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Before Shirzad Chamine found his calling as a coach to today's top CEOs and executive teams, he was a charismatic entrepreneur who turned into a hyper-critical tyrant without even knowing it. That dark chapter ignited his journey to understand how to conquer our self-sabotaging sides and live in the light of "Positive Intelligence" — the approach Chamine developed for mastering the mind and finding true happiness and success.



Transcript

^(audience applauding) - Thank you.. (clears throat) I'd like to start today, I hear this is a confidential place so I wanna start with a confession of some kind, and the confession I want to make is that a very, very dark character inside of me.. A really nasty guy, pretty destructive and pretty ugly, and since I am a huge fan of Star Wars, you could call this character, the Darth Vader.. (audience murmuring) Now, and for those of you who wanna leave now, this is your last chance.. Actually, you can't because we have locked the doors for a while now, but really, that's just half of the story, that confession of the dark side.. The Darth Vader is only half the story because the other half of the story is that if I may say so myself, I also have a brilliant, beautiful, positive, incredibly creative, and wise other character inside of myself, and I, and again, using the Star War metaphor, I would call that my Jedi.. I do have a Jedi inside and I do have a Darth Vader inside.. And the question is why am I starting with this confession with you? Because the key thing that I noticed inside of myself and have always noticed is that these two characters inside of me are in constant battle with each other.. There is a war always raging between my inner Darth Vader and my inner Jedi.. And the reason, hopefully, that that is relevant to you is that what I wanna bring to you today is the realization that, actually, inside every one of you also is a constant war between your Darth Vader and your Jedi, and that it's that war that defines, how you do in that war defines what kind of a life you have, and how you do in that war, based on all the research that we have done, now done, actually ends up determining how much of your potential you reach in life, and actually how happy you are along the way..

This balance of power between these two forces inside of you is at the heart of so much of what happens in your life, and the nature of my conversation, the nature of my research is, how do you recognize this balance of power, how do you see the impact that it is having on you, and how do you shift the balance of power? I actually wanna do the entire talk today based on a narrative of my own time as an entrepreneur, because actually, my realization of these forces that I'm talking about really happened on a day that I would still, to this day, consider the most devastating and the most humiliating day of my life as an entrepreneur.. And that is, that actually became the genesis of me discovering a lot of what I will be talking to you about, so for those of you, how many here, how many people here are already are entrepreneurs? And how many of you are seriously considering to become entrepreneurs? Okay, so, the collectively between the two sides, I think, the majority of people, and what I can tell you is that, what I will share about the most humiliating day of my life, you are gonna find out, is not that uncommon about what happens in entrepreneurship, and hopefully, one of the things I will be showing you is that there is light at the end of that tunnel.. And the research that I'll show you that came out of what the genesis of that horrific experience of my life actually ends up having five strategies for us that I wanna share with you today.. Five strategies of how do you shift the balance of power between the forces inside your mind, that ends up impacting how successful you'll become in your life, and also how much happiness versus stress you will feel along the way.. One, a little bit of a surprise, is that, as I will show you those five strategies, I will also show you that there is a very special role that your index finger actually plays, and it's gonna be very hard for you to predict what role it plays, so don't try because you probably are not gonna guess, but strategy number one and strategy number five of these five strategies that I wanna share with you actually have a big role that your index finger plays, so let's begin to honor this little finger that actually plays some powerful roles in our life.. So let me start now with what actually led to the most humiliating day of my personal and professional life, and life as an entrepreneur, that led to all of this.. It all started several years after I graduated from Stanford Business School here.. So I was in many of your seats, as many years ago and then several years out, after looking at a bunch of great companies, I decided that I had a vision of my own, and what I had come up with because my background had been in both psychology, and engineering, and business, the vision that I had was that with the emerging technology at the time, we could create a self-

coaching software that every employee within every company could use to coach their own career through the company, and that, I thought that it could, that every company would be interested in having people be self-guided in their career management because it would have an internal coach that we would create for them.. Because of my engineering background, I ended up actually coding a prototype that was interactive and pretty interesting, and I cold called a bunch of Fortune 500 CEOs and to my amazement, because I was on fire with this vision and I was so believing that it was gonna happen, I got almost a dozen CEOs of Fortune 500 companies and people of that caliber.. One of the most senior people of, from Venture Capital Committee coming as a personal investor, and one of the most famous authors in business, a whole bunch of first-class people got interested and we raised about a million and a half in seed financing and later on, 20 million dollars in series A financing from major venture capitals, so during this phase of me going up, talking to people about the vision of the company and what was possible in the work that we were doing, I was all positive, I was all energized, I was all vision, and it was magnetic..

Everybody I talked to wanted to be a part of it, and I also ended up attracting all classes and group of people who wanted to work with me in the company, including one of buddies from business school, who ended up becoming president of the company.. So that was all great stuff, and we got one major Fortune 100 company to actually pay for the rights to use the software that didn't even exist yet.. That really got us off the ground.. Now fast-forward two years into the company forming and all of these wonderful things happening, our offices was in downtown Palo Alto, and one day, I went out to get lunch and I strolled back to my offices in downtown Palo Alto, and I walked upstairs, we were on the second floor, and my heart sank when I walked upstairs because what I saw is that in our conference room, kind of doubling as our boardroom, what I saw was that my chairman of the board was sitting there, my president, my buddy from business school I had hired to run the company with me was sitting there, my most senior director was sitting there, my most senior vice president was sitting there, all awkwardly waiting to have an intervention with me.. This was a palace coup, and what had happened is that during these two years, I had shifted from this extraordinarily positive, magnetic visionary that I was that attracted everything to the company and started it, to a monster that nobody wanted to work with, to a controlling, distrusting, micromanaging, always negative, always angry, always pissed person who was trying to make everything right, and I was so not able to hear any feedback people were giving me, that my president, my vice president had no choice but to go above my head and have a palace coup, because there was no listening in me that was happening at the time.. And as the board started telling me the feedback about what was going on, and the feedback that they were getting, the way I, of course, I engaged with them was lashing out in a way that, of course, totally proved the point, that I was not a person who could listen to a single word anybody was saying anymore.. That became the most profoundly painful moment of my life as a professional, and the problem that I had was that I could not actually walk away, or normally, I would've either lashed out, or walked away and I did not have the luxury of that because I brought in everybody with the money, I brought in the clients, I brought in the, everybody was working there.. I did not have the luxury of walking away.. I needed to stay and see this thing through even though that day I was stripped of a lot of my power, which a lot of entrepreneurs are familiar with.. Venture-backed software company, that happens a lot to founding members of the company..

What some point are shown to be the ones who are destroying their own vision, and have to be pushed aside or changing their role and all of that stuff.. So I had to stay and staying was so profoundly painful because imagine walking into an office space every single day, looking at people that you were certain had totally betrayed you and betrayed your trust.. And I was so convinced that they had betrayed me and betrayed my trust for self-serving purposes.. So imagine the amount of pain I experienced day after day, living with what it is that I had to be with, with the company, and that started a whole series of questions, including the questions of, so, who is the real me? Is the real me the person who was that incredible, magnetic visionary that brought everybody to his company? Or is the real me this monster that nobody wanted to work with anymore? Who is the real me? How had I shifted from one to the other? Was this shift permanent? Is there a way that I could've, I could now go back to what used to be? Are these people that I'm interacting with truly people who are betraying me for self-serving purposes, or was there another solution? Was there another explanation? These were all the questions that were in my mind and I couldn't answer them at the time because I was literally in a daze for about a week.. Not able to even sort out my thoughts, and that started about 15 years of working on myself and also research that eventually led to the body of work that I have on positive intelligence, and all of the things that I'll be talking to you about today.. Gradually, there were all these discoveries to research, and my own personal experience that led to the work that we do today, and the question was about trying to answer, how is it that we self-sabotage? How is it that we go from one to the other mode of ourselves and what are the ways that we can actually shift, shift that orientation? Eventually, what the research led me to is four major branches of science that had explosive growth at the time, and they include positive psychology, neuroscience, cognitive behavioral psychology, and performance science.. There was a synthesis of the latest breakthroughs in these four branches of science, on top of which, the research that I brought, synthesizing this with the original research, ended up calling that positive intelligence.. A lot of people who started being exposed to this work with me actually wanted to call it Jedi Mind Training 'cause that's how they experienced it.. That this is really the work that we are doing, they were telling me this is like Jedi Mind Training, but of course, as you can imagine, because of copyright issues, we couldn't call this Jedi Mind Training.. We had to call it Positive Intelligence, but it really is about the Darth Vader and Jedi within yourself..

And basically, again, for the same copyright issues I was talking about, what it is about is looking at, Positive Intelligence is about the balance of power between the two forces.. Instead of the Darth Vader, we call it the Saboteurs, and actually, it turns out, you don't have one Darth Vader inside.. There are multiple dark characters inside of you, and in totality, we call them Saboteurs.. Most people have a few of these nasty characters, but you do have one Sage, which is the one that serves

you.. So this is the war between the voice that serves you, your Sage, your true self, versus the Saboteurs that are messing with you, and the work was about how do you shift that balance.. So Positive Intelligence eventually got defined as the percentage of time your mind is serving you as opposed to sabotaging you, and one way to look at that is that relative strength of Sage versus Saboteurs.. Positive Intelligence Quotients ends up being called PQ, and we can actually measure PQ, and we have now a whole ton of research that connects PQ with all sorts of measures and metrics of performance.. That's how we know PQ is the single most important predictive factor in terms of how much of your true potential you actually achieve in performance, and also how much stress versus levels of wellbeing or happiness you experience.. It's a predictor of both of those things.. And as we did this research, one of the most important things that came up is actually the whole concept of the two brains inside of your mind, that you really do not have one brain inside of your skull, but you have two brains..

Now most of you are already familiar with the fight-or-flight type of response and the fight-or-flight brain.. This is much bigger than that.. Fight-or-flight is mostly the limbic system, the brain stem type of thing, and it's mostly about the fear and danger, but what we really, at the end, realize is that there is something much bigger than that, that overall we call, we ended up calling the Survivor Brain, and what the Survivor Brain is, of which the fight-or-flight is just a small part, is a part of your brain that is basically tasked with having you survive not just physically, but also emotionally, and as a kid, you actually have a challenge of how do you navigate the challenges of, the emotional challenges, and survive with your identity intact, and it ends up being something that gets aided by this region of your brain.. The problem with this region of the brain, and one of the things that had to happen to me, look at the emotions that this region of the brain is capable of producing.. When this region of your brain is activated, you can't help yourself.. You will be feeling negative emotions, not just anxiety, anger, disappointment, but shame, guilt, regret, all of these nasty negative emotions that you feel are emotions that you feel when the survival part of your brain is activated.. And of course, by the way, in the book, there are a couple of chapters on the different brains, so there's a little bit of generalization here.. It's not all of the left brain, it's part of the left brain.. There's a lot more detail to this but right now, what I would love for you to pay attention to is that actually there are two brains.. The other brain, being that, what we call the Positive Intelligence brain, it's an entirely different region..

When that region is activated, you feel positive emotions like curiosity, compassion, joy, creativity, peace, calm resolve, gratitude.. When you look at this chart, what immediately strikes you is, if you are in search of happiness in your life, what realize is happiness is an inside game.. If you're able to activate the PQ region of your brain, the Positive Intelligence or PQ region of your brain, you will be feeling positive emotions that have you feel kinda happy, and even if you're in the middle of a great challenge and a great crisis, the opposite is also true.. If you happen to be in the middle of paradise, but your Survivor Brain is activated, you can't help yourself.. You're gonna be feeling negative emotions and not very happy, but it also has a huge impact on performance, and the impact on performance is all the body of research that I was telling you about, coming from those four branches of science shows that your peak performance, your highest performance is going to be through the path of positive emotions.. Your highest performance comes from the brain that is calm, and centered, and focused, and able to see possibilities, and be creative.. All of these things happen in the PQ region of the brain, not in the Survivor Brain, so your path to highest performance, and what I call stress-free peak performance, is by learning how to activate the PQ region of your brain, and what had happened to me, one of the things that happened to me in my entrepreneurial meltdown, is that what we now know about the survival part of the brain is that it kinda loops on itself.. Once you get going, you have an internal loop and an external loop.. Negativity creates more negativity, and once you start looping on yourself, it's kinda hard sometimes to get out, and I had gotten into a loop based on the stress that the job was creating for me, that I had not been able to get out.. Stress, by the way, is the key thing, is the key fuel that begins to shift you to the survival part of your brain, and as the survival part of your brain gets going, it helps create cortisol, stress hormones, so it actually feeds on the stress, so that's the kind of loop that you get yourself into..

So one question is, how do you actually learn how to shift the brain activation? The first strategy that I wanna be sharing with you is the strategy of how do you shift brain activation from the Survivor Brain to activating, actually, the PQ region of your brain.. What do you think is the traditional way of activating the PQ region of your brain? There's an ancient traditional way of doing that.. What do you think that is? It's meditation, yes, absolutely, it's meditation, and there are a couple of meditation works, if you're able to do it consistently, and there are two challenges with meditation.. One challenge with meditation is that most people who start meditating cannot continue meditating.. Their track record is dismal, of the percentage of people who start meditation, who actually are able to sustain meditation, so that's one problem.. Most people can't sustain being meditators.. The second problem is even a bigger problem, which is most meditators learn how to shift their brain activation when they are meditating, so in the morning, in the privacy of their room, closing their eyes, doing the mantra, whatever they do meditation, totally shift brain activation.. Problem is, if you wanna be Jedi in the arena of life, you need to learn how to activate that brain in the middle of war, in the middle of challenges, in the middle of crises, and most meditators don't learn, how do I actually activate that brain when I really need it? So what we ended up creating, looking at functional MRI studies, is it's a different way of activating that part of the brain which we call PQ Rep.. Consider PQ Rep to be like a dumbbell rep to activate the muscles of the PQ region of your brain, so basically, the way you activate the PQ region of your brain is through these 10-second exercises that we call a PQ Rep.. There are many, many different ways to do it, but I wanna show you one way to do it, and this is where the index finger comes in..

Remember, I told you the index finger? So one way to activate that awesome part of your brain, so for the next 10 seconds, please do this with me.. So, take your index finger and rub it gently against your thumb, and with so much attention that you can actually feel the fingertip ridges on both fingers.. Now if you really are doing this with so much attention, that you can

feel the fingertip ridges on both fingers, if you do this for 10 seconds, then what, if we had your brain under a functional MRI, you would notice that the PQ region of your brain just got ever so slightly activated, and the survival part of your brain got ever so slightly quieter.. Now there are literally hundreds of different ways to do PQ Reps.. Lots of other ways in the book.. I just showed you one, and one of the, basically, there is one other part of the research about how many of these reps you need to do so that you build up and maintain muscles in the PQ region, rather than allow them to atrophy, and the number is 36.. If you sit down and a lot of PQ Reps, 36 reps comes in about 12 minutes or so, on average for general, for an average person, but as I just showed you, you can do PQ Rep with your eyes open, in the middle of meetings, while taking a dog out for a walk, while taking a shower, while eating, you can do PQ Reps anytime.. Then, and so the first strategy is how do you boost your PQ brain with PQ Reps, that's the first of the five strategies.. Then, what we kind of started realizing is that that part that I just shared with you is the strategy that deals with the neurological level of the dark side of you versus the one, the part that serves you, but there's actually a corollary on the psychological part, which is that if you look at the Survivor Brain, the voice that the Survivor Brain uses to actually get things done in the world, in your mind, is the voice of the Saboteurs, because its job is survival.. So if you wanna look at the dynamics that I just talked about at the psychological level, then you need to be looking at Saboteurs versus Sage, and the fact that you actually have at least a few of these Saboteurs messing with you..

Now of these Saboteurs, all of them, every single one of them basically come into your life as you try to answer the following question, "To survive and succeed, I should..." Saboteurs come into your life and take hold in your brain and become neural pathways in your brain in automatic reactions to things.. As you try to answer "To survive and succeed, I should..." and every kid answers that question differently, 'cause every kid is wired differently and every kid has different challenges, you end up answering that question in a way that develops the kind of Saboteurs that you have, and we all end up having some of these Saboteurs.. There is one Saboteur that's universal, and that's the Judge.. And many of you have known about one small element of the Judge, which we call the inner critic, but the Judge is really much bigger than just the inner critic.. The Judge is the one that's not only constantly beating the crap out of you, to tell you what's wrong with you and, "You idiot, why aren't you getting better?" and "Why did you make this mistake?" It's also constantly finding fault with others, and so one of the key culprits of my entrepreneurial meltdown was that this character was running wild in my head with immunity, and that I believed every word that this character told me.. So the Judge, as things started going wrong in my company, everything that's started going wrong, first of all, the Judge would come beat the crap out of me.. "What's wrong with you, you idiot!" "With all this training and all these promises, "how can you make such stupid mistakes?" And as it was beating the crap out of me, it also started finding what was wrong with you, and what was wrong with you, and what was wrong with this VP, and what was wrong with my president, what was wrong with my board.. It found everything that was wrong with everybody else.. Why? Because both of those were about my emotional survival as a kid.. As a kid, I had been told, "Look, if you wanna be ambitious "and achieve things, you gotta be hard on yourself, "you gotta keep pushing yourself, pushing yourself..

"You gotta keep telling yourself, "things that are wrong, you gotta keep beating yourself up.. "That's a good thing to do." I had been told my Judge is a good thing for me.. Good for my survival, and once it beat the crap out of me, I had also learned to judge everybody else because, gee, it's really hard to be the only loser in the world, right? So my Judge was saying, "I'm a loser, but so are you!" Everybody's an idiot, everybody has flaws, and I am flawed, so I'm gonna survive.. And what I didn't know is that character was actually quite destructive, and that the character that keeps making you feel bad about yourself is actually not good for you.. The one that constantly beats you up for what's wrong with you and others is not good for you.. It's actually a Saboteur, it's quite destructive.. Now you might be asking a very important question right now, which is, "But aren't negative emotions "actually good for you?" Aren't negative emotions actually good for you.. Isn't a Judge helpful for you by pushing you and beating you up and all that.. Isn't that good for your performance? And the answer to that, to answer that, let me answer a separate question first.. Is pain ever good for you? Is it good to feel pain? The answer is, "Of course!" If you put your hand on a hot stove, and if you don't feel pain, you're not gonna react accordingly, and you'll burn your hand to the bone, right? So feeling pain is really good for you..

It is awesome to feel pain.. The question is, how long would it be good for you to feel the pain before you remove your hand from the hot stove? And the answer, hopefully, is a split-second.. Just long enough to know that there is a problem here, right? Same exact pain with negative emotions.. Is it good to feel anger, shame, guilt, disappointment, all of this stuff, when something is going wrong? The answer is, of course it is.. If you didn't feel any of those negative emotions, you will keep doing the thing and not improve anything.. The question is, how long is it good to feel bad after a failure, how long is it good to feel shame after something that you do that doesn't go well, how long is it good to feel guilt, to feel stress over what's gonna happen? The answer is a split-second long enough for you to pay attention and take corrective action.. If you stay in negative emotion for more than a split-second, you're hijacked by your Saboteurs.. It's gonna mess with your performance.. And that's true with all Saboteurs.. Anytime you're in negative emotion for more than a few seconds, you are hijacked by a part of your brain that's not serving you because your path to highest performance is through positive energy..

So basically, then, the strategy number two becomes, how do you, making sure that you expose and weaken your Judge Saboteur by calling its bullshit, by basically saying, "Actually, beating the crap "out of me for the fifth time over the mistake "I did yesterday is not very helpful, sir.. "It's not, I got the message.. "It's no longer serving, you are now sabotaging me." And the way we do that in terms of looking at some of these Saboteurs is to have you, basically, pay attention to when are you staying in negative emotion and have I gotten the message that this thing is supposed to give me, and if I got the message after a few seconds, then I am going to be moving on.. By the way, notice the difference between my thing, "I will fail tomorrow," which is a statement of fact, like I'm believing the Saboteur, versus my Judge Saboteur is saying I will fail

tomorrow.. Just notice the dramatic difference when you stop believing the Saboteurs as the voice of gospel truth, which these Saboteurs lead you to believe they are.. Now, what I realized after discovering my Judge Saboteur, is that actually my meltdown was not only due to my Judge Saboteur.. My meltdown has to do with a whole lot of other Saboteurs, too, and that as I was noticing other people around me, it was clear that different people have different Saboteurs, that the Judge is one, but other people have other ways where they mess with their own performance and productivity and happiness, and eventually, our research led, looking at career derailers, how people sabotage themselves, doing a lot of factor analysis, trying to come up with the fewest number of categories that explains all this variety, end up creating a three by three grid.. I won't go into details about the three by three grid, but the Saboteurs that fit into this grid, the nine, what we call accomplice Saboteur, the accomplices of the Judge.. Depending on your personality, you have at least one or two of these other Saboteurs, and their names, of course, are Controller, Hyper-Achiever, Restless, Stickler, Pleaser, Hyper-Vigilant, and Avoider, Victim, Hyper-Rational.. What a cast of characters, right? And by the way, some of you may be sitting here and think, "Oh, Shirzad, this is awesome! "I finally can tell my jackass boyfriend, "what a Controller he has been all this time "and now finally, I have a name "for what has been annoying me about him," or "My boss, I get that he was a Stickler "that annoys the hell out of me." Don't do that..

(audience laughing) Please don't go to people in your life and tell them, "I got the Saboteur that you have, let me tell you." I cannot guarantee your safety if you do that.. (audience laughs) The thing that I talk about is, you know, it's easy to see the spinach in somebody else's teeth, isn't it? And it's easier to see Saboteurs in others, but the work really is about looking yourself in the mirror.. How do you self-sabotage? How do you shift to negative energy, and if you shift to negative energy and shift others to negative energy, you are in self-sabotage.. That's not your path to highest performance or happiness, therefore, by definition, you're in sabotage, which is your mechanism.. So we do actually have an online assessment, that in about five minutes, gives you your results of what, how you self-sabotage.. I will give that to you at the end of my talk.. I'll tell you how to do the Saboteur self-assessment, but I'm not now because too many of you will be distracted if I did.. So in my case, what I discovered, my meltdown had been partially caused by my Hyper-Rational.. The Hyper-Rational is that arrogant part of me that had learned as a kid that because I had more, higher IQ than most people, that that was a weapon I could always use and anytime things weren't going my way, I would shift the conversation to purely logical, rational thing, where I knew I could win the battle.. What I didn't realize is that I would be winning the battle but losing the war..

Relationship are not rational constructs.. When you try to solve everything through the rational mind, you actually leave out very important things like emotion, and the caring, and the compassion, and the connection that you would feel with human beings, is pushed out the window.. When it's a purely rational construct, you destroy relationship in the process of winning the rational conversation.. That's what my Hyper-Rational was doing.. It was destroying every relationship in the company because I was just fighting rational battle, not realizing that relationships are not rational constructs, actually.. Loyalty is not a rational concept.. Trust is not a rational concept.. Love is not rational.. The reason the sunset is so beautiful is not rational.. The most beautiful, most important things in life are not rational, and the Hyper-Rational pretends that everything can best be handled rationally..

So that was one way I was destroying thing and the Controller was the other.. The harder things got, the more things started going wrong, the most tightly I controlled things, and in order to make things work better and better, and these Saboteurs always create the opposite of what they pretend to create.. The more I try to control things, the more micromanager I became, the less people around me were able to take initiative and to grow, and the less they were actually able to help the situation, so everything became tunnel vision as my Hyper-Rational, Judge and Controller started messing with me.. So, it might appear that I was particularly weird and screwed up as I was dealing with these Saboteurs, and what I wanna tell you is that my experience now after 15 years of this research working with a ton of, the research by the way was with a lot of CEOs, with a lot of sales teams, and executive teams, with world-class athletes, with 200,000 people around the world, looking into the Saboteurs, what I now know is that this thing, this, what we are talking about is universal, that there are no exceptions to people having this kind of experience.. And the question of, "Can you be successful "with your Saboteurs?" The answer to that is yes.. The negative Saboteurs can actually push you, and push you, and push you to succeed.. A lot of CEOs that I work with actually have strong Saboteurs.. But the reason you wanna deal with this issue is two things.. One, so long as the Saboteurs are pushing you to your level of success, you will never be happy because every step of the way is littered with negativity.. That's one..

The other thing is, your path to highest performance is not through the Saboteurs.. So you will not perform as well, you will not accomplish as much, but can you accomplish some good stuff? Absolutely, you can achieve, and one thing I wanna just show you to kind of bring this to life for you, is a while back, I did this, I was running a leadership development seminar for more than a hundred CEOs.. Some of them billionaires, some of them household names you would know.. A lot of, obviously, very successful people, and because I had been coaching some of them, I knew what life really was for them.. And I knew they were suffering from the pains that Saboteurs cause everybody, but when we were starting the seminar, people were going around and introducing themselves to each other and everybody was puffed up in peacock colors and yeah, everything is perfect, and I'm great, and all the facade of perfection, and when the seminar started, I told them, "You know what, I don't buy that bullshit.. "I coach some of you, I know what your life really is like.. "Let's tell the truth." And I gave them this 3 1/2 by five cards and I said, "Tell the truth about what's really going on in your life," and anonymously, no names attached, and then I shuffled the cards and I read out the cards to them.. And this is a random selection of the hundred or so cards from these CEOs.. That's, this is what life is like, even after you succeed, if your Saboteurs are still intact.. This is what

life is about if your Saboteurs are still messing with you..

"I'm terrified of failing as the leader of my business." "My air of confidence is false, I have no plan in life." "I'm rarely at peace with myself, "constantly looking for more, comparing myself with others." Do you hear the Saboteurs? At the top of their profession, that's still what this person is thinking.. "I fear dying at an early age from overwork and stress." "I'm self-destructive and I don't know why." "I have no idea how to truly connect with my only son." "I often feel like I'm a fraud." This is so common among high-achieving individuals that we even have a name for it.. We call it the Impostor Syndrome.. So many high-achieving individuals think that their success is due to luck and circumstance and one day, they will be discovered for the fraud that they are.. Saboteur.. "I've been abusing drugs and alcohol to deal with stress." "I battle with constantly ranking "and judging everyone around me "in all settings, all the time." Do you hear the Saboteurs? "I lack strength in resisting temptations and desires." "I'm feeling very sad and lonely, "and the anti-depressants I'm on don't seem to be helping." "I worry my materialism is hurting my children." This one broke my heart when I first read it.. "I don't love myself very much." Written in all capital letters.. "I don't love myself very much." No amount of money in the bank will help this person be happy so long as these Saboteurs are at play.. "I wish I could run away for one year, just be alone." And the last one from these CEOs.. "I'm afraid of ending up like my father, "who is unloved and will die alone." Unless you think that this is just like CEOs, I did this, I was teaching the Positive Intelligence class for a bunch of graduate students at Stanford..

30 graduate students, and I asked them to write cards.. Well how were they really feeling? And of these 30, 29 came back, just one card came back saying, "You know what, there isn't much for me to share." 29 of the 30 cards, Stanford graduate students in my class, came back with, this is just one random selection.. "I'm never good enough for myself.. "I'm a disappointment, a wasted potential." Can you imagine the lie inside somebody's head that as a Stanford graduate student, will have them believe this? Unless you take on your Saboteurs, there is no end to the game of trying to find peace in your heart because no matter what you create in the external world in terms of success and wealth, if these guys are running you, these are the things you'd be signing.. How many of you here would actually have written, maybe, something similar to one of these cards? A lot of hands are raising, thank you for that honesty.. And I've done this across the globe, lots of different companies.. The book is translated to 16 different languages.. I've been doing this in every culture, and what I know is, that the Saboteurs are a universal condition, and before I did this work, I thought, what's wrong with me? I'm particularly broken and screwed up.. What's wrong with me? Everybody else have figured it out, you know? Shirzad, what's wrong with you? And this was life-changing work because I realized, you know what, actually, I'm just having a human experience.. This is what it is to be a human being..

The Saboteurs are messing with us and unless we take them on, these are the things that we would be thinking and feeling.. So, how do we take on these Saboteurs? One of the works that we help people do is create a wanted poster for the bad guy inside, the enemy inside, and at least begin to tell when the Saboteur is messing with you so you take away his power and credibility.. Name the Saboteur when he shows up.. "No, that's not true, I'm not gonna buy that bullshit.. "This is a lie, the negative path is never the path "that will serve me, and you are messing with me.. "I don't trust and believe what you're trying to." So that then becomes our third strategy, which is expose the Judge's Accomplice Saboteurs, so you'll find out through the Saboteur assessment, I'll, again, at the end of the talk, give you link for that, where to go do that.. You wanna expose and discredit and weaken the Accomplice Saboteur that messes with you and has been lying to you.. Now, the question is, how do we actually shift, so one thing is, let's not do the Saboteur thing, but then, what's the, how do you do the Jedi thing? How do you do the opposite of the Saboteur, which is the Sage? And as I was going through my meltdown, it was clear to me that the pain that I was experiencing was not going to secede unless I figured a way what's the gift inside of this craziness that I've gotten myself into.. My life was breathlessly painful, day after day, and in order to get myself out of that pain, I needed to ask the question, "How can I possibly take what has happened to me "and actually begin to turn that into a gift of some kind?" And eventually, what we found out in the research is that actually, that appears to be one of the number one tools that high performers used, that every time life throws shit at them, one of the ways that they know how to quickly recover to the positive place, that gets them to their highest performance, is ask the question, "How do I turn this into a gift and opportunity?" The question of how do I take everything into a gift and opportunity is one that allows you, when things don't go according your way, by the way, life does to you every other day, every other hour of every other day, as things don't go your way, you are at a fork in the road, and the fork in the road, either your Saboteurs are gonna come in and say, "Shit, shit, shit, "you're screwed!" Or your Sage is gonna come in and say, "You know what, I can turn this "into a gift and opportunity." And whichever fork you take, whichever you do in this fork in the road, becomes a self-fulfilling reality.. That's the power of this, that whichever of these perspectives you bring becomes a self-fulfilling reality..

So think about, if you're in the middle of the most important project of your life, and mistakes and failure are happening by you and others, if the Saboteurs come in and say, "Goddammit, this is terrible, this is awful, "we gotta fix this, we are in trouble!" And with that energy, as you're running a team, you have shifted everybody in the first 30 seconds to their Saboteurs, and within that vortex of negativity you have created, everybody's brain has gone to Survivor Brain, which is not very creative, which is not very resourceful, which is just watching its ass, not really gonna come up with what's going on and to improve things as much as you could, but if you say, "You know what, "mistakes and failures have occurred "and we can turn this into a gift and opportunity," you become curious, you become compassionate, you become empathic to yourself and others, being in this trouble together, the curiosity's gonna bring out a lot more information about how do you fix this thing now, and your brain stays in the positive region of your brain, the PQ region of the brain, so that you actually have access to your creative powers, so you will actually take a mistake and failure, and figure out how to turn it into an opportunity, not

because it will automatically become so, but because there's a self-fulfilling prophecy.. If you believe that, you activate the parts of your brain in yourself and others around you that will figure a way how to make that a gift and opportunity.. Just like in my case, the greatest meltdown of my entrepreneurial life that could've destroyed me for years, actually ended up becoming the greatest gift in my life.. A gift that has created this incredible career I have today, that's deeply fulfilling, would not have happened without that meltdown that I had.. It ended up eventually having me become deeply curious about my president and others who had created the palace coup and the chairman and others, and I realized they were deeply caring people, who actually were doing that, fighting for my vision, so I actually am great friends with every single one who was in that boardroom today, and I'm in deep gratitude for them to do what they did, and has resulted in all my body of work, because I went to the question of, how can I turn this into a gift and opportunity, which becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.. So that ends up being a perspective that actually allows you to activate the region of your brain, the PQ region of the brain, that gives you access to five great Sage Powers.. I have removed the name of these Sage Powers because we don't have time to get into them.. I want them to remain a little bit of mystery for you, but what our research showed is that, you know, you may have heard about emotional intelligence.. There are all these competencies and you don't even know where to start to develop these competencies, but what we created was, analogous to when you want to create a painting, there are only three primary colors, and if you have access to those three primary colors, you can actually create every tapestry that you want, every painting that you want.. All colors come from that, and it turns out that when it comes to the positive powers of leadership and being successful in life, and all of these great things, that the Sage actually has the five primary powers, and with those primary powers, if you shift your brain to that region, and have access to those five awesome powers that your Sage brings, you will be able to automatically develop all the emotional intelligence competencies because they are re-combinations of these five powers..

I will just tell you one of these powers, which is the power to, that's where the, I think N is to navigate, to find your path, it's a power of pathfinding and navigating your path based on deeper sense of meaning and purpose.. Your deeper sense of meaning and purpose lives within your Sage, 'cause that's the one who knows who you are and where you're heading, so the fourth strategy that we were just talking about is, to make sure that you activate your Sage Perspective and Five Powers.. I've told you about how to activate the Perspective.. The Five Powers, please do a little bit more research to know what they are.. The navigate one is the one that actually comes a segue to my final strategy.. That is my favorite, actually, which is also gonna use the index finger.. So the final strategy that I wanna share with you, my favorite, and the one that will actually have the most profound impact on you, is one that I wanna begin to tell you about by first, have you look at your index finger.. Take a look at your index finger.. By the way, if you're listening to this as a podcast and driving, please don't take a look at your index finger.. Pay attention to the road please, but for the rest of us, what do you see when you look at your index finger? It's your fingerprint, and what you will know about your fingerprint..

Your fingerprint is unique.. You are extraordinarily unique.. Anybody who is a parent knows, who has more than one child knows, anybody who have ever seen with a parent of more than one child knows, that the child is born with a complete, each child is born with a completely different blueprint.. You were born with a completely unique blueprint for the amazing being that you are.. As unique as your fingerprint, you are that special.. You are that special.. That is your Sage, that's you're true self.. Now the question that often I get asked by my CEO clients, by my students, by the others that I work with is, so how do I find my path? What's my calling? What's my, how do I figure out the purpose and the calling? And one of the key things that I tell them is, unfortunately, some of the information out there is a little misleading to people, so Maslow's self-actualization, we talk about Maslow's self-actualization as if it's something that is one thing that one day you will eventually get.. That's not how people find their paths.. The way that actually will find your true self, your Jedi, you become self-actualized, is, let's use a different metaphor, and the metaphor is, think about standing at the edge of a thickly wooded forest, and it's very foggy and it's very dark, and at the, all the way, at the very, very other end of the forest, there's a giant lighthouse, and in this metaphor, imagine that that is your true self, that's your true calling, that's your true purpose..

And what is happening is you're at this edge of the forest, and your purpose is to somehow get to the lighthouse, your true calling, your true self, and you don't have a roadmap and it's dark and it's thickly forested.. That's how life actually happens.. There is no roadmap, and there is no straight line to the lighthouse, so what do you do? What instructions do you give to yourself for living a life of purpose, for pursuing your calling? The only instruction you can give yourself is, at any given step, take the step that has more light in it.. Take the next step based on what has more light in it.. And as you take that step, and only after you take that step, the step after that will reveal itself, the step that now has the most light in it, and then the step that has the most light in it, and you get closer and closer and closer to the lighthouse, to your true self, to your final self-actualization, and here's the deal, you will never fully get there.. Nobody dies completely self-actualized, nobody gets to the lighthouse, but can you keep taking every step as a step that has more light in it? And as you keep going, as you're getting closer and closer and closer to the lighthouse, there is more and more light in every step and you begin to run into people around you that are on a similar path that can help you with that path, and you begin to discover amazing things because you're paying attention to every step.. Self-actualization is not, and following your calling is not about one destination that one day you're gonna get to.. It's about every step.. It's about taking the next step that has more light in it.. And so that's our last strategy, follow your light in every step, and where is that light coming from? That light is coming from your Sage, the one that knows your calling, the one that has that unique blueprint..

And how do you know the step that has more light in it? It's the step that has positive energy to it.. Be suspicious of any step that's being directed by the fears of your Saboteurs, by the mandates of your Saboteurs, by the shame or the guilt of your

Saboteurs.. That's how you know it doesn't have light in it.. How are you deciding your next step? And to bring this all to kind of conclusion of what's happening with me today, and how I'm using all of this, how does all of this becomes actualized, I am now creating my other startup company.. So I've started a company where we are looking at all of this power of Positive Intelligence and saying, this is really the missing link in education for our children.. This is the missing link in education of every salesperson, every executive, of every CEO.. This is the missing link in education, personal, mastery over your own mind, following the path of the Jedi inside, finding out how do you find the light in the next step and moving with that.. This is the thing we are supposed to be teaching everybody and it's the missing link.. So the startup right now that I'm creating is how do we take this stuff we just talked about into millions of lives? What happens to our world if every high school kid knows how to discover their own Jedi and follow that path? What happens if every CEO gets that? So that's the company I'm building, and of course, very excited about the vision and mission that it has, and using technology, app, and other digital technologies to make sure this is scalable, and I wanna give you an example of how I am actually following these steps, so Shinyung, who actually, Shinyung Park, who's sitting in the audience, and she's my head of product, just last week, we were having a conversation about user testing, and I found myself getting really frustrated at what she was saying and completely triggering and beginning to go down the path, that 15 years ago, had gotten me into the palace coup stuff, all right? And here is the difference.. I caught myself 10 seconds into it and said, "You know what, I'm hijacked right now "by my Saboteurs." How did I know I'm hijacked by my Saboteurs? Because my emotions were negative..

I did not trust myself in that moment.. So I literally, out loud, I said to Shinyang, "Shinyang, I'm right now, hijacked.. "I gotta a few PQ Reps." So I did a few PQ Reps to recover back to center, to my Sage, to my Jedi, and I had triggered her Saboteur so she has started saying things that was clearly negative energy.. I said, "Hey, Shinyang, I am beginning to shift.. "It'll be good if you also do a few PQ Reps "and shift back," because my Saboteur had triggered her Saboteur.. Within 30 seconds to a minute, both of us had shifted.. The conversation moved to a very different conversation where I was deeply curious about not what was wrong with what she was saying, but what was right about what she was saying.. And it took me to a completely different conversation, took her to completely different conversation, and we have great creative results out of it, and what happened in that moment is that not only did we increase the chances of our company succeeding and performing better, but most importantly, we were following the step with more light in it, which meant both of us got closer to our final, living our calling, which is the only game there is, really.. How can you live, how can you live your true calling? How do you become more and more of the incredible Sage that you are, and less and less of the Saboteurs that are messing with you? So my final parting words which you, and for you are not, "May the Force be with you," because we know the Force is with you.. My parting request for you and wish for you is may you always see the amazing light that is within you, and let it light up the next step and follow that next step..

And with that, I'd love to see if there are questions in the next few minutes.. (audience applauding) Thank you.. (audience applauding) Yes.. - [Woman] Thank you very much, incredibly interesting lecture.. So I'm the mother of two daughters, (mumbles) 11 and 13.. Do you have any advice on how to cook this down to some fruitful parenting and tips because (mumbles) especially girls, I can already see their Saboteurs growing and come forth.. - So the question is, as a parent, how do you bring this to children? I have a 17-year-old and a 12-year-old, and the most important thing I wanna say there is just like I was modeling the behavior with my colleague at the company, the best way to teach this to others is model it yourself as a parent.. So I have told my kids what my Saboteurs are.. I can't get away with shit at home.. The moment I do something, my daughter says, "Daddy, is that your Saboteur talking right now?" And often, she's right..

She is holding me accountable, and right in front of her eyes, I shift from my Saboteur to Sage, so she's saying, "You know what, Dad has Saboteurs," so it's the fact that I have Saboteurs, there's not something wrong with me and it's normal and Dad can shift in 15 seconds, maybe I can, too.. So you gotta, before you teach this to anybody as a leader or as a parent, you gotta realize that when you model it, people get inspired, and if you don't, they are gonna see the hypocrisy of it.. Maybe one other? - [Woman] One more question.. - Yes.. Yes, go ahead.. - [Man] I think you were talking about Pleaser or Pleasurer or something along those lines of being a Saboteur.. How would you (mumbles)? - The Pleaser is one that can't say no to taking care of other people even when the right thing is to do that.. You gotta sometimes put the oxygen mask on yourself in the plane, and the Pleaser puts it on somebody else because they can't say no, and then they're very resentful and maybe faint, so if you're a giving, caring person, learn how to say no when you wanna say no and when to give when you wanna give, rather than be forced by a Saboteur about always giving even when that's not the right thing to be doing.. That's what the Pleaser construct is.. I guess that was our last question..

- [Woman] Yes, well, please join me in thanking our amazing guest.. (audience applauds) - Thank you, thank you.. (audience applauding) - [Woman] Thank you.. (audience applauding)..