

THE TRULY AMAZING LIFE SHOW *with Aaron Kennard*

The Power of Living True to the Real You.

Episode #46 – with Jay Forte

Aaron: Alright, I'm here with Jay Forte from the Greatness Zone, podcast, and blog. And he's a coach and I'm just really excited to have him here. Are you there Jay?

Jay: I am here, Aaron. Glad to spend some time with you today.

Aaron: Yeah. Thank you so much for jumping on the call, jumping on the phone and coming over here. So, people, I'm just really excited to have you and discussing because our missions are so well aligned. Like the Truly Amazing Life mission, the Greatness Zone mission. I mean, as I first met Jay, everybody, just a little while ago, as we're discussing our missions and how he's coaching people into greatness, we kind of have a slightly different slant on it but the underlying values are just so similar. And he's got so much amazing insight to offer on this topic of living a truly amazing life, being great. And, so I'm really excited to have you on the phone here and discuss that with you, Jay. So, why don't we just jump in? First off, give me a brief intro on yourself. If you want to share anything more about you personally, and then tell us what is it specifically that makes life truly amazing to you right now in your life.

Jay: Cool. I love that question. So let me introduce that, who I am today is not who I was. That sounds weird. But I used to be a CPA, and a CFO for a couple of big companies, and realized that I'd spent most of my life pretending to be somebody else. And decided...and I had a company that bought my company out and wanted me to move to a place that I didn't want to. I started their education department and found my love of learning, and teaching, and coaching, and guiding. And for the last 15 or 20 years that's what I've done. And then shifted into writing books, and teaching, and coaching, and guiding. And that's how I've stumbled into what my one greatness zone was because most of my life, I spent not in my greatness zone. Or as I like to tell people, I spent it in my good enough zone.

Aaron: I might want to get into that for sure. I appreciate you giving us kind of that brief background. And we'll dive way into that because that's a super intriguing story there. So, yeah, keep going.

Jay: What makes life amazing, I think, now more than ever before is, I finally realized that it is my choice to show up to my own life. And maybe that sounds a little weird but that's a really late realization for me. Growing up in a big, loud Italian family, I don't remember choosing too much. I remember being told off a lot. But I think what makes life amazing now is that I am in a career, in a work, in a relationship, in a life that truly fits me. And I have never been here before. So, I think it reminds me that I'm so grateful that others struggle their whole life to find something like this. And though mine took a while to get here, I'm in it. And it's just cool as it can be.

Aaron: That's awesome. So, your career, your relationship, your life, it's like this fit. And so you mentioned before that you've been...you know, you were just living kind of good enough and not really living true to you, perhaps. And so the thing that makes it most amazing now is, it sounds like really living true to you. Living the life that fits you, who you are.

Jay: Right. So, I know we talked before that, you know, life is about trying to discover your own voice in a world of other loud voices. And I think, you know, having struggled through most of my life to find my own and then doing it through some really big period of a troubled part in life where I just couldn't hear what life was supposed to be for me, and decided that I probably shouldn't be in it at all. And then after coming back from a pretty close brush with deciding to end it all that some clarity came on the other side that, you know, that all of this event was to help me be courageous enough to hear what my own voice might say. And then be tough enough to go ahead and live that. Even if the rest of the world said, OK, or not OK. I wasn't here to make sure everybody thought my life was perfect. Though really, until that moment, that that was the way that I lived. So, you know, prior to that, I would never have said life is an amazing thing.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: It's a chore. I can't wait for it to be over. And then I came close to seeing that, be careful what you wish for.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: I came pretty close and then realized, hey, wait a minute. It is way more of a gift. You just didn't see it because you didn't make the space to show up to the moment on where all the greatness is. You were so worried about what was missing instead of what you had. And when the perspective shifted, then the huge awareness, the huge opportunity, and the huge potential, for a new life showed up almost in the moment.

Aaron: That's awesome. That sounds so similar to what happened to me.

Jay: Yeah. We're like brothers from a different mother.

Aaron: Exactly. That's such a similar experience, only so vastly different too. It's amazing, because we have such different backgrounds. Such different, you know, experiences but that it's so interesting that it's so similar to like when we

have these transformational moments, when we see that life is a gift. It's amazing. So, I'm really interested in diving, digging more into that. So, why don't we just jump into that? Why don't you tell us...so we talked a little bit what you're doing now. You focused on teaching people to find their greatness zone, and live a truly amazing life. But let's go back in time...and you've kind of alluded to a couple of these things about not wanting to live one day. Why don't we elaborate on that story? Take us through the story of your experience with this transformation, so that people can learn some lessons through what you experienced. And let's get back into it.

Jay: Well, I'm convinced that life sends each of us a pretty good size challenge to remind us that we're way more capable than we think we are.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: That we're braver, we're stronger, we're way more capable. And mine was, you know, in a big Italian family, I was born the gay kid. In a very Catholic family, in a very devout Italian, and very particular strong family.

Aaron: What part of the world were you growing up in?

Jay: Say it again?

Aaron: Where was this? What part of the world were you growing up?

Jay: I grew up on Cape Cod.

Aaron: OK. Got you.

Jay: In Massachusetts, just outside of Boston. We're a big Italian family from really, around Boston.

Aaron: Cool.

Jay: So, it was in my mind, you know, the moment I realized about age eight, that that's who I was. I was determined to never would anybody find out. And from that moment, I basically checked out of life. You know, I ditched school but my family was active in living life in a big way. And I was just hanging on to the edges, hoping that, you know, someday I would just have the opportunity to get out of it. And so, my family had a rule. The rules were, you know, study hard, go to school, get married, have kids, get a good job, you'll be happy. OK, next kid. OK, next kid. OK, next kid. So, you know, not being a strong-willed person I went and did all that. Got married. Married a wonderful person but, you know, knew right on that it was not for me. And we have three amazing kids that about 10 years into the marriage, I had to come out to my wife just to let her know that, you know, I was back with all the depression that came along with trying to be somebody that you're not.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: And she needed to understand that the challenges we were having in our relationship were not her. They were me. She was terrific, fabulous person, kind, amazing spouse, but for some reason, I couldn't be there for that.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: And it was at that point that, you know, I came out. We eventually told the kids. And we did a very good job of managing a really difficult situation that had challenges based on faith, and religion, and something else going on, and the families too, but raised kids in a loving and supporting way. My kids are wonderful with like the concept and were supportive. But that was still not enough for me. There was at the point in it where I'd just ruined everybody's life and I just needed to end this.

Aaron: So, was this after you came out and then...

Jay: Yeah. Yeah. So, it was just about a year after I came out that I just was...I had made all the wrong decisions every point in life. And I was in the wrong field. I didn't love where I worked and I was in a relationship that I shouldn't have been in. I had kids. Now what was I going to do? And it was this...life was not amazing. It just wasn't.

Aaron: Yeah. I mean, we're kind of breezing over it but that...I mean, you don't just get to a point of wanting to end your life, you know. It just doesn't happen all of a sudden. It happens...this big, huge build up over time. I mean, since you were eight years old and now you're in your 30s or 40, or something, right?

Jay: Thirties.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: I was in my 30s, and...

Aaron: I mean, this was 20 years of like decisions and living under this cloak of not being able to be who you are. And not feeling like you could just express yourself that has now built up to you feeling completely depressed, right?

Jay: Yeah. And the weird thing about it is, you know, it's such a small part of your life. But it turns into the biggest part of your life when it unattended.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: And it's like a road block that you can't pass. And all you wanted was some clarity about why is it? What do I do with it? How do I place it so that the rest of this amazing life can go on?

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: And, but it's really hard when the thing that you are is what everybody around you says, you can't and shouldn't be. And you're wrong to be. And

you're going to hell and all the rest. And that's a lot for an eight year old to [inaudible 9:35]

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: And so I kind of carried a lot of that for lots of years and then finally decided that the world would probably be better if I weren't here. And so it was very close to...I had climbed the bridge ready to jump one day, and then had a friend of mine chase me down and just talked to me for a while. And stopped it enough and then we got some help for me. And it was in that moment that, you know, just the view of the world changed. That it wasn't this terrible thing I had to get over. It was this amazing thing I hadn't started yet.

Aaron: Tell me more about that. You're saying like, when you were on the bridge, and your friend is talking you down, that was the transformational moment?

Jay: Yeah. It was once my feet...

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: ...were back on the ground. Because I had too much opportunity to go the other way.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: But back on the ground it was, you know, about a week after that where the clouds finally lifted, and for some reason it was, you know, it was right that I didn't end it. And that people were really upset with me for considering it but at the same time, it was an opportunity to see that they really just wanted me to be who I was. And I had never seen that.

Aaron: They meaning who? Like who are you referring to?

Jay: Well, some of my siblings that I had included into that conversation, and some of the friends that I had...

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: ...were the ones that reminded me that, you know, the world's a better place because you're in it. That's one of the reasons why at the end of my podcast, that's why I say that. Is that the world is a better place because you're in it. Because you could leave it and then we short-change the world. And we don't want that.

Aaron: Yeah. That's powerful. So, you realized that this was an opportunity, I mean, that these people were saying...they give you this validation that you are valuable, and that they want you to be who you are. And you didn't realize that probably before, right?

Jay: Well, I didn't give myself permission...

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: ...because, you know, for every foundation that I had, it was not OK. And it was more important in my life to be unhappy, but right.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: Than unhappy, and potentially on the HOV lane to hell.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: So, it's the funny things that you remember and I know that most of the institutions we have when we're kid, they don't...I don't know if they mean to do this, but some of these things as we interpret them, as we hear them, without a strong sense of your own voice. And that's part of why I got into what I got into. Struggling myself to find out where my voice was. How do I help people discover what the voice says? Because when you do, that's the place you trust.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: You know, the institutions that are around, the loudest voices that are around don't necessarily have your best interest in mind.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: You know, for lots of reasons. So, the one that does have your best interest is you. But how do you tune in and know what that is so that you can then direct yourself into your most amazing life, whatever that is? You know, wherever it is? And whoever it might include.

Aaron: Yeah. And that's a great transition. So, you get to this point. You decided not to end it. And you decided to giving yourself permission to actually just even look into who you are, and begin expressing, being who you are other than trying to be something you're not. So, then what did you do? And then let's talk about, you know, how can that apply to other people in this process of, you know, how do you be true to yourself? And what difference can that make and all that? So, start with what happened for you? What was that transition like for you when you learned them?

Jay: Well, I think the first thing that I realized is that by tuning in to what was right with me instead of what was wrong with me, a world that had previously been completely obscure showed up. That when you know your strengths, and your abilities, and your values, and your passions, you see the best of you. And when you take a look at the best of you, there are places all around this world that need exactly you do best. So, you know, whether that comes under the casing of a gay kid, or a straight kid has no bearing...

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: ...on whether you're passionate, and talented, and can teach, and coach, and guide, or write, or whatever...it has nothing to do with it. In fact, you know,

we finally called it the candy coating. I mean the M&M, the candy coating on the outside means nothing about the filling.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: But the filling is beautiful, and the filling has abilities, and it has all of this opportunity if it can get past the coating that sometimes gets given to it.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: And it's our responsibility to know that, and to hear that, and to see that. And I think coming to terms with it on the bridge, or just after the bridge, was for me the opportunity to see what I think I finally see now. But I was just not in view before. I couldn't see it.

Aaron: Yeah. It's amazing how these beliefs just completely blind us. These beliefs that we hold on to, like in your case, that I cannot be that way. I have to do what these people do because that's right, or whatever. It's amazing how that just completely blinds us to like life, to the world, to like all these things that makes us unhappy. And as soon as we can remove this one false belief, it's like pulling off this black sheet from in front of our eyes. And all of a sudden everything's different. The whole world looks different, right?

Jay: That's it exactly. That somebody else's definition of my life was somebody else's definition of my life and not my own.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: And, you know, so certain personalities can fight back with the world when they fight. I have this pretty timid personality that, you know, I didn't do that quite so well.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: I didn't do that quite so well until I finally came face to face with ending it. And then I realized that I'm far more courageous than I thought I was. And I needed to be.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: And it was like life had shaken me a little bit and said, wait a minute, you know. Why are you misreading this? There's nothing wrong with you. Everything is fine. I intended you to be like this.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: Because when you discover that this was the reason why you were living small and now you're not, that was to get your attention so you would stop playing small.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: And I'm sorry that it pushed you very close to the edge but it didn't push you over.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: So, based on that, so what do you want to see and how might you do it? And I think...you know what it's done for me is create this opportunity to be, you know, exceptionally passionate about helping people discover what's right with them instead of what's wrong with them.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: And, you know, we get that all the time. You know, your kids come home with grades, they have five A's and a C, and the first thing we say is, what happened with the C. And in the workplace, you know, the first thing goes on performance review, oh, here are these things you need to work on. Well, what are the things I'm amazing at? And how is it that we don't go there first? Because if we knew them, we would build our life around them.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: My favorite quote ever is this quote by Frederick Buechner. He's a Presbyterian minister, and a philosopher, and writer and he says, your vocation [inaudible 16:44] your purpose. Your vocation in life is where your greatest joy meets the world's greatest need. A great one, you're good at, if the world needs it you should do this. And it doesn't matter whether somebody says you should, or you shouldn't. You know it. You should do it. And if you do that, the you that shows up to it, because you're playing to your greatness, is one who's going to show up in a really exceptional way. And that exceptional way has the capacity to change things. So for me trying to bow out, because I didn't see it, reminded me, and reminds me to tell others, don't bow out. You just haven't seen it yet.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: And when you do, what you might be...what you might see is something different than you expected which was mine.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: But it doesn't mean that it's anything less than perfect for you.

Aaron: Yeah. That's beautiful. I like what you said about that experience giving you this amazing passion about helping other people see what's right with them instead of what's wrong with them. Like you would not be...it's amazing how our adversities shape us and actually do create these big advantages. Like I always say, everything is conspiring for your benefit. This whole experience of you getting to the brink of this bridge created like an amazing blessing for lots of other people that you're now able to help. I mean, you would not have this passion. You would not have this understanding, and this depth, and conviction of being able to help us all see and start looking at what's amazing about us if you didn't

have those experiences. And so, you wouldn't be producing such a good amount of good in the world that you're doing through all of your work. Right?

Jay: I totally cursed this thing when I was younger, and I realized that's what it was.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: I was like, why is that mine? You know, how could I possibly have that?

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: And now it was the most freeing and the most...it doesn't mean it's easy.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: But it's still a funny world about it.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: But my view of it changed as one of the greatest blessings I've ever gotten.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: It was the permission to be who I am. And I instantly changed as a parent. I was so wrapped up in making sure that nobody knew...

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: ...that I was not available to my kids, and not available to anybody. I was always, like I said, I was hanging on to the edge hoping I would just get over it. And, you know, it's cool being a gay dad of three daughters. And when all the worry about it went, and when all the fear about it went, the person that came in surprised me. And I was thrilled with what was right with me.

Aaron: That's amazing because you're a new...I mean, you didn't know yourself at that point. You had no idea who the real adult you was. Because you never lived it, right?

Jay: Right. And the expression, the example I give all the time is because we were a really focused Italian family, and we worked hard to make sure we were on the right road in life, and that's how my parents raised us. And only to find out from my five siblings that that was the right road for them. But I was the kid on the wrong road. And I said to my parents when I finally came out, and I said, you know, it's like being dropped in the middle of the jungle. You know, when you're used to being on a road and instead you get dropped in the middle of a jungle, and no machete and they say, find your way home. What? What am I supposed to do now? Everything I thought to be true is not true for me.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: What am I supposed to do at age 35? Start again? And when I realized it wasn't starting again, it was starting for me.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: That's what it was.

Aaron: Yeah. Like you never had started yet?

Jay: Yeah. Yeah. That everything I'd done before was somebody else's version of it. Now I'm doing mine now.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: And with that, so what do I want to do? And how do I want to go? And alright, you know, I've made some choices and I'll have to live with those. And I can be a loving and supportive ex-husband. And I can be a loving and supporting parent, and a brother, and ex-brother-in-law and this. It doesn't mean I have to be mean or any of that stuff.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: It just means I'm starting again and you have no idea what I've been through or what this is like. But that's OK. It not for you, it's for me.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: And that then turned me into, how might I be able to articulate this to other people so that whatever is keeping them in their closet, for whatever reason, you know, whatever holds them back...

Aaron: Yep.

Jay: ...that they could look at it, call it for what it is, embrace it for how it is that they are. And as your great phrase, you know, everything is conspiring for good.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: That there's a reason. Maybe you don't know it yet. So, keep asking, how might I see this as the source of something bigger and better? And let me be open to it. And if it comes through, however it comes through, I want to be OK with it. Let me just be OK.

Aaron: Yeah. And yours is a really poignant and, you know, big example of the whole, you know, it's such a common, I mean it's a very talked about common example in the world as far as people to see that, you know, the gay, straight thing and coming out of the closet. That's a very, you know, talked about thing but this principle, your principle of like living your life. Everybody's got these closets that they're in. It's not just gay and straight stuff. Like you just happen to have this really vivid example of it. And you've got this ability to change but it's much, much more than that. It's applicable to every single one of us, right?

Jay: Oh, absolutely. There is something that keeps us small. And we're not aware that our life is amazing. There's always something that we're finding fault with instead of, you know.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: That's a great line where we're always looking for what's wrong instead of what's right. What if we paid attention to what's right?

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: And saw that instead of what's wrong. And what we intend happens. So let's intend that. And if we could do that more often, then we would have the capacity to change the world in this, I'm convinced, in this epic way.

Aaron: Yeah. And it comes back to really being true to you, and discovering you, and giving yourself permission to be you. Whoever you are, right? I mean, not just in like a sexual orientation way. I'm talking like in just a true to your foundational being way. Like, why are you here on earth? And are you living your life for your parents? Or are you living your life for somebody else in any way? Like in the job that you're doing. In the things that you do because you're afraid to actually be who you are. You've never really confronted like what it is for you. Like for me, personally, it was I'm doing this business but it's not like my true love right now. And I'm finding that my passion is doing some of these other things but I'm kind of stifling up because I need to go make money, and provide for the family and stuff like that. That's a really challenging one because we do have these responsibilities. And we can't just like jump ship on that and not make any money and do what we love, right? But for every person it's different. And I just want to make sure that that point is clear for people. That there's somewhere that we're hiding behind sometimes that we need to come out of. And for me it's like recognizing it's this pillar. What you're talking about is one of the main pillars of the truly amazing life, which is remember who you are. And so for me, that becomes a daily habit. Like I literally personally will forget who I am in a matter of three days if I don't continually bring myself back to it. Like it's so easy to like lose track of my true desires because there're so many pulls in the world pulling me in all these different directions and trying to tell me who I am. That I literally have to go every day, look in the mirror and remind myself who I am. Tell myself I love myself. Get connected to that. And like it's a daily process for me. So, I'm curious if you have anything like that. I mean, maybe you're just... I think this may be different for everybody, but I'd be interested to hear your take on that, on continuing to remember who you are.

Jay: There's one line that came true for me because we also grew up as a pretty devout Catholic family. So, I kind of battle every now and then with, you know, what people say from a faith and spiritual standpoint.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: The one line that serves me most in this, Aaron, is me remembering, I have it written down. Someone greater than you thought you should be you. So

you should be you. And they didn't make any excuses or any apologies for the you that came out, and the things that you have, or the things you should have. And you have all the right stuff. My mother used to say this to us when we were kids, you have all the right...we were busy complaining about, you know, why did I get, you know, curly hair, the big Italian nose, or the whatever. And she was like, you know, look in the mirror. I'm like, yeah, now I got a problem with my complexion, too. She says, no, look deeper. Then she'd say, you have all the right things to be amazing. You do. You're just are not looking for what they are. So, if you could look deeper, you would see that you have all the right stuff. And not only that, but that it was intentional. But the things that you have, though you might find fault or think the world finds fault with them, you know, that was me with the whole gay issue.

Aaron:Yeah.

Jay: You know, the rest of the world says you're not OK. What am I supposed to do with that?

Aaron:Yeah.

Jay: And well, the only right answer is, ignore them. What do they know?

Aaron:Yeah.

Jay: And they were not privy to the conversation you had with your own maker.

Aaron:Yep.

Jay: And that one doesn't make junk, and therefore you're not junk.

Aaron:Yep.

Jay: And so, you know, someone greater than you thought you should be you. And didn't apologize and doesn't think you need to apologize. So, go be it. However it looks. However it works out. This one is yours. In a planet of seven billion people, you're unique. We all are. And the reason we are is to that there's room for us. So that we can find our thing, do our thing, and show up in our way, and that life is amazing. Otherwise, why are we here?

Aaron:Yeah, that's awesome. So, with that, I love that quote. Did you say it was a quote from someone or is that just something that you say?

Jay: It came into my head and I think that was my own higher power saying, look, how many times do I have to get you to stop worrying about this? Just remember this.

Aaron:I love it. I'm going to quote you. That's an awesome quote. Someone greater than you thought that you should be you, so you should be you.

Jay: You should be you.

Aaron: And what is that? I mean like, so for you, people have to look in the mirror. And it's for nobody else to decide. It's between you and your maker. And only you know who you are. Right? That's the thing that most people are so busy trying to like fit into somebody else's mold. But we just need to let that all go and get real with ourselves in the mirror, and in time, and in writing, in whatever way we have to. But for you, for you what is...is there a process that you do, Jay, to stay true to that? You say you have that quote. Is that something that you kind of remind yourself of periodically?

Jay: Yeah. I have that posted. My morning process is powerful supportive words, my own if I'm inspired or somebody else's, but and always journaling. For me, I have to talk through some of the things. And I find that just the way it works for me that my connection to my higher power, my higher self comes through in my writing. I just ask questions and I get my answers.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: If I can make the discipline of sitting down and doing it. I'm an early riser and that works for me. And so, I try and start with meditation and then go into a little bit of journaling. And that just sets the stage well enough that whatever pulls happen during the course of the day that the foundation is a strong one.

Aaron: That's awesome.

Jay: And that identity thing was such a tough thing for me. I don't see it that way anymore. But like you said, you know, three days away from it, you know, you can quickly get pulled into a place where you're like, wait a minute, I thought I'd fixed this already.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: And it's just a reminder that success habit, greatness habits are the things you do. So, you stay in that space.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: And most of the time they're fun. You know, they're a good thing. They're not torture. They're not hard work.

Aaron: Like meditation and journaling for you in the morning, how is that for you? Is that a process you love?

Jay: Oh, I love it. Yeah. Yeah. I'm always surprised with what comes out.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: And that's the reason why I like it. Sometimes it's, you know, I ask a question about, you know, why is this going on? And the answer will come out. I'm like, wow, that's a little scary. But it's been like that my whole life. Anytime I've written and asked for something from above, then it seems to show up.

Aaron: So, like when you're writing, do you write in the form of conversation with God?

Jay: I do.

Aaron: Yeah. That's awesome. I've actually started doing that in the last few months, and oh my goodness. It's like, it's amazing. It's my favorite time of the day. Almost every time I'm just like in tears. They're like just page after page of stuff coming out that I'm just blown away by as I take that position of allowing myself to listen to the higher power. And for me, I just imagine, what would God say to me? If somebody who's created me, love me...like sometimes it's hard. I have to get myself in that mode but it's just like, we all have an imagination. I start imagining and all of a sudden this amazing stuff, loving, compassionate, like words of wisdom just start pouring out on the page and it's like my favorite...that's cool to hear that we have such a similar process. I do the same thing with meditation and then journaling.

Jay: Yeah. To me so far those are ones that really work.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: And you know what, I'm not sure, Aaron, do you go back and read your journal after because, I am absolutely floored with the wisdom sometimes when I look back.

Aaron: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Jay: In the moment, I don't always see it. But when I go back and I read it, I'm like, Oh my God, who wrote this?

Aaron: Yeah. Exactly.

Jay: Where did this come from? I need to write a book about this.

Aaron: I probably don't reach as much.

Jay: This is like a secret.

Aaron: I probably don't read back as much as I should. But it's like when I do, I'm the same way. I think, who, did somebody sneak into my journal and write this?

Jay: Somebody really wise wrote something in here.

Aaron: Exactly.

Jay: How did it get here?

Aaron: Exactly. That's really interesting. So do you have a process for doing that? Going back through your journal sometimes, or do you just do it randomly?

Jay: I do it randomly. My office is a bit of a mess at the moment so I've had to move my stack of journals. But every now and then I like to pick one that I haven't read in a while and just flip through it. I date them.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: So I have an idea on who I was at the time.

Aaron: Yeah. I do too. I date every top of the page. So, you do it always in paper and pen?

Jay: I have to touch it.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: I have to touch it.

Aaron: Yeah. That's me too.

Jay: Yeah. Same with books. I can't...I'm not an electronic reader book guy. I have a lot of books, like I say way too many. I have a lot of books because my relationship with my books is intimate and I take notes. It's sometimes not with what's said, it's what it makes me think. And most of my blogs come from a combination of words I see on the page that may or may not have any meaning to what I'm writing about but they jump off the page for me.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: You need to write about this. You need to...and like I said, many times it's not even what the thing's about but the word order...

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: ...means something. So I have little marks I leave all over my books on which one's a blog, which ones do I need to include in the program, which one's a quote. And because I'm a big fan of using the wisdom of others to inspire yet more.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: I don't have to invent it all, I just need to connect some of the pieces of amazing things people have said and done already...

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: ...that would benefit the world.

Aaron: With your journals, one quick...just what kind of journals do you use? Do you just use kind of like bound journals? I'm always curious to ask people what's their process is on this. Do you just use like bound up journals? Or what kind do you use?

Jay: I go to Staples and I buy brightly colored notebooks. So that everyone that I write on is colored different than the one before it. So I know which one I'm in.

Aaron: Are you talking like a 3-ring binder or what?

Jay: No. Not even. Just, you know, a spiral-bound notebook that they take to class.

Aaron: Oh. I got you, yeah.

Jay: So, you know, when the kids go back to school, I buy like 15 of the them...

Jay: Yeah. Yeah.

Aaron: ...knowing I have to use them soon. And I pick my color sequence and I just go, you know, in some iteration.

Aaron: Yeah. Yeah. That's pretty cool.

Jay: That's all. That's all it is.

Aaron: I've moved to like just lined paper in a 3-ring binder because I have found that it's such a valuable asset for me that I don't want to lose for whatever reason. And I also want to have it in digital format and so I've actually gone through this mode of like just 3-ring binders and filling them up with paper and then filling up binders. But then I can take the whole stack of paper out and run it through my scanner and have like this digital backup of all my past journals really easily. That was one of my concerns with, with all my oldest journals are on these like bound up, you know, book type of journals and I can't really get access to those in any other format. And if I lost them, if they got wet or damaged, I'd be kind of really bummed out about it. So, that's what I've switched to now but I'm just curious what other people do on that. That's all.

Jay: No. They're just in my office. It's funny, I don't probably treat them like the treasure that they are. Because they've always been with me. They ride with me. If I've traveled, there's always at least one or two with me.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: So, they're beat up. They're, you know, they're dog-eared. They're, you know, I accidentally skipped a page and then I'll have to draw arrows to go back to this page. They're the sign of a crazy person probably, but [inaudible 33:48].

Aaron: The reason I spent so much time on this is because it's just foundational to living a truly amazing life. For people that don't journal, that don't write to themselves, I think it's just, it's a tragedy because they're missing a connection to themselves or their soul. There's just so much power in taking the pen, and getting this relationship with yourself on paper that can just transform people's life. I've seen it transform people's life and that's why I spend time kind of discussing the tactics of it even because some people just...it just kind of gets

overlooked. Oh, yeah, write in a journal. But nobody really is talking about what that means a lot. You know what I mean?

Jay: Yeah. We teach a course called Life Possibilities, and five activities to help you discover what you're good at, what you love, and what matters to you. And one of the activities is an introduction to journaling. That if you will commit 30 days to journaling, you will start to see that what comes out of it is amazing information about who you really are.

Aaron: And do you teach a process for journaling, like writing to your creator, or like how you actually go about that?

Jay: Well, we offer a couple of different ways knowing that everybody is really different. One thing that most people complain about or use as a reason why they can't, or won't journal is they don't know what to write about.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: So, on my website, we have a place where you can sign up for twice a week we send journal topics out.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: So, every week we pick a theme. This week we're talking about pushing past your limits. And so that the Monday and Wednesday people who are signed up for that, they get a journal guidance that says, this week we're talking about this. Here is our question. Write about and then we give them something to write about.

Aaron: That's cool. I like that.

Jay: Yeah. We find that... I teach that in this entrepreneurship class that I teach. One of the ways we help the kids at this college learn how to notice and hunt for opportunities that they have to realize that they have to see it from their unique vantage point from their unique set of lenses. How do you develop your lenses? Well, we have a talent assessment that we use in order to help them get languaged about the way they see the world. But we also encourage them to journal and they have a 30-day process where they have to write in a journal for 30 days. And they have to turn it in. And it's not so much that I'm looking about what they write about...

Aaron: Is that they do it.

Jay: ...is that they write.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: And so, it's the discipline and I won't let them do it on their iPad Minis, or their [inaudible 36:12]

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: No. You have to write in it.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: And because I want you to see what it feels like. At the end of 30 days if it doesn't serve you, then you don't need to do it. But you can't say no, before you say maybe.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: And I do have a lot of pushback on that. That's the one thing they hate the most.

Aaron: Journaling?

Jay: Yep. And I say, out of a class of 30 people may two or three journal.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: Everybody else is like, ugh, that's writing a diary. I'm not doing that. That's not journaling.

Aaron: That's the thing. I think most people have this misconception. Like when I was younger, I had this discipline of dairying, journaling. And I thought that's what journaling was. And I think that's just a big misconception that so many people have. They just never realized that journaling feels amazing. There's nothing work about it. It's like when you're trying to document history, that's a big whole chore and who cares. Like, why do you need to document every little thing you did today? Like that's literally how I journaled for like a matter of 12 years or something. I was very diligent about it. So I have all these documents. And it's like I never read those. Those don't help me like to know every little thing that happened and it was a big whole chore. But when I finally discovered how to write, that I could just open up the book and say, uh, how do I feel and I write that. How do you feel right now? Oh, I feel like crap. Well why? What's going on? Like just having this intimate conversation with myself. Just speaking whatever is on my mind on paper, it changes the whole thing, right?

Jay: What do you think someone needs to know in order to trust that? So, you know all of us are formed by the events in our lives. So, the reasons why we journal or don't journal is that something in our life has said, go do it or has said, absolutely don't do it. There has been some event, and if it stopped us, we'll call it a block. What do you find when you offer journaling as an opportunity for great growth when somebody says, I can't, I won't? Where's their block?

Aaron: You know, to be honest, I haven't had this conversation with many people. Like we're probably having the deepest conversation on it that I've had thus far, because I literally haven't gotten to this particular pillar in training. Like I'm creating this 12 month pillars but I haven't gotten to the create and write pillar. And so I haven't gotten a lot of feedback from my people on it yet. And I'm interested to see what people say about it. And for me personally, it's the reason that I didn't do it was because I thought about it wrong. I thought it was like this

thing I had to document. And there was benefit from me in that today. It's like it's cool for some posterity but it's not helping me right now. And I think, if I were to guess, I would say that's probably why most people don't journal. They just don't see any benefit to them right now. Like they don't under...like way? There's nothing...it's not doing, if it was doing something for them, they would probably do it, right?

Jay: So, that's a big one. So, when I'm looking at a class of 30 kids in college, maybe this is just really unique to college kids.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: The first thing they do is they look around and see if anybody is doing it. They're so...we talked about, you know, listening to your own voice. I'm so watching me over, and over again, we're looking at these kids instead of owning what it is that's true for them. They constantly look for the corroboration, or the support, or the guidance of somebody else who will say, yes or no to them. And I have to say to them, don't look at anybody else. This has nothing to do with anybody else.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: This is only for you.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: And whether you do or you don't do this, has nothing to do with anybody. Not your parents. Not anybody but me, because I made the assignment. And you because I want you to discover how amazing you are. And this is one of the ways of peeling back the layers. If you already knew, you wouldn't need to do this. But you don't know, and so I need you to try all these habits to find the one that serves you the best. So, the ones that serves you the best and in that, you will then be introduced to somebody you have no idea who they are. And, but I will tell you, it will be so worth it because the person that you're going to be introduced to, you will be completely impressed with. Completely impressed.

Aaron: Yep.

Jay: And trust me, and it took me 15 years to get to that perspective. That I could finally get over the other, here's what's wrong with me. That whole gay thing was, you know, I'm faulted on...

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: ...there's a failure in me and I have to work extra hard to get extra good grades and be a really good person.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: Because I have to make up for this.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: You know.

Aaron: It's amazing how you got all those lies installed from somewhere, isn't it?

Jay: It's a story that I played in my head that came from wherever it came from.

Aaron: Yeah. Exactly.

Jay: And I see these poor kids doing the same and I am trying to release them as a coach, you know. That's what I love about coaching, the reason why I got into coaching is that my life was one big block. What if I could understand me better and then help others get around these things that people have said or done. These assumptions and interpretations that do nothing other than take you off your road. And if you could see that they're moving you off the road, you would probably have the courage to say, you are not doing that to me.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: Because what it feels like on your road is so amazing I don't want you to miss it.

Aaron: Yeah. That's so awesome.

Jay: But as I'm looking at this class of freshman, they don't have any idea where their road is. They have no idea, no idea. Why am I here? What do I want for college? What is this major about? Why is he giving me this exercise? I'm thinking, oh, thank goodness I get you in class because you are in for way more than you bargained for with me.

Aaron: Yeah. I could potentially be saving you 25 years of your life.

Jay: Yes. Why wait til you're 50 to figure yourself out? Don't do that.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: You know, do it now. But you have to do this work and no one could do this work for you. But the prize is, if you do this work, you get a totally amazing life.

Aaron: Yeah. And I want to point out too, that like we say it's work, and yes it is work. It takes discipline to like commit to being with yourself for a bit and being quiet. And not just going in like and looking on Facebook and getting distracted by the latest, whatever, you know what I mean? It takes that kind of discipline but once you get into writing, like once you sit down with pen and paper like, for me there is a lot benefit. I gained the benefit of literally right in that moment. It makes me feel really good. It's a way that I can really impact my emotions and my feelings and get myself really thrilled about life right in that moment and that's a huge reward for that little discipline it requires to do that on a daily basis, so.

Jay: Yeah, and you're right. It isn't work. It is work in that it's different.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: You know, that they have plenty of time, you know, to hang out with their friends and do their sports, and do all the stuff but to ask them to spend 15 minutes with themselves, they're like, we have no time for this. How do you not have time for this?

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: So, I always, you know, as the older person throw it back in their face when they say, we have not time to journal. Let me get this straight, I say to them. Um, you don't have time to figure yourself out so you could make wise choices to show up big to your life. You don't have time for that? You don't have two minutes, or five minutes a day where you could do that? And they're like, well, since you put it that way. Yeah, I going to use every technique I can to help you get around this block at the moment. Because, if at the end of this it doesn't serve you because you gave it your best effort, and I truly didn't bring you some place, I'd be amazed but, OK, maybe it doesn't.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: Then fine. You're free. You know, it's like eating a broccoli. The first time you have to try it, who knows if you like it or not.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: You know, you at least have to try it. And if you do, I would hate for you to have missed it your whole life.

Aaron: Yep.

Jay: Because you were afraid of it because somebody someplace said, you would hate it. Its' a diary. It's a girl's thing.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: And it's not. Its' a life awareness thing and the more aware you are, the more conscious you are, it's the five C's that we use at the Greatness Zone. The more conscious you are, the greater clarity you have about who you are. Means you make better choices which means you show up to life far more competently which means you live more courageously. So, consciousness, clarity, choice, competence...

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: ...and courage. And, you know, the more you do what it is that you're called to do, and you are in that space that's yours in your true greatness zone, that's the place where you become courageous because you don't care what the rest of the world says. You know, you're in your space. You showed up. You

watched, you chose, you showed up big. You think life's amazing and you're not going to let anybody talk you out of it. And that's the place where most people don't get to. Because they didn't show up, they didn't notice, and they didn't choose. It just went by them. And you know, I'm a poster child of the whole thing. But I like to think I'm the reformation though. You know, with at least I learned.

Aaron: Yeah.

Jay: And that's why I run through the streets acting like a maniac sometimes saying, don't let this happen to you.

Aaron: Well, that's a powerful way to end. Thank you so much. It's been... and we're going to wrap up here soon. But that was a very concise way to pull this together and I loved where this conversation turned. We were talking about a lot about, you know, discovering who you are. And we ended up, you know, getting into this whole discussion about journaling and the importance of it. I think it's so important. As we're talking about it, I'm so excited to share this with people because I haven't had this discussion much with other people. And there're so many people that need to hear this, how valuable it is. And the last thing I would say on that, is that when you said, it's the guy thinking it's girly, or this or that. Well, probably the most powerful leaders in the world's, in the world's history, guys or girls, I would be very surprised if they weren't very in touch with themselves and writing like consistently. So, it's definitely not just like...but I can see how little, I mean, younger kids think that as well.

Jay: But I think you're right. I think that everybody who shows up big to life, has a process to know who they are so that person, who that true person can show up big to that life.

Aaron: Exactly.

Jay: And I think in most cases, I think a lot of people do it through the journal.

Aaron: Yeah. Exactly. But, let's warp up. I just want to ask one final question. If you, first of all, tell us how everybody can get in touch with you, learn more about the Greatness Zone, or benefit from your podcast, or anything. Any contact information to get people more in touch with the amazing work that you're doing, or coaching, or anything. And then if you could just leave us with one, one final brief thought on what somebody should do today to make today amazing. Let's wrap with that.

Jay: OK. I'm pretty easy to find. It's at thegreatnesszone.com. Facebook has the same name. All of our connections to LinkedIn and anything else you can find out through there. You can sign up for our podcast there as well. We have a Greatness Zone podcast, finding your greatness road in life. So, and all of our workshops and other things that we do in order to help people discover who they are and then how to bring that big to the world.

Aaron: Awesome,

Jay: So, the biggest thing about how to be...

Aaron: Tell us one thing about what somebody can do to make today amazing. And we may have talked about 10 things here today. Any just final one thought you might recommend for somebody.

Jay: Yeah. I think the biggest thing is to go to the mirror...this is the one habit that I have. Go to the mirror as soon as we're done, as soon as we're finished hearing this. Look in that mirror. Point at the mirror and say, you are awesome. And in that, I think you start to look deeper and understand that there's something divine, something awesome, and something extraordinary that's in you. And by telling yourself that often enough, then regardless of what the world says, you come out to the world tuned in and ready to make the most of that world.

Aaron: Love it. Thank you so much, Jay. It's been such an awesome conversation. And thank you everybody else for listening. We'll catch you on the next episode.

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*Sincerely,
Aaron Kennard*