

Speaker 1: Bulletproof Radio: a state of high performance.

Dave: You're listening to Bulletproof Radio with Dave Asprey. Today's cool fact of the day is that Henrietta Swan Leavitt was born 150 years ago on July 4. She mapped the stars at the Harvard Observatory. At the time, she used the most advanced photographic and spectroscopic methods she could find. She figured out that you could measure the brightness of thousands of stars. She noticed that the stars' brightness varied on a regular schedule, depending on just their intrinsic brightness. She worked out something called period luminosity relationship in 1908, which gave astronomers a powerful tool to measure the distance to stars and other astronomical objects.

Her work, this is someone you've probably never heard of, made most of the 20th century's most dramatic understandings of what's happening in space possible, which is really amazing. I didn't know until I was doing research for the show that that kind of knowledge existed that long ago, so if you're thinking, "Wow, progress is really slow," well, you could say it's really slow. You could also say that was only 100 years ago out of the thousands of years we've been around. You look at the speed of progress, it's only getting faster. We're able to do more now than we ever have in all of history. Just knowing this kind of stuff makes me happy. Hopefully, it made you happy too.

Today's guest is Dawa Tarchin Phillips, who's a Santa Barbara, California-based mindfulness and meditation expert and author, entrepreneur, spiritual teacher, researcher, educator, and really fantastically interesting guy, who's been written about in the New York Times and Men's Fitness and Forbes and places like that. He's American but grew up across Europe, speaks English, German, French, and probably some other languages that I don't know about.

He's interesting because he studied and trained as an ordained monk with a Vajrayana Buddhist meditation master. This is someone of the Tibetan lineage. He completed two different three-year meditation retreats in France. His Tibetan name actually means, "accomplished moon." For 25 years, he's been a dharma and meditation practitioner, which is a pretty serious spiritual path. What's cool though is that he's a non-sectarian Buddhist practitioner and an authorized teacher of the Kagyu School of Tibetan Buddhism in the U.S. and abroad and has taken his knowledge of what's going on inside our heads, inside our bodies, and turned it towards leadership.

He runs a leadership development company in Santa Barbara that does mindfulness-based leadership. What I've found in my own path of being Bulletproof CEO and before that is that the leaders who do the most good, who do the most amazing things are the ones who have the most mindfulness. So if you're an unmindful leader, you might be successful, but you'll be really unhappy, and so will all of the people at your company. That totally sucks.

When I saw a chance to talk to a Buddhist monk who's teaching executives how to be better executives, I'm like, "All right, we've gotta get this guy on the show." So, Dawa, welcome to Bulletproof Radio.

Dawa: Thank you, Dave. Good to be here. It's nice to see you. I don't know if people will know that we're actually meeting here on Oahu today.

Dave: There are worse places to conduct an interview. We're both here for Jack Canfield's group called Transformation Leadership Council, so to get to look at each other eye to eye is particularly useful and usually makes for a really awesome interview.

Dawa: It does.

Dave: I'm pretty stoked. Now, it's hard to know where to start with you because you've done things like create the International Mindfulness Teacher Association, where you're putting together these groups of people who, for long periods of time but really the last 10 years, there's been an explosion of people working with mindfulness and awareness and the very soft skills of leadership that go way beyond like emotional intelligence and things like that. What led you to actually put together a band of teachers around this? What's the point of doing that?

Dawa: Well, what's interesting, if you look at how mindfulness and really transformational practices have entered our society, modern society over the last 50 years, you see that there's a greater adoption due to the scientific inquiry and the evidence-based practices that have been drawn out of these traditionally a little bit more, you can say ...

Dave: You can say "esoteric" or "woo woo."

Dawa: Esoteric, woo woo, or non-mainstream maybe educational paths, right?

Dave: Yeah.

Dawa: That has made it accessible for many people to actually understand how these practices can affect their physiology, their mental function, their emotional function, and also their spiritual development in a non-theistic way, in an experiential way and can lead to greater happiness but also better performance. All of that work that's happened has led to an explosive interest in these kinds of practices, mindfulness practices, but also manifestation practices. How can I create the life I want by using my skills of mind, of heart, and of action to actually transform my life?

That explosion has also led to more and more people seeking professional activity in that area. Mindfulness is one of those areas, and we've seen, particularly over the last decade, an explosion in mindfulness teachers. That has led to the need to have some professionalization. The International Mindfulness Teachers Association is the first global body that allows mindfulness teachers to associate with each other, that allows people who run training programs to aim for a specific quality of teacher training, so that everyone knows that if you entrust yourself to someone that has had training recognized by a collaborative body, such as the International Mindfulness Teachers Association, you know you're in good hands because we want to know that, with our minds and with our hearts, we're in good hands. That's sometimes difficult to make out.

Dave: There's been an explosion of these life coaches, oftentimes life coaches who haven't really lived a lot of their life yet. Sort of take a two-hour class and now you hang up a shingle, and I'm a life coach. But putting some professionalism around it seems important because you can also have the potential for abuse because people either aren't qualified or form really unhealthy attachments to their clients and things like that. How would someone listening to the show who's thinking about working with a mindfulness coach, how do you sort out, this is a qualified mindfulness coach who's likely to lead me down a good path versus one, with the best of intentions, might lead me down a path that I don't want to go down?

Dawa: Yes, the easiest way would be to go to the website of the IMTA, IMTA.org, and there you can see both the pathways that training programs take to get an international accreditation and pathways that individual teachers and trainers and coaches take to become internationally certified. It lines out some basic fields of knowledge and experience and skill that one should aim for cultivating in oneself.

The good thing is, with these practices, is you're the first beneficiary. By developing these skills, the first life you're able to transform is your own. That then also brings you into a place where you know from firsthand experience what these practices do. That's really what we want. We want people that lead others to and through places that they themselves have become familiar with through their practice.

Dave: It sounds like I'm going to have to introduce you to a bunch of the Bulletproof coach people because we have a bunch of Bulletproof coaches, who ... similar thing. If you aren't walking the walk and you haven't at least walked it before, it's very hard to work with someone. I see a lot of entrepreneurs who are struggling, unhappy. They're running companies doing more than \$1 million a year in revenue, like, "I should be happy, but I kind of hate my life."

Dawa: Yes.

Dave: In fact, it's maybe more common than not.

Dawa: Yes.

Dave: When someone like that sits down with a mindfulness teacher and starts their own process and actually has some level of attainment and starts having things happen, if you're working with someone who's teaching mindfulness but doesn't have that intrinsic understanding of those states, you might run into places where, like if your coach hasn't been there before, it's hard to know what to do. I appreciate you sharing that tidbit. Give me the URL one more time. It was ...

Dawa: IMTA.org

Dave: IMTA.org, so that's one place that you might want to go if you're listening and you're looking for a specific mindfulness coach.

There's a lot of online meditation training that I've seen. I've had several experts come on the show and talk about that. What's your take on using an app or using online tools to meditate better? Is that effective?

Dawa: I think it is. We know from science that it can be effective.

Dave: Okay.

Dawa: It always depends on how someone is using the method. The right method in the wrong hands can lead to bad outcomes. A method, regardless of how simple or simplified, in the right hands can bring positive results. Yes, I definitely believe and know that not all, but a portion of the existing mindfulness and meditation apps deliver verifiable results, and that's a good thing. I think we're in a time where we need to accelerate the rate at which people actually become more awake and more in tune with their sense of connection with each other and also their sense of personal, spiritual, and social responsibility.

Dave: Did you just say meditate faster? Did I hear that?

Dawa: No, I didn't say meditate faster. I'd say accelerated awakening.

Dave: There you go.

Dawa: How can we accelerate the process by which people actually mature themselves?

Dave: What's the point of being awakened?

Dawa: The point is to be an integrated, valuable member of society, one that can be less preoccupied with their own fight for survival, whether that is an interior, mental, and emotional fight for survival due to trauma, or it's an exterior fight for survival due to lack of economic security or social embeddedness.

As long as people are really struggling for survival, it's very difficult to feel that sense of connection with others and to accept that we might be better off together than alone. I think there's a benefit from this process of awakening for our society because everyone that becomes more integrated, more grounded, more capable will both feel a personal sense of empowerment and also a greater desire to contribute. I think that is the kind of society that we desperately need and we long for, I think also. As when we get together in these leadership meetings, part of what makes it so valuable is how we are able to connect.

Dave: It's kind of funny, I think a lot of my leadership team at Bulletproof has no clue why I go to things like this, but you put it very eloquently there. There's some value with connecting with other people who are working on similar skills because you learn, and there's some value to just being in a room with a bunch of people who see things in a certain way because it soaks in, for lack of a better word.

Dawa: Yeah, and the ability to solve problems together increases, the synergy. I think human synergy, the ability to solve problems by collaboration and co-creation, we have barely tapped into it. We're coming up against challenges where we need to have that skill. I think part of this process that we're training in and also you with your company and how you are moving people along is to get people to a place where they actually are capable, synergistic individuals that can help solve problems on a larger scale.

Dave: How do you know if you're awakened?

Dawa: It's a good question. I think you notice it. Yeah, that's a good question. I'd say you notice it by the amount of attachment you've transformed into love, I would say.

Dave: Okay. If someone's listening to this going, "All right," I'm pretty sure, Dawa-

Dawa: I have to say, I have to express that from a spiritual teacher perspective. Otherwise, I say, "Look at their EEG." If the personal opinion and the EEG don't match, you might have a by-passer.

Dave: There you go. This actually gets into the leadership stuff. One of the things that you train in leadership is the quality of your presence.

Dawa: Yes.

Dave: What I've learned is that, early in my career, I was pretty much running away from failure, and I was pretty angry most of the time. I could show up at a board meeting, and I knew the dance. I could say the right things, but inside I'm like, "I hope that person falls off a cliff." You're basically sending hateful thoughts into the room, and there's lots of fear and greed and all that sort of stuff.

I didn't understand this because I grew up with a very engineering focus, kind of skeptical mindset. People can tell. How you tell, I have some theories about mitochondrial measuring of magnetic fields that are probably true, but even if they're not, the fact is, if someone walks into a room and what they're saying and doing doesn't match what they're feeling, we know.

Dawa: Yes.

Dave: The quality of your presence goes up when what you're feeling inside matches what you say. That's at least my definition of a quality of presence because I know that I can go on stage with Tony Robbins, thousands of people, but if I don't have whatever that weird alignment between what's going on in my gut and my heart and my words, it doesn't stick. The audience doesn't ... it's like a firewall almost. How do you define presence for leaders though? This is my experience of it, but what's your definition as a spiritual teacher?

Dawa: Yeah, yeah. It's a great question, Dave. First of all, the reason why we focus on presence is because everything that lies in an individual person's control boils down to five things:

what they think, how they feel, what they imagine, what they say, and what they do. Those five things all happen in the present. Someone who actually doesn't have present, has lost all control over their life. They have no control over the direction of their life.

We bring people back to the present because that is where the steering occurs. That is where actually control over the direction of one's life can be gained. We developed an approach to leadership that is actually allowing people, particularly leaders, to understand that they're not in the business of creating a better future. They're in the business of upgrading the present, of learning how to transform the experience and the interaction and the outcomes that they're achieving in the present.

People intuitively know that what we're saying here is true because they have lived every moment of their life in the present, yet they get trapped in the attachment to past experiences, which then projects itself into fear of the future. When we help them, through mindfulness practices, step out of that and explain to them clearly the tools that they have available to transform their present moment experience and how that then becomes their leadership style. They're not only teachers, their constituency or their employees or their followers, how to be more effective in living healthy, impactful, meaningful lives. That becomes, for the leader, very satisfying because they feel more in the driver's seat of their own life, and they know now how to introduce the ones that they care for and are responsible for, to actually a model that works.

So you asked me how I define presence, right? It's hard to define. I'd say the ability of a person to remain ... I call it "real time." To have full access to their resources in real time.

Dave: I came across a story once. I'm not sure which meditation teaching this was, but they were looking at meditation, basically spiritual guru-level people. They'd sit them in a room, and they'd have the lights blink really briefly. They'd say, "What did you experience?" They'd say, "Well, the lights were on, the lights were off, the lights were on." They'd take someone who didn't have as much presence, someone who was untrained, and they'd say, "The lights were on." They're not even perceiving the blink because they're kind of living in a mush of some of the present, some of the past, and maybe some of the future.

Dawa: Yes.

Dave: But they're not actually perceiving all of the things happening in the world around them. Is that kind of an accurate picture? Do you see the lights blink when other people don't? How do you know you're in the present?

Dawa: Yeah, yeah, yeah. You know because there's nothing else you have to hold onto.

Dave: Okay.

Dawa: You realize that you're in the present because you feel groundless, but also tapped in and connected. We notice that all the things that we hold onto, that become so much

part of our egoic identity, things that we accomplished in the past or that we hope to accomplish in the future. But when we become really present, the things that we can really grasp onto are less and less. What we remain with is this sense of open-mindedness and open-heartedness. Our intentions and our willingness to engage in the situation we're in, in the most effective way we know how.

There's a certain groundlessness that comes with presence. I think most people that have developed a meditation practice, they've become familiar with it. In our approach, we tell people there are three practices you are involved in. You are involved in familiarizing yourself with something, cultivating something, and then learning how to gain a sense of direction. When we say familiarization, what is actually happening and how does that become something you don't run away from, but you become actually more intimate with and more familiar with?

Then, among the things that are happening, which are the things you want to cultivate and why? Particularly in the role of a CEO or a leader, those have to be things that actually align themselves with the vision, the mission, and the purpose of your organization. Then the direction is being really clear on where the dials are, what you actually can control and how, and what you can't, so that you reduce your energy waste. You maximize efficiency.

I'm a fan of the work you guys are doing with the bio-hacking and the neuro-hacking because I think it's all about developing a sense of efficiency with one's energy and really focusing it on those levers that we have actually available to us to transform the world and our life.

Dave: When you're more present, you're more efficient because you know what's going on, and you're less reactive to things that aren't happening, that your nervous system might be worried about is happening.

Dawa: Yeah.

Dave: Okay.

Dawa: And you use the things you can actually influence. You waste less time on the things that you actually can't.

Dave: Here's an interesting question for you. We're both in Hawaii. I was here in Hawaii when the fake missile alert went off.

Dawa: Yes.

Dave: I'll say I didn't lose any sleep over it. That's probably because I was still asleep when it happened. But I know what my reaction to that would be, which is not a very strong reaction, just because partly I'm an engineer and also the things you can change. Bottom line: if there's really a missile flying towards you that's nuclear, you're probably screwed, so you might as well enjoy the ocean. There's nothing to be done there.

Dawa: Yes, let your family know you love them.

Dave: Exactly, right. Versus there were people reacted in all sorts of different ways. What would someone who practices presence and this awakening you're talking about, how would they typically respond to an event like that that's mostly out of their control, versus someone who doesn't have a practice like this? Talk to me about the level of suffering or just the mindset that would come with that.

Dawa: Yeah, so with mindful leadership, you tend to go less into anxiety and worry and the stress response. You tend to stay more in an area where you actually have a clarity and access to your inner resources and outer resources, and you can have discernment. You can make decisions among the choices that are available, which is really the ideal state.

Dave: Right.

Dawa: The ideal state is full access to your resources, discernment, and clarity about the options. That is really what we cultivate, that state. When we do get into a state of fight or flight, freeze or faint, how can we reduce that state, either through investing remedies, practicing certain practices, or also investing trust. An important aspect of mindfulness practice that oftentimes is left out, this active cultivation of trust into one's own experience.

Dave: How do we deal with trust? Because there are people who are not trustworthy. There are people who will meet with you, steal your ideas, or try and steal your money, or put together a bad partnership. Just aren't worth that.

Dawa: Yes.

Dave: So, on one hand, I mediate, I'm working on awakening, so I'm more trusting.

Dawa: Right.

Dave: How do you keep that from turning into you're easy to be taken advantage of?

Dawa: Oh, naivete.

Dave: Yeah.

Dawa: Yes, exactly. That's a great question, and I get that often. Partly, the relationship with trust is one that oftentimes people have not examined very carefully, which means that we experience our trust level as a reaction to our environment. We put other people in charge of our trust levels. When we do that, our trust levels remain low and oftentimes don't contribute to our well-being and success but undermine it.

There's an important process by which we release others from that responsibility, and we understand that we have the ability to generate trust to the level we wish to. When it gets hurt, harmed, or broken, we can rebuild it to the level at which we experience

healing, redemption, or some sense of forgiveness and wholeness again, independently of what others are doing.

That skill is very important because if we live in this idea that somehow others will become so stable or clear or ethical or predictable that we can trust deeper, then we're in a state of dependency on others' development. It's frustrating because others are never quite reliable enough or predictable enough to warrant that level of trust. Never mind the world, which is changing so fast and so drastically and has natural disasters and socioeconomic crises.

This aspect of trust is really understanding that trust is good for you, basically. It's just good for me to be in a state of trust. I develop it because it balances my autonomic nervous system. It frees me from negative projections based on past experiences and negative expectancy, and it puts me back into that open, present state where I have access to my resources, which is where I want to be.

It doesn't mean I give up discernment. It doesn't mean that, in order to have trust, I need to abandon discernment. I think that's the either/or duality that many of us grew up with, where we say, "Okay, I'm either in a state of trust, or I'm critically discerning." I and my team, we say, "No, we really want to try to cultivate both a state of enhanced trust, so that we're balanced, we're happy, we're open, and an increased sense of discernment."

Dave: Tell me about a time that someone violated your trust as a monk. What happened internally and externally with you?

Dawa: Well, I guess the violations that I've experienced in the past, I went through 12 years of monastic training. I'm not a monk. Now, I'm married and have a family. But, at the time, spiritual teachers are not infallible. We live in a time where a lot of false idols are coming down, and a lot of sacred cows are being slaughtered. It's a good thing. I think we're disrupting the whole idea that wisdom is an hierarchical essence, when in fact it's distributed, can come from anyone anytime.

I'm a big fan of peer-to-peer awakening. What I have experienced as well in my life is teachers who were not what they said or made out or presented themselves to be.

Dave: That's a big betrayal.

Dawa: Big betrayal. Who weren't keeping their commitments, who made false statements about what they were doing and who they were. Who they presented themselves to be in public was not who they were in private. From those betrayals, the way back really was about understanding the role of a teacher in one's life and also understanding where, in fact, my personal responsibility for my own growth and education and wisdom lies. How to not abdicate that, how to not abandon that in the process.

I think many of us, maybe partly through the educational system we go through, we abandon so much of our own wisdom and so much of our own sense of empowerment.

It becomes painful when we realize that we did that. Even though many times we knew something better than the person in the front of the room, or we actually had a sense of a different truth than what was written in the book, we still were stuck in that power differential of that authority figure. I think that the lessons I learned is how to really trust my own wisdom and to know that ultimately being at peace with myself, the decisions I make, and the guidance I receive from my own heart and mind is really the journey. I don't know if that makes sense to your question.

Dave: It does make sense there. One of the things that you can always do, in fact something that I teach when I'm working with executives, is around finding gratitude.

Dawa: Yeah.

Dave: There's something that you learned from that situation even if it really sucked, even if it was painful. If you can't find that, or if you just don't know how to do that or you don't do the work to find someone to be grateful for, it becomes very hard to let it go and sort of see it for what it is versus what it feels like.

Dawa: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dave: One of the practices that I used to do, I can't say I do it every day, but I did for a long time, was when I was meditating, I would just say, "I'm grateful that things happen the way they're supposed to happen." Now, as a Western engineering guy, there's all sorts of questions about philosophy, about fate. Is everything predetermined? That could be a really ugly statement. What I came down to over the years was that my nervous system is frighteningly stupid and will believe almost anything I tell it. I say that because rationally, I know things might not happen the way, at least, that I think they're supposed to happen, but as long as my nervous system thinks things happen the way they're supposed to happen, it chills out, which allows me to be more present, make better decisions, and be a more effective leader and things like that.

Dawa: Yes.

Dave: I look at this almost like there's a separate consciousness that's in the body that's looking at all this crap, and that if you can get that to believe that it's trusting, that that frees up a lot of the noise, that then allows me to decide whether I am going to choose to take action like I'm trusting, which is getting rid of the fear that comes from just assuming that, even though rationally I know that might not be true. Is that a good practice, or does that have a downside I don't know about?

Dawa: I think it's a good practice. I think the body is mainly in a survival state naturally because it only has one mission. That is to survive and replicate.

Dave: Right.

Dawa: That is different than the mind's or the spirit's mission because the mind or the spirit knows that it is not going to survive physically. It knows that. Yet the body, its primary

conditioning is around that. I think the spiritual path, at least the way I understand it, and I've done a lot of work in neuroscience, founded a research center in Santa Barbara and other things, is that how do we get the reality of our body and the wisdom of our mind to actually work together in a way that is integrated?

I'm not a big fan of the enlightenment that tries to achieve some kind of state that some imagined alternative reality. I think that-

Dave: They have drugs for that, right?

Dawa: Yeah, they have drugs for that, and people lose decades pursuing this. Then they die, and they never were really here, right?

Dave: Right.

Dawa: I think that what we want to have is a state where we can influence the well-being of our body through our mind, and we can influence the well-being of our mind through our body.

Dave: Is there a danger to some meditation practices? I'm asking this because, when I was studying Buddhism in Nepal at a Tibetan monastery years ago, they talked about there's a fast path to enlightenment. But people go crazy along the way. You might be able to get enlightened in one lifetime, but you might also end up in a padded cell. There's various other people out there who talk about unstable personalities meditating and becoming more unstable. What are the downsides to embarking on a practice like the one that you went down?

Dawa: I use the word "enlightenment" very, very rarely. I think I like the word "awakening" because people can make sense of living a life where they're more awake. I think the downside is to not know where the real traps are. There are traps along the path of awakening, where people can get off the path and then really lose a decade or two pursuing things that ultimately don't bring much benefit.

Then I think the other downside is when a breakthrough occurs, to not have any mentors or friends that can help with the integration of that paradigm shift. I believe it's very important to have spiritual friends, whether they are childhood friends, or they are colleagues or spouses or even children, but people that you choose because you have things in common, and you pursue a path together, and you are interested in each other's experience. Because I think that there's a wisdom of the group that helps with the integration of such breakthroughs.

I think when people isolate themselves on the spiritual path and don't share their experience and use their experience as a way of escapism, then yeah, there can be serious downsides, all the way from mental illness to harm to their physical health, and certainly huge harm to their social system, where people abandon their families or entertain very wrong ideas about what an awakened life actually could or would look like in the modern world.

Dave: There's a trap that people fall into behaviorally, not just around meditation. It can be around exercise, it can be around diet, it can be around meditation, almost anything, where you embark on a path, and it makes a difference, so therefore more of that path kind of relentlessly, because it's already past your filters as something that clearly works.

Dawa: Yes.

Dave: This happened to me when I was a raw vegan. I'm like, "Wow, I'm feeling really good." And after three months, I wasn't quite feeling as good, but I knew that the vegan diet really worked for me. I went on to the point, I had shattered a tooth and introduced some autoimmune problems. One day, I was like, "You know what? I think I'm gonna eat some meat." That really was kind of a transformative thing, but I was so convinced and committed. I figured this out, this is really good.

I've seen the same thing happen with meditation practice. You do it this certain way as long as it works, but that willingness to be able to say, "I'm going to shift what I do, based on the current state of things," which goes back to what you mentioned around awareness and just how am I doing right now? If I did this meditation every day for 10 days, and things are crappy, and it's not working anymore, that's why you have those friends you just talked about, where you talk to them about it, and maybe you do it more, or maybe you make a shift. But if you're doing it in isolation, it might be really hard to do.

Dawa: Yes.

Dave: But on the flip side, if you do it in a group setting and everyone in the group encourages you and says, "No, this works, you gotta keep doing it, you gotta keep doing it," and it's not working for you, how do you solve that? As a person navigating their way through almost an infinite number of meditation and spiritual practices, not to mention diet, exercise, all the other lifestyle stuff. How do you navigate that ability to say, "All right, I'm going to change my path a little bit or a lot"?

Dawa: Well, it brings up two things. You and I, we share an interest in neuro-feedback as well, right? I am very interested, and others as well, in finding ways in which we can integrate the body's wisdom into this process because the body doesn't lie. It has no incentive to tell a story.

Dave: Right, right.

Dawa: If it is contracted and ill and not well, it will let you know. Anything that allows us to get data from the body as to how it is doing, given the mind that is entertained by the inhabiting person, I think that's very valuable.

I think also that there are paradoxes in awakening, where two seemingly opposing things can actually be true at the same time. Those things sometimes the intellect struggles with. The intellect struggles with the fact that we need both relationship and

alone time. In our partnerships, when we try to communicate that, we get very mixed messages from each other. When we say, "I need some alone time," people may feel rejected. When we constantly engage in relationship, we may feel like we're letting ourselves down.

But it's a constant dance to integrate these paradoxes. Part of what, for example, has evolved in the tradition of zen is sitting with a paradox until the paradox resolves in a larger truth. I think that is part of an authentic meditation practice is the willingness to be with a paradox until the paradox dissolves into a larger experience of a reality in which these seemingly opposing realities can actually be simultaneously present. I don't know if that makes sense the way I explained it.

Dave: It does make sense. One of the challenges of all of the meditation and spiritual paths is that a lot of what we're talking about is, one of my favorite words, it's ineffable, which basically means that there aren't words to describe it. That's why all the teachings, "Imagine a flower of a golden ..." The Buddha sitting on a gray stone that looks like ... what they're trying to do is paint an inside neurological state that doesn't have words for it.

Dawa: Correct.

Dave: Like telling a colorblind person, "It's red," but what's red? You just don't know. I think it does make sense. It's an eloquent way of explaining something that's hard to explain. The ability to sit with a paradox really pisses off engineers and scientists, and that's where I come from. It took me a lot of work to be able to just sit down and say, "You know what? Half my brain is completely irrational, and half my brain is entirely rational." I can now entertain a quote "irrational" practice, irrational being that we don't necessarily know why it works, and we think it works, but we're not sure, but I'm willing to play with that.

At the same time, having a rational side that isn't gonna beat me over the head for potentially, "Maybe you're wasting time," or something like that and just accept that I'm rational and irrational at the same time. For me, that set me free to just experiment, I'm gonna see what works. And if I don't know why it works, I can make up a story. It's leprechauns and unicorn-powered. Whatever the story is, maybe it's actually based in mitochondrial biology or quantum wormholes. We just don't know, and we can tell ourselves a story to make ourselves feel safe, and telling the story is what science is, and making the story more accurate of reality.

But to be able to accept that I'm gonna do this practice that seems completely crazy, but if it works, then it wasn't crazy, and if it doesn't work, it's just an experiment. That was a really tough step for me. A lot of the hardcore skeptics out there have reached the point where if I don't know how it works or I don't have some arbitrary definition for proving that it works, I'm not gonna try it. What's your advice to people who are in that very cognitive, hyper-rational mindset?

Dawa: Be a scientist. Be a scientist, which means create a thesis for yourself and test it. I am predominantly a curious mind. I wouldn't even call myself in any way religious. I am spiritual, but due to discovery. I have a curious mind, and I like to ask myself questions and then see what answers I find. I think everybody deserves that intellectual freedom to be able to ask themselves questions they find interesting and to create theses or look at theses that maybe others have and test them.

I think that is a real path of knowledge, as the Greeks would have lived it, an inquiry. I think that is the permission we need to give ourselves again after we're recovering from the educational system of the Industrial Age.

Dave: Right.

Dawa: That we have the permission for pursuing our thirst for knowledge and that we can put ideas, theories, models to the test without having to blindly adopt them, just in order to fit into a role, a position, or a path.

Dave: So one side is blind adoption doesn't make sense, and the other flip side of that coin is that can't be, therefore it isn't, which is the skeptic's sort of mantra. If someone reports something, rather than saying, "It's impossible," determine whether it really happened, and, if so, you found an outlier that now says, "Maybe there's more to the model."

For me, that's wakened me up, spiritually and emotionally, to things I didn't know about, but also even nutritionally and some of the other areas where I work, where if there's one study that shows cows can get fat on 30% less calories, and they use it to make millions more dollars in the ranching industry, I know there's something more than a calorie that matters, and I'm going to explore that.

But it's very natural for us to reject, "That fact can't be true because it violates my model, and if I don't have this model, I won't be safe." By practicing presence and awareness in the things that you do in your leadership training and in your meditation training, I think it becomes safer to go down that path and say, "I'm just gonna see what works."

Dawa: Yes, yes, and it becomes ... sometimes we say, there's a fear of the unknown or the unfamiliar. As a leader, it is so important for us, there's so much uncertainty, if we're really living at the cutting edge of reality, at the cutting edge of time, at the cutting edge of movements. There's so much uncertainty, and leaders have to be able to make decisions with incomplete information all the time.

Dave: Oh, yeah.

Dawa: They need a skill set that they can draw on in that kind of an environment. Curiosity, willingness to learn, willingness to stay in touch with the inner resources because the outer resources are still coming, they're still manifesting.

Dave: Right.

Dawa: I think that is a core skill. The beautiful thing is we see more and more CEOs, business owners, entrepreneurs showing up with that skill. I call it the new archetype of an awakened entrepreneur. I could count you among them. People who show significant accomplishment and mastery in business, but are operating from a spiritual awareness.

Dave: I don't think it's possible to have that level of business success and be happy at the same time until you've done that. Having \$6 million when I was a miserable 26-year-old, lost it when I was 28, but it's about feeling good every day, and then the success comes with that. I'm with you on that front.

You're doing something really interesting this year that I would love to join on, but I probably won't, just because it takes a month. You are spending a month leading a group of people on a circle around the globe, going to a bunch of places, including Mount Kailash, which is a remote part of western Tibet where I first had yak butter tea that was the inspiration for Bulletproof Coffee, as well as one of the holiest mountains in history. Tell me a little bit about why you're going to these seven different spiritual locations around the planet and what you're doing there because it's fascinating.

Dawa: I will. I also want to tell you, if you want me to take something for you as a gratitude gift to the Kailash, let me know.

Dave: Oh, yes. Okay.

Dawa: Because I just thought that that might be a nice thing, an offering.

Dave: Yes, absolutely. Thank you for that. What a great idea. Yes.

Dawa: This particular trip, it's called the Awakened World Global Pilgrimage, and it takes place from May 11, 2018 to June 11, 2018. It goes around the earth one time, does a circumambulation. But more than that, it's an ascending journey where we visit powerful places on the globe that correspond to the frequency of the different chakras or energy centers in the human body.

We'll travel from Los Angeles to eastern Africa, Tanzania, to then Ngorongoro Crater in the Serengeti. Then to Egypt, to Jerusalem, to Varanasi, to northern China, the Wutaishan area and then to Lhasa and Mount Kailash, which represent the seven different energy centers or chakras that exist in the human body that are also represented in their frequency on the globe, on our planet.

This journey allows people to understand on a deeper level their own humanity. The purpose of the trip is to awaken more unified consciousness in the world. There's a lot of division at the moment in our world, a lot of separation along ideological, artificially drawn lines and borders. The pilgrimage is really about acknowledging that awakening is a universal value. It is not limited by ethnicity, gender, cultural origin, none of that. It's a trip of 30 days of pilgrimage around the globe through the seven energy centers of the planet to help people awaken.

It has never been done in the history of the world. There has never been a public pilgrimage that actually honored the entire earth as the sacred place. It will take 30 days to do it effectively. It's organized by a great tour company that also organizes trips for Stanford and UCLA. I've been working with them together. This will be the third pilgrimage that I lead internationally.

Dave: Wow.

Dawa: It's going to be fantastic.

Dave: I would love to have a month of time to go join and do that because those are some just amazing places, and to go there and look at them from a spiritual perspective and to experience that with a group of people doing the same thing, talk about forming community. What a cool thing. Yeah, being a CEO and a podcaster and author, I gotta figure out how to work a month of time off into that.

Dawa: Maybe we'll lead in 2020 or 2019, we'll lead one just for CEOs.

Dave: There you go.

Dawa: We'll kind of work around everyone.

Dave: We can all be on our cell phones all the time.

Dawa: That's right.

Dave: Cancel out the spirituality there.

Dawa: Have a free day every fourth day, there's an executive day.

Dave: That might actually work, something like that, where you're like, "Just gotta check in." Well, what a fascinating thing to do. I wish that, earlier in life, I'd had the opportunity to do that. And I still may, but this is something that I didn't do in my early twenties, which was just to travel and see things. To be able to stack all that up in a month, what a cool thing.

Dawa: Well, Dave, you're making a big difference in the world. I have a lot of millennials that I work with, as well, who are really inspired by what your team and Bulletproof is doing.

Dave: Oh, thank you.

Dawa: Let me know. I have certain expertise that also was mined over, quite took time to develop. I know there will be opportunities for us to create things.

Dave: Beautiful. Dawa, if someone came to you tomorrow and said, "I want to perform better at everything I do as a human being. What are the three most important pieces of advice you have for me?" What would you offer them?

Dawa: I would say, first of all, you need mentors. The human mind and the human body learns so much faster from modeling success than it does from recreating it out of thin air.

Dave: Oh, yeah.

Dawa: Second would be whenever you are learning something new, the sign of that is that you feel your own limitation. You feel a sense of intellectual stupidity. You feel a sense of personal inadequacy. You feel a sense of even your own motor skills and dexterity. Don't reject that feeling. Every child knows it but doesn't reject it. But as an adult, we reject that feeling, which keeps us in a limited state, where we're constantly trying to avoid feeling out of our element and out of our comfort zone. That would be the next step.

And then the third step really would be have a model for transformation. There is a, as our friend Jack would say, success leaves clues, which means there are models by which people successfully transform their lives, their relationships, their income, their businesses, their impact, their influence, everything. There are models by which that can be done. I think I would say, understand, find a good model, find a good model, and once you do, the only thing in your way is mindset. Once you have a model that you can actually work, then work that model and take care of the mindset. With that, you can go a long way.

Dave: Beautiful. Awesome. Thanks for being on Bulletproof Radio. You've mentioned several different resources during the interview, and people can go to ... what was it? IAMT.org.

Dawa: IMTA.org.

Dave: Oh, IMTA.org. Where else can people find your work?

Dawa: People can find my work at dawatarphinphillips.com, which is my website. They can find me on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, and Instagram. We have a free, very empowering meditation on the nature of the mind under dawatarphinphillips.com/awakeningpresence, that people can access for free, just by leaving their email if they want to stay in touch with us.

Dave: Okay.

Dawa: And then there are a couple of groups I have. There's an online course called "The Mindful Leadership Breakthrough." There is a Mindful Leadership Tribe, which is our community of leaders in this space that are working on themselves on an ongoing basis, developing solutions. They can also visit my company's website at empowermentholdings.com. Those are several ways by which people can get in touch.

Dave: Excellent. If you liked today's episode, do yourself a favor and be more present, be more aware, be more alert. You can also practice gratitude by going to bulletproof.com/itunes, which will take you right to the site where you can leave a review for the show to say it was worth your time. Thank you.

