

## My Child Will Thrive Podcast: How Mindset Can Be your Child's Superpower with Todd Herman

Tara Hunkin:

00:00

This is the My Child Will Thrive podcast, and I'm your host Tara Hunkin, nutritional therapy practitioner, certified GAPS practitioner, restorative wellness practitioner, and mother. I'm thrilled to share with you the latest information, tips, resources, and tools to help you on the path to recovery for your child with ADHD, autism, sensory processing disorder, or learning disabilities. My own experiences with my daughter, combined with as much training as I can get my hands on, research I can dig into, and conferences I can attend have helped me to develop systems and tools for parents like you who feel overwhelmed, trying to help their children. So, sit back as I share another great topic to help you on your journey.

A quick disclaimer before we get started, My Child Will Thrive is not a substitute for working with a qualified healthcare practitioner. The information provided on this podcast is not intended to diagnosis or treat your child. Please consult your healthcare practitioner before implementing any information or treatments that you have learned about on this podcast. There are many gifted, passionate, and knowledgeable practitioners with hundreds, if not thousands, of hours of study and clinical experience available to help guide you.

Part of our goal is to give you the knowledge and tools you need to effectively advocate for your child, so that you don't blindly implement each new treatment that comes along. No one knows your child better than you, no one knows your child's history like you do or can better judge what is normal or abnormal for your child. The greatest success in recovery comes from the parent being informed and asking the right questions and making the best decisions for their child in coordination with a team of qualified practitioners in different areas of specialty.

Now, on with the show.

Hi, and welcome to the My Child Will Thrive podcast. Today on the podcast, we're going to talk about mindset and the importance of mindset for both us as parents and for our children as they are working through all the different challenges that they encounter through their lives, and as we do through their recovery.

The person we're going to be talking to about this today has recently published a book, which I'm going to mention in a moment, called *The Alter Ego Effect*, and he's going to walk us through how to go about helping our children and ourselves

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with our mindset. But I want to give you some background about Todd Herman before I bring him on to talk to you further.

Todd is an author, performance advisor, and entrepreneur. For 22 years, his training company, Herman Performance Systems, has focused on helping achievers and ambitious people in sport and business achieve wildly outrageous goals, while enjoying the process. Todd is originally from Alberta, Canada where he grew up on a large farm and ranch, and developed a healthy dislike of chicken coops. Todd's company provides a suite of programs, serving Olympic athletes, entrepreneurs, and leaders. Todd is also the author of *The Alter Ego Effect*, I just mentioned, the power of secret identities to transform your life. He's also the creator of the 90 Day Year, a performance system designed to create remarkable results for business owners fast. The 90 Day Year has won the Stevie Award for Global Leadership and Skill Development Program of the Year twice. Todd is also the recipient of the Inc. 500 Fastest Growing Companies Award. He's been featured on the Today Show, Sky Business News, Inc. Magazine, and CBC National News, and now the My Child Will Thrive podcast.

Todd lives in New York City with his wife and three young children, who he will talk about during this interview, and is also self-proclaimed as the currently world's worst ukulele player. Without further ado, I want to introduce you to Mr. Todd Herman.

I'm excited to have with us today on the My Child Will Thrive podcast Todd Herman. You've heard about him already in the intro. Todd, I was lucky ... fortunate enough to meet Todd through a program he runs, which I mentioned before, the 90 Day Year. I was able to get mentoring and guidance from Todd, and also learn about the thing he's going to talk about with us today, *The Alter Ego Effect* through those programs and how effective it can be for all types of people.

So, we're going to step outside the medical side and talk about mindset and how we need to have the right mindset as parents and for our kids as well. Welcome, Todd.

Todd Herman: 04:43

Thanks, Tara. Appreciate it. I love talking about this stuff, especially when it comes to how it applies to youngsters and those of us who've got little young ... I'm a parent of three kids under five, so all of this stuff applies beyond the Olympic athletes and the business leaders that I work with. So, thanks.

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Tara Hunkin: 05:01 Yeah. Well, so am I because I think I was ... I told you before and I tell other people that I've used the alter ego effect in terms of talking to my kids and, in particular, my older daughter about mindset. She can sometimes get stuck on certain ideas, but maybe she gets that from her mother. She comes by it honestly. But it has been incredibly helpful for her. So, this is really practical advice that really everybody can use.

So, why don't we just dive right in, and talk about your book. So, The Alter Ego Effect, which I ... and I love the power of secret identities to transform your life. So, what's the basic premise behind the book itself?

Todd Herman: 05:44 Yeah. So, there's a lot of different kind of ideas that I share around how alter egos and secret identities can really help someone just do the challenging things that life throws at us. I mean, many people that are going to be on here, you don't have to be ambitious enough on here to like go and try to scale a business to like multi-million dollars. Ambition can come in many forms, ambition can be just someone who wants to lead a powerful family and build an amazing culture just within that family. That's extremely noble, and that's ambitious because parenting is challenging, as we know, and there are moments when we can get worn out in our day, and then we end up saying things that we don't mean or want to say 'cause we're just worn out. And I'll talk about just how leveraging the idea of an alter ego can actually help us in those moments as well, and how I use it as well.

But the idea around the effect is that the effect that an alter ego and a secret identity has on people is that it unlocks a heroic self where all of the traits, the capabilities, the skills that you've already got, end up showing up in your world and on your field of play for you because there's nothing worse than ending the day where you feel like, "Why didn't I say this instead of that?" or, "Why didn't I take this action like I said I was going to do?" or, "Why didn't I speak up when I had the chance?" or something. What it does after a while is it starts to create what I call in the book a trapped self, where you feel like the way that the world is experiencing me isn't my real self, it's not the real me because I've got other ambitions or I've got things that I want to be getting out there, and I'm not doing it. Nothing is more debilitating to our sense of self, self-esteem, self-confidence, than that.

And so, alter egos and secret identities, I discovered 'cause I used it when I was a young teenager when I played football, I stepped into an alter ego so I could get my best capabilities out

onto the football field. And then, when I started a business when I was young, 21, I mean, I'm from western Canada, I grew up on a big farm and ranch outside of Medicine Hat, Alberta, which is close to the middle of nowhere. Literally, I think there's an actual town neighboring mine called Middle of Nowhere, Alberta.

But when I started in business, I looked like I was 12, I was 21, and so, I was so insecure about what I was going to be coming across to other people, and we all do this, right? Like we all fall into this trap about worrying about what other people are thinking of us, and I say in the book how that's just one of the kind of tricky little tools the enemy likes to use to pull us into that ordinary world where the trapped self exists. But the more and more that I ... after I started that business and I started to remember what I used in football as an alter ego, I was like, "Why can't I use that in business? This is just a different field that I'm going onto." It doesn't mean that alter egos are reserved for entertainers and athletes, we all need to perform in some way. I mean, I've got to perform ... performance is just really the results that you're getting, right, in your role, as a parent, as a leader, as a aunt, uncle, son, daughter, whatever the case might be.

And so, I tapped back into that strategy, and it helped me get past those insecurities that I had, so I could get myself out there. And when I started working with athletes, I started seeing that, well, the ones who keep on consistently performing at their highest keep on mentioning this idea of using a character or a persona or "I'd step into ... I'd kind of ... I step into a different version of myself," that's what they would consistently say. And I was like, "Wait, I did the same thing." After a while, kind of the dominoes finally dropped in my head and I thought, "Wait a second," and I went back through all my notes, and that's when I kind of codified and said, "Well, this seems to be a consistent thread, weaving all of the elite performers together. So, let's start creating a process." And then that's what I became known for, for the last 15, 16 years is building up alter egos and secret identities as one of the strategies that we use with athletes, taking it beyond that into public figures and leaders and entertainers that I've worked with as well.

And now with the book, it's about making it accessible to everybody because the worst thing that people could think is, "Oh, well, I can see how it would work for them, but really I'm [inaudible 00:10:01], I'm a ..." and even in that, I'm like, "Why are you dismissing yourself? What you're doing is incredibly valuable." And so, that's what I'm excited about bringing out.

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And how powerful it is to really continue to nurture and embrace this idea for your kids because it has been proven through, again, it's not just stories in here, there's science and there's data that backs up why this is so powerful. Plus, just the people in history that have used it as well, it's pretty hard to argue with Winston Churchill who used it, Martin Luther King who used this exact idea, Oprah Winfrey used this, and they've said it many times. It's just that most people don't notice that they're mentioning it, but me as someone who's a practitioner of it, I'm reading between the lines and I'm like, "Oh that, they've just said it again. They've just said it again."

- Tara Hunkin: 10:43 Yeah.
- Todd Herman: 10:43 But how this nurturing of this idea really helps young kids as well develop more grit, more perseverance, and more importantly, their self-talk becomes way more supportive to themselves. We can talk about that kind of, that stuff that I talk about in the book, here as well.
- Tara Hunkin: 11:03 Yeah. Well, I mean, well first of all, we know that works, like you said, from the examples in history and the people that you picked out, and there is a lot of science in the book. I know you, you like data.
- Todd Herman: 11:14 Yeah.
- Tara Hunkin: 11:15 It's all about the data, so tying it back to the science and the data is one of the reasons why I've always liked your work because I feel the same way.
- Todd Herman: 11:15 Yeah.
- Tara Hunkin: 11:23 And the parents that are listening to this in particular, I think it will resonate with them because, like you said, sometimes we say we're just the parent-
- Todd Herman: 11:30 Yeah.
- Tara Hunkin: 11:31 We aren't just anything, especially these parents. They are fighting for their kids-
- Todd Herman: 11:35 Yeah.
- Tara Hunkin: 11:35 And doing everything they can to help them. But sometimes, it is not just the mindset of the parent, but the mindset of the child that is really struggling to move things forward because

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many parents have experienced a lot of healing with their kids, but their kids are still stuck in what they were capable of previously or they aren't ... they haven't figured out yet how to live with what they've been given.

Todd Herman: 12:02

Yeah.

Tara Hunkin: 12:02

One of the things in your past too that you shared with me previously is that you have dyslexia. So, does that play in at all to how you take on your alter egos and applied that in your own life?

Todd Herman: 12:16

Well, I wrote the foreword to the book for a lady who wrote about her journey as being a parent to a daughter with "learning disabilities", and exactly like I say in the foreword is I don't look at myself as learning disabled, as I'm learning enabled because all that my dyslexia did was it amplified a part of my brain that allows me to think differently than someone who doesn't have that skill. I look at my dyslexia as 100% it's a skill.

Now, I didn't get diagnosed with dyslexia until I was 21, so I was completely through the educational process. And so, I didn't have anyone at like the age of eight making it where I was like, "Oh, that's why I'm not built for this world that I'm ..." 'cause school isn't built for dyslexics, school isn't built for people with ADD or hyperactive activity or autism, all those things. It's the classic quote, I think it's Mark Twain that said, "If every animal was graded based on whether or not it could climb a tree, a turtle would have a very tough time," or any other animal for that sake. And that's kind of what school does, right? We're graded on one specific quality, how well you can memorize things and then recall it in the moment when you're tested.

So, for me, I ... And so, because I went through that experience what it does is, people who go through this, you end up, because the world isn't built for the way that you operate, you end up having to come up with very, very creative ways to operate inside of it. And so, the great super skill that people with ADD or dyslexia and stuff end up building is this fantastic imagination and creativity skills. That's why as a career path, entrepreneurs tend to lean highly into this category of people because you've had to, at a very young age, develop a muscle of grit and perseverance and [inaudible 00:14:19] fortitude.

Now, it doesn't feel great when you're going through it, that's not ... But I think that a danger that parents could fall into now, and, again, I've got three little ones, I don't want them to experience pain or anything like that, but we end up missing out

on allowing them to develop a real good quality skillset of being challenged at a young age and then overcoming that, which I'd much rather them learn at young than older, and then be confronted with a world that is challenging them at an older age as opposed to younger.

Now, so, I can't say that this helped me find alter egos, it could have. But I definitely stayed tapped into this creative self, so that I could, I guess, still operate in that world. Now, for me, the one thing that it ... what's important for parents to do with youngsters is, the quality of our world is ... there's many factors that go into it, but one of them is based on the quality of the questions that you ask yourself because questions are a way that we start to frame the world, frame our situations. And so, if you say, "Why is this happening to me?" Well, that's going to create a certain set of paradigms that you're going to look at life through.

And the great thing about something like this is this can help reshape a youngster's identity and how they see themselves because they can say, if they're caught up in the moment and they're just entangled in their sort of circumstance, you can say, "Hey, that's great, but what would happen if ... what would Batman do in this moment?" or pick a character or a superhero or someone that they like. I mean, Paw Patrol is constantly played in my house right now, and so, there's Rubble, Rocky, Zuma, Skye. I can name them all, and I've got the Paw Patrol song in my head right now. But it would be just asking them, "Well, what would that person do?" And just that question alone can allow the youngster to dispense disbelief about their existence, and allow them to step into something else.

It's the one phenomenal genius superpower that human beings have. It's not our capacity to love someone else or something else, other animals on the planet have that capacity too. We're not unique there. Now, I'm not saying that's not a powerful thing, of course that's powerful, but that's not unique to us. What is unique to a human being is our ability to create a Heaven from Hell or a Hell from Heaven. We can create worlds in our heads. We can create ... we have this creative imagination that nothing else on the planet has, and what an alter ego or a secret identity helps us to do is navigate life with more grace so that we can show up as we want with the characteristics and traits that we know are sitting inside of us.

One of the studies that I share in the book is this study from the University of Minnesota where a lady, who the lineage of it, of how I was told, was that a lady was at one of my talks years ago,

shared this with her friend who is this research about my talk on alter egos. And so, she wanted to kind of do a test with it, and the study's called the Batman Effect. They brought a bunch of children into a room, four to six year olds, and they gave them a puzzle that was not solvable, and they wanted to see how long they stuck with that puzzle, right, before they quit on it to measure their grit and perseverance.

So, they did. They calculated all the stats. The one thing that they didn't expect to start kind of tabulating was also their self-talk, like how they were talking, 'cause that's kind of the ... that's the way that we're expressing our experience on the inside of our grit and perseverance.

So, anyways, they did that, and then they rolled in this rack of costumes, Batman and Dora the Explorer costumes, and they asked them to pick their favorite character, put on the costume, and then they brought in another puzzle, again, not solvable, and they wanted to see how long they would stick it out while ... The results of it were that when they put on the costume and they acted through that character, behaved like it, their level of grit and perseverance, which is measured by how much longer they stuck out using that or working on that puzzle, went way up. But the other side effect of it was their level of self-talk and what they thought about themselves went up as well. They would say things like, "Batman wouldn't quit, so I'm not going to quit." Right? Things like that.

Well, you can translate this stuff into medicine, and it's actually one of the studies that I'm going to finance in the next, is one on the effects of alter egos and secret identities, when people are going through medical challenges, going through cancer. So, you could take the cancer treatment or the chemo treatment or whatever yourself, but what if in the moment, you were given a cape or you put on Batman mask or I know someone who is taking this and their son loves Darth Vader and he puts on the Darth Vader helmet. That's when he's getting ... and he just, it just, it increases their level of intestinal fortitude, right? And I mean, I'm fortunate in that I didn't have to see my children get a major needle stuck inside of them, but if I could find a way to have my kids navigate something that's as challenging as that, I am going to definitely walk through the fires of Hell to make sure that that happened, right?

Tara Hunkin:

19:46

Yeah, yeah. So, what do you tell people who ... So, one of the things people say is that, should we be teaching our kids or ask ourselves just to be yourself and the authenticity around that-

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- Todd Herman: 19:46 Sure.
- Tara Hunkin: 19:59 'Cause I know that's a question that comes up quite a bit.
- Todd Herman: 20:01 Yeah, I know. If there's two questions that come up consistently it's that authenticity side and then the other one is that, yeah, I get how that could work for athletes and entertainers, but I lead a pretty regular life. We've kind of already talked about that, just the powers of it. But getting to the authenticity side of things, like I always say to people, being inauthentic is actually when you're doing something to deceive others, right? 'Cause that's what we don't want to do, we don't want to be deceiving other people 'cause that is being inauthentic. We don't want to fake out someone else. And that's where people would be looking at the veneer of the alter ego as that's ... if that's how you're doing it, then yes, you're being inauthentic.

It all comes down to the intention of why you're doing something, and that's why, if you're doing something from an outside perspective, that's what actually I talk about in chapter number three, that actually was what creates a trapped self. Anytime you're allowing a circumstance or you're doing something to impress other people, it's going to trap you 'cause there's nothing good that's going to come out of that at all.

Conversely, in an extraordinary world, you're acting from an inside out approach, you're being very intentional about who and what is showing up out on that field to play for you. That is actually untapping your true authentic self, the real self, the core self, and that is not being inauthentic at all.

Again, gang, like people can't argue science. People can't ... this is just how the brain is built, right, the creative imagination. And I mean, I always challenge people anyway, I'm like, authenticity, it's a very slippery slope because after a couple of questions, I can basically break anyone's argument around what authenticity kind of is because we all know that there are many stages that we stand on in life, in the book I all them fields of play, right? I've got one when I go home to my kids, I've got one that I have in business, I've got one when I'm hanging out with my friends, I've got one that I have when I'm going home to see my parents 'cause no matter what I do, I am still the 10 year old kid, coming back from Disneyland who left his freaking wallet on the plane, right? Like, so now, I am Forgetful Todd, and it's literally the only time I've ever lost something.

So, anyways, we have all these fields, and on those fields, stages, we have aspects of our personality that are being

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magnified in that moment. Of course I'm different with my children as I am with my friends, that makes sense to people, and that's all this is doing. It's just that we're being very intentional about how and what we are using to get us to show up like we know that we can. That is being really authentic, starting from the inside and going out. It has nothing to do with being inauthentic. And I would argue with people, would you call Martin Luther King inauthentic because he wore glasses, like myself, that were nonprescription?

Tara Hunkin: 22:39

Yeah.

Todd Herman: 22:40

People don't know that about him. It's actually why in my book, I'm holding it up for people on the podcast in this video, but on the book, there's a pair of glasses on it. Well, some people think it's because I wear glasses that are nonprescription and that's what I used when I was starting in business to go and step into a different version, but those are actually the replica of Martin Luther King's 'cause he did the same thing, 'cause he felt like he had such an important message and movement to honor that he didn't want to get any of those ... have any of those insecurities that he might have about himself show up. So, he used glasses as a shield to his self, and show up as his distinguish self. That's what he called it, my distinguished self, to show up and do the tough things that he wanted to go and do.

And again, anyone trying to deny it, again, I've worked with people for 16,000 hours one-on-one. When you work with people that long, you really do see the reality of how people are operating, not through the lens of someone who's researching from an outside perspective, I'm crawling in between the six inches, and I've seen what real elite people do, and what people who are struggling do. The ones who are elite, they definitely use their creative imagination more than those other ones do, and they get trapped inside of these arguments of being inauthentic and authentic, it's just one way that they do it.

Tara Hunkin: 23:54

Before we go through, 'cause I want you to take everybody through the breakdown of those layers in terms of from the inside out, but before we do that, can you give an example of like, you worked with amazing people from all walks of life, do you have a favorite example of how stepping into an alter ego and doing that to bring the best out in someone has really impacted their life? I know there's lots of them but-

Todd Herman: 23:54

Yeah.

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- Tara Hunkin: 24:20 Do you have a favorite one from your work?
- Todd Herman: 24:23 I don't have a favorite one, actually.
- Tara Hunkin: 24:25 Can I bring one up you mentioned to me? So, one time you mentioned to me that equestrians were your, and of course, I've used that with my daughter 'cause she's an equestrian, but you said that was your favorite people to work for and I asked you why. So, can you tell everybody why that might be?
- Todd Herman: 24:42 Yeah. Well, one of the reasons why they're some of my favorite is, well, I'm a farm kid, so I like horses. But I say that, and yet, most of the time when I'm working with them, it's over the phone and I'm actually not at the stable with them, around the horses. This is a complete side note, I don't know why I'm sharing this, but my favorite thing about, 'cause I live here in New York City, I'm a long way away from that farm and ranch that I grew up on, but my absolute favorite thing is when we, I live in West Chelsea, is when I get closer to Central Park and I can actually smell the horse crap of the carriages 'cause I'm like, "Oh, that's home to me right there."
- Tara Hunkin: 25:20 It's so true, actually, when you travel through New York, it's also the clapping of the horses-
- Todd Herman: 25:25 Yeah.
- Tara Hunkin: 25:25 On the pavement. Well, there's not a lot of pavement in farm country, so.
- Todd Herman: 25:28 No. But one of the reasons why they're my favorite is, when you think about just athletics in general, equestrian is one of the few sports that, not only are you trying to manage your emotional and mental state yourself and your physical state, but you are now riding on top of 1,000 pound plus animal that gift in life is to detect the emotional resonance of the people around them, that's why they're used in therapy as the people that are here know, right?
- And so, as an equestrian rider, if you're doing, especially something like dressage where you've got to have a very specific posture and you're doing very specific movements out in the arena, if the horse detects any amount of stress or anxiety or any of that through just something as simple as how much more you're gripping the reins, and again, you could just grip the reins tighter and not pull on them, and it will detect that energy passing through the reins into its body, and it will

start to be jittery and anxious and everything. So, for them, I thought that was always my greatest kind of achievement as someone who was working on someone on peak performance and mental gain was, if I can help those people because now, I actually have something that is reflecting how their state is. 'Cause when I'm looking at a football player, I can look at their ... I definitely look at their physiology and I'm looking at their body language and all that stuff tells me stuff, but nothing as much as a horse does.

And so, but I had this, the one that you're referring to, one of my clients, Lisa, when we first started working together, she accomplished, worked extraordinarily hard at her craft, but always would kind of stay in that average zone. She's an entrepreneur, hard charging type person, type A personality, but that doesn't work on a horse, that does not work on a horse if you're going to reflect that. And so, we worked on that, and when we were building out the alter ego for her, I just immediately said, I'm like, "Who do you want to embody or who resonates with you from any point in time, like of your personal history, that you think would be an amazing ... if you brought their characteristics and traits out onto the horse with you?"

And immediately she went to, which is actually quite rare, but if people paid attention they'd be able to answer quickly, most people just struggle with it a little bit, but it was Wonder Woman. And again, this was before what Wonder Woman is now, this was years ago when Wonder Woman wasn't as cool as she is right now, and she's like ... she's ... I mean, frick, she's almost my alter ego, I mean, why not? And so, that was hers, was Wonder Woman. Just she's like, just the control that she had the presence that she had no matter what was being thrown her way, and specifically, she was referring to, of course, then, back then, which was the original Wonder Woman, was that kind of calm look that she always had no matter what.

And then I said, "Okay, great." Now, one of the steps that we talk about in the alter ego effect is, part of the method is, to use a totem or an artifact to activate that alter ego. And so, I was like, "We've got to find something, right, like I talk about the glasses, Martin Luther King had the glasses, Clark Kent used glasses, what is yours going to be?" And so she loved the idea of going out and getting a custom bracelet just like Wonder Woman's, and she did. She went and got a custom bracelet. And I said, "Okay, now, the activation event, which we talk about in the book as well, is there's that moment, that phone booth moment, which I talk about in chapter one, when you're going to really activate and you're going to be very intentional about

that self now showing up." And it was ... I like the use of sound, sound in the brain is just so powerful to activate something, and so the way that we got the clasp made was there was a real snapping sound, and that was the moment that Wonder Woman came alive and really, her traits came alive, inside of Lisa.

Within one year, she won her world championship in that. Now, again, this is someone who actually wasn't a pro. She was an armature, and she won it. Her trainer is one of the top trainers in the world, he actually is the top trainer in Connecticut, not too far from me here, and he just called me up and just, when we never talked, but he was like, "This is not believable, this cannot be done. Like someone can't do this and rise to that high of a level so quickly." And I said, "Why not?"

Right, when we start understand ourselves even that much more and peeling back the onions or peeling back the layers of this stuff and we start really acting through our core self, there is ... that's why I call it just the place of pure possibility. Who knows? I don't know, that's why I'm not going to put a label on it 'cause I can't act like I know everything there is to know about who we are as human beings.

Now, getting to the science of it, though, okay, 'cause, like you said, I mean, I'm someone who doesn't like anecdotal stuff. I want the data and the science on this. So, there's a principle and phenomenon that we have psychologically called enclothed cognition. Enclothed cognition is that we as human beings, we attach meaning to things that we wear and that we put on. And so, when you put something on, you're enclothing now, who you are, which then is exhibited in your traits and your behaviors with the cognitive traits of whatever you think that that thing is. So, that's why when those children put on the Batman costumes, they were enclothing themselves in the traits of Batman, which were allowing them to be more perseverant and see themselves in a different way, or Dora the Explorer, or in Lisa's case, stepping into Wonder Woman and enclothing herself. That's why that thing was ... putting on that thing was so important.

So, the study that was done, there was ... one of the studies that was done is at Kellogg School of Management. They brought a bunch of students into a room, so college students into a room, and I don't know if anyone here listening has ever seen one of those puzzles where it's like 25 squares and there is a word of a color, so like the word, it's written in ... so yellow, but the color of it is green. And then they've got orange, but the

color of it is blue. And so, the test is, how quickly can you get through those 25 boxes by saying the word that's on there, not the color because it's a total trick of the brain to do that.

So, they brought these kids into a room and they asked them, "Okay, go through this," and they were going to time them and just grade their focus and concentration skills. So, they did it. They recorded all the data, then they brought in another group, and they handed them a white coat that they said is a painter's coat. Then they got them to do the exact same thing. They put on the white painter's coat, and then they brought in another group. This time they handed them the exact white coat, this time they told them it was a doctor's coat or a lab coat, and they got them to do it. So, what do you think the difference was between the people who did the painter's coat and the street clothing, just the first group? What was the difference in their focus and concentration skills and how quickly they got through it?

- Tara Hunkin: 32:39 Well, I mean, you'd guess that it should be the same, but it's going to be different. I'm assuming.
- Todd Herman: 32:44 No, it was the same.
- Tara Hunkin: 32:47 It was the same?
- Todd Herman: 32:47 It was the same.
- Tara Hunkin: 32:47 Okay.
- Todd Herman: 32:48 Okay? So, there's no difference whatsoever. Painter's coat didn't mean anything.
- Tara Hunkin: 32:52 Really?
- Todd Herman: 32:53 But the lab coat one, they did it in less than half the time, they made far less mistakes, and they exhibited, then of course, higher levels of focus and concentration skills. So, why is that? Well, that's because when you're putting on a lab coat, when you're told it's a lab coat or a doctor's coat, immediately your brain goes into now, how would a doctor act or what are the qualities of a doctor or someone who's a lab technician? They're deliberate, they're focused, they have high concentration skills, whatever that is for someone, we all pretty much have the same type of idea. But with regards to that particular test, wearing the painter's coat didn't help someone as much 'cause it wasn't a creative task. But they did another test where it was

a creative task, and the people who wore the painter's coat were able to get through that and exhibit way more creativity than everyone else. And then the doctor's and lab coat wearers didn't. They did the exact same ... they had the exact same results of the people who were wearing just the street clothing.

So, that's an example of enclothed cognition, which gets back to okay, now, so, that's why it was powerful for Lisa to wear that armband and it was powerful for me to put on these glasses because just putting on the glasses alone wouldn't mean anything, but I had, just through my own history, I grew up in a rural, rural, rural school, 65 kids, kindergarten to grade nine, and Mark was the smartest kid in my class, there was five of us in the class, so maybe that wasn't a high benchmark, but, in reality, back in Canada, Mark actually won the national math test when we were in grade nine together. So, he was legitimately super smart, and he had glasses. And then in the grade younger than me, the smartest kid in that class, James, he was in my sister's grade, he had glasses. So, all these people who were the smartest around me, and we all adopt these beliefs at a young age, right? So, I was like oh, smart people wear glasses.

So, when I was struggling when I was first starting out with being insecure about how I looked or how young I looked and lacking confidence, and because the traits that I really wanted to display was someone who was smart, I went and bought a pair of glasses. Those glasses meant that I was exhibiting ... now I was going to enclothe myself in being far more smart and articulate, and that's exactly what happened. I'm just leveraging what's already built into the human psyche, I'm not changing anything. I mean, whether someone wants to use this or not use it, it doesn't matter, you're already using it. Like everyone has a favorite shirt, a favorite dress that they put on, a pair of shoes that they put on, in the book I talk about Oprah and what Oprah has ranked as her favorite episode of all time, and I won't get into it 'cause I let people dig into it in the book, it's in chapter two. But yeah, it's ... so it's there, whether you use it or not, it's still happening whether you like it or not.

Tara Hunkin:

35:40

Yeah. I mean, it makes a lot of sense. I mean, I think that we all, like when you put the clothes on that you feel represent what you're going in to do, you tend to do it better at that thing. So, it does make a lot of sense. And it's interesting to ... will be interesting to use that with the kids because they already identify with these characters and want to be those characters and want to live those lives, so I think it's, for them, probably a lot easier than it is for us as adults, like you said.

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- Todd Herman: 36:10 I mean, I say it in the book, listen, while I definitely created the process and codified it, I didn't invent alter egos. The first person that mentioned it was Cicero back in 44 B.C., and he had the most eloquent way of saying it, which was, "It's the other I or a trusted friend." And even the contemporary psychologist who's probably the most popular contemporary psychologist of today is Jordan Peterson, and Jordan Peterson said in his 12 rules book that the second rule of having a healthy life is for you to be someone who takes care of ... who takes yourself seriously and takes care of you.
- And so, while I didn't invent it, I just say like, you've all ... everyone has done this, this is a remembering more than anything else. This is just you tap back into, "Yeah, I used to do that." And that's ... and to hear now that that's actually something that's very normal to do, I mean, that's why I'm this mission with this is just I'd like to lead the mission around, hey, no, this is not weird, it's not strange, it's the most real version of a human being as you can possibly get 'cause the more and more people that we can get activating their best traits in the world, we're probably going to have a better place, right? So, I'm doing this very selfishly because I want a better place and it's going to help my kids live into a better world too.
- Tara Hunkin: 37:23 Yeah. I mean, like I said, it makes a lot of sense. If you have time, can we-
- Todd Herman: 37:23 Yeah.
- Tara Hunkin: 37:28 Just go through those layers-
- Todd Herman: 37:28 Yeah.
- Tara Hunkin: 37:30 That you talked about because you do talk about this in-depth in the book obviously, but on a high level, what are the five layers that you talk about, about how to go about building this alter ego?
- Todd Herman: 37:41 If anyone just kind of in their mind, if they imagine, if you've ever seen that kind of image of how ... of the Earth kind of cut in half, right, so there's ... the Earth is now bisected, and when you do that, they kind of like start to show how the Earth is made with like the core and then there's the mantel and all that. Well, if you think of how we all show up in our worlds, at our very core is this core self, that's what I was kind of talking about before. So, there's this like just place of like pure possibility or pure love or pure imagination, pure creativity, and all that. But

then, of course, the last time we were ever that was typically when we came out of the womb and then we start getting shaped by society. And so, how do we end up getting shaped, which ends up translating into the results that we get in our lives?

Well, the first layer that sits beyond the core self is what I call the core drivers layer. The core drivers are things that are made up of the things that are typically larger than yourself end up shaping you. Your family is larger than you, it's not just you it's you're a part of something. And when you're a part of something, you can end up adopting the traits of that group, even despite the fact that it might not be serving what you want to be doing in life or how you want to be showing up. So, family is a big core driver.

Religion or spirituality is another core driver. Your country, Canadians act a certain way, Americans act a certain way, right? We start adopting these values, which is another one. Your values, even though your values are something that's personal to you, it's very much a core driver. So, even being a police officer. I mean, I've done work with the U.S. Army, Navy Seals, Green Berets, and even ... so them, now they're a part of a tribe of people, a group of people, and they can start adopting the qualities, the rules, the paradigms of that group. Okay? And again, it can be something that activates you, a heroic self, or it could trap you as well, depending on what field we're talking about.

Then the next layer beyond that is our belief layer, that's where our attitudes, our habits, our beliefs about ourselves, our beliefs about others, beliefs about our circumstances, that's where all that stuff sits. What I always want to remind people when it comes to beliefs are remember, beliefs are not true. A belief is not a truth. How I know it's not a truth is, if it's not true for me as well, then it's not a truth, that's how you can immediately know whether or not something is talking about a belief or a truth. Now, again, they can feel real to us, of course, 'cause that's our belief but it's not truth, which, why that's important is, when I'm trying to help someone make a change, we need to operate with a paradigm that both them and I share because as soon as people realize that a belief doesn't have to be you forever or you don't have to be acting through that forever, it's important for people to understand that. So, that's the next layer.

Then the next layer beyond that, as we get closer and closer to the surface, is the action layer. Action layer's where our skills sit,

our knowledge sits, the traits, the characteristics that we've developed sit, and that we end up revealing on our field of play, which is the final layer, which is the layer of circumstance, the layer of situation. It's people, the places, the things that we're interacting with, okay?

And so, this model ends up becoming really helpful for me when I'm working with people one-on-one or just even in the book to get people a lot of context because, again, like I say, there's many fields, though, that we stand on, and we have a different self that's ending up showing up on all these fields as well.

And so, from that, what I also kind of create in the book is, if you imagine this kind of bisected world where we're talking about these different layers, if you kind of think of that circle having a lower half and a top half, the lower half is what I call, 'cause it's the shadow world, is the ordinary world. And when you operate from an outside-in approach, that you're doing things to impress others, you're worried about what someone else might think of you, you're falling into any one of the hidden forces that the enemy loves to do to pull you into this ordinary world 'cause it's a safe world, it's where we're not pushing our comfort zones at all. And the enemy loves to use things like imposture syndrome, loves to use things like the judgements and the worries and the criticisms of others, and all of those things end up trapping us 'cause we don't ... all of who we are isn't showing up in our world.

Conversely though, in the top half, which is more light, is the extraordinary world. It's not that it's extraordinary 'cause there's less challenges, there's less obstacles to go through, it's extraordinary because we actually know that who and what I'm bringing out into the world is a representation of who and what I really am, right? And that's what's so challenging with people like myself that are dyslexics or people that are ... is that we are often operating inside of a world that will pull you into an ordinary because it's not built to support us, right? But when we find the thing that makes us genius and our parents or teachers or mentors, whoever helps us find that, now I'm going to be defined how the world operates, I'll define my world, I'm going to act intentionally and untap myself and not kind of have to apologize for it either as well.

And so, it creates this heroic self, which creates that extraordinary world. I mean, I've got hundreds of challenges that I've gone through, but continuously trying to activate those real traits that I have and not falling prey to what the enemy will constantly do to pull me in there makes you feel pretty good

when you end your day and put your head on the pillow 'cause you know that you acted with intention, honoring the values that you truly do have. And so, whether you use an alter ego to help untap that, and that's what I talk about in the book is the alter ego is that trusted friend, like Cicero says, that helps to pull you into the extraordinary world and there's nothing more powerful than showing up in a world with some allies at your back that can be there to support you as you go, whether they're imagined or whether they're real. I suggest both to people because going through life without actual real life allies is a mistake too.

- Tara Hunkin: 43:42 Yeah. Well, and I think that's a great way for everyone to now pull all those ideas together and start to look at how they're going to be able to bring this to their kids. I guess the only-
- Todd Herman: 43:55 Sure, I don't ... The only thing I wanted to say there-
- Tara Hunkin: 43:55 Yeah, sure.
- Todd Herman: 43:57 Just to wrap this up as a parent, so how we use this with our kids is, 'cause we definitely don't have perfect children nor do I want that, anyway, but they all have ways of acting up and challenging you in different ways, their personalities are all different amongst all three of them. But when they are having a meltdown or whatever, what's important is that I don't contribute to then shaping an identity for them that's not going to serve them longterm by saying things like, "Oh, Sophie's just angry." Like when I say it that way, 'Sophie's angry', that's an identity placement. Even just shifting and saying, "Sophie's acting angry," now that's different. It's not Sophie's angry, she's just acting angry.

But the way to kind of use this idea is, I talk about in the book, just the importance of naming the enemy. If we just use words like resistance and fear and judgment and criticism and worries and stresses and trauma and all this, that's formless stuff. And the way that the brain works, because it's an imagination tool, the moment you give something form, you can actually shape it, you can touch it, you can feel it, you can work with it, right? That's why the most scary movies of all time are always the movies that you don't see anything coming, right, that's what made Jaws so powerful was you didn't know how big the shark was and all that. It operated below the surface of the ocean.

And so, we name it, we name the enemy. So, whether it's gremlin, whether it's Frankie, whether it's whoever, we name it, and then if Charlie or Molly or ... if Charlie, it's like, "Oh, there's

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that little gremlin," right? That's just one simple ... like, it's like, no, no, no. 'Cause the message that you're sending to them is like, "No, no, no, you're way more powerful, you're way more perseverant, or you're more way loving or you're way more caring. That's not who you are. That's that little gremlin showing up. That's not Charlie showing up. That's the gremlin showing up," right? We all have that parts of our personality. And just creating that distinction of duality 'cause it exists, we have that dark side and that light side, we got that shadow self, we've got the spotlight self. So, that helps with parenting as well-

- Tara Hunkin: 46:10 Yeah.
- Todd Herman: 46:10 [crosstalk 00:46:10] or with kids.
- Tara Hunkin: 46:11 Yeah, I think that's an incredibly powerful tool for all of us because, I mean, as you know, with kids in particular that struggle, they get so frustrated. I mean, kids, as they grow, get frustrated anyway, but when you have a disability or a challenge, be it medical or otherwise, the frustration levels, especially at the younger ages but even at the older ages, can overwhelm them-
- Todd Herman: 46:11 Yeah.
- Tara Hunkin: 46:34 On a regular basis. If we're constantly telling them or there will be people outside telling them that they are bad or they can't control themselves, giving them another tool to get perspective on the fact that it's not really them, it's just the circumstances they're being dealt with-
- Todd Herman: 46:52 Yeah.
- Tara Hunkin: 46:53 At that particular time.
- Todd Herman: 46:55 Yeah.
- Tara Hunkin: 46:55 So, that was ... I'm really glad you summed it up with that.
- Todd Herman: 46:59 Yeah.
- Tara Hunkin: 47:00 Obviously, everybody should go out and get the book, so they can dive in. Quickly, the book is coming out, we're going to make sure this goes lives on the day it comes out on February 5th, but if you for some reason, you get a sneak peek earlier, you can preorder it now as well.

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- Todd Herman: 47:17 Yeah.
- Tara Hunkin: 47:18 What would you say, like sort of your to all parents out there, I mean, you've given us lots of great tips, but if there's one takeaway that they should have from this for themselves in terms of self-care or for their kids moving forward, what do you think the most important thing they need to understand and implement walking away from listening to this today?
- Todd Herman: 47:43 I think it's hard for me to kind of say just one thing, but I would say that if you can appreciate just how indomitable the human spirit is and what it can go through, but then also understand that there are some undiscovered parts of the world of our mind, that if we tap into them more can allow us to then handle life with a heck of a lot more grace, and it's not about weird, and who cares if it was being weird? If it works for you, it works for you. That world of nothing is like living in purgatory more than constantly trying to do things in order to impress other people, but really, if I can do something to impress myself and even from someone who's [inaudible 00:48:30] performance side of things, that's what I'm trying to do is get people locked into the process. The more that you can just focus on what you can control, then those results typically end up helping to ... or end up showing up automatically.
- Tara Hunkin: 48:42 Yeah. That actually is a great thing to end on because I think that applies really well to the parents as well 'cause I know the parents out there work incredibly hard at what they're doing, they often feel they're being judged for their children's behaviors-
- Todd Herman: 48:55 Yeah.
- Tara Hunkin: 48:55 Or the circumstances because people don't know what's going on in the background of their lives.
- Todd Herman: 48:59 Yeah.
- Tara Hunkin: 49:00 And yeah, I think that that is an incredibly powerful tool to help, like you said, manage these things with as much grace as we can while we're-
- Todd Herman: 49:08 And with this too, just as a note, we're not looking for people to be perfect, that's not what my book is about. It's like, no, no, no. But there are certain areas of our life that are really important to us right now, and for everyone that's listening, it's definitely going to be this experience that's happening with

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their son or daughter, and even themselves as a parent. And so, that is a fantastic place to start by unleashing more of that kind of ... those heroic traits that I know that they have, I've just done this for so long that they're nesting inside of people and they're waiting to get activated.

Tara Hunkin: 49:40 Well, I am excited to see the wave of alter egos coming out and doing awesome things in the world 'cause we sure need it right now.

Todd Herman: 49:47 Yeah. Well, thanks, Tara. And I mean, if people want to, again, we've got it on Audible, we've got it in Kindle, and hardcover as well, and so, if they go to [alteregoeffect.com](http://alteregoeffect.com), that's where all the links are that people can go and find it in their neck of the woods, wherever that might be.

Tara Hunkin: 50:00 Yeah. Exactly, all around the world. Thanks so much for spending some time with me today, Todd, and we'll talk to you again soon.

Todd Herman: 50:07 Thanks, Tara.

Tara Hunkin: 50:08 Bye for now.

So, that's a wrap. Thanks for joining me this week on My Child Will Thrive. I'm so passionate about giving you the tools and information you need to help your child recover. As they say, it takes a village, so join us in the My Child Will Thrive Village Facebook group where you can meet like-minded parents and stay up to date on everything we have going on at My Child Will Thrive.

This is Tara Hunkin, and I'll catch you on the next podcast or over at [mychildwillthrive.com](http://mychildwillthrive.com).