

# DISRUPT YOURSELF PODCAST

## EPISODE 323: SHIRZAD CHAMINE

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. The building block of that growth. It's you. It's said that cliches become cliches for a reason. There's at least a kernel of truth to them. So, I want to start today's episode with this cliché You are your own worst enemy. There's a reason it gets repeated over and over. We, meaning humans, keep running into this same problem in 2023 or 2023 BC. We keep tripping over our own feet. We keep stabbing ourselves in the back. We keep being our own worst enemy. So, what do we do about ourselves? That's where I want to bring in our guests for today. Shirzad Chamine is best known as the founder and CEO of Positive Intelligence.

You might have heard of it as PK. Maybe you've taken a test to figure out your IQ score or what your top saboteurs are. Shirzad's dedicated his life to democratizing mental fitness, which is pretty much how quickly you bounce back from something negative and your PK scores attest of how strong that mental muscle is. Before his work with Positive intelligence, Shirzad was CEO of the Coach Training Institute. While his time as a student at the Stanford Graduate School of Business continues to influence students today, as you'll hear and hold on. He's an electrical engineer, too. So how does the guy who does all of this fight his saboteurs? How does he fight his own worst enemy? And how did he learn to be his own best friend? I've got all that and more for you in this episode. I hope you'll enjoy.

**Whitney Johnson:** All right. So, Shirzad, it's a tradition for us to start with a formative story on Disrupt Yourself. But I want to start a different way this time. I want to ask you about something ordinary that you find magic or motivation in time after time. Many people can tell great stories, but I would like to know about something that's ordinary, that makes you you Shirzad and maybe it's even something you saw or did today.

**Shirzad Chamine:** I sometimes even teach this to my clients. I say you wait for this big exotic vacation to go and finally have a sense of awe and beauty of life and oh my God, it's wonderful to go to Hawaii and see these amazing

volcanic mountains and all that stuff. And all of that wonder is right in front of you at this very moment. Just take a look at the palm of your hand and be fascinated by what you see in the palm of your hands. So, my invitation for all our listeners and viewers right now is just take a close look at the palm of your hand. Take a look at all the peaks and valleys. There are so many curves that that's there. It's not it's not flat like you sometimes think it is. All of these curves, the long, long interval sections with the shorter ones, the fact that this is not just even one color or multiple colors. If you, if you if you just slide your fingers along the palm of your hands, there are lots of different sensations and temperatures you will just notice as you go along and as you pay attention, you realize that you barely understand really the true beauty and complexity of even the palm of your own hand. You do not need to go all the way to exotic Hawaiian vacation to be in awe and wonder of the beauty that's right here with you at any given moment. And so, what do I find? I step out of my home to take my little dog out for a walk. Her name is Penny. And so, as I as I do, and even a fallen leaf on the ground, as I truly look at this fallen leaf, there is endless beauty in it that I can experience if I'm truly present to it in the moment. So, for me, every day is extraordinary if I'm really present to it.

**Whitney Johnson:** Well, first of all, our cat is named Penny, so we have.

**Shirzad Chamine:** Oh, all right.

**Whitney Johnson:** Dog and a cat, both named Penny. But I love this idea that all of the fascination and the wonder of the planet and the universe is just in the palm of our hand.

**Shirzad Chamine:** Yeah. Every little thing in the universe is the microcosm of the entire universe. And all of its beauty and wonder is right there, including stuff about ourselves. We are magnificent, incredible, astonishing beings. If we begin to remember. And so, part of what I talk to people about, the work that we do, our work is not about changing you. Our work is about helping you remember the incredible being that you are.

**Whitney Johnson:** So, speaking of the beauty, I'd like to build a foundation for our listeners. You've talked about how your childhood was dominated by a violent father and very poor living conditions. Can you talk a bit more about the world from your perspective as a child?

**Shirzad Chamine:** Well, I have a picture of myself when I was two years old. And in this picture, my head is bowed and I am looking at the camera in complete resignation and depression, because what had happened is, as a sensitive kid, I was looking around, realizing there wasn't much love and safety. And I found, you know, solace in the cocoon of my isolation and depression. I later realized I was in clinical depression the first 30 years of my life and what saved me and sustained me was, I don't know where it came from, but early in my childhood, my heroes were Martin Luther King and Gandhi. And early in my childhood, there was a whisper in my ear. I did not know where it came from. I never questioned it. And the whisper was your result. Your path in this world is one day to be on the world stage like your hero, Martin Luther King and Gandhi, and change millions of lives. And it's a whisper that I never questioned and it never was about me. The ego, how amazing I'm going to be. It was always

about massive change and about changing millions of lives was always about that scale. And that whisper sustained me. Sustained me through my childhood and has guided me ever so gently. So, every decision I've made in my life and I'm beginning to absolutely see that whisper manifested in the work that I do today.

**Whitney Johnson:** It's interesting that you're saying that even in your work you one of the things that you invite people to do is to have a picture of themselves at a very young age when to capture the essence of themselves. And I do have a picture of myself on my camera, on my screensaver that I can look at. Oh, you do? Oh, yes, I do. I do find it curious listening to you saying that even at the age of two, that your light or your essence had gone out and so or somewhat it was dimmed. So, when you think about your essence Yourself, what picture do you look at or you just picture it?

**Shirzad Chamine:** The first time that I started realizing there is such a thing as unchanging essence that we are born with is actually having two having two kids who from day one were so fundamentally different from each other. So, my son is a is a gentle introvert and such a quiet soul. From the beginning he just was easy going and was going with the flow and just had this charm about his way of being and kind of meandering through life with such ease and flow and gentleness. And then my daughter four years later is born and she is a hard charging, powerful being who is incredibly extroverted and self-directed, hard charging. And it is such a different being, equally beautiful, but so different. And it was clear even on day one, the way they were looking at and connecting with the environment. And I just saw that these two were born with completely different essence from day one. And then as I saw their beautiful selves blossom. And right now, one is in college and one is post college. Nothing about that essence has ever changed. And so, my job as a parent was not how to change my kids, but how to have them keep remembering this amazing being that they are worthy of all the unconditional love in the world.

And so, you know, my work on myself, too, is I had absolutely forgotten the amazing thing that I am. So, my work on myself has been to remember and fall back in love with myself again. And so, my childhood picture, even the one that has me look so sad and depressed if I truly keep looking at him underneath that that resignation there is this beautiful, sensitive being who is here to make a difference and who is here to love and be loved. And so, I adore that kid. I adore myself. I've fallen back in love with myself and some of the work that I do mean a big part of the essence of the work we do with others is help them remember who they are at this unchanging essence. And I talk to people this, you know, as you know, I've been a CEO coach for the longest time, very, very ambitious, driven people. And I keep helping them see that their love for themselves is absolutely conditional love, which is no love at all. You know, they keep performing and performing and performing so that they can find themselves worthy of love forever. So temporarily, before they set the next goal for themselves. And there is never enough achievement to actually arrive.

That sustains love because the question always is what's the next achievement? What's the next achievement? Give me more so that you're worthy of love and let them see that this is conditional love, which is no love at all. It's like you're treating yourself like a rat, running a maze and giving yourself cheese at the end of the maze. The other boy now runs me another maze. And so, the question I asked them is, how can you go back to really discovering this

beautiful essence being you have always been That has never changed. And from day one was worthy of all the unconditional love in the world. Love that being every single day, unconditionally. Even if you've had a bad day, if you even if you've made mistakes, even if you have been failing very different way of being so that then going and achieving and doing stuff is a nice, wonderful, joyful thing you do rather than an anxious thing you do so that you can prove yourself worthy of love or acknowledgment or things like that. So that's a big thing that I did with myself and also things that I did with my children so that their love for themselves was not conditional. And they knew my love for them was not conditional.

**Whitney Johnson:** You know, what I found that's been really helpful is, as I said, I've got a picture of when I was about 7 or 8 on my phone as my screensaver, and it is very helpful when I start to And think probably most people listening to this will do something like this is you make a mistake and you want to start berating yourself and saying, you know, you, you messed up. You shouldn't have done this. Well, and you look at that picture of yourself and you realize, I would not talk to this child like that. I simply would not talk to this child that way. So why am I talking to myself that way and think that's what has made it so powerful for me?

**Shirzad Chamine:** Exactly. Whitney and that voice is the judge voice. And my judge voice is so harsh and brutal. And I use the word brutality very intentionally. My judge voice against myself is so brutal. I called my judge the executioner. And so, this voice, by the way, has never ceased, is still in my ear every day and says that you're unworthy of any love or attention. You are a fraud. Any minute now, you're going to be discovered for the facade and the fraud. You are the imposter syndrome, all of that stuff. And so basically one of the things I help people visualize is just think about it like imagine these beautiful lessons being yourself if you remember that beautiful kid through that picture and every time the judge comes in to beat, to beat you up like that, imagine it beating this beautiful being. Would you allow that? Exactly like you said, Whitney. And the answer is, of course I will not allow it. I will protect this being at all cost. I would protect my child at all costs against this kind of brutality. So. So then, let's protect ourselves at all costs against this brutality. So, every time my judge shows up now with complete vigilance and a sense of humor, I say, hey, there you go again. Calling me an idiot, calling me worthless, calling me a facade. Stop it. I'm not going to take it right now. And I shift my attention over and over again by just labeling that voice as the judge. The judge is not me and the judge is not telling me the truth. Now, of course, this judge is in me because actually this judge was incredibly helpful to help me survive my childhood. And most of our judge voices are there for a reason. They help us survive our childhood, mentally and emotionally. But by the time we are adults, they are no longer serving and we need to let them know this is no longer helpful. You know, have a better alternative. Yeah, well.

**Whitney Johnson:** One of your best-known Ted Talks is about the little voices in our head, like the judge that you just described, that keep us from what we want. You call them saboteurs. We learn them early on. Tell us about the quiz that you can take to find out what your saboteurs are and then we'll include that in the show notes for people, because it's a terrific quiz. And is there a saboteur that you've been fighting in particular recently? Maybe it's the judge, maybe it's another saboteur.

**Shirzad Chamine:** Yeah, there is. So, what we did factor analysis, research on what are all the ways that we self-sabotage and factor analysis helps you get to the core building blocks of variations that you see. So, what our research showed, more than a million people now have participated in it. What it showed is that there are not 100 ways to self-sabotage. It seems like there are, but there really are only ten ways. And we call these ways we self-sabotage. We call them the saboteurs. And so, they have names like the judge, the controller, the stickler, the victim, the pleaser, the avoider, And, and so on. So hopefully you're seeing yourself in it, your significant other in it, your kid in it. So, it's a universal phenomenon. And we have a saboteur assessment that within five minutes gives you a bar chart that shows you your top saboteurs, how you self-sabotage. We usually have people focus on just a couple of these saboteurs, plus the judge, which is the universal saboteur And. And it has a profound impact when you do that. So, we're going to let you know where to go find it. And [positiveintelligence.com](http://positiveintelligence.com) so that you do that.

**Whitney Johnson:** Yeah so, we'll include that in the show notes. So, is there one that you've been fighting with or fending off recently besides the judge?

**Shirzad Chamine:** My top saboteurs have been the avoider and just actually like my son. So, my son and I share the top saboteur avoider And. And then after that the pleaser. So, one of the ways that we look at what saboteurs are, saboteurs take your greatest strength. And by overusing and abusing your greatest strengths, they turn it into your greatest weakness. For example, one of my greatest strengths is being very empathic and caring. That's a really awesome strength for me to use for good, and that's what makes me effective in the work that I do. Overused That becomes my pleaser saboteur where I don't set enough boundaries. I can't say no when I really need to be saying no and all that stuff. And avoider is an is another one. So those are the couple of things that I've been working on.

**Whitney Johnson:** Well, of course, I'm now going to tell you what my top saboteurs and you can tell me what strength I'm overused IN. All right. So, my top saboteur is hypervigilant. So, what strength does one overuse when they're hypervigilant?

**Shirzad Chamine:** Well, the hypervigilance is this tendency to take responsibility for the whole to really take the burden of any groups that you're in, any family system, you and your loved ones take it on your shoulder to protect them, to create integration with them, to hold them in safety. And that's a really wonderful leadership, you know, ability to take on take on that rather than just be about yourself. And the challenge is that the lie that you tell yourself is that in order for me to protect myself and my loved ones and people I care about against all these dangers in the world, I need to be constantly anxious and find out what are all the dangers out there that I can protect myself and others about. And the problem is that you use a metaphor of if you are being asked to protect the village against, you know, if there's a village next to the woods and somebody asks you, well, make sure you protect the village against tigers coming from the woods to eat, eat the people in the village, If you're standing there in a hypervigilant mode in the morning and every time a tree shakes, you say, oh, my God, it's a tiger. There is a tiger, There's a tiger, there's a tiger. Even every time the tree shakes just from wind, you you're going to be so exhausted and cry wolf so many times falsely that by the afternoon when there is an actual tiger that's emerging from behind the trees, you are exhausted. You're not seeing with clarity and people have stopped listening to you.

**Whitney Johnson:** All right. So, you went to Stanford Business School. You figured after your first year there was some information, some wisdom, that you wanted to pass along. So, you wrote a letter. And it's a pretty popular letter to this day. Those top business schools still hand it out. So, for those who haven't read this letter, what is it about? What's the elevator pitch of that letter?

**Shirzad Chamine:** I went through the first year of business school absolutely certain that I was the one admissions mistake because my brutal self-judge was constantly shaming and guiltting me for all that was flawed about me and was having me look at all these other amazing people and saying, oh my God, that person is so impressive. That person has it made. That person is so together, she's out. Shame on you. You're the sole admission mistake. And it took me a long, long time to discover that this brutal judge in me was the one doing the talking and distorting my experience. And so, second year I noticed first year students coming in and I could just literally see them go through the same self-doubts and shame and guilt and all of the stresses. And I realized, wow, this is a narrative that keeps repeating itself. Maybe that my judge is not just unique to me. Maybe everybody has a brutal self-judge that is shaming me, them and guiltting them and having them think they are more broken than the others around who seem to be altogether. So, I took a chance that this Judge Royce is a universal voice. And so, I wrote a five page, single spaced letter that basically talked about here is what my experience of this voice in my head has been.

**Shirzad Chamine:** I bet you you're having the same kind of a voice and there is a better way, you know, stop listening to this voice and experience things differently. At the time there was not Internet and all that stuff. So, I put I copied 350 copies of this, put it in people's mailbox. And I was terrified that people were going to say to me afterwards, she's got shame on you. You are actually this voice is only unique to you. You're the only insecure person amongst us. None of us are having this experience. You have just added yourself as the most insecure person in school. And instead what happened was just a flood of thank you letters. People saying, thank you, thank you, thank you. You helped me realize I was not the only one having these self-doubts. And then it became a tradition. Every single year since then, second year MBA students at Stanford have copied that letter and given it to first year students as a gift. And then I hear that other business schools picked up on that tradition. So other top business schools are doing the same now with that letter.

**Whitney Johnson:** Back to that little voice in your head about Martin Luther King and Gandhi. When you were two years old.

**Shirzad Chamine:** Exactly.

**Whitney Johnson:** So, for a few years you were the CEO of the Coaches Training Institute, and so you had this front seat and building how coaches approach their work. In fact, earlier today I was with Magda Mook, who's the CEO of ICF. So, I wanted to pose the same question that I asked her, which is how have you seen coaching change over the last 20 years?

**Shirzad Chamine:** I'm very passionate about having coaching step into a whole new approach because I actually think my answer is that that traditional coaching has not changed that much from what we used to teach 20 years ago, and that it has fundamentally still stayed primarily about having a powerful conversation with our coaches and, and having the coachee come up with great wisdom and great insights as a result of that coaching session. And I think that has always added great value, that coaching can generate great insight and therefore that is very valuable. What I believe can be added to that, which is what my work has been about, is saying, you know what, that's wonderful. Let's create a circle and say that's a circle of traditional coaching, asking powerful questions, having people come up with their own brilliant answers and generate awesome insights. That's wonderful. Then what? What I believe that we have brought to the table is there are certain things that even if you keep asking powerful questions, the coachee will never come up with the answer, for those are the things that the coach can actually educate the coachee on the client on. For example, A lot of my work is about this research of about the ten saboteurs. That's a massive factor. Analysis research. These ten saboteurs came from research by just asking questions about somebody they can't come up with all their ten saboteurs and self-sabotage.

There is a part of my work that's about the neuroscience of things. How do you shift your brain activation, so you quiet the saboteurs and activate the positive part of your brain? Nobody will come up from an open-ended question with that kind of wisdom. So as a coach, I want to be able to teach. To put on a hat of teaching and educating and tell my client, hey, there is such a thing as a neuroscience of mental fitness. And there are these little exercises you can do to shift you from one brain activation to another. And so, there is this alternative to saboteurs that is all scientifically based. And I want to teach you some techniques about it. So that's a different circle of teaching and educating. And for me, the intersection between these two becomes what we call peak coaching or positive intelligence coaching. And the most important addition with all of this is that I believe true change and true transformation is only 20% about insight and really 80% about building mental muscles. And so too often are some coaching results in great insights that evaporate before they are made into lifelong new habits.

And I know most of us are familiar with reading books that we find life changing, going to workshops that we find life changing, going to coaching sessions that we find life changing. And we are so excited about insights. We got it. I got it. I got it, I got it. And three months later, we are back to the same old behavior. Why? Because all of those things get you awesome insight. But our bad old habits live in the form of neural pathways in our brain. These saboteurs have muscle power. If you have done a certain thing over and over and over again through a saboteur way, there is a powerful, you know, set of neural pathways there. I call them the muscles of the brain. For that saboteur, you don't fight muscle with insight. You fight muscle with muscle. So how do you build the positive muscles in the brain? And typically, that takes daily practice. So, we have built a positive intelligence app that coaches use to help their clients do daily practices so that their brilliant insight from coaching sessions, you know, result into rewiring the brain, laying out neural pathways for the positive part of the brain so that the insight is sustained through lifelong new habits of the positive mind.

**Whitney Johnson:** So, you know, as I'm thinking about S-curves and this idea of like, you get to the top of a curve, you know, it's time to jump to a new one. How did you know it was time to leave and go do something else?

**Shirzad Chamine:** What I noticed that is that too often are the metaphors and the frameworks that we use as coaches is a little bit, you know, preaching to the choir that that coaches are wired particular way tend to be very good at more abstract thinking, more, you know, in the Myers-Briggs there are certain typologies that tend to be more coaches, typologies capable of more intuitive thinking, abstract thinking and more tuning into emotions. And all of those things coaches tend to be good at. And because of that, sometimes we use framings frameworks and metaphors that appeal to that kind of mind. But then a lot of the people who could benefit from the work that we do are not necessarily wired that way. And so, coming from a science and engineering background, I thought that maybe what I could create was a operating system for personal professional development that could take personal and professional development to the masses in a way that wasn't available with the frameworks that we tended to use in coaching. And that became the beginning of the research on positive intelligence or factor analysis, our work on the saboteurs and sage.

**Whitney Johnson:** So, do you remember when you had the seed of this idea around the saboteurs and sages? Do you recall what that seed was by any chance?

**Shirzad Chamine:** I was working with a Fortune 100 company, and they wanted me to develop a workshop for their leaders. And they said, well, and I said, well, give me a catalog of what you already are doing for training and developing your leaders. And this this company hired from college and grew people from within. So, a lot of people were there 20, 30 years. So, they showed me the catalog of the courses that they use for people to grow as leaders. And something really powerful happened for me. I realized that every single one of these courses use its own different framework. So, there was I mean, they actually had the seven Habits of Highly Effective People. And then there was the five steps of managing a team. The nine ways of, you know, better persuasion, the 11 secrets of, you know, of productivity. So, every single one of these workshops and trainings used its own framework. And I realized it's no wonder that that all of this evaporates shortly after people experience these things because there is no common operating system. And so, what I realized is, you know, the field of personal professional development is still in its primitive stages. So that's where the research came from for performance, for wellness and for relationships. Those three main categories for optimizing performance, for optimizing wellness and for positive relationships. What are the ways we sabotage those things on the negative side and what are the positive qualities that we need in order to optimize those three things? And from that factor analysis, research came that all of these things are constantly sabotaged by these ten types of saboteurs.

And on the positive side, all of these things benefit from these five core superpowers, positive powers. And so that's where the saboteurs and the sage came from. And what we have now is this unique thing where all you need to do is install the simple operating system. And then each of these things that I just mentioned, how do you motivate a team? How do you run a powerful presentation? How do you manage your stress? How do you impact this relationship? How do you manage conflict? How do you do better negotiation? All of these things become applications of this same exact simple operating system, because with all of these things we can show you, your saboteurs are constantly sabotaging you in all those areas. And these five stage superpowers are exactly what you

need to get anything that you want done. Just a simple example of the power of this is we just did this work with the Fortune 100 company, and we asked them at the end of just the first six weeks of them going through the app guided program, we asked them, which of these emotional intelligence competencies have you grown significantly? And 17 of the 18 emotional intelligence competencies, 17 of the 18 emotional intelligence competencies people develop by just doing the simple little operating system I just talked about. So emotional intelligence becomes one simple application of this. So, all of a sudden, instead of going out there and trying to develop 18 different emotional intelligence competencies, you just go this simple thing. How to intercept my saboteurs. How do I shift to my positive stage and amplify those five positive superpowers?

**Whitney Johnson:** How do you know when they're when there's a saboteur talking to you and versus like, how do you know when it's the good angel versus the bad angel? How do you know that? How can you tell?

**Shirzad Chamine:** Yeah, we have a very simple definition of when we are in self-sabotage mode and therefore when a saboteur is talking to us. And the definition is, if you are in any negative emotion for more than a second, you are in self-sabotage sabotage mode. What is a negative emotion, or the most common negative emotion is stress anxiety. And so, the most prevalent negative emotions are stress and anxiety. And then of course, there's shame, guilt, self-doubt, frustration, regret, all of those things the exception of grieving, which is not a negative emotion, but that's another topic. So. And how do we know that's the case? Well, think about pain. So, the question that I ask often is, do we think pain is helpful? And the answer is, when you think about it, yeah, pain is helpful. Why? Because if you put your hand on a hot stove, if you don't feel any pain, you're going to keep your hand on the hot stove and burn to the bone. So therefore, it's really awesome to feel pain. But here's the interesting question How long would you like to feel the pain before you get the message and remove your hand from the hot stove? And hopefully the answer is well, as quickly as possible. Split second. Once you get the message, then you should take action on it.

So, the same exact thing with negative emotion is anger, stress, shame, guilt, disappointment, regret. All of those things. Are they important? The answer is they are critically important. These negative emotions are critically important. Their importance is delivering an alert to you that something needs your attention. But once you get that alert, that information has been delivered to you that something needs your attention, then you if you stay in those negative emotions, if you stay stressed, upset, disappointed, shamed, guilty, all of that stuff, your saboteurs are keeping your hand on the hot stove and complaining why life is so hard. Staying in the negative emotion is no longer helpful because trying to figure out how to deal with the challenge in front of you actually requires the positive brain where you are calm, clear headed, and in touch with the creative, resourceful part of the brain, which is the positive brain. Therefore, if you're in negative emotion and handling challenges of your life for more than a second, by definition you are sabotaging yourself. And the one in your head that's doing so is your sabotage. It's the judge keeping you upset. Is the controller keeping you upset? Is the avoider keeping you upset? That's the definition of saboteurs.

**Whitney Johnson:** Shirzad, what are some of the common applications of once people understand this operating system and how to use it? Where have you seen it be applied in really effective and powerful ways?

**Shirzad Chamine:** Yeah, the three categories that the general categories are performance, wellness and relationships. So, in the area of performance, we have world class athletes or some people at Stanford, for example, that, that were using the work to become better athletes because you can see how being a world class athlete is so much about command over your mind in the middle of the action that you're taking there. And then in organizations, there is, as you can imagine, the controllers avatar, the hyper achievers, Avatar, the hyper rational. I mean, every single one of these avatars, you can totally see the impact that it has on individual performance and very much on how teams get devastated by it. So I have leaders of teams really think about the profound damage that's caused in the entire team when these saboteurs collude with each other and realize that because saboteurs are contagious, when the leader comes into a team meeting and is all upset and frustrated and stressed because their saboteur is activated within the first 30s of a meeting, the leader who has started the meeting, you know, with frustration and their own saboteur has shifted every single person on the team to their saboteurs. And there's a feeding frenzy of saboteurs and no wonder there's so much stress in the work that we do because then the negative tends to be contagious just as the positive. So, we help leaders really see the power of shifting from being a contagion starter of negativity and saboteurs to what if they started meetings in deep sage, sage contagion? Even if things are not going well, starting by saying how do we convert this into a gift and opportunity? And what happens now all of a sudden to the collective positivity in the team that starts? Yeah, answering that question.

**Whitney Johnson:** You. You've had a New York Times best seller. You've had developed this app, which is terrific. You led the Coaches Training Institute. You have a legacy at elite business schools to this day. You have a Ted Talk. That's a lot. What are you excited about right now? What's one of your next s-curves that you want to jump to? What? What's on the horizon for you?

**Shirzad Chamine:** Well, our mission is very simple. They ask the following question: What would happen to our world if every child that's growing up in somewhere in their schooling is taught the science and practice of mental fitness? Because what that will do to that kid is it will have that kid realize that they can trust every voice in their head, that inside their head there are some very destructive voices, and they learn that they can go to self-command and quiet those voices and shift the positive voice within themselves. What happens to and that this is a muscle that can get exercised and get stronger and stronger and stronger. What happens to that kid in their ability to withstand bullying? That happens way too often into their ability to withstand the bad teaching, which happens very often in their ability to withstand bad, imperfect parenting, which happens way too often. They become far more resilient to all the stuff that tends to be destructive to kids. What happens to that kid's ability to withstand horrific negative judgments from their peers as they are growing up? I witnessed my daughter go through high school in the United States. It was devastating the amount of negative energy that these kids brought to themselves through social media and who's looking cool and who's an in-group and outgroup. And my daughter wasn't being affected by any of that stuff because she was resilient.

She was developing her mental fitness. What happens to that kid in terms of the choices that they make about their careers? It's no longer going to be about I want to please my parent. I want to satisfy others. It's going to be much

more self-directed about, you know, the blossoming of their true passions in the world. What happens to the politicians that that person is now going to elect? Do you think some of the destructive politicians that we have today in the world are going to be elected then? And as you think about it, if one generation of youth grows up with the science and practice of mental fitness, it will absolutely change our world. And that's when that whisper gets manifested. And so that's where I that's where my mission is that this needs to become mental fitness needs to become just as important in our educational systems as physical fitness and math and literature are today that will absolutely change our planet and I'm not going to stop until we get there. And right now, our app and our program is to is primarily focused on helping adults with it. But eventually we're going to make sure that every child also is benefiting from it.

**Whitney Johnson:** So that's your big next s curve is to get this into the schools, ideally elementary school so that children are learning this at.

**Shirzad Chamine:** A Yeah. And the current curve is still is we are still in the middle of that current s curve because in order for schools to benefit from this, we need a lot of, you know, influential people in all the communities be actually wake up to their own saboteurs and to their own, you know, ability to go to a safer place in making decisions because we do a lot of damage in our school systems right now through the choices that adults and parents make because those adults and parents don't know any better. They're still being driven by the old lives of their own saboteurs. So, the work still is going to be on the adults. They are the gatekeepers. They are the politicians, they are the parents, they are the educators. So, our work is still going to this s curve is absolutely going to continue for quite a while on the adults so that then we know exactly why and how this is so essential to bring to our kids.

**Whitney Johnson:** Have you ever had it happen where you administer the the assessment to see what someone's intelligence or their IQ is and they're scoring really, really high and you think, I don't know that they're actually really high. Has it ever happened?

**Shirzad Chamine:** Yeah, there is a caveat we put for the score assessment that says that this can be biased in a couple of ways. One is it measures the things based on the experience of the last 24 hours. So, if the last 24 hours was exceptionally happy, like you won the lottery or something, you're going to score artificially high. The second thing it's biased on is actually emotional. Ominous or really lack of self-awareness. And so, paradoxically, if you're completely in denial of any of the negative emotions that you experience and generate, you might score artificially positive. And then people around you say, actually, the way this person is answering the question is not accurate. We see them with negative emotions all the time, but they're saying they are they are not seeing it because they are emotionally numb. So, there are those two biasing factors for artificially scoring high. I wondered.

**Whitney Johnson:** Yeah, I wondered if there because I had that happen. So, I wondered about that. Okay. All right. So last two questions are what was most useful for you in this conversation?

**Shirzad Chamine:** I love that you are a practitioner of this work that always is so delightful that the person I'm talking to is actually passionate about this work. And for me, authenticity in people in your role and my role is so critical because too often in my years of, you know, getting to know people who were preaching awesome stuff, as I got to know them, I got so disappointed. Like they talk a good talk, but when you really get to know them, they're not practicing it. And for me, integrity and authenticity is so critical in the work we do. And so, I am always, you know, confessing to my own being hijacked by my saboteurs and my own work because this is ongoing work. And then I get a sense from you, from the way you have interacted with me, that this is your practice, that you are authentic in doing the work that you are advocating for others. So that's always really delightful for me. I love meeting a kindred spirit in that sense.

**Whitney Johnson:** It's funny, I remember when I first started this work, I had a person who I very much respect. Turns out, was my mother who said, if you're going to do this work. And be in this field. You need to do the work. You have to do the work. And I've always taken that very seriously. So. So here we are. All right. Final question, final words for you. Any closing comments that you would like to share to our listeners?

**Shirzad Chamine:** It's tough being a human being. We wake up every day with so many things that can easily get us down, the spiraling of negative negativity and outrage and resignation and shame and guilt and all of those things. It is tough being a human being after developing these mental fitness muscles. I honestly just wonder how in the world would I have lived without them? And I have so much compassion for any human being who has to go through life without having access to these kinds of tools and awareness because it is really, really tough. So, I think we all deserve to develop these the mental fitness muscles so that we can help ourselves remember who we truly are, how beautiful we are, how beautiful life itself is, and have a way to tackle the incredible challenges of life in a way that makes them energizing rather than constantly draining. And as you shift to that, that kind of practice, you do begin to look at every challenge as something that grows your mental fitness muscle. So, you keep embracing it rather than saying, Oh my God, there's yet another thing, yet another thing and yet another thing. You deserve better. I hope you do. I get to do that work.

**Whitney Johnson:** Thank you so much for joining us. This was very interesting and enlightening and fun.

**Shirzad Chamine:** Thank you. It has been such a pleasure. Doing this with you. Thanks for listening.

First things first. We will put links to anything and everything, including all the quizzes in the show notes. As for the wrap up, like Shirzad said, it's good and all to hear the message and feel invigorated by it, but you've got to do the work. So, here's the major takeaway. There's just one takeaway today. It's a lot easier to climb the S curve when you feel good, not bad when you don't have internal gremlins sabotaging every step of the climb. Shirzad's work helps with mental fitness, clearing the path of those saboteurs, tapping into your sage. But it does require work. And maybe that's a new S curve for you to show up to Yourself, to quiet your saboteurs, to stop being your own worst enemy, to Disrupt your mindset. For more on treating your body and soul with kindness, I'd recommend you listen to my talk with Brooke Snow **Episode 207** On the topic of the saboteurs inside of us. There's, of course, General

Stanley McChrystal **Episode 245**. It's titled The Biggest Risk to You is Yourself. And one more, Sandy Stelling on the language of growth. That's **Episode 193**. Thank you again to Shirzad Chamine and thank you for listening. If you enjoyed today's show, hit subscribe so you don't miss a single episode. Thank you to our producer Alexander Turk, production assistants Stephanie Brummel and Ange Harris and production coordinator Nicole Pellegrino.

I'm Whitney Johnson

And this is Disrupt Yourself.