

DISRUPT YOURSELF PODCAST

EPISODE 318: TOM PETERS - BONUS

Welcome back to the Disrupt Yourself podcast. I'm your host, Whitney Johnson, CEO of Disruption Advisors, where we help you grow your people to grow your organization because organizations don't Disrupt people do. And the building block of that growth it's you. We've got a really special episode for you today, and for once, I'm not actually the one doing the interviewing. Tom Peters is best known for his bestseller *In Search of Excellence*, but he's more than just a writer. He's a management icon. Tom served in the Navy. He was a White House adviser, a McKinsey consultant. He even had his own TV show. Yeah. When *In Search of Excellence* came out in the 80 seconds, PBS gave him a show just to talk about the book. Recently, Tom had the idea to start up a podcast of his own extreme humanism. That's also the name of one of his recent books, and he asked me to be his first guest. So, we talked and then he retired. I guess you could say he disrupted himself, wanting to do some type of tribute to this person who has been so generous to me. And as you'll hear to my daughter, with his permission, our team has polished up the tape and we are happy to present Tom Peters interviewing me. Well, you'll hear he also kind of interviews himself. Our talk picks up with him introducing the first and unfortunately, the last episode of his podcast. I hope you love Tom as much as we do. Enjoy.

Tom Peters: I am Tom Peters, and this is the first episode of my podcast called *Extreme Humanism*, and we are having the first conversation. I am having the first conversation with Whitney Johnson. It would be very easy for me to be, as Whitney would say, You were my first choice from the whole planet. But Whitney, you are my first choice

from the whole planet and you happened to say yes and I am thrilled out of my mind as a result thereof. So welcome.

Whitney Johnson: Thank you, Tom. And I have to say, my yes was a very fast yes, yes, I would be honored. And so, this is so fun for me to be able to have this conversation with you.

Tom Peters: Well, thank you very much for that. They're a bunch of things I want to talk about. Talk to us a little bit about the S-curve, what it means, where it came from. And then I've got a very important personal question, but I will hold that.

Whitney Johnson: All right. So, the S-curve, some of you are going to be familiar with it. It was first popularized by Everett Rogers, a sociologist back in the 1960s. And he used it to figure out how quickly an idea would be adopted. He was actually looking at hybrid corn. There was a corn, and this is actually in the 30s and 40s, this brand-new corn, and it had a 20% higher yield. It was drought resistant; it was easier to harvest, and yet it took about five years for the first 10% of the farmers to adopt the corn. And then he observed that in the next three years they went from 10% of the farmers to 40% of the farmers. And so, this this adoption he saw was happening on the shape of an S, so a flat part and then a steep part and then a flat part of saturation. Well, we use this S curve at the disruptive innovation fund that I cofounded with Clayton Christensen to help us figure out how quickly an innovation would be adopted and to be able to make investment decisions. But one of the big aha's that I had as we were using this S curve is it could also not only help us look at how groups change, but how individuals change. It could help us understand how we learn and how we grow so that every time you and I start something new, we are on the launch point of a brand-new S curve. And so, I can talk through the different parts of the S curve. But that's that's the genesis of the idea. We were using it for investing and I had this aha. That we could use it to understand how people grow and develop.

Tom Peters: Yeah, I mean, I have a question for you at the end. I've been doing this, that and the other. Finished a book and I got a little bit of this out of your books. I want to know how the hell you're going to get me on the bottom of a new S-curve before this thing – this conversation is over.

Whitney Johnson: Oh, I like that challenge, Tom.

Tom Peters: At the bottom of the curve. And I really want you to hammer on that one.

Whitney Johnson: Okay, let's do it. So let me give you a quick overview of what it looks like, and then we can talk about how we're going to get you to jump to the launch point of a new curve. So, thank you. Here's what's going on in your brain is whenever you start something new: your brain is running a predictive model. And the brain is saying, what do I need to do to get from the bottom of this mountain to the top of the mountain? So, the bottom of the curve to the top of the curve. It's making lots and lots of predictions, many of which are inaccurate. And so, because they're inaccurate, your dopamine in your brain, which is the chemical messenger of delight, it drops. The other

thing that's happening for you at the launch point is you're mapping new territory. So cognitively, emotionally, it's very taxing and you also are undergoing an identity shift. You're no longer who you were, but you're not yet who you're going to be. And so, you have this experience of this is thrilling, but it's also terrifying. And you can feel overwhelmed and discouraged. And it's not that growth isn't happening, but it feels very slow. So, this is that experience that you have whenever you start something new, that's the launch point and the sweet spot. This is the second part of the curve. Your brain is continuing to run this model and it's getting increasingly accurate. And in fact, you're having lots of emotional upside surprises, which is causing your dopamine to spike.

Whitney Johnson: This is what happens in the stock market, by the way, when people beat numbers, markets. The stocks go up because of the dopamine. And so now you're having this experience of being exhilarated where it's hard but not too hard. It's easy, but not too easy. Growth is fast. It feels fast. That's the sweet spot, that steep part of the curve. And then you hit mastery. And I want you to listen very carefully, Tom, because this is going to help motivate you to jump to the launch point of a new curve. What happens when you're in mastery? You are having the experience of the model. You've figured it out. It's like a computer program. It's done major chord on the piano. Ta da! So, there's not very much dopamine. Your identity, what you started to do, you're now really good at and you've mapped the territory. There's not much new to see. And so, growth is slow. So, you've got slow at the launch point where the dopamine is dropping fast in the sweet spot where the dopamine spiking and in mastery you've got slow, where the dopamine is basically flat. And if you stay there too long, your plateau will become a precipice. And so rather than waiting to get pushed off that curve, rather than waiting to get disrupted, you make the decision to Disrupt Yourself and jump to the launch point of a new curve. Are you persuaded yet or do we need more?

Tom Peters: No, I'm absolutely persuaded we could go on on that topic for a long, long time. But what hit me was you come in as a new leader of a group and the situation is not the most perfect situation in the world. The number I hate most on the planet is the number 32. And I've seen this in a lot of places. 32% of employees are engaged in their workplace. The shocking thing about that, by the way, I think it's Gallup stuff. The number doesn't vary from country to country. I mean, it's just a third of people. So, at any rate, I walk into a 32% situation. People are getting the job done. Place is not going to hell in a handbasket. How do I take a bunch of people who are very decent people haven't been treated particularly specially, haven't been abused, and I really want to get them thinking about another world. And today is my first morning on the job. It's a 12-person department within finance, 26 person group within purchasing whatever that what the hell do I do on day one? I'm completely I've been totally sucked into the S-curve stuff and I want to know how to play with that bottom end.

Whitney Johnson: Yeah. All right. So, it's day one and one of the conversations you want to have. If you haven't already had the conversation before you hired a person is to have them sit down and draw this S-curve and say, okay, you've got the launch point, you've got the sweet spot and you've got the mastery. And you say to them, you in this role are at the launch point of this curve. You may be a domain expert. That may be true and that may be part of the reason that we hired you. But when we think about your role and your being able to be successful in this role, you are at the launch point because it involves not only your domain expertise, but also your ability to get things done and to get things done by working with people. Now, some of the things that I want you to understand is that

getting things done means you need to map out who your stakeholders are. You need to get to know people. You need to understand the territory in which you are working. Because getting things done, moving up that curve, you have to do it by yourself, but you're not going to do it alone. The other thing that I'm going to want you to understand is that you are going to have lots of moments where you think, I thought it was a good idea to take on this project or this role or this job, but now I'm not so sure. And that's because your dopamine is dropping. So, you're going to have moments of feeling overwhelmed and discouraged and uncomfortable and gangly and awkward. Go into this place of learning. Understand that you are going to feel this way and the situation is normal. I expect you to feel this way. So please don't pretend like you know things that you don't. And then the third thing that I'm going to want you to really think about is as you're moving off the launch point is to take that dopamine. So, moving along a curve is basically a dopamine management exercise. And so, let's figure out how to put in place a hack of doing these really small, ridiculously small goals that allow you to get some dopamine that will build that momentum off the launch point so that you can move into the sweet spot as quickly as possible. So, situation normal that you're uncomfortable. I want you to map the territory, which means get to know all of your stakeholders and then set these really small goals that will allow you to build momentum to move into the sweet spot of your curve.

Tom Peters: Great. I mean, great. Meaning it's not easy, but I understand. I understand. I mean, part of it, it strikes me, is just the fact that I have a model that I'm sharing with other people gives people the confidence that maybe we know what the heck we're doing.

Whitney Johnson: You know, exactly. Tom, it's really interesting when you say that, because I've had a number of people say to me, well, Whitney this S-curve thing, it's just this little line. It's so simple. And my comment is precisely because it's simple, because it's visual and it because it's visual, it bypasses the, you know, this logical part of your brain. It goes directly to your subconscious. It allows you to have a very robust conversation because it's so simple and everybody can understand it and grasp it very quickly.

Tom Peters: It's funny, I read this experiment years ago. One of my great heroes in the world of social psych is a guy by the name of Carl White, and this is one of his books. There was a group of Italian soldiers during World War Two who were literally lost in the Alps and their lieutenant sat down. Drew a map. They were lost and distressed and showed him the map. Once they had the map, they walked out of the area where they were lost. It wasn't a map. He was just sitting there with a piece of paper drawing little lines. But it gave them the confidence to think that, in fact, they could take the first step in the second step. And I love that.

Whitney Johnson: Yeah. Wow. The placebo effect was very effective. Yeah.

Tom Peters: Yeah, exactly. Well, one thing. I'll tell you my favorite story after I tell you the two things, which are just one thing. Your damned book titles lead them up the learning curve. Most recent book, *Grow Your People to Grow Your Company*. That's not sophisticated English, for God's sakes. Whitney. I'm 79 and I've been doing whatever the hell I've been doing for at least 40 years. Why don't leaders understand that they are not being paid to be the best programmer or the best accountant? Their entire role in life. Is to develop people, period. That's the ball game. I'll

tell you one little story and then I want you to give me the final answer to that and get rid of my frustration, which is 50 years in the making. Oh, sure, no problem. Good. I was giving a speech in Mumbai and sitting ten feet from me in the first row was a guy in a uniform who I was told was a four-star general who happened to run the entire Indian Army, which incidentally is the biggest on earth. I mean, that terrified me. I was in the Navy, and I was a junior officer, and people with stars are terrifying. We got into this topic, though, and I just loved this so much. I'm talking to a four-star general who has hundreds of thousands of people working for him. Now we're going to promote somebody to general, and I've got seven candidates, of which of whom Whitney Johnson is one. He said he basically said, there is only one way that I evaluate Whitney Johnson. I find the people who worked for her during the time that she was stepping up the ladder and see the degree to which they achieved great success, thanks significantly to the two years that they were working with Whitney. I started weeping when he said that. I mean, he basically he's talking about generals of armies and he's saying, I'm going to go back. And, you know, I was so blown away, I kind of started to cry practically.

Whitney Johnson: I love that. If you think about the curve being a mountain that you're climbing, he's basically saying, so it doesn't matter. And now you're going to make me cry. It doesn't matter if you can get to the top of the mountain. If you look back down and you say it's okay that eight of us got here, But Ted, he's dead down at the bottom of the mountain and so it's that ability to say, I understand that I need to make it up to the top, but if I don't help other people up to the top of the mountain as well, then I have failed. Now, your question about why do we not do that? I think the answer, Tom, for me, at its simplest and there can be lots of contributing factors, we want to do it. Most of us do. There are probably some evil people around, but most of us really want to grow other people. We really want to develop the people around us. We really want to be that boss. The people said Tom was the best boss that I ever had, and I think that we don't. When we get to this place of we have shadow values, we have yes, I want to help other people, but if I at any point feel that I am not safe, if I if I at any point am worried that I won't make it up the mountain, if I at any point am worried that I am not going to survive, not physically, but emotionally, I start to do things that undermine other people. Meaning if I'm going up the curve and I'm bringing someone up the mountain and they might pass me along the way, then am I going to continue to help them? I may not, depending on what other values that I have that are at play. And so for us as leaders, I think the biggest challenge that comes is that we have to figure out and this goes to Disrupt Yourself and grow yourself to grow your people is that we need to become increasingly aware of when do we have those moments where we fight against our greater instincts or our higher instincts or our higher motivations and start to root those out of ourselves so that we can get to the point where we in every situation are willing to say, You know what, I'm going to help people around me grow because I know there's enough there's plenty of headroom for me, there's plenty of mountains, there's plenty of opportunity for me to grow. And by growing myself, then I can allow other people to grow. And oh, by the way, when I make it possible for the people around me to grow, I grow as well. That takes tremendous courage and introspection and discipline to go to that place. That's why we don't do it, because it's very, very supremely difficult.

Tom Peters: Well, a couple of responses. I was reading your bio and I believe you have a music degree.

Whitney Johnson: I do.

Tom Peters: I've got engineering degrees, so you've got it made and I've got a problem. What do you mean? And what I mean by that, which has a lot to do with hiring. Et cetera. Liberal arts graduates are a lot more likely to be thoughtful about these things than engineers business, MBAs. School graduates and so on. I had this wonderful conversation. I have a neighbor and he was a physicist, PhD. He was working, I think, at MIT, but working for the CIA. And it was some shockingly complicated thing where you would take the film out of the belly of a YouTube and you would try to find out what was going on on the ground. Neither here nor there, very complicated. And he had a buddy who had a team and his buddies, and these were both guys with IQs of 962 on their bad days. And this other guy's team regularly did better work. And it wasn't competitive. He was just, you know, he's interested in everything. And he said what I found was the magic of the other team was he always had music majors, theater majors, people from the liberal arts, people who looked at the planet in a very, very different way. I love that. I love that part of it. And particularly I've become kind of rabid on the topic. I mean, I have four technical degrees, two engineering, two business rabbit on the part of make sure you hire the liberal arts people. Et cetera. Et cetera. And per what you were saying; it just it brings a different, more varied, more humanistic humanism view of the world. What are we going to do about that?

Whitney Johnson: Well, I think we are doing something about it. Right. I think that that is happening more frequently just because we're aware of it. And we're aware that I mean, remember when Dan Pink's book *A Whole New Mind* came out for me that was such a valuable book because it was so easy to only value engineering degrees and not to value liberal arts degrees. And for me, certainly I started to value what I brought to the table, how I did think about the world differently, how I do think, you know, whether I'm writing a piece or conducting a podcast interview or giving a speech. I always have music in the back of my mind. How And or even this book that you read, I have a crescendo and get to this place where there was some musicality to it. And so, so part of what I think is happening is that liberal arts graduates are valuing what they bring to the table. And I think the hard sciences are valuing it as well. And we are just getting better at appreciating the things that we do differently. I actually want to add one other piece of research that I came across recently that I think is really interesting. There was looking at a mountain. So, continuing with this mountain metaphor, one of the things that they found, some researchers found is that if I look at a mountain by myself, it has one slant. But if you and I, Tom, are standing together looking up at that mountain and talking about what are we going to need to do to scale that mountain, the slant appears to be less. And oh, by the way, if you're not there, but I still think Tom's. How would Tom think about this? And Tom could help me get up this mountain? It still feels like it's less. And to me, that is such a valuable way to think about when we're working together. Going back to this story that he told to you, when we work together, climbing and scaling that curve of our career of a project becomes easier. Many, many backpacks make for light work of climbing up the mountain.

Tom Peters: Your research story reminds me of another research story. There's a book. I don't know whether you ever read it *Management Methods* from the Mayo Clinic. And as we both know, whenever they have those rankings of best health care groups, Mayo is invariably on top. And he told one little story that I just loved. Whitney Johnson is one of the best neurosurgeons God ever put on earth. And I would love to hire her for my hospital, which is a

mayo unit. And so, I have an interview with her. During the interview that lasts 45 minutes or an hour, I am literally not figuratively counting the number of times Whitney uses the word we versus the number of times that Whitney uses the word I. And even though she is God's gift to humanity, if the eyes beat the wheeze, we're not going to bring her on board. Wow. That's and that is just and the point to tie it in and not make it sound so weird. In 1914, I believe it was, Dr. Mayo introduced the notion of team medicine, and it still sticks 120 years later. And team medicine is, you know, and I know from the health care world, that ain't the norm. But, you know, that's the way they the way they do the game. And I just, I wish people would look at the world that way. There was a woman who was hired there as a surgeon. And, you know, these quotes are crazy quotes, except she's a surgeon. So, she probably doesn't resort to hyperbole as much as much as I do. She said I am 100 times more powerful in this job than my last job because we do everything as a team. There's a whole book which says the most important decisions we make are hiring decisions. And most of us aren't very good at hiring relative to these skills. I'm not an expert. Talk to me about good versus bad hiring. And relative to the things I want you to do. Two things. Damn it. Relative. Relative to us on the up. This s curve. I want to hear, first of all, about how we get the weeds, do the hiring process. And secondly, I want you to give me a little riff relative to these variables in your in your s curve, a little riff on training because I froth at the mouth over the topic of training.

Whitney Johnson: Okay. So, going back to your question earlier, is this idea of people who can make it up the S curve, you pointed out one thing is can they work with other people? So, this idea of I versus we asking them questions like, so how did you get your first job or how did you graduate? You know, how were you able to maybe it's not your first job, but it could be your first job. How have you gotten to where you are and asking people to tell stories about themselves and what you will find? If it's only I, I, I, I. Then that again is problematic. And it's interesting because one of the people that I profile in Smart growth is a woman by the name of Astrid Tuminez. And she said she made the comment that anybody who is self-made or says that they're self-made is a delusion. Now, why is that story interesting and valuable? Because Astrid Tuminez grew up in the Philippines. She grew up in the slums of the Philippines in a house that was on stilts. They had no money. There were six kids or seven kids. Her father made basically \$50 a month. She was ended up in a school with Catholic nuns who taught her to read and write. And she dreamed of someday coming to the United States. She made it to the United States. She got degrees from Harvard and MIT. And today she is the president, the president of a university with 40,000 students. But she came from this place where one could argue, and she could make the claim and probably no one, no one would disagree with her that she is self-made. And yet she says, if you say that it's a delusion, why? Because she had an older sister that fed her. She had Catholic nuns that schooled her. She had people who would sponsor her to come to United States. She had a professor who believed in her. And when she first started in college, who gave her a job typing, when she didn't seem to know how to spell over and over and over again. And so, I think that narrative is very, very important. The other piece of that, in addition to working with people, I would say is look for initiative. Are people agentic ask them questions like tell me about your life and then look for do they say, and then this happened, and I figured this out. And how do they make meaning of these experiences? What did they do rather than, well, then this happened to me and then that happened to me. And oh, this was difficult. And oh, life is challenging and difficult and hard. If you hear those kinds of things, there's an inclination to place blame, to not take responsibility. And what you want is, again, you want people who can work with other people but who believe that

they are fundamentally agents and have autonomy regardless of the situation and are going to take responsibility for making progress along those curves. And if those two things are in place, you can figure everything else out. So that's where I would start.

Tom Peters: Hey, I think it's a great point. Be our time is short and I haven't done the most important thing. You and I have met face to face only once. And that was at a dinner and I found you vaguely interesting. You had your daughter Miranda, with you, and she was about the most fantastic person other than my own kids that I've ever met. And so, it's a few years later now, and I want you to tell me. Tell me about Miranda today.

Whitney Johnson: Yeah. Okay. So, I will. And I think that this is a really great. Her story is a really great example of the topic of your podcast of extreme humanism and of leadership and of self-leadership. So, here's the current story. So just to give everyone some background, we met at a dinner in Columbia; I think it was Columbia. It was either Columbia or Peru. And so Miranda, my daughter, she's now 21 years old and she at the time we met, she was enrolled to go to the University of Virginia in the United States. She was, at the time, taking a gap year. She had done very well in high school, straight A's, was in ten AP courses, fives on every single one academic team, state champion, etcetera. So, she's planning on going to school; Uva, this is 2020. The pandemic hits after two days. And by the way, I have permission to share the story, everyone. So, you're not worried. After two days, she calls us, mom and dad, and says, "I'm not ready to do this right now. I need to come home." She was really struggling with anxiety, and so she just wasn't ready to go to school. And so, she had the incredible courage to say to mom and dad, I'm not ready to go to college right now. So, she took another gap year. Well, last fall, she decides I'm going to start school at Southern Virginia University, where my husband teaches. And part of us said, hooray, because, you know, we just got a \$30,000 cut on tuition, had a really great semester, took straight A's again, started this next semester. So, this is just a few months ago and said mom and dad, I'm not ready to do school right now. And so, the thing that happened at that moment, which was so powerful and so compelling for me, is that she said finally, and this is now several years, she's ready to go see a therapist. Finally, she's ready to look at what do I do from a med standpoint in order for me not to in order for me to deal with this anxiety that I was I was born with. And so, and also mom and dad, I need to thank you for holding this space for me. But I also need you to hold me accountable. And so, one of the things that as she and I talked about, it's a really interesting time in the world because we put so much emphasis on intellectual progress and on physical stamina and progress and on even spiritual progress. And I think one of the things that the pandemic has given us is that it has made it okay in a very. Much more potent manner to really focus on our emotional and our mental health. And so, she is schooling us. We're learning from her and she's in the process of figuring this out. And so that is the update. And I think it's, um, I think it's, you know, of course we want her to be happy and productive, but I just find it so encouraging and inspiring that she was willing to say to us, hey, I need to figure this out and I need your help to figure this out. So that's the update on Miranda.

Tom Peters: I think it's a wonderful story. I think it's a nery story. It's an exciting story. I would have to say that mom and dad get a little bit of credit in this one as well for being responsive, understanding and so on. I mean, my real takeaway, which is a takeaway from the conversation. Oh, two things. There's another general whose name is Melvin Zais, and he was teaching at a at the Army War College. And I don't have the whole quote and we don't have

time. But he basically said, if there is one thing that will set you apart, if there is one thing which will lead to to improved outcomes, if there is one thing that will lead to improved performance, it is you must care. And I would love it if it came from anywhere. I love it. Coming from the Army War College. When you talk about the S curve, it's a wonderful tool. But you're talking about the way people support each other. They get together, they care about each other. That's Miranda's story as well. And I just wish and pray and hope in the world that professionally, you and you and I live, that more people would get that. That is the essence of extreme humanism. It is the essence of excellence. And I even think I'm not going to be around 20 years from now. But as artificial intelligence continues to move up the curve exponentially, and we're going to have to find entirely different ways of living that will even push us more in that direction. I hope it will push us more in that direction. Well, Whitney, I am a genius to have decided to have you as my first guest and I want to really thank you for your time. I am in awe of what you do, how you do it. It's funny, there was a was a column that David Brooks wrote a couple of years ago and I just loved it. He said There are two kinds of virtues. There are resume virtues; and there are eulogy virtues. The resume virtues are promoted 17 times. Blah, blah, blah. Blah, blah, blah blah, blah, blah. Have a degree have of this. And the eulogy virtues obviously are what they say about you at your funeral. And he said the eulogy virtues are always all about how Whitney treated people. Now, maybe I look at it a little more intensely at the age of 79 than people would who are a teeny bit younger. My great hope of my life is that. Comments like that or ideas like that belong as much in a, quote, hard-nosed business environment as they do. You know, heaven alone knows where else business is about humans and humanity and doing things together. And, you know, that's been my 40-year war. And it's you probably wouldn't use exactly the same language, but yours as well. And you know, God bless you for the effort you've put in and the things you care about. And, you know, I hope you keep going to 179 and, you know, may Miranda have the most wonderful life imaginable, whatever the heck she does.

Whitney Johnson: Well, thanks for listening. That is Tom Peters for you, management icon. And I figured the best way, the only way to close out this special episode was to bring my daughter on for a bit. Miranda. Hi.

Miranda Johnson: Hi! How are you?

Whitney Johnson: So, I just want to make sure I say this again. I had your full permission to share the story with Tom, right?

Miranda Johnson: Oh, totally.

Whitney Johnson: So, what's it like hearing someone else tell your story of what you've been up to for the past couple of years?

Miranda Johnson: We've talked about it, of course, but I guess hearing it in this format was a bit interesting because of course I had to live all those years. So, there is a lot more stumbling and self-doubt about whether I was doing the right thing and if I was being too easy on myself using my mental health issues as an excuse to not strive for as much.

But I'm happy with where I'm at right now. So, I think I've made the right decisions and that's how I'll choose to see it.

Whitney Johnson: So good. So specifically, we talked about the last couple of years, but what are you up to today? It's fun. You know, a day in the life of Miranda. It's a Saturday morning. We're recording this. What are you up to?

Miranda Johnson: So, I was prepping for this, of course, listening to the podcast and thinking about what I wanted to say. And then I guess while I'm in school in college. So, I'm writing a paper right now about how in *Emma* by Jane Austen and its adaptations, uh, masculinity is correlated with wealth and different interpretations of that. Okay. Yeah, it's fun.

Whitney Johnson: All right. It's so interesting how you can take a piece of literature and dissect it in so many different ways.

Miranda Johnson: Yeah, I mean, the basic thing to do that all my classmates is doing is like different perceptions of fatherhood and romance. And I'm just like, money is interesting. Let's do that.

Whitney Johnson: Well, because didn't you not too long ago do a whole analysis of like the value of currency during Jane Austen's?

Miranda Johnson: That's part of the reason. Yeah. There's so many different ways to measure wealth.

Whitney Johnson: Oh, interesting. Okay. So, let's go now to the conversation with Tom. Um, I know for me as a mother, it was just so touching for him to pay special attention to you, to see you. I think we first met him when you were 18. You were about to graduate at 19.

Miranda Johnson: This was 19. This was my first gap year.

Whitney Johnson: Okay. Okay. So, you had already graduated from high school. Yeah. All right.

Miranda Johnson: But definitely still figuring out what I was doing with my life. Exactly.

Whitney Johnson: So, but I remember having this experience of just feeling so moved and touched as a mother that this person who I revere was taking an interest in you. And I just wonder, what was it like for you? And because I'm thinking for everybody who's listening, you know, what does it mean when someone that is revered takes interest in someone who's an up and comer who's still in college? What was it like for you?

Miranda Johnson: I, of course, had heard you say the name Tom Peters before, and I guess I'm always a little hesitant to hear people you talk about and like, say you really like because I'm just like, "Oh, what if I have a

different opinion?” Then we're going to have to like, deal with that. But I don't know. Tom Peters met my expectations and then exceeded them. He was just so kind and eloquent and intelligent and passionate, and it was super flattering to have a conversation in him where he seemed to actually care what I was saying about and be genuine in that care. It's because of the whole anxiety thing. I'm prone to a bit of self-doubt. So, it was really we talked about all sorts of things. We went from like history and our personal experiences and religion and our personal experiences, and it was a real back and forth conversation, which I think is pretty unusual for someone who is at my age and then someone who's so much senior and has so much more life experience to get to have an experience like that.

Whitney Johnson: Yeah, I think it's a good reminder for all of the adults out there to pay attention to people who are who are emerging adults. Um, I know I talk a lot about the S curve. What do you think of the S curve? Miranda, give me your unvarnished opinion.

Miranda Johnson: Okay. Um, I guess the most honest answer was that is that I'm of two minds of it. I have my daughter of Whitney Johnson mind, which is just like, “Oh, that's something my mom does. So, it's lame.” Of course.

Whitney Johnson: As you've said on many occasions, Dad and I are solidly above average parents.

Miranda Johnson: Yeah, I always mean that as the highest compliment. Um, if I was being genuine in my praise, I'd say you were 90 percentile at least.

Whitney Johnson: Oh, well, thank you. I wasn't fishing for that, but I'll take it. All right. So. So the daughter, Miranda says the S is kind of lame, but then the person. Miranda, what does she say?

Miranda Johnson: Um. I guess it's always cool to have a mom like you because you expose me to all these different ways of thinking about the world and growth and development. Just because you're reading and learning these things for the S curve. In particular, it's helpful for me because I often see myself, like stuck in the perpetual at the bottom of the s curve mindset and the anxiety that comes with it. I kind of feel like I'm flailing through life, so it's helpful to like be aware of the S curve and the impact that can have on our emotions and perceptions, because then I can use that to like adjust my mental assessment of a situation and then I can better deal with it.

Whitney Johnson: You can normalize the experience.

Miranda Johnson: Yeah, exactly.

Whitney Johnson: Love it. Okay. So Miranda, thank you so much for coming on. I love you.

Miranda Johnson: I love you, too. And I'm was happy to hear this podcast because it's lovely to hear Tom's voice again.

Whitney Johnson: Yeah, I agree. And let's, let's wrap that up by saying, Tom, thank you. We are so grateful for you. We're happy for you that you've retired, but we're sad for us. We're really going to miss you in the in the public sphere.

Miranda Johnson: Yes.

Thank you again to Tom Peters for sharing this tape with us. Thank you to Tom for interviewing me. Thank you to my daughter, Miranda, for joining us. And thank you for listening. If you enjoyed this episode, hit subscribe so you don't miss a single episode. And please, if you know of someone who needs more Tom Peters in their life, share this with them. Thank you to our producer Alexander Turk, production assistant Stephanie Brummel and production coordinator Nicole Pellegrino.

I'm Whitney Johnson.

And this is a special episode of Disrupt Yourself.