

## Episode #10: The Hero's Journey

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Welcome to Allowed. I'm your host, Caneel Joyce. Whether you are in the midst of growth or in the throws of one of the deepest challenges of your life. You are on the Hero's Journey. We often talk about the journey of growth as something that sounds kind of etherial and mysterious, but what's really incredible is there's actually quite a bit of structure to it. There is a predictable order in which the events of your journey will unfold. It will be immediately familiar to you as you listen to our guests describe the Hero's Journey. We have David Shechtman of evolution on with us today describing it for us and teaching us how to use it, but you will recognize the events and the arc of this story because it shows up in Superman, Batman, Cinderella, pretty much any story that you have ever read or seen, including your own life.

So you're allowed to move faster through this journey. You're allowed to get unstuck, you're allowed to understand what might come next, and you're allowed to know where you are even if things currently seem chaotic. So excited to have David here on the show. He's one of my favorite collaborators and always makes me laugh to death. So I'm very, very excited for him to be here on this kind of serious episode. So please jump in and let's learn about the Hero's Journey.

Thank you so much for coming back this week to join us on this episode about the Hero's Journey with my guest. David Shechtman is here live with me in the studio in LA today. Every time you show up for this show, you are investing in the most important thing you possibly can, which is your own growth development, self-awareness, grounded-ness and joy.

The Hero's Journey is one of the most powerful models that we know of as coaches. That explains the journey of growing as a human being. And I'm sure that once David explains to you what this looks like, you will begin to recognize it all over the place, in your life and in the world. So let's dive into the conversation today on the show. We have the incredible, delightful David Shechtman, who is one of my partners in evolution, our coaching community, our coaching collective, our coaching firm. And I'm very excited to have you here, David. Thank you so much for coming out.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Yes, thank you Caneel it's great to be here.

Oh man, I've been looking forward to this for so long.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Me too.

I remember when, I remember being outside of the evolution house maybe like a year ago. And we started talking about like what could this podcast be? And we could debate some ideas and have different points of view. And here it's finally here we manifested. High five. He's one of the only people I know who everywhere he goes, people keep saying, "you need to have a podcast." He's seemingly effortlessly entertaining. So I'm really excited for him to be here and what he's going to be speaking with us about today is the Hero's Journey and we've had an opportunity to do a lot of work, some of which involved trials and struggle. And you know, David, you've certainly seen me kind of break before and have helped pull me up and it's been just such an honor to be able to work with somebody of your level of depth and character and intelligence.

And I'm so excited that you're here today to teach me and the listeners about the Hero's Journey, because this is, I think for you, it's one of the most useful concepts in personal growth that there is. It's something I don't know a ton about, but I'm loosely familiar and familiar enough that you and I, actually remember, last year we were at our offsite, the evolution partner gathering and we were staying at an Airbnb in LA with a bunch of other partners. Really, really fun. And we got into this fight about, it was a sparring match, you know, like we like to have, as I was telling you how awesome the movie Superman is.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** And you were like, "yeah, well you've got this hero is doing this." And I was like, "that's every movie that's ever been made."

But you said that because it's every movie, it means this is not a good movie. And I'm telling you.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Are we back in this?

Superman is a really good movie. So, you know, I had just seen it again, it was one of my favorites when I was growing up. And I was explaining step-by-step about how this movie maps onto the Hero's Journey. Like it's a perfect Hero's Journey and some people agreed with me, but you were against.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Yes. I was not buying it.

Why were you not buying it?

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Well, first of all, my recollection of that conversation was that you were lauding the movie for having a plot. So all movies have an arc. And what we're talking about today is the Hero's Journey, which is an arc for our lives.

Every story.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Right. Every story. Many stories, longer stories, lifetime stories, they follow an arc, right? And a sort of plot line that takes people through an experience.

Just because every movie follows the Hero's Journey and so do our lives, does not mean that Superman is not a good movie. It's an incredible movie.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Okay, well, I don't want to come across as a Superman hater, of course, but I'm not sure that disastrous special effects, uneven acting and a terrible ending constitutes a great movie, even if it has a good Hero's Journey.

All right. Agree to disagree. Well when we plan our next film festival, but we will not include that one. And that's a story for another day. The epic film festival. I'm getting ahead of ourselves though. Let's bring it back and, and I want to dive into what is the Hero's Journey. So this Hero's Journey, it's in every story and is there, is there a story that a lot of our listeners would know about that really maps well onto the Hero's Journey?

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** So, well, you know, the story that gets the most publicity about the Hero's Journey is Star Wars because George Lucas read The Hero with a Thousand Faces, which was Campbell's book and then base the entire, you know...

Who is Joseph Campbell?

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** So Joseph Campbell was an academic and author. He taught for a long, long time, I think, close to 40 years at Sarah Lawrence college. His main contribution was this anthropological study of cultures across time and geography, all the way from the very beginning of recorded civilization cave paintings, all the way to the modern

contemporary world that he lived in. So he was well known for that body of work and taught in a very dedicated fashion at Sarah Lawrence college. Later in his life. He did a great deal of speaking, presenting at SLN and other sorts of organizations like that. And he is the author of many books, the first and really landmark book being The Hero with a Thousand Faces.

And this book is the source of our understanding of the Hero's Journey.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Yes.

As well as the spark of inspiration behind the movie Star Wars.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Exactly, exactly. And this is where what really helped launch the Hero's Journey as a body of work into popular culture. Bill Moyers in particular, if you remember The Journalists he really took to Joseph Campbell and many people saw a series of like, I think it was interviews that he had done and they coauthored a book called the power of myth, which is far more readable and accessible than a hero with a thousand faces, which is like, you know, like reading's, unbelievably arcane sort of work. But that came from the work that star Wars created. Right. And I'm not sure that a lot of people today remember it, but star Wars was a critical failure. I mean, it's just, the critics thought it was terrible. It was awful. It was poorly done and shot, but people were absolutely gripped by the characters, the story, the battle between good and evil. And that all comes from that very human experience that Campbell identified.

Oh man. So can you tell me how Star Wars maps onto the Hero's Journey and then we will get into why this matters and what, you know, the nitty gritty of the hero's journey and how you can apply it to your life. But what we're talking about Star Wars, just give me the blow by blow at a high level.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** So the hero is obviously Luke, Luke Skywalker. Luke Skywalker is the hero, and he's the individual who, has these terrible things really befall him. If you think of the beginning of the movie, right? And if you just go back to a, can't remember the name of it, but it's, I guess it's Four, right, which was the initial movie that came out 1977. So he's right living in this sort of basic kind of village existence and he gets a calling to depart and to really become involved in this larger effort and struggle.

Okay. So there's, this is little foreshadowing for our audience. There's the call, right? And then there is the departure and there is the struggle or the ordeal. Okay. Then what happens?

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** And then he goes through a series of very challenging tests where success, victory and even survival is not guaranteed. And he's forced to confront terrible threats and dangers. And through that experience, he improves, he learns, he channels, talents and gifts. And fundamentally as an individual is changed by the experience. And upon the defeat of that test, of that ordeal, he returns home.

The return home.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Yes. And shares his gift.

The sharing of the gifts. So these are like phases of the Hero's Journey. And that story is, it resonates so much if you look at any like situation in your life, any big struggle. So, you know, for me some of it, some of the struggles or ordeals that I have faced is I have faced, I have faced debt, I have faced, uh, I have faced pain. I recovered from a lot of back pain. I have faced, big questions about my purpose and my career. Of course I've faced heartbreak. And all of these struggles are exactly the things that gave me the gifts that I have now that now my life's work is focused on giving those gifts back.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** That's right.

And I know that I would not have, I would, so to go back to the change formula, which is a concept we introduced in episode one of this podcast, is I didn't have the sufficient discomfort in my life to be willing to overcome a resistance to change. I was holding on so tight to a certain way of being. Then until I faced this struggle, I was not willing to change. And then once I changed, I had the gifts. And this is the Hero's Journey.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** That's right, and I would also want to ground this in day to day experiences that people have. I would be willing to suggest that everybody listening to this podcast episode right now is involved in a Hero's Journey of sorts.

Somewhere in the process.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Somewhere in their experience people are having children and beginning to leave the safety and the ease of either single life or married life without kids

and how predictable things aren't stepping into this unknown journey fraught with peril and uncertainty that will change them fundamentally forever as they are individuals.

I think this is often when we receive the call from a new client is they are standing at that threshold and they recognize that this step forward without this step forward, like they will stay where they are, but if they do take the step, they're entering the unknown and they want to, but it's uncertain and there's fear and so they're looking for an ally. And that is also an element of the Hero's Journey, right? The ally.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** The ally and the guide and we are there often to help them and business is a great example of this. Certainly anybody who's looked to start a business or do something dramatic that hasn't been done before in the innovation space is staring at a perilous road ahead.

Absolutely. I mean, an idea is the call inspiration can be the call or a desire to just get out of your current situation. Like, this is not working for me.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Right. I don't have to do this, but I feel like calling to do it. And I know even in, in ways that I can't fully articulate that this is critical for me to do.

Oh my goodness, I am so in the Hero's Journey right now. Oh, okay. So when people ask, why are you starting this podcast? Are you, are you doing it to get new clients? You, you know, what are you trying to do here? And I didn't, it was none of those things. It was, I am called. Literally, I had no explanation, but I knew it was, I know now what I must do. And then I started this podcast and I entered into this like vast space of unknown because this is a, you know, for those of you listening, like this was a significant ordeal on my part. This was a massive unraveling of a lot of my business to be able to get the funds and move them into developing content and get the time in my calendar of instead of working with clients every, you know, every day, all day, like removing those clients, which is also my source of income.

And, and shifting that time and energy into this work that I was called to do. And basically I just was running a lot of fear for months being like, "I don't know what's going to happen here. I don't even know exactly like how I'm going to get out of this current, unsustainable situation." And now the allies are arriving. Right. And you, you know, you are an example of that. You are one of my allies and I know that you just launched your podcast, which, you know, this episode will be aired in a couple months, but, but literally this week I believe you launched your podcast series, which is called Journey To the End of the Race. And it's a pretty profound subject matter. It's about end of life and we'll get more into that later and

how it connects to the Hero's Journey. I'm so excited to get into this from the minute I thought of having a podcast. I can't wait to do an episode with David. I cannot wait.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** I'm happy it came together too.

Oh man. I'm so in it.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Let me give you an example, a personal example for me. So I moved out to LA about 14 and a half years ago, I think. So I'd sold a house, in Chicago where I was living before with my family. I was out here, uh, about a year into that experience, feeling excited that I could go to the beach any day I wanted to and terrified at my dwindling financial reserves. And the sense that it wasn't as easy as I thought it was gonna be to make this change in my life. Also had a daughter who was about 18 months old, so I started...

That's a challenging age.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** In any circumstance, right? Let alone financial struggle and you know, relocation.

They're realizing that there is separation between you and them.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Right, right. Yeah. So we're all dealing with thresholds and that point. So what did I decide to do? Go to grad school.

That's a good way to earn money.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** So I decided to enter a full time program. Now, thankfully it was structured in such a way that I could still, you know, and, and travel kind of in chunks. So it, it was, it was a feasible from a calendar standpoint, but I did that not because it made sense in any sort of rational way, but because I knew that I needed to have that experience. I knew, even though I couldn't explain why that my future depended on it, I had to be in this experience. I had to grow myself and I knew it was going to be frightening, uncertain, and stimulating. And even halfway through I wasn't sure I was gonna make it. I mean, now it all seems perfectly normal that I would have completed and graduated and everything would have worked out. I had time away from my family, my wife was losing her mind while I'm traveling the world in this grad school program and she's dealing with a small child and I had



to work through those challenges and the gifts were enormous in terms of what I learned, who I met and the future that it launched for me.

That's fascinating. I want to get, I want to get more into that. So first, let's see. I would love to hear a little bit about what brought you into the work that you do as a coach.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Well, that's an interesting question and I think I've got an interesting response was actually through the family business that I grew up in. So my dad came out of academia and social work and psychotherapy. Never feeling good about the actual impact of what he was doing, the systems he was operating in and always had a desire to do more on a different stage at that time. Right. This is the 70s, late seventies, early to mid eighties, you really struggled to find any sort of fit in the business community to support the type of work you wanted to do. So he created his own.

And what was the type of work you wanted to do?

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Well, he wanted to do very similar work to what we're doing now, which is really tying personal growth to professional development.

At that time. Was that an edgy concept?

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Yeah, I'm not even sure I'd call it edgy. As much as non-existent. Uh, it felt very, um, probably fractured or disintegrated based on how we've seen the world to fall in the last 20 to 30 years. So people would do personal growth work and they would focus on professional development, but rarely ever connect the two. So he had to find people who were interested in taking that risk, exploring those topics and having those interactions. And he started very small with the, you know, this is all in the Chicago area. So he started with uh, banks and the school district and police department and got some traction there. Really just grinding it in the trenches with people and slowly built it from there. Got some larger corporate clients referred around the country, ended up writing books.

That's a big upward trajectory there. So started like with nothing, no demand, and created the demand somehow. And then wrote books?

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Ended up writing books, becoming a speaker. I was kind of on the circuit for a while and presenting in front of some very prestigious groups of people. I got to benefit from that growing up, traveling a lot and seeing him work and I enjoyed what I saw and experienced so much that I ultimately decided to join the firm five years after undergrad. And it was funny at that time I didn't really even know what I was getting into. I



had a vague notion. I had just seen his work from a distance, but I was also aware that nothing else really clicked for me. I tried a lot of different work in sales, marketing, some even some tech works and web development, and I was good at all of it, but nothing ever really seemed to click where I felt I was doing my best work and people were appreciating the input that I was giving them. So I decided to join the family business. It felt risky at the time, but as soon as I was in front of clients, it was the experience I was hoping for people like the work and asked me back.

Wow, great. Now you're here and you have a degree from the really prestigious Pepperdine OD program, right? Organizational development.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** That's right. That's right. So in the course of doing that work, our organization, my dad's company had a lot of client activity in Southern California. I was coming out to LA, Orange County, San Diego on a regular basis. Really fell in love with it. And my wife was thinking, if I ever want to see you again, I know we should move out and not have to deal with me commuting all the time to the West coast. So I came out and had a, an experience that I think a lot of people do when they come out to LA, which is, "Oh, this is harder than I expected. This is much more competitive and challenging than I ever anticipated. I need some more work, I need some more development and learning." So I landed on the Pepperdine program in organization development. So it's a master's degree in OD and that was exactly what I was looking for.

All right. So let's dive in. I want to talk about the Hero's Journey. What is the Hero's Journey?

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** The Hero's Journey is for me, a revealing confounding, magical framework that I think in many ways is a skeleton key for human development. So whenever I've studied people development, I've been aware that there are two dimensions to the experience that people go through. One would be local or particular, and the other would be universal.

Okay. So the things that local or particular, is that the content of my own life. My own job. The details.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Yeah. Yeah. Well, things that are unique to me. Like I live in LA, I come from a divorced family.

Yeah, my strengths are X, Y, Z.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** I have these challenges. I'm 5'10 I mean all of those things that are just my circumstances.

What are the universal?

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** This is really the Hero's Journey. That is what represents the blueprint of a consistent experience that people go through on their journey. So Caneel, you and I have our own local unique particular aspects to our own lives and then we're both in many ways doing the same work on the same journey. Those two exist at the same time.

Yes, yes. So the colors are different, but the journey is the same.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Exactly, exactly. So Joseph Campbell is the author, an academic who first identified or noticed and called out this pattern that he saw.

What is that pattern? What does it look like?

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Well, so he's a mythologist and I think this is really important to call out. He would call himself a mythologist.

And this is missing the anthropological sense, these stories that we tell again and again across cultures.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Exactly. And they create meaning for people, shared sense of meaning and purpose. So it's very easy to think of Greek mythology, Norse Mythology, you know, those are well documented and you know, and, and, and also referred to a great deal in those terms. But there are lots of other myths that we use on a regular basis then I don't think we really, you know, label that way. Like think of the American dream is the American dream real?

So it's a pattern that we, our brains, our human brains are attuned to seeing and that are, we as humans are prone to experiencing

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** And it has currency. So you talk about the American dream, people know what you mean.

Those words like invoke a whole entire story, like a Cinderella story, which, you know, every culture has its own version of a Cinderella story.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Exactly.

It's actually the first class I took at UCLA as an undergrad was folklore and mythology and it completely shaped the way that I think the idea that we are all born in very separate places with brains that happen to have the same stories in them and that we as cultures, whenever we come together in groups are going to retell and experience these stories. I mean that was like there is programming in there that has content that blew me away and this idea that there's a universal experience, it gives you something to work with when you're lost and things are feeling very, very chaotic. And I know that in the Hero's Journey there, are there specific points where it is, it feels very like there's a destruction element. Things are falling apart, things are changing, meaning it's chaos. And so this idea that I am, this is part of a process that is safe and that I'm not alone. Maybe I'm at this part of the process and you're at that part of the process, but that there's a path I can expect to fall into. I'd love to get into that. What that path looks like. Can you tell us about some of the stages in the Hero's Journey?

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Absolutely. So this is where by frustration level with the content sometimes comes out.

I love when you get frustrated.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** That's right. So let me tell a quick story about this, why it frustrates me so much and then I'll directly answer the question or get into more detail and specifics. So I'm sure you're familiar with that story of Apple. The early days when jobs and Wazniak went to Xerox park and they entered this startup lab that was the West coast affiliate of Xerox, which was headquartered in the Northeast.

And back then Xerox park was like the place to develop technology. And it created a lot of what Silicon Valley is today.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Well, that's exactly right. But when the co founders of Apple walked in, they discovered the mouse, the graphical user interface and all of these different tools that ended up totally revolutionizing personal computing.

Humanizing computers, giving us a way to speak to them.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** But if you know the rest of that story, they were just sitting in this lab and nobody in the headquarters for Xerox was paying any attention to it. So what did Apple do? They paid a poultry fee to license this took the technology and changed the world. All right? So you can look at that a couple of ways. Like wow, look at the Steve's from Apple. The other way to look at it is what in the world were they doing or not doing with all of this, these magical learnings and inventions.

Little side note on this because it connects to something I was reading just this morning and I tend to trust synchronicity. So I, in my little meditation shed, I have a copy of Napoleon Hill's. Um, what does the power positive thinking, something to that effect. And I just flip open to random chapters sometimes and I'll read a couple pages. But what I was reading about today is it just as our human eyes can be nearsighted or farsighted, so can our mindset.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Yeah.

And if we're near sighted in our mindset, we're very focused on the here and now and what do I need to do with what's around me? But we lack longterm vision. And if we are farsighted, then we can only see the longterm vision. But we can't execute. It's all this like ideal dream, future state. But what's here and now we're not dealing with including, we are not recognizing opportunities that are right under our nose. So Napoleon Hill says the challenges, how can we not have either nearsightedness or farsightedness but have like this range of vision. I think we're each prone to our own end of that extreme. But this sounds like Xerox Park was in the farsighted perhaps, and just not noticing like this really is something.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** That's right. That's right. That's right. So my experience with the Hero's Journey is lots of people know a great deal about this material and they're arguing about arcane, pointless details that have nothing to do with most people's lived experience. So they have the key, a skeleton key potentially to fundamentally transforming human experience. And they're arguing about whether, "Oh, Cyrus was wearing a brown robe or a blue robe."

Wait, who is doing the arguing in this, in this story.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Well, so my experience is going to study of myths, symposiums to various lectures and conferences about Joseph Campbell and his material. And I'm experiencing academics primarily debating these points that fundamentally don't change or alter the course of anyone's life. Really, ultimately trying to claim some sort of expertise on

the model when it's not theirs to claim and who cares anyway, if they're right. What matters is if I can derive practical use from the concepts. So it enrages me at times that something so powerful and something so great is not getting the utility that it could.

Ah, so the Hero's Journey is the mouse and society is Xerox Park or academia Xerox park.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** So for me, I'll tell this one quick story and then I'll get more into the framework. I came to the Hero's Journey to give meaning and purpose to a lot of suffering in my life that I was going through feeling like I was struggling, not getting ahead, not having the experiences I wanted to, but I felt like I was doing the right things. I was taking risks, I was putting myself out there. I was trying very diligently and earnestly to improve myself. And I was still in a struggle, some state. So I needed to have some sort of framework to explain and what I was doing and going through. So it really didn't matter if O Cyrus was wearing a brown robe or a blue robe in, you know, millennia past. What matters is if I could give context meaning and purpose to my life experience.

So there's a practical utility to this framework.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** That rarely gets embraced.

Why is it important to have a meaning and purpose?

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Well, I mean, you know, I didn't grow up in a very religious background by many people's standards. I mean, I would say there were spirituality that was a part of my life, but not a lot of, you know, church or synagogue service or you know, not a lot of ritual that I was experiencing. And so, one, you know, judgment I make of religion is that in addition to all the other things that people tend to think about it, it creates some narrative structure that helps people make meaning of their life and define the experiences that they have. And so I was in a position of not really having much of that in my life, not really wanting to go join an organization I maybe didn't feel called to or feel good about participating in. So I guess in some ways I was looking for a secular version of what that would be.

So fascinating. So this framework for you has been your touchstone and I really relate to those times where for years you are trying everything that everything you can think of to pull yourself out of a hole of some kind, pull yourself out of debt or pain or broken heart or illness, just hard knocks. Or maybe all of those at the same time. And when we have a

touchdown, it's like a rope we can pull ourself out with. And so the Hero's Journey can be that. And it's been that for you.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** And also a sanity check. I'm sure you're like me and many other people feel alone, broken, miserable in times of struggle and suffering and some of the struggles and some of the suffering comes from great things. You know, I think of being a parent. I love my daughter more than anything else on the planet. And incredible misery that experience along the way, a roller coaster of intense experiences. Being a business owner, you know, launching new things, there's incredible challenge and struggle that comes with that. So to be able to contextualize that and also feel unknowable by it, this is worthy. This is meaningful. This is for the good of me and the world.

I'm in this phase of my Hero's Journey, but I am still a hero.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Yes. It means a lot.

It does. It does mean a lot. So let's get into what it looks like.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** So, I want to explain this in a couple of ways. I want to start with the most simplified version you could ever think of related to this and then we can add more detail as we go. But I want to start simple because again, I want people to derive benefit and value today after they listened to this podcast episode.

In the show notes, we will link to a diagram of this model so that people can, if you want to, even right now, you can just click the link, go to the show notes and grab the downloadables. There so that they can, they can look at it while you talk through it. You can get that at [Caneel.com/podcast](http://Caneel.com/podcast).

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** That's great.

But we will talk through it in a way that you don't need any notes if you don't want them.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Perfect. All right, so let me get started here. First off, there are three main sections of this journey or stages and people even within these high level three will use different terms. So, I'll try and give a couple of examples of what they would be. The first is departure. Sometimes people call it separation. The idea is that the individual, the hero, is

leaving a familiar space, a known state, a known location to embark on some sort of adventure.

So an example of this might be I'm leaving, I'm leaving home for the first time. I'm leaving my virginity behind, I'm leaving my maidenhood and now I'm becoming a mother. So there are many, even just in life stages there are, but then also we leave jobs, we leave relationships, we leave parts of ourselves behind that are not serving us. Yeah. So lots of this departure or separation in our life.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Exactly. Exactly. The next stage then is sometimes referred to as ordeal or initiation. And this is the stage where the hero is crossing the threshold, entering into this unknown, unfamiliar, uncertain space or location. And where a series of challenges, struggles, characters, people come into the experience.

So this is the first day of moving into the dorms and all of the chaos of that. Or it's the transition stage of labor. So this is, this is familiar. Okay. So, you're disoriented a little bit in this stage.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Disoriented and there's also typically an immense amount of struggle. So I can share some more deeper details later. But oftentimes people think of this in medieval terms. So there's like a dragon to go fight, right? There's some sort of big test that faces the hero.

So I love this for our listeners. You know this, David, one of the things that we do on this podcast is we create a live personal coaching session for our listeners. And so I'd invite you as a listener to think about in your life, where have you been in the stage of separation and then where, what was it like when you went into initiation and what did that feel like? Who was there, what are the memories implanted in your brain? Um, what was it like in your body emotionally? It's cause it's important, right? To connect to your point about these tools need to be practical. It's important for us to give ourselves the space to start looking at how our life has order and meaning

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Typically then in this experience, the hero acquires a gift. So something comes from this ordeal or a series of tests that take place and it's, you know, usually a change in internal change that occurs. So if I move away, I gain the life skills of being independent. I started a business, I begin to gain then the talents and the financial resources that come from succeeding in that way. The final stage then is a return. This is coming back, coming home to where you started and sharing that gift or the change with the world. It's a restorative type of experience.



Oh, that's beautiful. What's an example of that from your life?

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** One initial one that comes to mind is studying abroad. So my junior year of undergrad, I decided to study in Central and Eastern Europe. And this is in the early nineties early to mid nineties so it's a time of incredible transition in that part of the world.

The Berlin wall came down in 89.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** 89 right. And so all these, uh, political, social economic systems are in rapid change and now you can go online and watch a webcam in Budapest or something. But at that time it seemed really, you know, unknown and just sort of had access to these places, through watching the Olympics or something like that, or the occasional documentary.

Makes it sound so long ago though, we're such a dinosaur.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** It makes me feel very old. So, you know, talk about a departure from the familiar, right. I was living in Chicago, suburban Chicago, in the Midwest, and next thing you know, I'm in Budapest and then Prague living. So, especially again at that time, big change. It was not a globalized world. So I was going into these places where I didn't know the language, I didn't understand the customs. Very few people spoke English. It was very disorienting. So, you know, now looking back it seems like, well, of course all that happened and I figured it out as I went, but at the time it felt like I was traveling to a different dimension or planet or something. So I'm crossing the threshold, going into that very foreign environment.

So that's the separation was you left Chicago, the initiation was the chaos of first arriving and how disorienting that was.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** That's right.

Then what happened?

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Well, and then I went through all sorts of challenges trying to do well academically, to meet friends, to establish an identity, to be happy and to really in some ways for my own independent sense of self at that stage. To that point, I had really been defined by my environment, my parents, and my affiliations at college and the people I knew and I was going into this place where all of that was stripped away. I was a visitor in a foreign land and there were no expectations of me to be anything or doing anything, which sounds

incredibly liberating and exciting and also terrifying and it's ambiguity. So I went through the idea or through the experience of really forming a personality. And I think at that point is when I really connected to the idea of having a worldview, one that's not parochial and just narrowly focused on my own personal experiences or narrow view of the world.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** And I really began to define myself as an expert of other cultures as individual who can connect and mix with different people and who is a, I think an influencer. I think that's where I really developed the ability to influence other people through thoughts and relational interaction. And again, that all sounds, from a distance, like pretty obvious. And I was over there and, but there were people who were struggling to leave their dorm rooms. There were people who were struggling to eat at a restaurant that, you know, didn't have the golden arches out side of it. And so it was really an immersive experience and it fundamentally changed me and gave me a series of gifts.

And how are you giving back to the world now?

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** So then I returned, you know, just very literally returned back to the States. I didn't come home at all during that time. So my parents came to visit me and I traveled a bit with family, so I was gone for about 10 months and came back to the States, noticed all the changes that had happened in my home country, uh, at being gone and then was able to come back and make some very specific decisions about who I wanted to be, the type of work I wanted to do and the sorts of friendships I wanted to invest in.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** And I really don't think that I would have been able to launch down this career path had I not gone through that experience. Because prior to that, I may have had an interest in being a part of my dad's organization and working in the same field. But I don't think I had the independent sense of identity and the ability to influence people through communication and relational interaction prior to that experience. So I was able to take something that it fundamentally changed me and share that with others as a gift.

Wow. That's connecting this framework now to so many parts of my life. And many of you listening have heard me tell a story about my back and how I recovered from back pain and the meaning of that ordeal in my life. And I guess for me the separation there was, I was leaving my dreams behind. I was leaving like my way of thinking behind and the result of all of that, the suffering involved, I guess this would be the, the ordeal was the back pain and how crippling that was and how it just totally stopped my life in the process of healing. I discovered an internal sense of integrity. So I think it was that embodiment intelligence that I gained and the return for me, so skip parts of the story.

Like the return for me was recognizing how all the only gifts I came for academia, like they were, they were true gifts, but it was the ordeal that gave me that embodiment. And I use that every day now. And so I'm returning and this even this show, you know, Allowed like I didn't allow myself in that PhD program to just say no to make the changes until I had the back struggle. And now I know how to do that. And that's what, that's the message I'm trying to get through here in every show is just how much we are allowed. You're so allowed. We're allowed to do so much more than we think we are.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Can I ask you some questions about that? So I'll set the question up. In my experience that I shared earlier about studying abroad, I had to face a dragon as a part of the ordeals I went through and for me that was very much about voice. Do I have any voice of my own or am I simply a parrot of somebody else? So that wasn't necessarily a person, you know, or a department or anything I was fighting, but I was definitely fighting an internal belief. Right. Which is, just as daunting if not more than a external creature. What was that for you in the story you shared?

I was wrestling with boundaries. Um, I was yeah, boundaries, boundaries that I was feeling to set in with myself in my life. Like, really working way too hard on way too many things. I was a yes girl, I probably had like seven projects going simultaneously, which are in, you know, when you're doing like hardcore research that is way too many. And I worked with several different departments across campus. I published articles in like engineering journals, design journals, organizational development, psychology.

So it was really sprawled and that, and the reason behind all my back pain was hypermobility, which basically means overly flexible. And so at the same time as this I was really struggling with it's, I had so many ideas, it was really hard for me to narrow the focus enough to find one thing to become what I was going to study for the next four years and what my dissertation was going to be about, which is going to be the launch pad for the rest of your research program, really. For the next 10 years probably.

So that felt so scary to me, commit, you know what I mean? So like committing to one thing felt very, very scary. And um, so I ended up realizing that if I was going to be able to tolerate the constraint, I actually needed to fall in love with it. Like I needed to find a way to love limits and boundaries. So my dissertation research was about creativity in constraint and like what is the role of constraint on creativity? And you know, what I found is that it's essential. Which was a thing that in my mind I was so like kind of liberal in a way in my thinking that I just thought any idea is a great idea. Yeah, let's go, let's do all of them. And I didn't have that sense of it, of alignment and integrity of like there's a way to constrain that is artful, constraints themselves can be the art.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Yeah. So I want to jump in and make a point. So I love this story and part of the reason I think the Hero's Journey is something that more and more people need to understand and utilize is that I think in your example you could have read a book about constraints and you could have intellectually grasped the concept and shared it very fluently with groups of people and I'm not sure that would have delivered much difference in your life and I don't think we'd be sitting here on this podcast right now. I believe you had to have that experience and wrestle with those challenges and ordeals in the road of trials and all the other things internally so that you could embody the change.

Completely. There's no way I was going to give up on being a sprawler, there was absolutely no way I needed to be forced into, couldn't even walk, and then it was like, okay, let's get out of here. The way out is finishing with a pH.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** That's right. That's right. That's right. So the world we live in, and you, I both know this from the work we do is we tend to see environments where work is just painful and punishing and nothing but ordeal. And then we tend to also see environments where it's nothing but initiate or nothing but like celebration and return and happiness and positivity. And I think people are viewing this way too much as polarities.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** I work with some clients where where the day to day is a miserable nightmare of suffering and that's considered hard work or good work. And then I'm also environments where people are celebrating the excitement of being together all the time. And I don't think either one really delivers embodied change. It's just endless cycles of one stage. So I think what's important is that it's all relevant. You know, the courage to leave the bravery and perseverance to work through challenge and the excitement of coming home and sharing the glory and gifts and contributions of the world. But it's got to be the whole cycle. Otherwise people are just sharing interesting intellectual concepts that don't do much.

Yeah. And so we have a tendency to grip on and get stuck sometimes in these phases.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Right. And not process through the cycle.

So it helps to have this roadmap to know what does it look like next?

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Yes.

And I love the idea too of really valuing each of these stages in the process and seeing them as productive. Cause this, this tells us how, how struggle is productive. It tells us how separation is productive and, and that we will get to go home.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** That's right. That's exactly right. So if you're okay with that, I'd like to put a little more meat on the bones so to speak with this. So there, and I don't want to give the full treatment because I'm not sure the full treatment is worth that a level of detail and explanation and people can go download this and find it online, et cetera. But there are other people and other aspects of the experience that come into it. So first off, the hero tends to hear a call to action, right? So sometimes people think of like, you know, the villager and medieval wherever. And this, you know, sort of we need you to go save the community, go find this, go, you know, get the gem or whatever it would be. There's some call that this individual hears.

Okay. So when the bear was living in your backyard...

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** I figured this would make it into the podcast, it was the crawl space in my house.

What was the call when, what was the call of the bear? How did you find out about the bear? Let's map it on let's, let's map cause I want to show how this happens in a micro like in small, you know, short time frame stories. And it also happens like very macro level of course of my life and I love the bear story so, what's the call?

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Well I think the call was literally from our neighbors saying there's a bear crawling into your crawl space of your house and you might want to do something about that.

You live in Los Angeles, there are bears wandering around in Los Angeles. In your house.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. In the structure of my house, there was a bear. Yeah, it was, it was in the crawl space.

Did you believe them?

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Yeah, I had no reason to disbelieve the neighbor. I had the reaction most people do, which was a mini panic attack, called the authorities and very quickly realized that I was on my own. So I was like separated from the society that was sworn to protect me apparently. But yeah. Then not too many times in life I felt like the authorities

just left me on my own to figure out a dangerous, they kept like referring me to the animal, the animal control, then the department of fish and wildlife, and then I was like, well, he'll leave eventually and like, "Oh, that's an interesting approach." So yeah. So I realized there's a bear in my crawl space and you know, at that point, that was late in the night. So I eventually just went to sleep, you know, figured out that nothing was going to happen under the cover of darkness, the next day realized that, you know, he was still there.

Yes. I remember seeing on Slack and you said, "bear is still here." And that was where I, that was where I first entered the story and I'm like, "what is going on here?" I love that you updated us.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** That's right. That's right. That's right. I did create some like journalistic sort of flow to it. Uh, so I then realized he was still there. It was hot. So, you know, he was getting out of the sun. It made sense to me. Then real, I got some pro tips from YouTube apparently on how I could blast him with music, a spray, ammonia into the area that he was in, you know, some other sort of bad ideas that that didn't work. Pleaded again for the authorities to come.

What stage are we in now of the Hero's Journey?

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Yeah. We're, we're in the initiation here. We're in the ordeal. Yeah. We're, we're going through this actually thought that I developed a primitive communication system with the bear where I would like stomp on the ground and if I stomped once, he would grunt once, twice. He would crunch twice.

You guys are becoming friends.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Yeah. So it was maybe using that skill of intimacy and influence with a 400 pound bear. And what I ultimately, I think gained from this experience and this knowledge was that I couldn't control it. And I actually developed some empathy understanding for the bear once I got out of my panic and frustration at the situation that was in front of me. I, you know, initially started, you know, to, to, to think, well, you know, this is just sweltering outside. I mean, I wish he was in my pool actually. That would've been fine with me too.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** But he's in shade. So I understand that. Started to think more, about, you know, just the situation that he's, this drought and this heat and all these challenges and his environment and people living there and um, you know, everything else that happens in these wildlife interface zones and, you know, the city and the country. And then recognize that I didn't have the ability to change this and at least not directly and could either drive

myself crazy, uh, or I could, um, understand a bit about how he was going to operate and then make some decisions to align with whatever that pattern and cycle was.

So you recognize that you were in the ordeal.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Yeah.

And you chose to move out of it.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** And I chose to listen to some instinct and natural sense of things to, where so much of my life is about like overcoming all that, you know, like I'm tired. I just need to power through it or I don't want to do this.

Denying your animal body.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** My animal sense. And you know, my therapist happened to believe that this was all about me getting in touch with my instinctual nature, which you know, is for so much of my life just been dormant and hibernated. And then on top of that, I'm in a men's group and in the men's group.

What's a men's group, real quick for our listeners.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Yeah. So, the men's movement started kind of in the late seventies and early eighties, and was a way of really creating a structure for masculinity and for men to be a part of that. Uh, you know, maybe historically it existed in a lot of societies and it sort of been like sanitized out in a lot of the modern world with our modernity and you know, and just changes and you know, rise in feminism and a lot of things. But there's still a need that men have to be in community with each other and to process, you know, in, in healthy ways. You know, mature masculinity can look like. So, well, we all have animal names in the men's group, that's a part of the men's group.

Oh wow.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** So guess what? My animal name is powerful bear.

Oh my gosh.



**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** And you know, when thinking of power and sort of base nature and instinct, right. The chakra idea is that it's at the base, right? Sort of the base of the spine, the bottom of the torso. So I have a bear in my crawl space, right below where I am. Yeah, my cave, channeling energy up and through into me.

Oh this is awesome.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** So it was really a magical experience in many ways. Uh, and what I was then able to do when getting in touch more with myself and with this creature and with the process of removal I guess, or allowance I guess for departure for him eventually left. He eventually left when we boarded it up so he couldn't get back in. But then I was able to tell some funny stories, which you know is not nothing right, but also to recognize where in my life my instincts were not alive. Where in the world was I dormant?

Yes. And, David, like the last year of your life you have been a rocket ship. Like you are on fire right now. I feel like it's been success after success after success, but contribution. I'd like to, I'd like to get, talk about your podcast in a moment. Cause I think this is, this is like one of the many gifts that you're bringing back after this ordeal, which who knows how important that ordeal was that did it, does it feel like it was an important ordeal in your life?

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Yeah, I mean in the moment, I don't think I had the perspective of it to see how it would all play out. But yeah, it felt pretty significant. This is also a part of my embracing of this is to see that the challenges and obstacles along the way are gifts too.

Absolutely. So this is, this was, um, almost completely what our Thanksgiving episode was about on this podcast is the gift in the challenge.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Yes. Yes, yes, yes. So all of that is going to come.

I recommend that. That was episode number three. I recommend going back to that, there's also a really funny blooper reel, which was our own ordeal. We had our own ordeal happen during the development of that podcast. So you can watch all that, listeners. You can, you can watch the video.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** That's right. So there's going to be a call to action, right, that the hero is going to somehow receive. There's typically a refusal then of that call. So it's very normal. It's typically a part of the process that the hero's going to go, yeah, sounds like a good idea. I don't think I'm going to do that. And then there for there to be a reconsideration, potentially then influence from other people, who end up swaying that opinion or the hero comes

around and ultimately decides to answer that. And then there, you know, again, I said not going to talk about every last thing, but then there's the move to a threshold, right? So there's a departure and a threat crossing the threshold experience, which goes from known to unknown. So, you know, at the airport, flying to Europe, right. For me sitting there, right.

I remember that when I first moved to Europe.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Yeah. I mean that is a heavy experience. You know, even if nothing dramatic happens, it's just, you're sitting there like, my life is never going to be the same after today. It will be fundamentally changed. You know, it's not the, probably a handful of experiences in life that feel that way for people. Right. That that level. Then in the unknown space, right into this initiatory or deal type of place, people come into your life, allies, supernatural aid, sometimes they're called people you would meet. You may have known this person. Suddenly this person gives you something that helps you on your journey. Didn't see it coming.

This is part of the actual model. Allies arrive.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Exactly. Exactly, exactly. And often in places you would never expect to see.

So if I know that, I can begin looking to them.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Yes. And also people who are in your way, challenges, obstacles, not even dragons who represent some Supreme ordeal, but just people who were in the way, they're not there necessarily to harm you. They're there to teach you something as you go. And then you get gifts. Sometimes they're called boons, right. Just another word for gift. And then back into the known experience. There's a return threshold. Sometimes there's actually refusal to return. You know, being at that space of loving this sort of like dynamic world unknown world, the thrill of that, but then a re-entry into that and then the sharing and all sorts of integrative types of experience of energies and ideas and thoughts. This is going to sound extremely corny, but again, I want this model to be useful. Think of a James Bond movie.

I can't.

DAVID SHECHTMAN: Just think of a typical James Bond, right? So here's James Bond in some sort of right familiar environment. He's playing poker, he's drinking, he's cavorting, he's flirting, he's doing something that he knows and he gets a call, right?

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** And he hadn't, he doesn't want to respond to the call because yeah. And so he's partying. He doesn't want to go to headquarters. Finally realizes he has to go to headquarters. Then he gets this assignment and he has to go save the world somehow.

Separation.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Right. Take on some evil. So he departs and then he's in wherever he is. Right. Some exotic location and locale with you know, people. And this was maybe a little different in the sixties and seventies because the world didn't know as much about other other reaches. But still, he's in South America, he's in New Orleans, he's in Russia.

He crosses the threshold out of where he was into this new place.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** This new place. And suddenly people show up.

Allies.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Allies, challengers, right.

Gifts?

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Well that's coming, right? But he's got like someone from the CIA who is helping him here and he's got, you know, some, you know, kind of love and trust too.

Some totally hot woman is just like a bad ass in one thing only,

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Right, right, right. And you can't tell is she on his side or the other side? Right. And there's some ambiguity about that. These are all those sorts of kind of shape shifting characters that exist. And then he's got some big ordeal, right? Some specter or villain that he has to take on and he's not guaranteed to win. Right? And you don't know until the very end that he's going to, and sometimes at the very end, this, you know, person comes in and helps save him in a way that he could never have done on his own. And then he gets some gift, right? He gets like the code or he disarms the bomb or he learned some secret or whatever it is, and he returns back to England and to headquarters and restores

the world. Like, you know, it's sort of cheesy and comical and melodramatic, but that is essentially the framework.

Superman follows this, Frozen, uh, so many movies map right onto that. You know, probably everyone. That makes it very real.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** That's exactly right. Exactly right.

Useful. I'd like to get a little bit more into the denial of the call, right. In my experience calls have an expiration date and I've heard before, you know, there's a half-life of inspiration and when that first spark of inspiration, it's strongest. And then it gradually just goes down and down, but it never goes away. And that's how half-lives work. And in my experience, when I deny the call, if I don't recover quickly enough, I'm left with this energetic gunk, like I'm toxic. A lifetime of accumulated denials of self. What have you seen happen when we deny the call and what are some examples of that?

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Yeah. Well, the first thing that comes to mind though, hearing you say this, is that denial is necessarily bad. So...

I don't think it is. I think that's, that we can stay stuck in that phase. Sometimes it looks like a choice. Right? Okay. I have an idea. I have some inspiration. I have a call, an opportunity, and we can make a choice at that moment or shortly thereafter. And we can say yes or no. Do I have a whole body? Yes. If not, no. Ideally. And, but when we're ambivalent or avoiding whatever that choice is confronting us with, or we desperately do want to cross that threshold, but we're not willing.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Yeah.

And we stay stuck in the, I'm not sure. And I feel like, you know, a lot, a lot of us live in that zone a lot of the time. That's what I mean by this denial.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** So a few things come to mind. First off, I think having ambivalence early on is healthy because if I don't really have a choice, I don't really ever commit.

You have to have agency in making that choice.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Exactly. So I think it's very, healthy and normal to have ambivalence or concern or even to just hold back. But what I think you're describing more fully that often

gets in people's way is this idea of partial commitment to call it. And this is one of those very subjective and challenging things to talk through because there are just no markers that are definitive in terms of have to or won't. But many people end up living lives that feel less than as a result of a calling that comes, whether the calling comes from someone they know, someone they don't know, a source they never would have imagined. Most of us get that voice in our head that says it's important to do this, that you may not succeed. You may not succeed in the way you think you will. You may face perilous challenges along the way, but it's worth it because it's who you are and what you're meant to do.

And so the calling, you know, the calling might be the calling to leave a toxic relationship, the calling to quit your job and strike out on your own as an entrepreneur, the calling to disappoint your parents, to leave your hometown. You know, there are so many that linger with us, to live your truth, to live your truth. And it's a truth that is so subjective. That's the nature of calling. It's kind of a through me experience. It's not rational. You know, if we don't have a connection to our bodies and our emotions, if we're in like avoidance or denial mode all the time, we are finding ways to not hear the calling.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** That's right. And you and I live in the personal growth world quite a bit. We tend to, we'll live in the personal growth world for professional development, but it's still the personal growth world. And I pay attention to a lot of authors who are very frustrated by the contemporary view of psychology and personal growth, where it feels like it is pathologizing individuality, that there is some sort of normative behavior that we all have to adopt in our life in order to be healthy. Well, I don't want to be healthy and sanitized of any distinctiveness my life. So if I'm meant to do something on this earth, it's not necessarily gonna be a clean experience and it's not necessarily going to be the same way that someone who wrote the DSM manual tells me it needs to be, this is an adventure and I want to choose that adventure and make it mine.

Yeah, man. So if we think about the Hero's Journey, of course it happens in small situational ways. It also happens over the course of our whole lives. And I'm wondering about, if you think about like from birth to death, there are parts of that journey that I feel like societally we, culturally we understand that there, there's an ordeal like midlife. There's an ordeal, right? It's who am I? Wait a second. Time. Time is happening. I am mortal and then we, we go through our crisis or what are we calling it now? The midlife emergence. And, and we find the gift. We don't want to be middle-aged, but uh, but we do cross that threshold and then we wrestle, we wrestle with ourselves, the dragons in ourself. And then we discover that there is a freedom in us claiming our power usually.

And, and in us claiming our mortality, that actually that's a gift. And then we go through whatever happened in those last however many years, 50 years. And then there's the end. And I guess for the Hero's Journey, that would be the return home. And what's something

that you and I have chatted about before is how it's so fascinating that death is one of the only universal experiences. And it's the one we know the least amount. And I know that this is something that's really up for you this week. Even lots of loss, lots of loss and coincidentally happens to be a week when your podcast came out, which is a six part series and it's a beautiful idea and I'd love you to share what that's about and how it connects to this.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Yeah. Thank you. Thank you. I appreciate it. So the, as you mentioned earlier, everywhere I go, at least in, the circles that you and I traffic in, uh, people tell me that I need to have a podcast. So, it's been on my mind for a number of years. I know that I have an interest in sharing and I know I have a good voice for this medium. I really have been struggling though with how exactly to do that. Sadly, a number of months ago, a former client and I got back in contact and I learned that he had been diagnosed with terminal cancer at age 39 with a family of four children. So I was horrified to hear the news and wanted to be supportive of him, initially just through talking and listening. But as we got through the conversation a bit more, he mentioned to me that, you know, our connection, had always been strong and he had an interest in maybe doing something given his situation.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** And it was just in that call in the moment. The call. That my mind sorted to podcast, I just said this might be the opening, the opportunity to get involved in that sort of work, given the unique and heavy experience that he was going through and given my interest in putting myself out there and being of service in this way. So as I talked to him about interviewing him about his life and experience going through this, he had a very positive reaction to it and saw that as something that he'd like to do.

It sounds massively courageous and I can't imagine anything more intimate than facing end of life.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** So I started to think more about this and I thought, in my own mind, that simply a conversation about what it's like to be 39, hear this news, deal with his family, make short term plans for the remainder of his life.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** That would be a pretty compelling insight that not a lot of people are able to hear. But I also thought, I'm not sure that that's the extent that I want, you know, to bring into this project. I think there's something more universal about this to. Back to that local and universal kind of idea. And when I thought about the universality of death and mortality, as you explained, there's unbelievable paradox to it. So nobody definitively knows what happens at the time of death. I mean, people, have theories and maybe the Tibetans have gotten closer than anyone else to, you know, mapping this out or writing about it, but no one ultimately knows. There's no proof. And if you stop and you think about that, like



that is crazy. I mean, the entire history of humanity, the only certain thing to happen is unbelievably mysterious.

Yes.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** But although it's incredibly mysterious when people are faced with death, it's tremendously clarifying. There's a lot of study that's been done on near death experiences and a lot of, even if it's just anecdotal awareness that people have, that when someone they care about guys or suffers a very difficult tragedy, they suddenly see priorities in their life. They suddenly know what they want to do. I even remember after 9/11, 2001, there was this tremendous rush of people to do something in the world, to be significant.

To get out of whatever rat race they were in, start their life.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Right. To really lean into a passionate project of some sort because they were confronted by all, you know, terrible horror and devastation. So mystery leads to certainty. So I wanted to explore that in the podcast series. So I'm interviewing Todd Anderson about his story up until the news and then his story through that news and in his recent times of dealing with it, what it's been like to go through it and more importantly, how it's changed him as a man.

Wow. What a lot of trust he has in you. Whew. Where can we hear the podcast?

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** <https://www.journeytotheendoftherace.com/>.

Journeytotheendoftherace.com. We will link to this in the show notes and I'm really excited to listen to this. And also I know that the way that you hold this topic is it feels like I will be able to listen to something about death without feeling completely bogged down because you're illuminating for me even right now, just the how fascinating it is and just the curiosity of it. And I think with this understanding of the Hero's Journey that there's, there are stages that we pass through and then each has value and we come, we come back and we return our gifts and actually this is a gift that he's giving back. Gift to the world, gift to the world to share this.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** He's already done some presentations that you know, had nothing to do with me, but he spoke at his former company. He was like an annual meeting stay, you know, main stage speaker. And he shared with me that standing up and talking for 20 or 25 minutes about his story has led to dozens and dozens of people reaching out to him, sharing their experience, revealing secrets they had kept from any, you know, anyone their entire



lives. Just being open about this topic has led to radical transformation in many, many lives, lives.

It's so powerful to share. And I'm really glad that you're sharing your gifts with the world and you know, boom, like we did it. We're doing it. It's happening right now. We're finally doing it. It's really exciting. So David, thank you so much for being here today. This was amazing and really useful for me. My brain is swirling with the meaning that I can make of, and the idea that I can recognize that I'm in a phase that's where they're suffering and I can, I can choose to move out faster and I can choose to look for allies and I can look for gifts and I can look for meaning and I can look for what, what is, what is this challenge? Or like what's the skill they're giving me? What am I learning? It feels like incredibly productive work. So thank you so much for sharing this work.

**DAVID SHECHTMAN:** Yeah, you're welcome, Caneel. It's been great to be here.

So for our listeners, David is offering a worksheet that will help you to identify where you are in your own Hero's Journey and to map your life or some situation onto the Hero's Journey and discover, discover the many benefits of the model, but also find a path out for yourself that is meaningful and rich and productive. So thank you for offering that. We're going to put that in the show notes, which you can find at [caneel.com/podcast](http://caneel.com/podcast) and I believe this is episode 10. So [caneel.com/podcast-10](http://caneel.com/podcast-10). We'll specifically get you there.

Next week, it's interesting, our guest next week actually connects a lot to what we were talking about in the middle of this show, about how with your bear story, how we, they often deny that our animal nature and that we're turning back to, Oh yes, I'm, I'm going to protect my family and I don't have control and I'm mortal and just mortality in general. A lot of this connects you to some work that is done by a woman named Beth Killough and she runs an organization called Circle Up. I had the benefit of working with her all day yesterday with my year long leadership development group, which is launching again soon. Um, and applications are open right now. But at the end of that program, she came down and she got everybody through some equine leadership training. So basically learning about their leadership and how they can grow with horses. She's huge on really understanding what it means that we are animals and how when we forget that we're animals we can't lead. So some of the practices she's going to offer fall within a framework she has called natural leadership and it's an interesting, it's interesting.

Of course we're animals everywhere we go. So probably it would connect to every episode, but I'm glad that we got to talk about today so you guys can check that out next week. It'll be in episode 11. All right. Thank you so much for being here and making the time and space

for yourself to learn and to grow. We will see you back here next week and I wish you a productive, wonderful and meaningful week.