

The Inner Chief Podcast

Episode 295 - Dr Jeff Spencer, Champion Maker

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[Full Transcript]

Greg Layton:

Well, Chiefs, I'm here with the great Dr. Jeff Spencer, the champion maker meets the Chief Maker, and I'm really excited about this. Many of you don't know, one of my absolute passions is a psychology of high performance, but I'm an amateur in the presence of a master, so I can't wait to really get into the detail here with Jeff. Jeff, thank you for coming on The Inner Chief, mate.

Jeff Spencer:

My pleasure. Thanks again for the invite, Greg.

Greg Layton:

Jeff, one of our great traditions at The Inner Chief is to know where our guests come from, where our chiefs come from. Can you just tell a little bit of a story that sums up your childhood and early life?

Jeff Spencer:

Well, when I was seven, I wanted to become an Olympian. I thought that'd be the coolest thing ever. But I feel like the Olympics chose me and there was an instant magnetism towards it and I felt that the Olympians embodied a superhero-esque figure that had a superpower to do things of high significance that transcended normal human potential. Obviously wanting to be an Olympian, I didn't know how I was going to do it, but I needed to know something about what that fabric was that went from sum of the parts to greater than sum of the parts. I was really intrigued by that from moment zero. I obviously couldn't articulate it like I'm doing it now, but there was just this urge to do it. It was not to showcase myself. I didn't care about that. It was not to try to prove somebody wrong that told me I couldn't do it.

It was none of that. It was like an exploration that called me into the unknown that I had the proclivity to be able to connect with and I had the self-starting gene to begin to pursue. The next phase of that was I was asked to go on a 25-mile bike ride by a racing club, so I hustled a bike and went on a 25-mile ride with the experienced racing cyclists, and at the end of the 25 miles they were tired and I wasn't. I was like, "Well, wait a minute. What's up with this?" So I felt, again, like cycling had chosen me for it to be the vehicle by which I would become an Olympian.

Then I had three angels. My first angel was my cycling coach, and he was a five time national champion, three time Olympian and he said, "Jeff, I'm going to teach you how to win. It's a learned skill and I want you to come and be part of my training group. Our training group is Olympians and world champions. You're obviously not that, but I want you to be around the conversation. I want you to observe what's happening because if it's within you to become it, it's already there, I can't put anything into you that's not already there, it will awaken something and you will have a natural resonance with this and you'll develop over time these skills, which could be your launching pad to becoming an Olympian."

So my mom and I went to the bike shop looking for a more formal racing bike and when I was in the bike shop, this guy, actually one of the salesmen, said "Psst" and pointed to the door and I looked over at the door and there was this guy with giant legs and he was wearing a T-shirt, USA Olympic team on it, and I wanted that T-shirt. Again, the T-shirt called me to it so I went home and I got my crayons and I drew a little plan on using the T-shirt as a logo USA Olympic team and my plan to become an Olympic cyclist was simple. I was going to work hard, be brave, and never make an excuse. I gave myself 10 years from the age of 11 to 21 for the Munich Olympics, and that became my Independence Day declaration is what that was, and with the help of my coach and other things, I did become an Olympian 10 years later.

That's how the Olympic thing got brought into it. But two other angels I think are really important here is that when I was 18, I was a student at the University of Southern California studying sports science. We come from welfare families so I was there on an educational opportunity scholarship and so I rode my bike because I was training to be an Olympian at that time. I rode a hundred miles round trip every day to school to do my studies. I outlined all my information on these index cards that I built the platform between my handlebars and I studied going to and from school and I did my supplemental training on the racing velodrome, but I met actually my life mentor who taught me the heart mind side of it who was a Victorian and he chose me to be his art glass apprentice to help him build his masterpiece creations as a glass artist. He was a true renaissance man. He was an author, a poet, he won an Emmy for his creative philosophy and he said, "I need to fill you up on stuff."

That was classical music. It was the playwrights, the great literary works of history, history itself, and at the breaks and during lunchtime, he filled me with that side of it as I had the capacity to be able to absorb that. So we had a person who knew how to win, that had the athletic ability to perhaps become Olympian, he had a receptivity to look at the heart mind side of things, and then my final angel was an elder Frenchman that was very unique in his demeanour and the presence of being, he was the most reconciled person I've ever met my entire life who taught me the soul of humanity. I found out later that he was a World War II concentration camp survivor. He was a concentration camp survivor, and he was exposed to every human cruelty you could imagine, but he didn't have a venomous bone in his body.

With the mind, heart, soul, body from those three angels, that crafted a very unique me that had the capacity to do things from a more comprehensive way rather than a myopic focus on a single thing. That was how I became an Olympian, how I got my master's degree in sports science, how I went on to be a nationally recognised art glass sculptor and do all three of those things simultaneously. That was an interesting point of genesis for me.

Greg Layton:

Jeff, you said a couple of things there, which I sort of want to go back and labour on, if that's all right.

Jeff Spencer:

Yeah, of course.

Greg Layton:

You said learning to win is a skillset.

Jeff Spencer:

It is.

Greg Layton:

I've heard it before, and it's something that, let's be honest, nobody really learns it and it's completely absent from any curriculum and anything around the world. In fact, in some ways we teach the opposite. We teach that winning is not even required when we have soccer games where we don't score a goal, don't score the points, which is almost completely the opposite to real life. When you learned ... actually, if you have someone out there who's wanting to learn how to win, can you talk through what it is they need to understand, purely at a philosophical level? Because I want to go through your frameworks in a bit, but at a philosophical level, what do they need to understand about winning that most people just simply do not get?

Jeff Spencer:

Well, I think it's, again, we seem to think that it's a matter of will, we think that it's a matter of having enough things, tools, techniques, technology. We think that if we work hard enough ... it does kind of sound right. Well, if we work hard enough, we'll get whatever we want. That's one of the ongoing things out there. If we put enough detail into what we're doing, then we have a better chance because there's nothing left up to chance, and also if we hyper-focus, then we're not going to take our eye off the ball. I think all of those things are completely false, and they set us up to be able to play a much lesser game because they're way too rigid and it doesn't give us the capacity to stand in receivership of being able to be given insight into choices that can be made along the way that connect as their own shortcut to us identifying our untapped potential that we don't even know that exists.

Because if we can't find that, which you can't by doing hard work, you can't do that by thinking with more focus, you cannot do that by boring a more detailed plan. It requires a receptivity of self to be open to possibility. It requires a proximity to people, places, and things that also demands a certain level of gravity and magnetism between us and other things that are not effort driven. If it's anything, it's anti-driven, but yet that way we can find the path that can lead to the bigger stuff. It's not an act of necessarily will. If you want to play the will game, you can get to some of the parts, but I don't think you can ever transcend to some of the parts by doing that.

Greg Layton:

I think there's a really interesting point you're making here about it's where you start and what you're saying is you start from this point of receptivity.

Jeff Spencer:

A hundred percent receivership and receptivity. Absolutely.

Greg Layton:

Receivership. Can you just explain that in more depth? What does that really mean? Because I've also heard you say things like you need to find your own truth. Can you just talk to that for a minute?

Jeff Spencer:

Sure. Well, receivership really would be like I'm going to listen, meaning that I'm going to open up myself and my receptivity to invite things to show up in my conscious awareness that I will look at for consideration. I'm not going to impose through my own will a rigid path forward, thinking that I can arm bar fate and providence to bend it to my desire. It doesn't work like that. There's always a shortcut through revelation. I'm working on a particular project right now that requires some deeper levels of insight. The first thing I do in the morning when I have a first awareness of a brand new day, I don't get up and start hustling and looking at my phone and trying to get a jump in the competitive advantage on people getting up earlier and getting to work sooner. I know that that doesn't work. All

it does is create a hyper focus that eliminates the possibility of me seeing something of value that would really make the difference.

Rather than get up, I lay in bed. I don't wake myself up to get into action and move too quickly because I know that when I go from delta sleep to theta wave, which is a dream like state of heightened creativity, as the brain waves go from delta sleep up to alpha beta wave where we're in mortal combat with the challenges of the day, that there's a little space and time there where revelation can put things into consciousness. But if we're not aware of that and we bypass it, then we're immediately into the octagon, fighting our way and slugging our way through a day, and so we miss the opportunity for the bigger idea or the nuances that are necessary to craft a greatness which we're capable of.

Again, what you're doing, you're pausing to let it come to you. But see, then your human nature's going to say, "Well, Jeff, obviously you don't care because you're not trying. If you really cared about this, you'd be out looking under every rock. You would be hustling. Nobody would outwork you because if you don't work, how are you going to get anything done?" Well, it's exactly the opposite. If you have the right one or two things that make a difference and you're certain about that, then you can start skipping stairs to get to where you want to get to, rather than slugging it out on the freeway trying to get on the on ramp with everybody else. It's a completely contrarian way of doing things.

Greg Layton:

There's a sense of ease in flow to it, right?

Jeff Spencer:

Yeah. Well, again, when you use the word receivership, receptive, the word restraint has to be in there as a parallel companion to that. Because if you can't restrain yourself from your fear-based survival instincts, meaning that if I don't get started and get the competitive advantage on everybody else by outworking them and getting less sleep and being the first guy on the beat, that's complete mythology. But our human nature wants to make us believe that that is true. It also wants to make us believe that if we're not perfect, we can't win a gold medal. Again, that's complete fallacy. It makes us think that if you have fear, then you can't do it, or you can't take action until the fear disappears. I mean, there's all this mythology that our human nature comes up with that talks us into doing things that seem right, but can't deliver on the promise of our full potential.

We can't get there through that. If you look at the zone performance and you say, "Well, that's flow," and you ask a person what is flow? "Well, I won the gold medal. I felt like I was hardly trying." Well, that should tell us something. Or it would be the same thing with spontaneous healing. I mean, if you have a catastrophic illness and it spontaneously disappears, it's exactly the same biology as its own performance. It's where the body and the mind and the soul are in harmony with each other and the harmony that's created, that's what full potential emerges from. It's like full potential is not a commodity that lives somewhere in a location where you can drive to it at 1234 Main Street and let's pick up some full potential. No, it emerges from the parts of the system being in harmony. That's another thing that people don't get. It's like, "If I push harder, I'll get there." Well, not necessarily. It doesn't work like that.

Greg Layton:

I wanted to sort of draw in what your French mentor said and your observation about him actually, which was he was the most reconciled man.

Jeff Spencer:

He was

Greg Layton:

I think that is such a beautiful line because it talks about this incredible congruence internally to him in his own system, and he obviously worked a lot to resolve that, he'd exercise his demons. You're talking about here in many ways, I love that the outcome is this congruent flow in the real world, where it is effortless, where it external attention, rhythmic and beautiful, it's flow, it's art, it's music, it's dance, it's sport, whatever you're having. That's the outcome, but it begins with the internal being congruent and reconciled.

Jeff Spencer:

Yes, and that is not natural to humanity. Our natural state of being is to be a combat veteran. It's in constant combat with everything and working harder will get us to where we want to go. Again, more detail, the more optionality, the more focus, the less distraction. I mean, all of those are ... that's complete mythology. I mean, it's essential and it's necessary, but it's more about getting us out of the way and letting the process happen. That's very hard because what we're saying, we're saying you have to give up everything that makes you a natural human being, including our natural instincts, but those are mostly fear-based survival mechanisms. They're not springboards to, again, coherence, synergy, and cooperation that allow the system to work together that allows the exponential to be able to take place.

That's very conflicting to the human side of things because it doesn't seem like that math would work, but yet it does. The idea of flow is a deliberate intentional process by which we find our way to that state because it's not a natural state.

Greg Layton:

What most people go through in life is, and I see this in a lot of performers in both corporate and the sporting world, is a level of imbalance. One element of their life is all in, so it might be all in on career or might be all in on one technical aspect, but as a result, the roundedness of their life actually is creating a level of toxicity, which they're not even really feeling, they're so numb to it because it's the way they've been operating for so long, and they're just being totally destroyed by emails and phone calls and endless meeting and social media and crap that they almost ... I think there's a thing that you are saying is they might feel like that this is the path forward because they are getting some maybe kudos for that, they're getting probably paid reasonably well for working that hard, but it's not the outcome and it's not ever going to reach your potential.

Jeff Spencer:

No, it actually blocks it for this reason, is that if you look at potential, there's four potentials. There's full potential, but that doesn't have a location. It's an emergent property of your hidden potential that you don't know exists along with your known potential that hasn't manifested yet. Unless all those potentials are together, the system is not complete. It's like having a rugby team missing a player. Well, you can't play at the capacity of the team because you're missing a player and the other players can't play harder to make up for the player that's not there. Again, our human nature thinking doesn't match what really has to happen to come from our full potential. I mean, that is basically the human dilemma is this idea that hard work, press hard, want it more, be committed. A lot of that is fear driven. It's like, "If I don't do this, then I'm not going to succeed", quite honestly. It's like if you generally talk to a lot of prolific achievers, they will tell you they fear losing more than they relish winning. The fear of loss is very difficult for them to do that. I always begin with the biology of our human nature has, in my opinion, two different mentalities that are opposing each other, that are at war with each other 24 hours a day for control over our decision making. We have the human nature biologic side that's hardwired into those survival impulses, but likewise, we have another biology and that biology, it's also hardwired, it's called instinct. The primary instinct, yeah, I

get procreation, yeah, I get food, yeah, I get shelter. But the one that all the experts agree on as the most important instinct, instinct means biological hardwired, is seeker. We're born as a seeker. Well, if that's the case, then that means that we're born to explore, we have a natural curiosity and we have a desire and an impulse to achieve this biologic.

You've got the side of us, the instinctual seeker side that wants to create a life of significance and value, and then we have the human survival based fight or flight side of us that's all about survivorship and self-preservation. There are two different parts that are warring within us 24 hours a day for control over our decision making. That's why we have this low grade anxiety. Every one of us every day has got this push, pull, push, pull, this that, up, down, black, white, green, pink, should I, shouldn't I. It's continuously there. We get glimpses of composure maybe once in a while about mastery of its own performance, but generally we're conflicted by biologic nature, in my opinion. The reason why I-

Greg Layton:

It's good and evil. Right?

Jeff Spencer:

Well, in a certain sense I think that it really is. But I mean also if you look at ... One day, I said, "Well, look, what's the nature of what people call this?" What do they call this? Limiting beliefs. So I said, "Okay, well what's the nature of this? Who came up with this?" "Well, everybody did." "Well, what's the nature of it?" "Well, it got put into us." "Well, by who?" "By culture and society." I'm saying, "Well, wait a minute, I don't know if that's true", because if we have a survival instinct or we have a survival biology, that's hardwired nature, and if we have a hardwired instinct and we agree that instinct and we look at what is said about instincts and the hierarchy, then we have a biology that we didn't ask, for that transcends ... maybe it's already within us, and it is awoken within us by being in proximity to other people, places, and things that resonate with this and their harmonic presence of being turns that on that's already within us.

I mean, maybe that's a consideration that should be considered. I think that it should be, because what I know is that if you identify yourself with the person that continually makes the same error over and over again, you're screwed in my opinion. You're screwed because that's your biology. That's not you. But if you think that it's you, it would be like, "Hey, Greg, you dummy. You did it again. You're in your 50s. You should know better than this. When are you going to ... Come on, man? Are you kidding me?" People are haunted by it. "Well, God, maybe I just can't control this thing." No, because your survival biology is there 24 hours a day for your entire life, nobody gets over it. With U2, I remember one opening concert for a kickoff tour, Bono was beside himself and it's like, "Wait a minute. You don't need to be ... you're Bono."

Or Lance, "Hey man, I was going to start the race today and I had this thing in my head telling me I was going to have a bad day." I mean, there are no exemptions from this and somehow we've come up with some explanations here that I think that are ... they may be subject ... at least some level of consideration needs to be given to biology on this, in my opinion.

Greg Layton:

I think it's very true. One of my mentors was a guy called John Grinder, who's one of the co-founders of NLP and I remember him telling this story at a workshop he was doing and we're on the topic of self-belief. I really wanted to talk to you about this. I'm so glad this has come up.

Jeff Spencer:

Yeah, let's do it.

Greg Layton:

He was challenging a lady in the audience about being able to rock climb. He was a very good rock climber, John. She said, "What happens when you get to the wall and you don't believe you can do it?" He goes, "I don't have belief." She said, "What do you mean?" He said, "I get to the wall and it's totally silent. It's quiet, it's calm. I'm looking at the wall." It was quite apparent that the flow you spoke about earlier, it had been so long since ... or perhaps she had never experienced that. She was so stuck in this biologic human nature you're talking about that she didn't have a counter example of absolute flow, of absolute freedom and she had generalised all of her failures to all aspects of her life. So a failure here meant I always, right? Whereas opposed to she'd localised all success, "I'm only successful in this thing." My question is if this is biologic in some ways, which I tend to agree-

Jeff Spencer:

No doubt, it has to be.

Greg Layton:

The way you're describing it. Is there some question or practise that is required on a regular basis? Because if this battle is going on every day-

Jeff Spencer:

Every second.

Greg Layton:

It is for me.

Jeff Spencer:

Every second.

Greg Layton:

Before this call, it was going on.

Jeff Spencer:

Yeah.

Greg Layton:

So I'm asking myself what is it that you teach that help people say, "Okay ..." Because the counter as you're talking about ... well, I'm pretty sure you call it the champion mindset,

Jeff Spencer:

The champion's mind. It's not a mindset. The champion has a mind.

Greg Layton:

The champion's mind.

Jeff Spencer:

It's like a human mindset is your anticipated reflex based on your survival instincts and an important part about this is that the human instinct is faster than you can think because the difference between life and death in a physical situation, you don't have time to think about turning away from a driver that's run a red light that's going to T-bone your car. There has to be something faster than you can think because I'm seeing you as you were a quarter of a second ago. I'm not seeing you in real time. A quarter of a second in athletics, that's like gold medal versus stay home and don't even show up.

We have this idea that neurobiology is everything. No, it's something, but it's not everything. The idea of the prioritisation of our biology as survival, both physically and psychologically, because if we don't survive psychologically or physically, then nothing matters on the upside because we're not going to get there anyhow. Therefore, nature's hardwired these responses within us to be able to make sure that we survive. Again, somehow you've had this, everybody has, where there's some physical event where somehow they know what to do, but they didn't think about it. That saved them from imminent danger. Or let's say another example in the psychological world, has anybody ever said anything to you that was perceived as a threat and you responded back to them faster than you could think, with something? And how well did it turn out? Did you say the right thing? Or you say the wrong thing?

Well, it never works out well, as far as I know, from what people tell me. And then a person says, well, that wasn't really me. Well, it had to be you, because it came out of your mouth.

Greg Layton:

Yeah.

Jeff Spencer:

That may be the survival you. But the survival you worked independent of you. Does that make sense?

Greg Layton:

Yeah, absolutely.

Jeff Spencer:

So again-

Greg Layton:

That's faster than you can think, right?

Jeff Spencer:

Yeah. We're getting all sorts of clues about making this mythological truth that we believe to be true because it makes some sense. But on a deeper level of scrutiny, I think that we do need to really take a look at how we're viewing this, because I think that the way that it is being viewed is somewhat incomplete.

And so to answer your question about that, the first thing that I always say to the people that I work with and anybody, is that if you're in a situation where you feel the classic signs of threat, sweaty palms, you're paralysed intellectually. You want to respond, combat ready, whatever, just ask yourself, what do I think about this? Because when you ask yourself, what do I think about this? Then you're going to pause and you, the human observer, is going to ask yourself the question about how your automatic response is taking place. And if we give ourselves space to contemplate it.

For example, one of my clients, he'd been waiting 10 years to have a meeting with Mr. Big, and he got a meeting with Mr. Big. And then he called me, what am I going to do - it's Mr. Big? And I said, well, what do you think about this? And he said, well, Mr. Big needs me because I have the solution to his problem. I said, well, okay, well that's a good thing to know. So I said, well, and by what authority can you say that to me?

Well, I'm me and I know myself. I said, well, great. Well then what are you going to do when you see Mr. Big in five minutes? Well, I'm going to tell him that I have the answer to his dilemma, and I'm going to take ownership of that, because he's called me into this meeting, because he wants to look at me eye to eye. He doesn't want to come in with him here and me here. It's eye to eye.

I said, well, when are you going to do this? He said, five minutes. So if you ask the question, what do I think about this? And you really give yourself a chance, don't intellectually or emotionally answer your own question, but you ask the question intellectually of your soul, what does your soul really think about this? It's, well, wait a minute, I can do this. If he can do this, then I can do this. Why am I acting like this? Well, that's a good question.

And so if we put that little pause in there, we've stopped the chain reaction. And then if we ask ourselves, who am I? Well, I'm Jeff, Olympian, X, Y, and Z, I'm qualified to do this. Okay, great. Then you can seize ownership of it. Well, what are you going to do? Well, I'm going to do X. Well, when are you going to do it? I'm going to do X in Y time.

So all of a sudden you've taken your reactivity that's already put you in a compromised spot, because all the stories that we tell us have catastrophic endings.

Greg Layton:

Mm-hmm.

Jeff Spencer:

It's just the way it is. And so we've taken that and we've put it within the context of reality, and we, the observer, has asked ourselves for... Simple. So much so that one of the things that I have that I give all my clients, I actually have a little card that they put in their wallet that's got the four questions on it.

So what this is, this is an emergency break to prevent our survival instinct or hardwired survival biology from taking charge of the situation. And again, we have to demonstrate the ability to step in front of that and then to give our self the space to ask those four questions with the idea of putting our full capacity in the forefront, to look at this through the eyes of a truth and reality, not talk ourselves out of it. Believing that our initial reaction was true and correct.

It is true and correct if you want to live a survival life. But if you want to live a life of prosperity and contribution and you live your life through your spontaneous fear-based survival responses, you can't get to you by that process.

Greg Layton:

Yeah.

Jeff Spencer:

Well, that's just me. Well, no, it's not just you. It's part of you, it's the reflex survival side of you. But it's not the one that can create the value and the life experience.

Greg Layton:

Jeff, I want to talk a bit about some specific examples and your full Champions framework. Before I do that, there's just one more thing I'd like to talk about. We've spoken about this congruence, the reconciliation of self. Look, there's no single set of questions or frameworks to do this. It's a lifelong process, right?

Jeff Spencer:

You're doing a great job in this conversation too, by the way. It's just been terrific.

Greg Layton:

Oh, thanks, Jeff. I've been fascinated by this journey. I had a similar angel in my life in Canada in 2006, a guy called Chad who gave me some really hard feedback I'd always needed, and took me under his wing and said, hey, mate, look, you're good at this. You're good at that. You're really talented, but fuck me, you're lazy. And I was, really? Because I'm a bit of a self-starter. But what he taught me, I wasn't finishing things well.

Jeff Spencer:

Yeah.

Greg Layton:

So I'd get started and then stop, start. And I had incredible energy to start stuff. But by crikey, was I terrible at finishing. And the reason it hurt so much is because it was so true, and because I respected and valued his opinion. And I said to Chad, hey, okay, I've just got to learn some stuff. What do I do?

And he took me to his house and he had this library. He was like this here, I was about 25 and I went... A lot like you're saying, you've rounded your own education. You've become a polymath in many ways, a philosopher of life. And this was Chad. And I said, where do I start? And he took a couple of choice books, Sucked by Nathaniel Brandon, and all this stuff around the undiscovered self and the... I can't remember the other... Survivor of one of the... Man's Search for Meaning, Viktor Frankl.

Jeff Spencer:

Mm-hm. It's a great book.

Greg Layton:

An incredible book. Incredible book. So I suppose the question I'm trying to get to is, maybe some guidelines on reconciling self at a deeper level. The inner work is so God damn important.

Jeff Spencer:

Yeah. I actually have a chart and a table that I work from that I've created through my observation over the last 60 years that does incorporate points of reconciliation that need to be made, otherwise we get stuck.

Let's say in high school, we think that we're the best athlete on the planet, then we go to college and we get our butt kicked. Well, the reconciliation is that, look, there are people that are going to be better than you are in certain things. And if you don't get over that reality, then you're not going to be able to progress forward. Or you hold a judgement against yourself by not being able to measure up or not having the capacity to do what it takes to come from your full potential, then you're going to get stuck there basically forever.

And then you may have another point where you see, well, gosh, had I been raised by different parents, things may have been different, but I wasn't. So therefore I stuck with this baggage that's holding me back. I have a lot of regrets about that. But again, if we hold onto that forever and we don't reconcile the fact that everybody gets a raw deal, I don't care where you come from, who you are, if you're too domesticated, that's not good. If you have too many disadvantages against you, well that's not good either.

So there's an equation that wrinkles all that out. Okay, for myself, I'm 72, I'm not going to get any younger. I can't go back and do what I did at 50. That was 23 years ago. So there's these points of reconciliation that we do need to look at, and we do need to get beyond, because all I could tell you is that it's never too late to create and live a reconciled world where you can be at peace with everything.

If we have a mechanism to be able to help us identify the things that are holding us hostage from moving forward, and we have a dialogue and a mechanism to have a moment of truth with them, to recognise that we can't go back and we can't unscramble the egg, but to look at the fact that we are human. Part of the human experience is, a lot of this, again, is driven by biology, because we take actions on what we think to be true, but then we find out later it wasn't true at all.

And again, for me, that's developmental biology that's demonstrated in the way that we think. You can't tell a 20-year-old that they shouldn't be doing something because they've already declared in their own mind that they know everything. You can't tell somebody in their 30s that you're running a risk of blowing yourself up, because you're not sleeping enough and you're imbalanced with your relationships, et cetera. And you're playing too big of a risk here with living a leveraged life, a house of cards.

Or tell them, look, you've got the wind at your back, you've had all these amazing successes. Maybe you should pull back a little bit and rest your team up and replenish the resources. What do you mean? You asking me to slow down when I've got the wind at my back? That's ridiculous, I've got to ride this wave as long as possible. So they've got to blow themselves up and then have adrenal fatigue. They got to take a year off to rest and recover from that.

Or a person pushes too hard in their mid to late 30s, early 40s. And the promise is, well, once we get to where I need to get to, then things are going to change. I'll get back to my health and then I'm going to be back and I'm going to restore all my relationships. That's another promise, right? And then all of a sudden you get to your 40s and you have a heart attack or a stroke, catastrophic relationship failure or financial ruin.

There are these things that are 100% predicted based on how we know humans think in their development. I had this conversation last week with someone that I know. I said, look, the way that you're living now in this situation, this is basically a lie. And there are no winners here. You just don't see it yet. And your entire life is at risk here.

And he was trying to figure out how to keep all this stuff hidden and all that sort of stuff. I said, no, no, this is bigger than you are. But I said, I don't expect you to listen to me, because I know that you don't have enough experience to believe what I'm saying to be true to you. But that's up to you to decide. But I'm telling you, what this is and where this is headed.

And of course, he didn't take my advice and he blew himself up in a couple of days. I told him exactly what was going to happen. I said, this is what's going to happen, and you run a high risk of doing this. And that's exactly what he did. He couldn't help himself. So there is a journey that is biologically programmed into it. Like a baby, every step of a baby's life, they could tell you what's coming around the corner. Well, a baby doesn't go to baby school to learn that. It's part of something that activates within them that we should anticipate.

And it's the same way with us as humans. We should be expecting at certain points in our development, based upon our age, certain probabilities or certain things. I could tell you, you're

probably going to have your first divorce in your mid-30. And then you're going to have your second divorce in your early 40s. You're going to have a zone of doom between 38 and 43, because that's when the convergence of all life's pressures converge. And you've spent the last 20 years accumulating all sorts of stuff. And then you're going to be so overburdened by this stuff you don't have any life flexibility. You just want your freedom back.

And you run a risk of disposing of the marriage, quitting your job to get some freedom back, because you'll do anything just to get some freedom back, feel some relief. So I feel that this is biology that also plays a role in this, but yet we're completely responsible for this, because it is us, but we're conflicted.

That's my opinion on this. And I've never seen an exemption from what I'm describing to you. I don't care who it is, it doesn't matter to me, that the same mistakes are made. I know exactly what somebody's going to tell me in the 50s. What am I going to do? I've got 10 years left. How am I going to make my mark on the world?

So, I just feel Greg, that we need so much compassion for ourselves as humans that are entangled in this biology and this evolutionary process. It's part of the species. And I just think that part of the mythology of this is that we expect ourselves to be superhuman, and we condemn ourselves for our humanness, when we should really be more mindful of the possibility of things that could be coming and the early warning signs of them, to avoid them.

But the mistakes that we do make, we have to somehow look at that as a humanness, that had we known better we wouldn't have done it. We didn't choose it to be malicious, but it seemed like it was true, but it ended up not being true. If that makes sense?

Greg Layton:

Mm-hmm.

Jeff Spencer:

We have to clean all that up. We've got to get rid of all the resentments. We've got to get rid of all the hostilities. We've got to wipe the slate clean. But that's not going to occur to us until we've tried it every other way. And then when we get to maybe around 50, we realise Hollywood lied. They lied about sex, drugs, rock and roll, the promised land. I thought I should be able to do it all. Now wait a minute, what's the deal with this?

Greg Layton:

Hollywood and these guys, influencers.

Jeff Spencer:

Yeah. So I hope that answers the question of reconciliation.

Greg Layton:

Yes.

Jeff Spencer:

Because we're always in a continuous state of that. And you have to let go of certain things, otherwise you're going to be stuck at the level that you're stuck at, if you can't let go of stuff.

Greg Layton:

Yeah. I think there's incredible wisdom in what you're saying. And I love the word compassion.

Jeff Spencer:

Got to have it, man.

Greg Layton:

Self-forgiveness. And I think this is what some people might be surprised about. We bring on a guy who's coached people to 40 gold medals, that we're starting with, hey, compassion, forgiveness, internal forgiveness.

Jeff Spencer:

Yeah, for sure.

Greg Layton:

We're talking about love. We're talking about gratitude.

Jeff Spencer:

Yeah.

Greg Layton:

I remember in 2008, I went and lived in China and trained with the Shaolin monks. And I went on to do this project in psych, and I was, fuck, this is going to be so cool. I'm going to go over there. I'm going to learn how to fight. I'm going to be hardcore. I was 28 at the time.

Jeff Spencer:

Well, there you go. See we got it, right?

Greg Layton:

Of course.

Jeff Spencer:

Of course.

Greg Layton:

Exactly like you're saying, right? Yeah, let's go, let's go. And then I got over there and it was a completely different experience. Not that there's a difference between mind, body, soul, spirit, but this was a far more mind and spirit experience, as much as there was incredible physical challenge every day.

We would meditate and then have lessons in morality from our Buddhist monk. And then towards the end we had to have fights, effectively in a cage. But it was in a boxing ring, in the middle of nowhere, with no protection or anything. And you had to turn up and be ready, right?

Jeff Spencer:

Yeah.

Greg Layton:

When my master came to me and he said, you have to go and ask someone to do the honour of fighting you inside that ring.

Jeff Spencer:

Yeah.

Greg Layton:

And I went, oh my gosh. My brain at the time was in this splitting, where you said, like the interruption of the pattern.

Jeff Spencer:

Yes.

Greg Layton:

To get me to a place where I was thinking really, really differently. And then the overwhelming sense that... When I got in that ring, sure, the fear was there, but then all the training and all this other work, I was just incredibly calm for what was in front of me. And I thought, wow, that's not what I expected. There was underlying fear, don't get me wrong.

Jeff Spencer:

No. It's completely normal.

Greg Layton:

There's a guy, who's horrendously scary. But I thought, wow, I'm in a better space than I thought. And in hindsight, it was because of all this additional work.

Jeff Spencer:

Correct.

Greg Layton:

And the big thing for me was, I don't care if I get knocked out, because I've done something else here, which is far greater.

Jeff Spencer:

Correct.

Greg Layton:

Jeff, can we just talk a bit about a couple of champions you've worked with?

Jeff Spencer:

For sure.

Greg Layton:

Yeah.

Jeff Spencer:

Absolutely.

Greg Layton:

And I'd love to talk about any of the great females you've worked with and maybe just highlight, is there much of a difference between working with men and women?

So Lance, you did seven tours with Lance. You were on the ground with him for all the seven tours, through that. Can you talk about what was remarkable about Lance? And outside of the drugs, right, forget. We'll talk about that at the end.

One thing I've always been fascinated by, is what is the difference that makes the difference? There's all these guys, was it 180 riders on the tour? I can't remember exactly the number.

Jeff Spencer:

Yeah.

Greg Layton:

So these are the top, top guys in the world.

Jeff Spencer:

Right.

Greg Layton:

What is the difference that makes the difference in a guy like Lance?

Jeff Spencer:

Well, I think obviously biology plays a role in that. You cannot transcend what your biological limitations are on this. But in my language here, Lance is a radioactive guy, and he's very philosophical about things. He's very, very unique in a lot of different ways.

His cancer was basically a death sentence. You've got a testicle the size of a lemon and it comes off this afternoon. You've got 15 golf ball sized cancers on your lungs. You got cancer in your brain, you got cancer in your abdomen. That's really what he faced in one conversation. And how do you give hope with that?

But Lance knows that he didn't crush cancer through his own will, he survived it. But here's the distinction, is that we have a human nature that I've been pretty explicit to describe in some detail for the limited time that we have here. But the sport of cycling and the ability to achieve and create a life of distinction, it's not a path for everybody. Most people prefer same old, same old for whatever reason. That's not why we're talking about this.

But it's about pain. It's about how far can you push yourself. It's you against yourself. It's you against the boogeyman inside your head. It's about all of those things. And what I can tell you is this, is that most human beings, they will barter their human mindset versus their champion's mind, will barter for the amount of effort that they put into something based upon what they'll get back with a certain level of effort.

And pain is one of the things that we will measure whether we will do it, against or not. And in cycling, because it's so long, it's so hard, especially the tour, pain is part of that. And what I do know about this is that a lot of people will mentally give up way before they hit their biologic limit, because they're afraid at a very primal level about what may happen if they move into this rarefied zone that is so scary, where you're challenging yourself against your ultimate limit. Most people can't go there. Can't do it. Too much. Just too much. Can't do it.

But in my opinion, what Lance had, he had the biology, but he looked at the pain that he had on a bicycle as a reminder that he was still alive. That's a different story. You come up with somebody that is your reference point. How are you going to beat them? Because you, in your own mind, you're asking yourself, I'm getting closer to quitting. That's what most people do.

Greg Layton:

Oh, man.

Jeff Spencer:

They start to feel the pain. They're getting ready to throw up the white flag, throw the anchor out, get off the bike, come up with some excuse.

Greg Layton:

Yeah.

Jeff Spencer:

No, it was a reminder that he was still alive. And he's tenacious, he will never do anything that he would not do 10 times over what he's asking of his teammates. There's a very gracious side to Lance that very few people see. Some people look at him as a demon and a devil. Some people look at him as a deity and a saint. I never looked quite honestly at him as either. I looked at him as being human.

And what I do know, is that if you expect to learn your perfect lessons of life from perfect people, you're not going to learn anything from anybody. It's our own judgement that prevents us from having amazing experiences, where we can learn from just about everybody, in this instance. And a couple of things that Lance said, in addition to that, he said, "pain is temporary, quitting is forever". Think about that. That is a mouthful.

Greg Layton:

Yep.

Jeff Spencer:

That would be one statement that someone could make, they could create a career on. Or when you get a second chance, you go all the way. Well, what does that mean, go all the way? It means that I will go all in, holding nothing back, to test myself against the opportunity.

Most people can't do that. They can say it, but when it really comes down to it, I don't know very many people that could actually do it. I could honestly tell you that as an Olympian myself, the most important thing that I learned from the Olympics is that I learned that you have to find yourself and you have to train yourself into a place where you know how to leave it all on the field. It could be the scariest thing ever, man. Because you've got to go freaking all in.

Greg Layton:

Yeah.

Jeff Spencer:

You can't hold anything back. That is terrifying to a lot of people. And for me, that's part of the secret, because there is a bit of an invincibility that goes along with that. When you recognise that nothing can really hurt you, but you get called a couple of names or whatever, it doesn't matter. There's a certain amount of resolve. There's a certain amount of confidence that one has when they move into these deeper recesses of personal exposure, both mentally and physically.

We're not talking about being reckless, diving out of an aeroplane without a parachute. We're not talking about that type of daredevil stuff. A lot of people think, well, Mount Everest, I'm going to climb it without oxygen. Things like that could be incredibly reckless. Why would you do that? You've got kids, to say that? Why would you do that?

But when it comes to other things that we can set in front of us that test our mettle, to see what you're really capable of. I think that this is a necessary part of what we put on our calendar. I think

you need to build some fear into your life, controlled fear, to test yourself against your reality and what you really think it is.

Greg Layton:

Yeah.

Jeff Spencer:

Are you really reaching the way you think that you're going to in a thoughtful, considerate way? Maybe you should also, on your calendar, build into it difference. Do stuff that gives yourself a chance for your untapped potential to show up.

The only reason I selected cycling, I didn't even know it was there. I went on a ride because I did something different. I had no idea. So I think there's all sorts of ways of creating a level of exposure to reacquaint ourselves with what's really there. And then with a certain level, a sensible approach, not reckless daredevil stuff, to test our self progressively against a possibility to responsibly evolve our self. And as we do that, then we become more connected to our life contribution, we're able to live with less things out of security, but we become more self-directed, requiring less to create a life of value. I think these are really important things that are important to me for the clients that I work with because what I do know is that every one of us is going to walk off the field at some point for the last time. And what are you going to say about yourself? Are you going to say, "I was reckless and put myself in harm's way and I ruined my life and others because I did something irresponsibly"? A lot of people do that.

Or am I going to be controlled and measured in my choices about testing myself against my own reality, to see what's really there? And can I showcase myself as a case study to look at that was able to address the human condition in a way that led to a resolution to live a life of tranquillity, of being in contribution? To me, if you can walk off the field saying there's nothing more that you could have done in this finite opportunity that we have, in my opinion, you've won the game. But I get that a 35-year-old isn't going to get that, and that's okay. That's a deeper conversation for later.

And so in the meantime, you work with where they are at their lifespan development, place of receptivity. And you've got to keep them in the game. As long as they're in the game and they're not setting themselves up for unnecessary risk or harm that leads to difficulty that would perhaps prohibit them from proceeding forward to develop into their full potential. And that's a work of progress over a lifetime, basically. That, to me, is creating a life of value and respect, and it honours the privilege, it says thank you to our mentors and our friends when they're acknowledged through our accomplishments because they know that they helped us, and we acknowledge that. It creates this level of goodwill that is just absolutely infectious as far as the value that we derive as humans from that level of interface with each other.

Greg Layton:

Jeff, you said something there, which I want to highlight. We have said a few times on different podcasts about the importance of interrupting the mediocrity or the pattern of your life by doing something epic. And I've heard you speak on other podcasts about the impact of going all in, right? I did this ultra marathon 15 years ago. And the first day I remember of this race, the internal dialogue was so noisy you couldn't hear the silence of the desert?

Jeff Spencer:

Sure.

Greg Layton:

"What the hell are you doing out here? God, this is where camels belong." And I'm like, "My gosh." But several days later and 250 kilometres and all that kind of challenge, I crossed this finish line. It was the middle of the night after just sort of going 80Ks through 45 degree heat, just absolutely delirious, just horrendously physically destroyed. And I crossed that finish line, and I remember just bawling my eyes out and crying, looking up at the desert, the far reaches of China going, "Holy shit." And my whole life changed that moment.

Jeff Spencer:

Yeah, I can understand why.

Greg Layton:

The perspective, just like... All the bullshit that I had put in my life, I went... I've heard you speak about this, that when you go to some place you'd never been before, that it changes your paradigm and perspective. Can you share a bit of a story about that, and why people need that in their life every now and then? Not always, just every now and then.

Jeff Spencer:

This is really an important conversation, quite honestly. And let me set up a timeline here for perspective on this. That was, for sure, the Olympics for me. When I went there and I experienced the magnitude of possibility, I could understand why astronauts go to the moon and come back, they're tweaked out, because of the whole panoramic of possibility, and people are whining about their oatmeal being too cold or the mail being late, or what are the Kardashians doing? I mean, it's like, oh my God. It's so painful to even listen to that.

But here's the observation that again, in the 30s, that's the decade of conquest. All you want to do is kick everybody's butt and you want to get all this stuff as physical representations of your value and your competency. That's to be anticipated because that's just the way it is. But it creates a lopsided situation, generally speaking, and we're talking here in terms of the high-performance lifestyle, not the average person. And generally, as we get towards the end of the 30s, we start to become suffocated with too much obligation, handling too many balls in the juggling act, our spontaneity and our creativity starts to diminish because of hyper responsibility. The kids are older. We're looking differently because we're gaining weight or we're losing weight, or skin's starting to sag. There's all sorts of things that are happening that we didn't really think about, but now we're looking at the consequences of that.

And generally, I've found that in the early 40s, there's a pause for reset if you survive what I call the zone of doom. A lot of people have to throw all the ballast overboard to start over at that age. Get divorced, they give up everything, they go back to a sterile lifestyle, they throw their job away. We're not talking about those people. We're talking about people that have made their way through the zone of doom. In the early 40s, my recommendation is this, because several of them are my clients. And let me say this too, is that my clients are really founders, they're visionaries, and they're established creators. And I help them develop a level of performance invincibility and dominance that they can maintain for the rest of their life. That's what I do.

So, when we're talking about the early 40s, generally, I suggest that people do somewhat... Let's call it a walkabout. I think you need to do a walkabout, where you have to reacquaint yourself with yourself, because generally you've given up maybe now 15 or 20 years of physical activity that you enjoyed at one point in time. Whether you're male or female, it doesn't matter. We've given up a lot to build the monument to self called business success, et cetera, which to me, is a biologic hardwired drive that you can't resist because we all have it to play a larger game. But I feel that it's really important to reacquaint yourself with this. Do a walkabout, whatever it is. There are people that I've

suggested, you find some physical activity that's prolonged, that maybe is a week or 10 days or two weeks that you do. Go to the Amazon and you go on a guided tour that has hiking or something along those lines, or maybe climb Mount Kilimanjaro, or something along that where you're by yourself and you're putting yourself up against your physicality that you haven't experienced, that you've forgotten 20 years ago. You don't even know who you are.

I see people at that age, they're so unconfident in their ability physically, they don't even know who they are. "I'm afraid to do this because I don't even know if I can do this anymore. I have no idea." So, they've completely neutered themselves from a fundamental aspect of their humanity that they need to reacquire themselves with. And it would be the same thing in terms of getting your health back, because there's a point in time where you burn too many candles too long, you burn through all your functional reserves in your 30s on three hours of sleep a night for 10 years, 15 years. You're at your limit. And if you don't pay that back, then there's a cost to be paid for that, that you don't want to pay, trust me. So, please get your health back, restore your health, do whatever you need to do to restore your health. Do it right, correctly, the first time, because then you're going to have a second half when you come out of the locker room for the second half that you can count on yourself to be there. You're not going to be concerned about blowing yourself up for a final time because you're running on fumes.

If you do those two things, then what you have done with that is that you have created and you have obtained for yourself your entire second half, where you can engage it with all certainty that you will be able to take that journey and complete it. And at that point, you've developed enough maturity to have a sensibility about you to make really good decisions, not only on a personal level, but also on a level on how you're now going to begin serving humanity.

And so I've just found that that little spot there, early 40s, maybe 41 to 44, right in there, that's a real sweet spot for being able to pay back that debt, but to reacquire self with self, because if you don't do that and you get back into action too quick, I can guarantee you that your runway is going to shrink by at least a half, and you're going to put yourself in imminent danger between the ages of 40 and 60 because that's when all the bad stuff starts to show up that you deferred till later that was happening, but you didn't know it because your nervous system didn't inform you of it because it was so small. Yeah, it was there, but you didn't know it. So, you thought you had a clean bill of health when you didn't.

Greg Layton:

Your internal concern is dead. Right, because you haven't... There's something here that I want to almost labour the point on is-

Jeff Spencer:

Yeah, please.

Greg Layton:

We're talking about this stop to understand self and soul, but first thing, part of that is to reacquire yourself with your body

Jeff Spencer:

100%. 100%.

Greg Layton:

And I think that a lot of people would just go away and just sit on a beach. And part of understanding the soul is to understand the body as well. You've got to reconnect the two, right?

Jeff Spencer:

100%.

Greg Layton:

It's a really powerful point you're making.

Jeff Spencer:

100%. It's the first thing that you do is that you have to give yourself permission to reacquaint yourself simultaneously with restoring your body and getting acquainted with your body. Because mostly, again, people have lost touch with it over 20 years. There's been a slippery slide away from it, where we're so buried in work that we forget about the body, but somehow we're surviving. So, we have the delusional thinking that everything's okay because it hasn't hurt me so far. Yeah. Well, you may be one day away from the heart attack or the stroke, and not even know it. And I just feel like it usually goes like this, is that when you realise the necessity of that, you may have some early warning signs or symptoms of it that says, "Stop now before you take the great plunge." When you start to let down, generally, you can almost become comatose because your last 20 years is catching up with you, and you may find yourself with no energy whatsoever.

And you may be conflicted saying, "Well, look, I should be resting. I should be feeling better, but how come I feel more tired?" Well, it's because you're not running on nervous energy anymore. You're finding and you're seeing yourself how you really are. So, rather than digging a deeper hole, you're now starting to fill in the hole. And when you do that, right nutrition, all the right advice that you're getting from whoever's supporting you in this journey back to health restoration, then at that point you're reacquainting yourself with your own mentality and who you used to be and your physicality. And then as that starts to regroup, then you start to do some physical things. And at a certain point, you'll get back to a place where I got to get back to work.

And when that naturally occurs, it may take a year, it may take eight months, who knows? But the point is that there will be a natural point if this is handled skillfully and with respect that it deserves, where you will naturally find yourself with a natural level of enthusiasm and physical ability and confidence and self to now begin your second half. And this is, generally, where you create your legacy, and legacy does matter. But if you blow yourself up and you go down, just when you're starting to get life figured out, then your potential for your own life plus your own case study for others to look at, it disappears. And you as a father disappear. You, as a friend, disappear. You, as a partner, disappear as well. And to me, that's tragic and preventable. If you continue to live life through your fear-based survival instincts out of making choices out of what you believe you stand to lose, then it's a losing proposition. You can't outrun this forever. You can't do it, never seen it.

Greg Layton:

Jeff. There's one thing that... I do quite a bit of work on this side in this men's group called Universal Man. We take men away. And one of the things we talk about is maintaining your own identity through these middle years of your life, like that 30 to 45, you're sort of talking about, that's sort of our main... Well, really 30 to 50 is most of the guys that come along. And that means going, doing things like you were saying on your own, and maintaining a healthy relationship with your mates away from home. Can you talk about the importance, if that makes sense, of that through your life?

Jeff Spencer:

Yeah. Well, it makes a lot of sense because, generally, what you're going to find in your 30s, you think you're gaining your identity, but you're actually losing it, quite honestly. Because if you identify yourself with business success as you, well, no, I mean, that's like I'm successful in business,

therefore I'll be a successful politician. Well, I don't see the correlation there. So, again, what you do see generally in the 30s is that you have people that partnership up in agreement and they say, "Well, look, together, love conquers all, and let's support each other." That's an easy thing to say in your early 30s because you don't have anything, and so you're all experimenting. But then as you start to move you to differentiate and specialise, and then maybe some person becomes the support and another person becomes the more visible and the relationship, then all of a sudden you're moving in different directions and you're finding that you're growing apart, which is more the rule rather than the occasional exception, and everybody's losing their identity.

The person that wasn't growing, because they're the support person that is doing everything on behalf of the other, they're losing their identity because early in the 30s, they were probably working and making a personal contribution in alignment with their assets, but they're giving that up as the support person. And then, the person who now is enjoying some level of success, they're not being looked at as the person, they're looked at as the person that's creating the success, that may not be then the real person, so everybody loses their identity. But the identity crisis happens in the late 30s and the early 40s because you can't outrun this. Because at a certain point, both people are going to be asking, "Who's the real me? Am I the puppet of the boss at the corporation? And I get an employee of the month parking spot because I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing? And what about me and where do I count? Because I've been raising kids and doing laundry. Wait a minute, how do I fit into this?"

And this is completely predictable, 100% predictable that something like this is going to happen, but nobody is prepared for that. So, again, there has to be a mechanism of staying in touch with self while you're going through this. But it's a problem for this reason, because every one of your friends the same age has got the same problem. So, you guys are talking to each other, giving yourself solutions that you think to be true and you've never been through it, so you don't really understand it. So, you're not really addressing the fundamentals of it because you can't look back over history to see it for what it really is. So, in my opinion, there needs to be some level of guidance through this that really understands the dilemma of this and how this, without being intentional, becomes a reality and we're not taken by surprise by it. That's why I feel like a certain level of counsel and connectedness with wisdom is really important. And it's not...

Greg Layton:

Yeah.

Jeff Spencer:

Yeah, well-

Greg Layton:

But this Universal Man group, we've got our Yoda. He's a little bit similar to you, but a different version of Jeff, right?

Jeff Spencer:

Yeah, yeah.

Greg Layton:

These are tough times, right?

Jeff Spencer:

I think-

Greg Layton:

Because the Yoda also tells you... And our conversation's been pretty heavy. We're talking about some heavy topics.

Jeff Spencer:

This is normal. Let me tell you, this is normal.

Greg Layton:

What the Yoda often tells me, he goes, "Just smile and laugh." And I think sometimes life can get incredibly heavy, but he carries a lightness to it. And I think-

Jeff Spencer:

I think it's a bit more complicated than that because there has to be an element of progress being made simultaneously because you can't expect a 30-year-old to look at, "Oh yeah, I have to enjoy the process." There has to be some level of reward. So, I think a lot of the platitudes that we hear being spoken, not between our conversation, but you hear out there from all the experts. I hear expert, I usually run for the exit. I feel like we have to have some level of practical holding in the life span development stage. We have to hold that close while we're providing insight and directive to make sense out of it, but not expecting anybody to understand in advance of their capacity, but to sort of point it out.

And that's why I have a process called the Champion's Enclave. It's a group of 12 people that I get to, periodically, through a private invitation that I extend to people, to join the group. And we get together for two and a half days. And Uncle Jeff kind of takes charge of this, and we have a deep and meaningful conversation and interaction about this whole thing. It's an amazing experience. So, I think that that plays a real role in it. And the need for wisdom counsel I think is really important. And that's not business coaching. Business coaching is bottom line increase. Life coaching is how do you feel good, whatever. But there has to be some level of advisory about the life experience as it's being lived and interpreting that and what should be expected that informs us that we're on the correct trajectory and what should we be mindful of that we're thinking about that isn't true, but it sure seems true that we should be avoiding.

I just think that there's always a need for an ongoing counsel like that. You need somebody outside the loop, not in the loop that shares the same problem.

Greg Layton:

Yeah, that's great wisdom. Everyone needs a Jeff or a Yoda, whatever your version of that is.

Jeff Spencer:

Yeah. Well, channelling goes a long way, just Uncle Jeff to the rescue, I guess. Where was I when I needed me? That's my question.

Greg Layton:

I like that one. Let's go back to some of the pros you've worked with. Let's talk about Tiger.

Jeff Spencer:

Yeah.

Greg Layton:

What's been the most interesting thing about working with Tiger?

Jeff Spencer:

Well, this was a long time ago, but I think the characteristics that all the prolific producers have is that they want to have an honest conversation to understand what the playing field really is. They're looking for honest interaction to understand and be presented with options about, number one, how do we read the playing field that I'm on? What does this mean? What are the implications and what are the options? And how do I deal with this? Everyone is like that. The press isn't always endeared to them because they're not the best sound bites. They prefer the loud mouth, trash-talking guy. So, again, that's what they all share. They're intensely committed to things. They want to understand why they're intelligent.

To say the least, they're very intelligent. I think some of the weak spots that they all share is that they haven't had people speaking into their life possibilities early enough about circumstances that should be anticipated that cause us to potentially stray off the reservation, that could put us in harm's way. Lance and Tiger both have black eyes for different reasons, and so I feel like there's not a conversation that happens early enough about the risks of being precocious and being in the limelight. I think that needs to be put out there early. By the time you have to talk about it, it's too late. They're not going to listen anyhow at that age, isn't going to happen. So, that's what I would say about that. It's a universal characteristic of play at that level.

Greg Layton:

And what has been the most fascinating case study in female pros you work with?

Jeff Spencer:

Oh, the immediate one that comes to mind is Natalie Cook, one of your very own, who won a gold medal in beach volleyball in the 2000 Olympics. Yeah, what a beautiful human being, what a tenacious competitor. She came to me, "Jeff, I want to be the first Australian athlete to be on five Olympic teams." Nobody had ever done that before. And so, we talked about it and I said, "Well, to do this, you have to go against everything that you've already learned because they're going to probably try to make you think that because you're older, you have to try harder and work harder to play with the younger players because you're losing your physical advantages. You've got to go exactly opposite to that because you already have a base of depth, you just need to have access to that when it really counts. And if you bury yourself trying to keep up in training, it'll be too much. Because I know exactly how this is going to go."

So, I told her that, and I said, "Also, that in coming back, there's a lot of travel that you'll be involved in. This is a very ambitious quest that you have. There may be a point in time where it becomes overwhelming and you're going to want to quit, and I'm going to tell you exactly when that's probably going to happen, and so when it shows up, you're going to call me and we're going to talk about it." So, I got a call from Thailand. "Hey, Jeff. You know that conversation that we had, I feel like I'm there." I said, "Well, okay. Well, we called it and here we are now," and we talked about what this means and what we're going to do about it.

And so what was so rewarding about that is that because of who she was and she played at the Olympic level for 20 years, imagine that, being able to hold that space for 20 years, it's unbelievable. And to have a mind that could execute unconventional strategies that were appropriate, but they didn't seem in alignment with what the human mindset and the common culture or the common wisdom would deem to be true. She was able to do that, and she did become the first Australian athlete to be on five Olympic teams. And so to me, that was a major achievement, which means that you're never too old. It means that sensibility triumphs enthusiasm. It means that restraint precedes desperation, to try to catch up and do more. It means that you have to trust doing less, and you have to be able to stand up under criticism that is ill-founded. You're going to have to declare something

of high significance that puts you on the line, because to do that, there's going to be a lot of eyeballs on you, and you have to learn to perform and make choices out of what has to go right for you to achieve it, rather than to look at it through the eyes of how you're being perceived by others. Because they're not going to get it. Then you could tell the story after you're done. She was able to do all of that and stay in the conversation and make it happen over time. That's not something you decide, yet you put it together with two weeks to go. That's more than a year's worth of work. It involves coaching. It involves recovery processes.

My role in that was to be the umbrella that saw the picture from a 100,000 feet, saw how all the parts were integrating and was able to call out what her experience would be later, so when it shows up, though it might be unconventional, we called it out in advance so that she could trust it, rather than look at it as being blindsided by an unanticipated. It was anticipated because we called it out in advance. We discussed when it shows up what we're going to do about it was some measure of detailed adjustment to it.

Greg Layton:

Jeff, have you noticed a difference working with women and men?

Jeff Spencer:

There is a difference, quite honestly. The biology's different. The hormones are different. If the scientists are correct and they look at the brain, neuroscience, women's brain and men's brains are not the same. As far as I know, that hasn't changed with the popular view of how many genders there are, so on and so forth. Even within that, individuals are significantly different. You have to take every person as a unique package. If you understand what makes them tick, then you're going to understand what the reach of their capacity is. You can speak to that and just beyond it to set targets that they can deem as being real. That will keep the evolution towards bigger on track and being able to progress at the optimum speed over time. That's really the whole secret.

You're not trying to make someone fit what you know, but you're looking at them and their needs. You're selecting from the library, in the history, the choices to be made that have the most value of them as a totality advancing forward. Because remember, as I said earlier in our conversation, it's like the sum of the parts that make up the individual. If those are in harmony with each other, then you get an exponential, emergent level of performance that we call full potential.

It's not an arithmetic. It's not an addition problem solved by working harder, being more detailed, being more focused, having more things. That's not the math that's done on it. If we hold that and we keep them in belief because they're seeing progressive improvement, that has to be explicitly detailed and named. Otherwise the expectation becomes too high. We've got to make sure that as long as that's balanced and we're able to account for what's coming and how we got to where we are, then they're going to stay in belief like, "This is going to happen."

Then eventually over time, the belief goes to knowing. Then once they know that they can do it, it's game over. You just can't now rush to the finish line or get greedy trying to do too much too fast to get there. It's game over. It's really, you can see how this is a matter of pacing, reading terrain and knowing when to pull back, knowing what to say, when. It holds it together. The idea work harder and you're going to get there, that's a great way of looking at it through human nature. Let's fight and let's see who's smarter. But it can't deliver on the overarching capacity of full potential.

Greg Layton:

So much wasted energy, when it's all about directed towards a competition. Then I think I've heard you say, all you're doing then is playing on their playing field, not your own.

Jeff Spencer:

No, 100%. Most people do that. It's like, "Yeah, I'm going to prove him wrong." If that's your motive, then you've already lost. "Sorry man. Sorry, you've already lost." Or "I'm going to do a comeback." "Nope, sorry. Don't do it. You've already lost." Yeah, that's not a reason to do anything. A lot of this has got to be negotiated through the eyes, what history tells us to be true. Knowing that 90% of the people won't listen because the boogeyman inside their head is telling them another story, that they just can't believe that less is better. There's just too much fear in letting go. Too scary.

Greg Layton:

Jeff, thank you so much for your time. There's probably just one or two more things.

Jeff Spencer:

Yeah, of course. Let's do it.

Greg Layton:

To cover a few, right?

Jeff Spencer:

Yeah, of course.

Greg Layton:

We have spoken a lot today about this internal personal congruence, the reconciliation building towards the champion's mind so that when you take the field, you're in flow. It's that beautiful experience of time slowing down, complete relaxation. Then this journey in between dealing with life's chapters and all the challenges that go with that.

One of the things that I love about what you do and I hope people have heard it, is you are often talking about the system. The system of, in my head, the system of life. Actually what you've done is you've created a whole series of frameworks that deal with the system of building high performance. Those systems are the ones that I've seen of yours. I haven't seen them all.

But there's quite a few frameworks I love because it creates clarity and it creates a sense of what do I do next in the framework. Gives people a roadmap or a blueprint so they don't skip steps along the way.

Jeff Spencer:

Yes.

Greg Layton:

What I'd like, if you're open to it, is could you talk us through the Champion's Blueprint methodology? Just there's a set of steps there, which I think most people would be skipping probably at least half, probably eight of the steps out.

Jeff Spencer:

Yeah, let me do this.

Greg Layton:

Yeah.

Jeff Spencer:

Yeah. I think it would probably be a more effective and accurate way of doing it. Let me talk about the Champion's Ladder. Let me talk about the Champion's Ladder.

Greg Layton:

Okay, that's good. Yeah.

Jeff Spencer:

The Champion's Ladder, of course it's gold. I couldn't get myself to do a silver or a bronze ladder. It's got to be a gold ladder, right?

Greg Layton:

Yeah.

Jeff Spencer:

Just can't get myself to say that. Just imagine a gold ladder. It's got five rungs on it. The rung is not a hierarchy of importance. It's simply saying that to go from where you are to full potential, there are five different competencies that have to be there that create a system for this happening. Competency number one is that you have to have a champion's mind. A champion's mind is different than a human mindset. A human mindset thinks that if I think good thoughts and I have affirmations, I'm going to get to where I want to get to.

That would be like recital or thought takes me there. Where a champion's mind, it's a living, breathing organism. That in real time is absorbing context and complex data volume and intensity. It's thoughtfully considering what does all this mean? Then it can correlate at a store route, interpret, modify data and transmit data. That's a lot different than one thing. Try harder.

No, this is digesting, interpreting reality in present time and knowing how to select from all the things that I could do, what's the most appropriate thing to do to take me forward based upon current context. That's a completely different story. That's why a champion's mind is necessary, not a mindset list of things that we recite and do.

The second thing is that we have to control our day. If you can't control your day, you can't control your life. It's just that simple. If you can't control your life, then you can't be a leader because nobody's going to trust you. If you can't control your life, you have energy leaks all over the place, you're going to be amazingly inefficient. You're not going to be able to get stuff done.

I've created a programme called the Champion's Perfect Day. This is what a day looks like to take advantage of our natural hormone and neurotransmitter peaks and valleys throughout a day, which is how we should sequence the choices of what we do to be in alignment with our biology, not to swim upstream against it. You have to be able to control your day.

Number three, you have to know how to win. I created a model called the Goal Achievement Roadmap that shows what the process of winning is. Basically, the champion's golden rule is do the homework and the test is easy. You have to make sure that you prepare well so that when you step onto the field, your game becomes automatic. That's kind of what you said. You step onto the field and it's flow. That means that everything that creates flow has already got to be there. That's all about preparation. I don't think most people prepare well.

Somehow, they think that if I just show up and trust the universe, the universe is going to give me everything I need to know, to do. Or I've been told by the experts, "Fail fast and learn by failing." I'm

saying, "That's a fast way to erode your confidence and self. I don't know that that's really a good idea." Why don't we make sure you know what readiness is because your readiness determines the time, distance, energy and resources necessary to get from where you are to any conceivable goal that you would currently have.

Then we just need to know, "What does the process of active pursuit of a goal look like? What are the things that I should be looking for, interpreting correctly so that I can add the assurance that I'm on track to get to the finish line on time, under budget and with least amount of resources consumed?" That would be rung number three.

Rung number four is, you have to be able to peek around the corner and see what's coming. Otherwise, you're going to get blindsided by something that's small, that's growing. That's a problem. Or you may miss an opportunity that's a faster way to bigger, better, that you don't see because you're too hyper focused. Yeah, I know all the experts say high hyper focus, yeah, I get that. But at the expense of a better idea, forget it. I'll take less focus. If it's seeing a blind spot that I can avoid, then I'll reduce the focus to see the blind spot that takes me out of the game. We have to have a neck mechanism where we can anticipate the future.

Finally, we need to control momentum. Momentum is our most precious resource in this particular dimension that we live in. Momentum is basically everything. We need to know how to generate it. We need to know how to keep it in motion. Those five areas that I just went through, those five areas, if they're developed simultaneously throughout a lifetime, as we evolve from where we are to our last breath, then we will be playing about as close to our full potential as we can get, which is an evolutionary process that never ends.

We never arrive at that over lifetime. I wish we could go into the details of that, but suffice it to say that if people look at that list of things and they place themselves within that, for sure, you'll be able to pick out areas that you're strong and weak. That may give you an insight as to what your needs are and where you might start in your quest to live a more efficient life that leads to higher productivity and outcome with less time and effort.

Greg Layton:

Wow. Jeff, I want to make sure we correct some things in the show notes so people can access that and connect with you. Before we go through some final questions, I want to talk about one of the things in your life you're most proud of. That is raising your beautiful daughter, Kim, and what that has taught you about life, parenting, humanity. Can you just tell us that story a bit?

Jeff Spencer:

Yeah, the best ever. We adopted our daughter at the age of 10 from Columbia when I was 58. If you can believe that, people thought I was insane. Like, "What are you doing? You're at the height of your career. You're adopting a 10 year old from Columbia. Do you know how risky that is?" It's like, "Let me say this. When I got called to be an Olympian, I became one. When I got called to show my art in the best galleries in New York City, I did it. I just know that when I'm called to something, if I answer the call, I've done my job as a human. I could walk off the field knowing that there's nothing that I could have done more in life to honour life's process and life's privilege."

When we brought her back to America, we had no language. We didn't speak Spanish. She didn't speak English. We had no language. She had no school because rural Columbia, why do you need school? You don't need school at all. She had PTSD and ADHD from getting beaten up and worse, daily from the age of 4, as bad as it gets. She had a parasitic-ridden body, severe malnutrition for 10 years, didn't trust anybody. Why should she? Humanity betrayed her, to the highest level.

I told my wife, "This is not an easy thing. This is a formidable foe." Our desire for our daughter was not just to save a life, but we wanted to manifest a potential. That's a sizable task with what we were faced with. I said, "I need to reduce my professional availability by 90% starting tomorrow," which I did to be her dad. Along with that one, 90% of our income, that's okay too. Whatever.

Answering the call is more important to me than being fearful about what life may be in the future and turning your back on a calling. To me, that would be the worst thing that anybody could do in terms of honouring life. Let's put it this way. My wife cried every day for 9 years and 10 months. It was so difficult, literally. Around the 10th year, my daughter graduated from high school with honours, even though she cheated her way through because she was raised as a criminal, a thief, a liar and a cheat. We didn't hold that against her. That was not who she really was. She didn't ask for that. That was something imposed upon her. I thought it was pretty genius that she was able to make that happen. She knew it and I knew it. We sort of wink, winked.

"Yeah, we know how this happened." We know. It's just between us. It's just between us. Then so when she graduated from community college, doing it herself with honours, I knew that she was going to be okay. Then she was back performing at the same level as her same age counterparts when she graduated from four year college. I guess that the take home here is several things.

Number one, you can love anybody. It's a decision that you make. There doesn't need to be a special set of conditions. It's not a one-way street. I'll give you this, if I get that. No, you don't do that. That's not a barter that you do. You show up and you get the job done with every ounce of commitment and love that you can muster up, which is really easy to do.

When the kid wraps her legs around you, they bury their head in your chest because they've never been hugged. They've never been told that they've been loved. That is the easiest thing in the world to do, man. Nothing else matters.

I also learned that you have to trust the process. Because there are going to be moments where you're so isolated and you feel so alone. Because nobody understands the magnitude of the commitment and the pervasive nature of this. It's incessant that you have to trust the process because sometimes all you have is a hope that you're going to get through the day. That's all you got. Because there is no visibility beyond that. Life is like that sometimes.

I also learned that it's really important that you always hold space for a miracle. That you never give up on the possibility of a miracle, because we had one. Sometimes that's all you got, is the hope of a miracle. It doesn't mean that you can command it into existence because it doesn't work like that. Miracles aren't a bartering chip that you make a deal with God. I'll put 100% into this if you give me that. You don't do that. You never withhold the possibility of a miracle.

Those are the most important things that I learned from the experience itself. By far my proudest achievement. What I'll say here and this is probably another thing I learned, that never, never discount the value of what you think you bring to humanity. All the magazines, all the comparisons and our human nature, it's always comparing us against everybody else. This scorecard, that's probably not even a real scorecard. It's probably highly embellished, quite honestly.

We talk ourselves out of a lot of certainty that we deserve to be giving ourselves because of the comparison game. Nothing that anybody does is insignificant. The most important thing that you should be mindful of every day is deciding how you're going to show up. Because if you show up and you let your moods dictate how you're going to show up, you've failed as a human. You've failed

other people as a human. Because people failed my daughter because they imposed upon her something that she didn't ask for. She's scarred for life because of it. None of us have the right to do that.

In my opinion, that's something that we need to be mindful of every day. It's good for us because it keeps us sober. It keeps us in the game. It's a purpose that is worth living for. It's how we transcend our self to become our highest value of self, to be able to contribute to others and leave a legacy of high impact and meaning. That's what I learned from my daughter.

Quite honestly, the empowerment of the experience. I don't need a lot. I could live on a cot in the corner of a room and be okay. As long as I had one of the best bikes in the world, a bicycle to ride and I had my computer and a desk. I could be as happy as could be. I don't need anything else. I don't because I don't need it. I've had a certain level of experience in my own life where I know where the value is. The value is in the freedom to explore, to be able to bring and create my highest contribution to humanity. If I can do that, then I've done my job. I can walk off the field.

The two things I want to end with here if I can, is that somebody asked me, "How do you decide what dreams you're going to pursue?" I said, "I don't pursue dreams. I answer callings." When I get the call, I show up faithfully. I commit and I get the job done just the way it is, just the way that I've always done it.

I'll also remind people that there's only one of us in all the creation. There's not another you. You're a unique addition of one of one that makes a contribution in everything that we say, everything that we do, both in the spoken word and in the written word. It's in the human archive. It influences that in a way that only we could do, that does impact the quality of what other people will be exposed to about what human potential and human possibility is.

When I think about that, I think what we have to give, we need to put meaning into our life somehow. When we're the best at what we're best at, we know what our gifts are, we share that liberally. Then we can live a life of tranquillity. We can walk off the field knowing that nothing more could have been done. Thanks again for the opportunity to have this conversation. It means a lot to me.

Greg Layton:

Jeff, it has been fantastic. I thank you for finishing on that wonderful note. It's a lifetime of wisdom there that I think everyone needs.

Jeff Spencer:

Thank you, Greg.

Greg Layton:

And that legacy you're leaving. Thank you, mate.

Jeff Spencer:

We'll talk soon.

Greg Layton:

We will. Thanks Jeff.