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ARCHIVE AUDIO INTERVIEW



John Assaraf

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John Assaraf

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John Assaraf Interview

Editor:

Today, we are privileged to have John Assaraf join us. John is an internationally recognised entrepreneur, brain researcher, and expert in the psychology of success. Not only has he grown multiple multimillion dollar businesses, but he's also a bestselling author and the CEO of NeuroGym, a company that uses the most advanced methods and evidence-based brain training methods to help individuals unleash their fullest potential. John, thank you so much for joining us today.

John Assaraf:

Great to be on.

Editor:

Well, could we start by asking you what initially drew you into the field of brain research and neurodevelopment?

John Assaraf:

I was fascinated with what we were discovering about the human brain, and specifically I had a lot of limiting beliefs. I felt like I wasn't smart enough. I felt like I was inadequate when I was a kid because I failed English and failed math. I left high school with grade 11. And so I just felt like I wasn't supposed to succeed because I was told if you didn't have a proper education, you probably weren't going to do well in life.

John Assaraf:

And I ended up meeting this one man who really understood the power of the mind, and he was a Napoleon Hill student of the book Think and Grow Rich. And so he started to teach me the power of self-talk, the power of visualisation, the power of developing the beliefs and the identity to achieve goals versus believing in my current beliefs and believing in what I thought I should achieve or not achieve because of my scholastic background and education. And so I got a healthy dose of what the human brain is capable of at a

very, very young age. And because it helped transform my life, I've studied it now for 44 years.

Editor:

Wow. I'm sure you've got many insights which we can maybe dive into as we get into this. What was the inspiration though behind you founding NeuroGym and how does that reflect maybe on your personal mission now?

John Assaraf:

I've been somebody who's exercised most of my life to stay in really good physical shape and to have energy and vitality and to look good and feel good. But I also was doing a lot of inner work, and I was looking to stay calm, reduce stress, have more confidence, have more certainty, have more personal power, tap into my fullest potential. And one of the things that I realised during my journey is there were a lot of people that knew what they should do. A lot of people know they should exercise and eat well and sleep well, but they don't do it. And a lot of people how they can make more money, and a lot of people know what they could do to have a better relationship, and a lot of people know a lot of stuff, but why weren't we doing what we knew we should be doing? Why weren't we doing what we already knew how to do?

John Assaraf:

And so I got fascinated with the neuroscience side of us, and I realised that the inner game determines the outer game. And I coined these terms, neuro muscles and innercise, for my own ease of understanding. And I realised that our self-image was either strong or weak. Our self-image was either constructive, building us up, or it could be destructive, tearing us down. I also realised that we have empowering beliefs, but we also have disempowering beliefs. And some of them are negative and some of them are downright lies.

John Assaraf:

And so I started to innercise a lot to train my own brain, and then I started to train my students' brains, people that were following my

work that read my books or saw me in one of my movies that I was in. And they started to achieve the same results. And in essence, we were training their brains. So just like you go to the gym, maybe to train your body and cardiovascular system, I was helping people rewire their brain, strengthen their neuro muscles so that they felt confident, certain, unstoppable, and they started achieving their goals and dreams as fast as I was.

John Assaraf:

And so I knew there was something to brain training, and that's why I started NeuroGym. That's why I wrote my bestselling book, Innercise, is to give people the brain exercises, so to speak, to train the different aspects of the brain, which is $100 billion tool that most people don't know how to use.

Editor:

Which is amazing in itself. Innercise has become, as you say, a bestseller worldwide. It's groundbreaking in terms of the content. But in terms of getting that out to an audience and getting people to buy into this, what were the steps that you took, John, to make that happen?

John Assaraf:

I had to break it down for people to be able to really understand it. So I'll give you an example. When I ask anybody, how important is your self-talk to yourself? Whether you say, "I'm good enough to achieve this," or, "I'm not good enough to achieve this," when you say, "I'm too young," or, "I'm too old," when you say, "I don't know how to do this," you're giving your brain an instruction and your brain follows through with whatever self-talk you're using on yourself. So self-talk matters. Self-talk creates thoughts that are consistent with the self-talk.

John Assaraf:

So if I'm negatively talking to myself on an ongoing basis, is it any wonder that the majority of my thoughts will be negative? And if the majority of thoughts are negative, which by the way, on a statistical

basis, 80% of the average person's thoughts in a day are negative, and we have 6,200 thoughts as of the latest research last year. And so if we have 5,000 negative thoughts a day on average, and we repeat those thoughts, 90% of each day, day after day after day, the majority of our population is negative, is disempowering themselves. Negative self-talk creates negative or disempowering emotions. Negative or disempowering emotions create behaviours that we don't want. So when we talk negatively to ourselves, we feel the negative aspects of what we're saying, and then we behave in those ways and we wonder why we're not achieving goals. So I started to understand that self-talk has a direct correlation to how I feel. How I feel has a direct correlation to what I do or don't do, so self-talk is important.

John Assaraf:

Next is understanding the effect on how I feel based on what I do. And so for example, if I feel afraid of failing, if I feel that I might be embarrassed, ashamed, ridiculed, judged, rejected, abandoned, if I feel like I might disappoint myself or somebody else, what are the chances that I'm actually going to take action?

John Assaraf:

Well, the answer is very, very slim because what we've discovered about the human brain, we will do more to avoid pain or discomfort than we will to gain pleasure. And so there's some automatic processes in the brain that prevent us from taking action as a protective mechanism, not because we don't want to take the action. We're just making sure that we don't suffer the consequences of maybe making a mistake or of feeling embarrassed or ashamed, judged or failing.

John Assaraf:

So when we start to understand that self-talk matters, when we start to understand that feelings matter, and we start to understand that I am not my thoughts, I am not my feelings. I have thoughts, I have feelings, and I could learn how to actually have better management of them, and we start off with becoming aware of thoughts,

becoming aware of emotions or feelings, and become aware of the actions I'm taking or not. And it's in that awareness through innercising that we can start to deliberately, for example, take our automatic negative thoughts and deliberately choose an automatic positive thought and replace it. We can realise like a Hollywood actress can change her feelings in a second from being really angry to laughing hysterically. She learns how to turn on or off specific emotions required for the scene. Well, can I learn how to feel something and say, "You know what? I want to flip from this feeling to a more empowering, constructive feeling and state, physiological state that will help me take action instead of staying in my comfort zone."

John Assaraf:

Well, of course we can, which then leads to the world of habits. And our brain automates everything that we repeat. So we repeat thoughts that are negative, it automates it. If we repeat emotions that are negative, it automates it. If we repeat being a procrastinator or a self saboteur, it just automates it in the form of a habit. So then we have to deliberately say, "Okay, a habit is nothing more than the reinforced loop to conserve energy for the brain. Can I deactivate or atrophy a habit pattern that may be not serving me? And deliberately now, using the latest in neuroscience, create and reinforce a new, powerful, empowering, constructive habit that will help me achieve my health, wealth relations, career, business goals?" And the answer is absolutely. So this is where we dive into the world of I really have more control than I think I have.

Editor:

And I know that a lot of your workings have been taken now and used in various therapy sessions. And I guess one of the things that you touched on before, John, is it's almost like that muscle memory, isn't it? If you are repeating negative things to yourself over and over again, it's almost like the opposite of going to the gym. When you go to the gym and you do reps on a piece of equipment, it's to build muscle. It's to grow. You are doing the same but in a negative form

if you are still just repeating those negative thoughts over and over again. How do you break that cycle though? What are the tips you would give somebody who's looking to break out of that way of thinking?

John Assaraf:

And I think we should also emphasise that it's not just negative patterns that we reinforce. We also reinforce the patterns that may be giving us some success right now, but we need new patterns if what we want to achieve is different than what we already have.

John Assaraf:

So the first part is to realise that you're not a tree. You can change. And the science of neuroplasticity basically says that we have 85 billion. Brain cells at any given moment, we can activate and create new patterns, new reinforced patterns. So let's say I have a belief. Let's just use a belief as an example. I'm too old to achieve this or do this, or I'm not smart enough, or I don't deserve to blank, right? Fill in the blank. Well, what if we wrote down that belief? And what if we just rewrote it in a different way that will actually empower the brain versus reinforce the pattern we don't want anymore?

John Assaraf:

And what if we said, "In the past, I used to believe I wasn't smart enough, wasn't good enough, or that I was too old to achieve blank, blank or blank." And now I'm deliberately thinking, feeling and acting as if I am smart enough, good enough, and worthy enough, and I am just the right age to achieve what I want to achieve. So now all of a sudden, we are giving our bio computer, our brain, new instructions that will actually open up the power of our brain's ability to take actions that are aligned with what we're saying. So instead of reinforcing, "I'm not good enough. I'm not worthy enough. I'm too old," why not change the script? In changing the script, we change the biochemistry of what's happening in our brain. In changing our biochemistry, we change the feeling because biochemistry is the

chemicals that are released into the bloodstream that causes a feeling.

John Assaraf:

So all of a sudden, if I say, "In the past I used to think or feel this, and now I'm choosing to feel and think this," our brain says, "Oh, okay." And now the motivational circuit turns on for the new idea, the new emotion. And so now, if we did that for one day, it would be nice. We'd feel good. But if I did it for seven days, 14 days, 21 days, 30 days deliberately, the same thing would happen in our brain that would happen in the gym. Just like if you started today to lift, let's say, five pounds of weights or two kilos of weight, and maybe it wasn't that hard today, and then in a week or two you added more resistance, in a week or two, you added a little bit more resistance, in a week after that, you had a little bit more resistance, you would build the muscle. You would get stronger.

John Assaraf:

Well, that's exactly how our brain's neuro muscles work. So as soon as we start build a new neuro muscle or reinforce one, it starts to build. And then the science of habits kick in and our brain says, "Hey, since you've been doing this for three weeks, four weeks, six weeks, eight weeks, let me just automate it so that it requires zero conscious effort," and I'm going to create a subconscious pattern and move it from this hard work and a lot of effort part of the brain into the a lot less work and effortless part of the brain, otherwise known as the subconscious, which is what most people do not do more of to condition, to train. And that's the power centre. So we start off with small, empowering actions, and those small empowering actions build a habit, and then the habit starts to build you.

Editor:

It's amazing. Also, I know you've written Innercise, which is an amazing book. If anybody's listening to this, reading this, it's definitely a book that you should check it out. But also your book, Having It All, which takes it to the next level, it's about not just

conditioning your brain, but also everything that goes along with that. Maybe you could just touch on that for a second, John.

John Assaraf:

Yeah. With the Innercise, we also released an Innercise app that tens of thousands of people are absolutely loving with thousands of five-star reviews. So that's in the app store. Having it all was a body of work that I developed in asking myself this question many years ago. Is it possible? First, the question was, is it possible to be healthy, to be happy, to be confident, to have a great family, and be a great father and husband? And health, wealth, relationships, career, is it possible to have it all? And the answer is yes. When you focus on having it all, you can develop the mindset. You can develop the skill set. You can develop the habits to have it all.

John Assaraf:

Now, sometimes it's not possible to have it all at the same time, but the idea that can I be healthy and happy and wealthy in each year of my life, not just financial wealth, the answer is yes, as opposed to saying the answer's no and here's all the reasons why not, why not start with the answer's yes, it's possible and then ask, well, what would I need to think in order to make that a reality? What would I need to feel in order to make that a reality? What would I need to do every day in what order to make that a reality?

John Assaraf:

And here's what you quickly start to realise. Energy will flow to where your attention goes. So if your energy and attention goes to investing a little bit of time on your health and wealth and relationship and whatever it is that's important to you a little bit every day, everything gets a little bit better every day. And if everything gets a little bit better every day or every week, then over the course of a month, maybe there's not that much change. But over the course of a year, three years, five years, 10 years, things become surprisingly better because of the law of compounding effect.

John Assaraf:

And for those that may not know what the law of compounding effect, here's a little quiz for you. What would you prefer, a million dollars today or a dollar today but the amount doubles every day? So today you get a dollar, tomorrow you get $2. The next day it's 4. The next day it's 8. Now, some people would get really excited about the million dollars right now, but what they don't realise is on day 30, you have less than a million dollars. But on day 31, you have almost 50, 60, 70% more than a million dollars if you just wait that extra day, because the law of compounding effort, the law of compounding effect, the law of compounding behaviours have an exponentially greater return with time.

John Assaraf:

So when we develop and reinforce what I call our constructive patterns in the brain, self-talk, emotional and behaviours, then we have a compounding effect over the course of our lifetime. And then we can start to say, "Oh my God, yes, having it all is possible and having it all is probable when you lay out the foundations for actually making that a reality.

Editor:

Absolutely. If anybody who is interested in finding out more about NeuroGym, about you, yourself, John, where do we need to go to do that? What do we need to do?

John Assaraf:

Sure. I'm on Instagram every day. I'm on Facebook every day. They can go to the johnassaraf.com website. They can hop into one of our events that we have at brainathon.com. It's great. We have an event with myself and a whole bunch of world renowned brain and success experts. And they can start following our work at myneurogym.com.

Editor:

Excellent. And one final question, if I may.

John Assaraf:

Sure.

Editor:

Could you leave our listeners maybe with just one actionable insight that they can implement today which would improve their mental health?

John Assaraf:

Yeah. I'm going to give you two things that I want everybody to do. Number one is I want you to write out a vision for your life that would really excite you around health, wealth, relationships, career, business. Write that out. And then I want you to write out some goals of things you are going to do, things you want to achieve in the next 30 days, and then create a little plan of what you're going to do every day to move closer towards those goals. So that's part one. So we're going to get a vision, some goals, and some action plans.

John Assaraf:

But part two, for your mental fitness, what I want you to do is take three minutes every morning. First minute, come up with as many things as you are grateful for, that you are grateful for. It could be, I'm grateful for breathing. I'm grateful for waking up today. I'm grateful for my best friend, my dog, my cat, my water. Oh my God, water, the sheets on my bed. Start with one minute to activate the reward centre of the brain because dopamine will be released and you will feel really, really good being grateful.

John Assaraf:

Number two, I want you to just sit there and I want you to visualise yourself already achieving something that's important to you. A health goal, relationship goal, career goal, business goal, financial goal, whatever, it's just visualise yourself, see yourself, and feel yourself achieving that goal, and do that for one minute.

John Assaraf:

And then the next minute, so this is three minutes. Gratitude, one minute. Visualise the goal you want to achieve and feel it, next minute. And the third minute, take out a piece of paper or your

mobile phone and write out three action steps you commit to taking today, today to move you closer to that goal you just envisioned.

John Assaraf:

Now, we have just set up a pattern in the brain of gratitude, a pattern in the brain for feeling and visualising what we want, and a pattern in the brain for writing out three things that we're going to do to achieve that goal, and then take action that day to do those three things no matter what. So keep it simple at first. Simple, simple, simple. It doesn't matter if it's one little thing. Now you teach yourself that you're an action taker versus somebody who just hopes and prays and dreams.

Editor:

Amazing. John, thank you so much for your time today. It's been an absolute pleasure talking to you. Thanks again.

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