perfect. Well then let's just get to the reading. I'm keen to hear it, so I'll hand it over to you, Ryan, and tell us about the Wright Brothers,

Ryan ([17:02](#)):

"The gathering of some 50 society members and their wives convened at the Monadnock Building at eight o'clock. In his brief introduction Chinook spoke of the advances made in aerial navigation by two gentlemen from Dayton, Ohio, bold enough to attempt things neither he nor Otto Lilienthal had dared tried. The speech Wilbert delivered modestly titled, 'Some aeronautical experiments,' would be quoted again and again for years to come. Published first in the Society's Journal, it appeared in full or part in the engineering magazine, Scientific American, and the magazine Flying and the annual report of the Smithsonian Institution. In the words of a latter-day aeronautic specialist at the Library of Congress. The speech was, "The Book of Genesis of the 20th century Bible of aeronautics." It was authentic Wilbur Wright, straightforward and clear.



'What was needed above all for success with a flying machine,' he said, 'Was the ability to ride with the wind, to balance and steer in the air. To explain how a bird could soar through the air would take much of the evening,' he said.

[\(18:16\)](#):

Instead, he took a sheet of paper and holding it parallel to the floor, let it drop. It would not settle steadily down as a stayed sensible piece of paper ought to do. But it insists on contravening every recognized rule of decorum, turning over and darting hither and dither in the most erratic manner, much after the style of an untrained horse. 'This was the kind of horse' he said 'that men had to learn to manage in order to fly. And there were two ways. One is to get on him and learn by actual practice how each motion and trick may be best met. The other is to sit on a fence and watch the beast a while and then retire to the house and at leisure figure out the best way of overcoming his jumps and kicks. The latter system is the safest, but the former on the whole turns out the larger proportion of good riders. 'If one were looking for perfect safety,' he said 'One would do well to sit on the fence and watch the birds. But if you really wish to learn, you must mount a machine and become acquainted with its tricks by actual trial.'"

[\(19:41\)](#):

I chose that, Michael, because I identify so much with the two ways of learning.

MBS [\(19:49\)](#):

I love that.

Ryan [\(19:51\)](#):

The two ways, and I think as a part of my learning machine, as Charlie Munger might say, is certainly reading and studying and looking at things. But part of the reason why before we started recording, I'm peppering you with tons of questions about building a business is because you've actually done it. You've written about it, you've read about it, but even more importantly to me at least



you've actually done it. You've learned . If you really want to learn, you must mount the machine and become acquainted with a trick by actual trial. When I asked you about some of the mistakes you made or some of the issues or the problems, oh, you've got plenty of them, right? You know, because you had to do it, you had to go through it.

[\(20:33\)](#):

I like this dichotomy of learning that yes, I do think there is a place for watching birds and for studying and for reading and writing, listening to podcasts. There's absolutely a part of it. But you've got to do both. And I think we learn who we are through actually doing it more so than reading about it or thinking about it. You got to have both. And that's why I pulled this passage when it comes to the guys trying to create the first ever flying machine. If you go on in this book and read more, there was some horrible moments along the way. People died, they crashed a ton. And they had a lot of doubters, but they learned by having the fortitude to continue to push on and mouthing machine over and over and over. And to me that's super inspiring.

MBS [\(21:22\)](#):

What's your relationship with failure?

Ryan [\(21:30\)](#):

I think it helps that I've had it in my past as an athlete. When I went to college at a place called Miami University, I was this hot shot recruit who thought he was the king of the world, was going to play in the NFL. And they happened to recruit another guy in my same class who played my same position, which is quarterback. His name is Ben Roethlisberger, and for anyone who follows sports, Ben played for almost 20 years for the Pittsburgh Steelers, won multiple Super Bowls MVPs and will get inducted into the Hall of Fame on his first ballot.

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



No.

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

Yeah. But we were there same age, same position, and he beat me out for that job and it was a devastating moment, but I've learned so much from that that I think I fear it a little less of being willing to try stuff, or being willing to do it. The one thing that I wanted to ask you about that, I'm not trying to turn this around. But I haven't had a book, I've written two books, I'm writing more, but I haven't had a book that has absolutely dominated the world like you have, because you have it.

([22:38](#)):

Does it increase your fear for all future books to say, "Is it even possible?" I talked to James Clear after he wrote Atomic Habits, and I don't want to speak for him, but I know he thinks about this. How do you view failure moving forward now that you've had a book that went viral, and still is going viral? How do you, because I think it would be harder to be you in that case when it comes to writing books than me. Because I've had books that have sold fine, that have sold pretty well, but nothing like the Coaching Habit, which is in the top .0001% of book sales. So how do you view that?

MBS ([23:21](#)):

Well, a few ways. First of all, I just heard the other day an update on how most books sell. And it's really sobering. This is Statistics from the front list, so regular publishers and books published that year. 15% of books sell less than 10 copies. These are books that publishers have paid advances for and they sell less than 10 copies.

Ryan ([23:21](#)):

Really?

MBS ([23:21](#)):



Yeah.

Ryan ([23:21](#)):

Wow.

MBS ([23:52](#)):

86% of books sell less than 5,000 copies. Now, 5,000 copies is considered the breakeven for a publisher apparently. 0.4% of books sell more than 100,000 copies. To have a book that's somewhere between a million and a million and a half copies sold is just this random unicorn moment. And actually rather than now going, how do I replicate that success? I know that I will never replicate that success. I just can't. I mean-

Ryan ([24:25](#)):

Maybe you could, you've done it before, you could.

MBS ([24:30](#)):

Exactly. But I'm just setting ... First of all, I'm setting my expectations to go, honestly, if I write a book and it sells more than 10,000 copies or maybe say probably I would hope I could get most books now over 20,000 copies. There's still a lot of copies of books and I'm still ahead of the game if I can do that.

([24:52](#)):

But partly now it's around deciding what success is for me. And it is a commitment to process over outcome. Because there's just so much you can't control about the outcome. I've always gone, how do I keep writing the best book I can? How do I define what the best launch and marketing campaign I can for a particular book? How do I do that as well as I can? And then how do I put it down and move on to whatever the next thing is? The thing I'm wrestling with at the moment, Ryan is trying to shift my identity from being an author to being a writer. Author is somebody with books, writer is somebody who makes writing



central to what they do, not on the edges of what they do. Which is mostly how writing has worked for me in the past.

[\(25:47\)](#):

And so I'm going, look, I want to publish a book a year for the next three or four years. And I've got ideas of what those are, and now the commitment is to write four or five really interesting, different, funny, smart books, all of which I look at and I go, "I love that book." And I kind of don't care whether other people buy it and other people love it. Because everybody loves some books and hates some books. Literally one of my favorite review for the Coaching Habit on Amazon is, "This is the worst book ever written." And I'm like, and the bare minimum, the people who are ripping the Coaching Habit off with the summary of the Coaching Habit aren't those worse books than the Coaching Habit? But no, apparently this is the worst book ever written. I'm like, that's hilarious and fantastic. I just celebrate the luck. It's hard work and a good book and a whole lot of luck that has created the coaching habit. And now I go, look, the work is to do the work, and it's not to worry too much about the outcome.

Ryan [\(26:58\)](#):

It's really on expectation setting moving forward that you're not going to let past success paralyze you from writing more?

MBS [\(27:09\)](#):

Yeah, there's a great ted talk by Liz Gilbert where after Eat, pray, love, she's like, "I'm now currently working on the deeply disappointing sequel to eat, pray, love." She knows everyone's going to go, "It's good, but it's not eat, pray, love, is it." And I'm like, everything I write, I'm like, it's good, but it's not really the coaching habit, is it? I'm like, it's not, and I'm not writing it to be the next coaching habit, I'm writing it to go, what's the most, I mean, I ask myself, Ryan, as I think about where I put my time, I go, "What's the most useful thing I could



do now that connects to the bigger vision that I have in terms of how I serve the world?"

And I take my best guess and I use that language really clearly, which is, "How do I make my best guess about what's next?" And then I go for it and I'm like, "I made my best guess. I'm doing the work as well as I can. Outcome, it'll work, it'll not work."

Ryan ([28:03](#)):

I got one more, I don't want to again hijack this, but when you think about-

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

Problem with interviewing a podcast host.

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

I know. When you think about the Coaching Habit, because I look back at my past work, I'm very proud of it, but I'm also wiser today than I was when I wrote it. Are there things that you'd want to change and update and say, "Oh yes, this was good, but I want to change it. I want to make it better." Are you able just to move on?

MBS ([28:25](#)):

I don't do a whole lot of looking back. I'm wired to be more attuned to kind of going forward rather than going back and tinkering and the like. But with the Coaching Habit in particular, I'd spent five years getting it turned down by a regular publishing company. And so I had five years of trying to write it and rewrite it and rewrite it so they would like it. And it meant that when I finally decided to self-publish it, I had written it so many times that writing the kind of, this is overstating it a bit, but the platonic ideal of what that book is came easily to me. Because I'm like, I've written so many versions of it, I think I know what the truest version of this might be. Part of it, it's success is that it's got a really crystalline structure and a clear arc and very few wasted words, so that people



find it fast and easy to read. Because so much of the miscellaneous got burnt off in that five years of getting turned down as I tried to write, get this book published.

Ryan ([29:37](#)):

Do you think there was, not out too deep, but do you think there was a reason that you got turned down for five years? There's some sort of thing, or that's just, "No, that's just the way life happened."

MBS ([29:50](#)):

I just think that's the way life happens. I'm an atheist, so I'm not a believer in terms of this is meant to happen. In fact, I really actively dislike that phrase, "This is meant to happen." It's not. It's like you constantly, life is constantly moments of being in a crossroad and you take your best guess and you go down one way and you go down the other and I'm like, that story could have ended 8,000 different ways. It could have picked it up and the book did nothing.

([30:21](#)):

I could have given up on it, I could have self-published it, but kind of done a half-assed self-publishing job. But I had the luck to go, I had a good idea. You got turned down after making me write it five, six different times, I decided to self-publish. I got really clear that I was going to self-publish as a professional, not as an amateur. I hired an editor, I hired a designer, I made the decision to market it for two years, so I'd be committed to it. I set a standard that I was trying to write a classic in the world of coaching. So I had a vision for what I wanted for the book that was separate from book sales and just all of those things happened in a way that they aligned in a good way and magic happened.

Ryan ([31:12](#)):



The takeaway for me is just the thought and intention. That's what is missing at times. But you're so thoughtful. And so then the action oriented step of being intentional with how you went about doing it, that's what I love. That's the takeaway for me is you can be grateful for the people who said no, but then instead of just whining or complaining or feeling sorry for yourself or saying, "The world's not fair," you said, "No, I'm going to do this thing and it's going to be awesome. It's going to be first class doing it my way." And that's how you get lucky. All of that builds up, I think you referenced luck. I think you've just done so much work that you gave yourself the best possible chance to get lucky. And here we are. It's pretty cool.

MBS ([32:08](#)):

I think there, there's some truth to that. And of course, what people aren't hearing are all the things where I did some pretty similar stuff and it didn't work. I mean, the last book I published, How to Begin, it's like, I think it's a really good book. I like how I've written it. There's so many things about it I'm really proud of, basically not a single thing I did in the launch and the marketing of it worked.

Ryan ([32:31](#)):

Really?

MBS ([32:33](#)):

Everything was be-devilled by this didn't quite pay off and this turned out not to be a good investment.

Ryan ([32:38](#)):

I love the cover. I've told you this man though, I love the originality and how you did this book begins right here. God, it's so good. That was one of those ideas. I said, oh, I wish I would've done that now it's already been done.

MBS ([32:51](#)):



With that book I get to go, "Ah, you know what? It's sold some copies." It hasn't sold as many copies as I was maybe wishing for and none of the stuff I was experimenting with with the launch worked. And I gave it my best shot and I thought that was my best guess. I celebrate the moment and I'm like, "Okay, so what am I going to do for my next book and how do I launch that? What do I learn from that and how do I move on? But enough about me.

Ryan ([33:17](#)):

No, I know-

MBS ([33:17](#)):

I'm curious. Let me turn The table.

Ryan ([33:19](#)):

You seem to have such a ... I'll stop. But you seem as such a good outlook of this self-actualization of understanding self that I admire that, because I actually find it quite rare, even with people who are very accomplished at times. So, whenever I come across it, I think that's aspirational for me trying to get closer to that place than I currently am.

MBS ([33:40](#)):

Well, let me tell you one funny story about a guy called Ben Zander, who you may have heard of. He wrote The Art of Possibility with his-

Ryan ([33:48](#)):

Rosamund Pike and him.

MBS ([33:50](#)):

That's right. Who was his wife. And then they separated but continued to work together successfully. It's a great book and he has a tactic in that where when things are going badly, as they always do, everything goes off the rails. At some



stage you put your arms in the air and go, how fascinating. And I love that because that is such a embodiment of a learning, holding it lightly and being curious and learning from whatever's going on. However, here's the funny twist on it. My very, very first book, which is a sort of self-coaching book that I published called, *Get Unstuck and Get Going*, I found a way of sneaking it to him. He was speaking at a conference and I was like, I'm trying to get him to blurb it. Couldn't give it to him when he was talking, so I left it for him at the hotel desk. So he got it when he checked out with a nice note saying, I admire your work. You're about possibilities. I'm about possibilities.

[\(34:46\)](#):

Maybe you'd consider doing this. He wrote me this email going, I really don't appreciate being given books like this. I did flick through it, honestly, it came across as a very shallow version of *Chicken Soup for the Soul*. I'm like, "Oh, how fascinating." That didn't work as well as I thought it might, but no matter.

Ryan [\(35:07\)](#):

You got this whole story lined up and how it worked out and it came together. It's like, "Nah."

MBS [\(35:11\)](#):

Exactly. There's all sorts of, I mean, I've got so many good stories about my failures. They're far more interesting and entertaining than my successes really.

Ryan [\(35:19\)](#):

But it's just like when you think about the greatest inventors of all time. They're not the ones that were ... They're smart, yes, but they usually have the most patents or the most ideas. And among them there's so much garbage and nonsense. But there's also some of the great stuff you can find among, so it's not necessarily a quality game, it's a quantity to get to the quality. And I try to remind myself as I'm writing these terrible sections of my next book and I'm



like, "Oh my God, but this is it. This is a part of the process." You got to get, because then there are some days I wish there were more. "But there are some days where you're like, oh, this is good. But there are many other days where this is not that good, but I got to keep showing up and doing the work day after day in order to get to the good stuff. You got to get through the bad stuff or the bad ideas. Just the way it seems like it goes.

MBS ([36:16](#)):

To summarize what you're saying, because I agree with that. First of all, you do the work to do the work. And doing the work is the work. And doing the work and writing and rewriting and rewriting is how you get from mediocre to much better. And even when you got to much better and you publish the next book, it probably won't work either, even if it's a good book. But if you then publish the next book, then you're accumulating odds that something's going to go in your favor. And so there's so much about it is continuing to place the bets and do the work so that you can place the bets.

Ryan ([36:52](#)):

Yep, so true.

MBS ([36:54](#)):

Let me ask you this, where's your learning edge these days? And how do you find it? How do you keep going there?

Ryan ([37:03](#)):

My learning edge, can you explain what you mean by learning edge?

MBS ([37:08](#)):



Sure. I'm thinking about your podcast, 500 episodes, eight years, extraordinary range of guests, some A-list, some like me, C-list. But you've got to mix the weed in with the chaff, I understand that. And when I had a podcast called The Great Work Podcast, after 200 interviews I was boring myself. And what I would do is I would show up. Sometimes I'd read the book, sometimes I'd clicked on Amazon and done a quick read inside this book. So I had some idea of some of their words some of the time. And I found myself at a plateau and unable to shake it off. And I'm curious to know if you've noticed yourself, or when you've found yourself at a plateau, how have you reinvigorated yourself or perhaps you've just gone. Actually, I love the fine-tuning of Towards Mastery.

Ryan ([38:19](#)):

Robert Green and I, we talked about this, I had him on a few times and another great writer, but he said he sensed that I find people endlessly fascinating. And I think that's right. So there are a lot of people in the world. And so I'm always in the lookout for guests, always. My brain does not shut off when I think about people who could be a potential guest. I actually, Peyton Manning is known for this as a fellow quarterback. It's funny to put ourselves in the same category, but I guess where we're at right now, Peyton Manning loved the Monday through Saturday work, the practice, the film, the note taking, the building a game plan, the scheming. I love the preparation process. Because it's a forcing function for me to learn. And I am in a better place even before the conversation because I like ... Now, I will say, Michael, the difference now is I have 100% control over my guests and I usually am able to get people that I really want.

([39:30](#)):

And I also have a good relationships with a number of people who represent authors like the PR people attached to authors as well as even sometimes CEOs and other leaders in different places. I have full autonomy on choosing the people on my show. It would be vastly different if I was kind of told or if I had to reach for a guest that I wasn't that curious about. So my curiosity drives me to



then want to do the research to want to be prepared. And then I get to do my ultimate favorite thing, which is to have a deep long-form conversation with a person wiser than me. And there are a lot of those people out there.

And so when we go to these parties with, I talk about Miranda, well, she may be in the middle of the dance floor and everybody's around her and she's the life of the party. I will probably find hopefully an interesting person and will be asking them questions for a while and having a deep conversation, not the life of the party, not necessarily the fun one you want to invite, but I probably will have built a relationship with a person or two. And that's how I view my podcast is building genuine relationships. I mean, I don't even remember the first time we recorded, but it's been years, and now we still have had an ongoing relationship since then because it started from one conversation.

[\(40:55\)](#):

And so to me that's exciting. The opportunity to meet my heroes. People, I read *The Coaching Habit* and then say, wait, I can actually talk to that guy, the guy who was actually, I'm serious, the guy who was actually able to put that into words. I can talk to that guy and learn directly from him and who knows, maybe even form some sort of relationship where it's ongoing and now that whole part of it is what excites me.

[\(41:24\)](#):

So yeah, I'm sure there could be a day I reach a plateau, but as of now, the more I do it, the more excited I get for the next one. I mean, ask Miranda when I come home after I've recorded, this will be the case today too, because this feels like one of those conversations.

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

Yeah, yeah.

Ryan [\(41:42\)](#):



She rolls her eyes at me at times. Oh God, he recorded a podcast today. God, he's going to be on top of the world, which is better than being mad I guess. And so she senses, I think the excitement I have and I'll tell her, Hey, I'm recording with Michael Bunge standard today. Remember the guy, the Coaching Championship? Oh yeah, I use that in my own job. Yeah, I'm recording with him today and then I'll do it and I'll come home and be so excited. So it creates so much juice for everything I do in my life that I may not be giving you the answer that you were hoping for, but to me it's the catalyst for everything that I get to do. And I don't know where that came from. I don't know if I was born with it. I don't know if I just kind of developed it over time.

[\(42:27\)](#):

I think it's probably a combination of all those things is that I just love the fact that I'm able to really learn from people and then build a relationship in the process. Because ultimately that's what life's all about, is the building of deep, long form transformational relationships. And man, that's my job now that is really cool. And I don't want to ever take that for granted.

MBS [\(42:52\)](#):

When I think of what gets in the way of the best of me showing up, it's often because I've got something performative going on, something to do with how I want to be known or how I want to be seen, or some sort of ego state that occludes the better angels of my nature, the better version of who I am, just being who I am. I'm wondering what distracts you from being the leader you want to be in that broader sense in terms of your life and how you notice it and how you manage it?

Ryan [\(43:37\)](#):

Warren Buffet said, "That the difference between the people who are really good and the people who are great is that the great ones say no, that's what is



my kryptonite is I'm not good at that. So I would say that's saying yes to too much that's going in nine different directions, that's trying to customize every single solution for a consulting client, which you and I have talked about before. It's just draining, man. And at times I think, "This isn't even good." And so, the ability to say no is just something I really struggle with and I don't think I'm good at it as of right now. I'm trying to get better, but it's just hard. And so I think the thing that I mess up the most is saying yes too often. And part of it's like a structure of my business too, is that I haven't done a good job of creating like, "These are my offerings," so to speak.

[\(44:48\)](#):

It's like somebody calls you, "Hey, I've listened to the podcast for two and a half years, I love it. Can you build a leadership development program within my company?" Sure and that leads like a million calls and like, "Hey, is this right? No, no, we don't." That type of thing. And I know that's how businesses start. A lot of them are like that and you got to figure it out. But that happens all the time now. And so I'm kind of in this place where I don't know if I need a partner who is full-time and that's probably part of it, or something along the lines of more structure around yes and no and building out the business side. And part of it too is, man, I spend a lot of time preparing and recording my podcast. That's my favorite thing to do.

[\(45:32\)](#):

It also hurts because then you say yes to something else and then that cuts into the potential of building the IP or building out the business side of things. I'm more of just wanting to do the thing and all that other work funds really my entire business to be able to do my favorite thing, which is record the show.

MBS [\(45:51\)](#):



Yeah, that's a helpful answer. And I have nothing but empathy for you that I've got a little bit better.

Ryan ([45:59](#)):

You've got to figure those things out. But it probably took you some time, I imagine. I don't know.

MBS ([46:03](#)):

And even things like the Box of Crayons, we basically have a singular offer at Box of Crayons, and I've got a new book coming out in June next year, and I'm like, "This is such good IP for a corporate audience." I go and talk to Shannon, the CEO at Box of Crayons. I'm like, "Here's the thing, and Connie, you guys should build the course to do with it." And she's like, "No, it doesn't fit our strategy." And I'm like, "Dammit, I have taught you well, too well. I mean, you should be saying no to other people, but not to me." Apparently-

Ryan ([46:40](#)):

I'm the guy.

MBS ([46:41](#)):

She knows how to do that.

Ryan ([46:43](#)):

Oh, that's great.

MBS ([46:43](#)):

Ryan, this has been such a great conversation, and as you've said, we've had great conversations over the years now, so it's lovely to get this on tape as they say. As a final question for you, what needs to be said that hasn't yet been said in this conversation?



Ryan ([47:00](#)):

Oh God, man, I felt like you've done such a good job of getting me to go to places that I haven't gone before. I don't know, I don't want to just give a trite answer there to make something up. I feel like we've really hit on a lot.

MBS ([47:17](#)):

I agree.

Ryan ([47:18](#)):

I will say, I guess from something that's really important to me, and it is one of my four values is consistency. And I think consistency is something that you're all about and I'm definitely all about. And it is what ultimately leads to the quality. We were on that call with Jayson Gagnard as part of mastermind talks, and I gave this thing, and Jayson and I have gone back and forth on the fact that if this stuff is really good you don't need to be consistent. And I understand that. But I also think for most of us it takes being consistent and doing the work day after day to get to the high quality output that we want.

([48:02](#)):

And so when somebody asks me of, I don't like giving advice, I don't feel like in the right position to do that. But if they do, I would say, "Well, if you show up and do the work each day striving to add value to other people's lives, I think, like we said before, your odds of your luck increasing, go up, of good things happening, of good opportunities popping up, increase if that's your mentality is to put your head down and do that work. And thinking about other people and how you can help them, I think you got a shot." So I mean, I think that stems from that consistency value of mine.

MBS ([48:44](#)):

Since writing about it or featuring it in my book, How to Begin, I've often mentioned the quote from Jacqueline Novogratz, "What if you could give more



to the world than you take?" And I'm just going to celebrate that Ryan has given me a variation on that here. What if you leave the world better than you find it, tidy up, say thank you. Leave an origami swan, keep doing the best work you can. Manage those two imposters, success and failure, the same. Celebrate your differences.

[\(49:21\)](#):

If you enjoyed my conversation with Ryan, two other interviews I might suggest, one with Shelly Rachanow. Now she's been a high-flying executive, she's on boards and that conversation is called Weighing the Price of Ambition. And then Arthur Brooks, who has written a number of really interesting books, often about so-called climbing the second mountain, trying to find purpose in your life. And that interview is suitably called, The Search for Purpose.

[\(49:51\)](#):

And for more on Ryan, you can go to learningleader.com. That's his home base for everything. He's also one of the faculty of The Year of Living Brilliantly, which we'll be opening up again in 2024. It's closed for renovation in 2023, but 2024 we're going to open it up again. You'll find that if you're listening to the archives yearoflivingbrilliantly.com. If you listen to this now, you can actually get your name on the list so you'll be first to notified when The Year of Living Brilliantly opens up. Thank you for listening. Thank you for being part of this. Thanks for giving the show some love, whether that's reviews or passing interviews on, I don't really know how reviews work, but apparently it helps influence the algorithm and secret but meaningful ways. So, all of that love goes some way to helping people find this podcast wrap up by celebrating you and saying, "You're awesome and you're doing great."