

No.1 Neuroscientist: The Science Behind Stress, Body Fat & Manifestation

Introduction

Tara Swart

00:00:00 — The way that I would see how healthy someone's brain is is by looking at their skin, their hair, their nails, because these are all on our extremities and no nutrition is going to be given to that. Your skin is your largest organ if your brain and your gut aren't getting enough in the first place.

Jake Humphrey

00:00:15 — This episode is supported by Huel.

Tara, nice to meet you.

Tara Swart

You too.

Jake Humphrey

Welcome to the show.

Tara Swart

Thank you.

Jake Humphrey

What do you believe high performance is?

What Is High Performance?

Tara Swart

00:00:26 — Well, as a neuroscientist, I'm going to say that high performance is about being mentally resilient and actually that it's not about being fully switched on all the time. It's about firing on all cylinders and in terms of the brain and the ways of thinking I would say that means that you're using your logic, your emotional intelligence, your creativity, your motivation, your intuition and your physicality. But it's also about not always firing on all cylinders and taking time to recoup your resilience.

00:00:57 — So you're looking at the longer, bigger picture than just adapting to the next challenge.

Building Resilience

Jake Humphrey

00:01:04 — Can we talk about resilience then? Because I've spent my life seeing resilient people achieve more than talented people. So how do we build resilience and why is resilience such an important thing in the modern world?

Tara Swart

00:01:19 — So I, you know, I always like to take it back to ancient times to explain things that aren't necessarily obviously explainable now. So when we had to be resilient in a way that was geared around physical survival, like when we lived in the cave, for a start, by the age that you and I are now, we'd be dead. So we didn't have to live for as long. We had to be resilient more physically to the elements, to the predators, to the risk of disease and things like that.

Tara Swart

00:01:51 — So then you fast forward to now, and today, compared to 100 years ago, not cave times, we would read, if we read a full newspaper from cover to cover, we would receive as much information as someone received in their entire lifetime 100 years ago. So the demands on us psychologically and emotionally, you know, and then add in this ability to be switched on 24-7, work across time zones, be constantly disturbed and disrupted in your thinking, has led to this need to be really mentally resilient. And actually what it's led to is tipping over into being chronically stressed. So we have this amazing adaptive stress response which means that we can meet a challenge, but we do need to rest afterwards. But we're not really allowed to rest now, you know, we're constantly stimulated.

00:02:43 — So that I think is the answer to your question.

Jake Humphrey

00:02:45 — This episode is supported by Huel. So I want to talk to you about this idea of always being switched on, this idea of taking everything on our shoulders. So I would say I'm resilient, right? I had a few challenges growing up and I'm really grateful for them. I'm really grateful when things go wrong because. I think it's a reminder that we need to be resilient. It helps build our resilience. But I also, if you spoke to my wife, she'd say Jake is always like 100%, 100% of the time.

00:03:13 — So when I actually stop for a moment I have this permanent like tension sort of in my diaphragm or in my stomach, right? Three days a week I'll wake up at two o'clock in the morning with things running through my head and then Harriet will

appear at five o'clock in the morning with me on the sofa and she'll be, can you come back to bed please? Sometimes I have this real sense of overwhelm but then I also put loads of, I put loads of sway by the fact that I can do this.

00:03:42 — Like I can deal with running these businesses and looking after these people and being a parent and being a husband. But then there is also this feeling at the back of my head like there might be a payoff at some point for this. So can we talk about what you think that constant level of, I wouldn't even call it stress maybe I would, that constant level of a heightened way of operating is probably doing to me?

Tara Swart

00:04:10 — I mean what I'm feeling from from you is this need to prove yourself when actually that that need isn't there anymore and that's often a sort of a legacy effect of something that we had to prove when we were younger and because you can run all these businesses and be a husband and a dad because you are doing it. I'd hate to see you end up having a heart attack later because you pushed yourself so hard to do all of those things that it started to affect your immune system.

00:04:37 — But I'd prefer to take it back to, what comes to mind if I say to you, what was it that you had to prove as a kid growing up?

Jake Humphrey

00:04:47 — Probably being a middle child, but a very loved one. Messing up my exams at school, failing my A-levels, being sacked from McDonald's as a teenager for a lack of communication skills.

Tara Swart

00:04:58 — Oh, Jake!

Jake Humphrey

00:04:58 — Having no, like honestly no discernible talent or ability, sort of floating through being a bit of a late developer. Like if you'd have seen me at 18, 19, you wouldn't have even seen me because you would have just missed me in a crowd. So all of this came quite late and came through luck, which we can also talk about probably. It came through the failure of my exams. It meant I got work experience rather than carrying on at school.

00:05:24 — So it probably maybe does relate to all of that.

Tara Swart

00:05:28 — Yeah, I think it's a bit of a stereotype but the middle child often does feel that they have to prove themselves. And I think if you bloomed later in life, which actually I did too, then there's a feeling of having to make up for that lost time. But

where I'd like, you know, you to get to now, and I think this will resonate with a lot of people, is why am I still fighting for something that I don't actually have to prove anymore? And what would happen if I wasn't switched on all the time?

00:05:54 — If you, you know, if you took time either to meditate or to spend time in nature, or to just be without doing anything. And, you know, another one I'm going to guess because I hear this so much is when people say I can just about hold it together at work, but when I get home, if my kids are being really annoying or my spouse is demanding, then I can snap. Now that means that you're only one unit away from snapping in the workplace, which is where I do a lot of my coaching with people.

00:06:24 — And an exercise that I give them is go home this evening and listen to your child for five minutes without looking at your phone and without interrupting them and every single time I've done this both with men and women mostly it's men but also you know I was a bit more surprised when I had this with a woman is that they say oh my goodness my child told me things they've never told me before which just goes to show that we are probably never paying full attention to our children always looking at our phone whilst they're talking to us and what a difference just a few minutes can make. So I'd love you to do that.

Jake Humphrey

00:07:01 — Yeah, I will. Why are we living like this then?

Tara Swart

00:07:08 — I guess because we can. I mean, you know, since we've had smartphones, that's probably the biggest fairly recent change, you know, where we can have information all the time, we can know what's going on all the time, we can be in touch with people all the time. And you know, it's got a level of addictiveness built into it. And our children are also brought up with devices now. So it's kind of, it's not like only the parents have the phones and the children are clamoring for their attention.

00:07:36 — It's quite easy to, you know, lose contact with them for two or three hours because they're on their screens. So quite a few times there's been like a phone on the table or something and people say like, oh, you know, this, this is the root of all of our problems. And I, I'm just quite firm about saying the phone isn't the problem, you're the problem. And people deal with it differently. Some people People put do not disturb or they put time limits on their apps and stuff, but I prefer to do it like I'm making a choice in every moment of either looking at it or not looking at it.

00:08:05 — And that's up to me and it's not the phone that's making me do it.

Jake Humphrey

00:08:12 — You know Huel has been a staple of my diet for some time and I'm currently loving these. Huel Daily A to Z Vitamins. Tastes great, refreshing, each can has

26 vitamins and minerals, offering 154 science backed health benefits, reduced tiredness and fatigue, normal cognitive function, healthy skin, hair and nails, and vitamin D for immunity. This is a vitamin drink that offers everything you could need it to. So what are you waiting for? Grab it right now in Tesco stores nationwide or at Huel. Com and let me know what you think.

Decreasing Attention Spans

Jake Humphrey

00:08:43 — And I think we can see the benefit, right, of always being connected. I was thinking the other day, you know, when Harriet says, what do you get off your phone? I'm thinking, well, it's my social media channels. It's my ability to communicate with the team, it's my emails that are coming in all the time, it's my contact with my parents and you know, I text my daughter and things, so it's a,

00:09:06 — I'm using it all the time for loads of good reasons, but I'd love to know what the impact is physiologically on us and mentally I guess of this constant drip feed of information all the time.

Tara Swart

00:09:20 — So early on after the smartphones came out there was some research that showed that very quickly our memory and attention centres in our brains had shrunk. So, and that was like what 15, 16 years ago now. So now I think what's more obvious is our attention span. So we're used to seeing things that are 15, 30, maybe 60 seconds long. And so even something like watching a long movie now is quite challenging for people.

00:09:49 — And I've noticed it myself, you. I really wanted to see Killers of the Flower Moon, but it's three and a half hours. And I had to watch it like a series. People are bingeing things on Netflix, because that's easier, and the shorter the episodes are, the more likely it is to be binged really quickly. And then obviously social media's even shorter attention span than that. So there I'm just talking about different types of video and audio.

Jake Humphrey

00:10:13 — And if someone's got a child who is looking at YouTube shorts, which are SOAK or TikTok, all short videos, is it changing the way their brain is wired and working for the rest of their lives.

Tara Swart

00:10:25 — Yeah, I mean, because it's already changed ours and we were adults when the smartphones came in. So, but very quickly, we had some changes in our brains. But

their whole brain as it's developing is being influenced by this. So, you know, people connect it to the rise of things like ADD and ADHD and autism as well. It's like, there's a theory that that's an evolutionary response to the fact that our time spans and attention spans have changed so dramatically.

Jake Humphrey

00:10:52 — Wow. Is the answer just to get our kids off these screens?

Tara Swart

00:10:57 — I'm not an advocate of that because to survive in the modern world they are going to have to be tech savvy. But I think limiting screen time and having it, like you said, using it for good purposes rather than sort of junk purposes if you like. And I do quite regular digital detoxes and that's very interesting because what I've always learnt when I've done that is the amount of extra time and space I have if I'm not looking at my device is it's unimaginable if you try to imagine what it'd be like to not look at your phone for a week you won't get to the place where that you would see if you actually did it.

Jake Humphrey

00:11:37 — Right, all I'm seeing is the amount of emails and messages I'd have at the end of that week that's my that's my.

Tara Swart

00:11:42 — Yeah so the funny thing is.

Jake Humphrey

00:11:43 — That puts off a lot of people doesn't it?

Tara Swart

00:11:45 — It does but what you find if you're not replying to the emails is actually you get a lot less. And I put an out-of-office notice on saying I am on a digital detox, your email won't be read until the 15th of January or whatever it is. And people actually at first, people were a bit shocked, like how can you run a business like that? But by the next Christmas people were saying where are you going for your digital detox and really respecting it.

Jake Humphrey

00:12:12 — And I think it's quite a good reminder for us as well that the world still revolves if we're not to check in our messages constantly.

Tara Swart

00:12:18 — Exactly.

Jake Humphrey

00:12:19 — And we trick ourselves into thinking we need to be doing it all the time.

Tara Swart

00:12:22 — Yeah, because we like, you know, feeling needed and wanted and part of a tribe is really important to us, but we shouldn't be reliant on the phone to get that feeling.

Jake Humphrey

00:12:33 — Have you ever been in that space where you check your emails, right, and they're up to date, then you flick across to, like, Instagram, and there's not much on there, so then you go across to X, and there's not much on there, and then within 30 seconds, you've gone back to the emails again, and then back to Instagram, back to AX, or TikTok, or LinkedIn, or whatever. And sometimes I'm going around and I'll say to myself, well, I know there's nothing new on there, but I still keep on this cycle of... And I can't even work out why my brain thinks that's a good use of my time.

00:13:04 — But it seems to be a hard thing not to do.

Tara Swart

00:13:07 — It's habit. You know, I mean, let's bring neuroplasticity in here, like, you know, quite up front, which is basically the way that neurons wire together and form pathways in your brain. And this goes on throughout adult life, it's not just in childhood. And so the two most important factors in that happening are repetition and emotional intensity. So obviously we repeatedly use our phones, you know, like there are statistics that say that could be up to thousands of times a day.

00:13:38 — And we get a dopamine hit from, you know, a reward from a like on Instagram or, you know, good news email or a text message from your daughter. So it's it's both of those things at once, the reward and the repetition.

Stress Is Making Us Fat

Jake Humphrey

00:13:53 — And I read a lot about, oh, this constant sort of level of stress that I feel I'm and a lot of other people are walking around with. I read often, oh, that. That stress is making you fat, right? I still don't understand this conversation about stress.

I understand stress on the brain. Do you look at my stomach? Yeah. Yeah, I can see there's a problem.

Tara Swart

00:14:22 — Well, with my hedge fund clients, who I would see monthly or less if they were in New York, they would just lift their T-shirt up when I walked into the room and say, like, now you know how the last month's trading's been.

Jake Humphrey

00:14:33 — Honestly? Yeah. Why on earth is what's going on stress-wise affecting the amount of fat we're carrying then?

Tara Swart

00:14:40 — The way that we're wired from cave times is that if we were chronically stressed, so basically our adrenal glands, which are back here above our kidneys, they release this hormone called cortisol and that correlates 100% with stress.

So if you're releasing a lot of cortisol, you will be feeling things like fear or anger or, you know, sadness. If you are feeling stressed mentally, your adrenal glands will produce the appropriate amount of cortisol to match that.

00:15:07 — So normally, in the 24-hour cycle, we release the melatonin to go to sleep when it gets dark. And that's, you know, we're not really living with the light-dark cycle as naturally as, you know, we used to. And then around dusk, we'll release the largest spike of cortisol for the 24-hour period, which is to help us wake up.

And then depending on your age and your gender there's a normal range between which it can fluctuate during the day and so if something stressful happens it might you know go towards the top of that level and then as soon as you've resolved the issue it'll go back down to a lower level. But the way we're living now which we've already discussed means that our cortisol levels are either constantly at the top of that normal range or even have tipped over and are higher than that normal range.

And so there are receptors in the brain, because the blood flows around your body and your brain, it crosses the blood-brain barrier, and these receptors monitor the levels of cortisol.

00:16:07 — And if they see that it's high all the time, or higher than it should be, then the brain starts to say, what are the reasons that there's a threat to my survival? And funnily enough, the first thing that still comes up, even though it's not true for most people, thankfully, in the world, is starvation. In the cave that was the biggest threat to our survival.

00:16:29 — So to help us to survive until we could, you know, hunt down a woolly mammoth or pick enough nuts and berries to, you know, feed the tribe, the cortisol drives fat being held in your abdominal fat cells. So we have subcutaneous fat which is all around our body equally distributed and then we have visceral fat which is around

our abdominal organs and a level of which protects our organs but then if cortisol is driving fat being deposited there that's when you see the pot bellies you know the kind of uneven distribution of fat and the people reporting I need to loosen my belt even though I'm being more active and I'm eating less those things that normally work don't work if cortisol is opposing that action.

Jake Humphrey

00:17:20 — So, high levels of stress are genuinely negatively affecting brain and body?

Tara Swart

00:17:25 — Yeah, so in the brain when it feels that it's under-resourced it's not going to give up resources for things like being creative, being flexible, regulating our emotions, it's going to go into what I call low power mode. So your blood supply gets brought down to the most basic survival functions that you need which in the modern day is show up at work and look like you're doing enough that you don't get fired. And then what's also happening is those high levels of cortisol that are flowing around your blood start to become corrosive to your immune system.

00:17:57 — So it can start with things like you get more colds and flus, or you get a cold or a flu that lasts for weeks and weeks. And then at the other end of the spectrum, it can mean that you're unable to fight off heart disease and cancers.

We're Addicted To Stress

Jake Humphrey

00:18:11 — What about if we're addicted to it? The stress, It's the constant having things that we're doing, we love that feeling.

Tara Swart

00:18:20 — Well we're addicted to the things perhaps that we're doing that are causing us stress but we wouldn't be addicted to the stress because when you have cortisol in your body it doesn't feel good. You feel agitated, you feel angry, you feel afraid, your brain dredges up all these negative memories to kind of try and keep you safe so it's not a good feeling.

Tara Swart

00:18:42 — But it might be that the things that you're trying to achieve, like working really hard, training really hard, traveling a lot, socializing too much, that those things, I put them on a spectrum from motivation to addiction. Because there's a lot of things that are good for you, like having a good job, having friends, some travel, gentle exercise, but it's when it tips over into all being cortisol-inducing, that's what mental

resilience is, the fact that you can bring yourself back from that. When you can't, then that's a problem and it can lead to burnout, basically.

Jake Humphrey

00:19:16 — Right. This reminds me of when I came to London, left the countryside, got a job on kids» telly, and I don't know whether you see this a lot, but the most exciting part of my life was the most stressful part of my life. And I think we've found that, actually, with a lot of guests who've joined us on this show. And I really had a bit of a mental health breakdown. I went back home, went to the GP, and he said, explain what's going on. And his answer was, maybe you're not cut out for working in London in the media.

00:19:44 — You should come back to the countryside and get an easier job. Obviously I ignored that. But I imagine that's a message given to many people who feel like that. Someone says, well, maybe that life is not for you, but it's the life that we love. So for people who are in this place right now where life brings all of these challenges, how can they build that mental resilience? How can they get to that place where it's exciting, it's busy, it's full-on, but it's also healthy?

Tara Swart

00:20:14 — So, the best way to do that is, I'll tell you what the things and the how. So, the things are anything that connects your mind and your body. So, you know, things we know as mindfulness techniques. So, that includes writing in a journal to offload your emotions, making gratitude lists to, you know, push your brain from that fear state to the more loving trusting state where you have the bonding hormone oxytocin. That's good for you, yoga, meditation, gentle exercise, time in nature and you know other things that we can go into details of but the thing with those is that if you're not really doing any of those and you say okay I'm gonna start journaling every day and going for a you know one-hour walk in nature three times a week it's probably going to be difficult to fit that into your lifestyle So I like to create 12 micro-habits for a year.

00:21:08 — And this was a game changer for me, going from New Year's resolutions to 12 micro-habits, because I would pick three or four for the first quarter and try to embed them into my life. And then, you know, maybe two or three of those would become habits quite easily. So then I'd pick the next three or four. And by doing that, by the end of the year, I would have at least eight or 10 habits that were just things I didn't even think about anymore. You know, I don't always get all 12.

Jake Humphrey

00:21:35 — And what are they currently? Can you share some of them that you've started this year with?

Tara Swart

00:21:38 — Yeah, so an hour in nature, but I think I've set that one for like three days a week.

Jake Humphrey

00:21:44 — Yeah.

Tara Swart

00:21:45 — A one-hour walk every day. I'm trying to think of a variety of things. Eating more protein and less carbohydrate, eating till I'm 80% full.

Jake Humphrey

00:21:58 — Right, yeah.

Tara Swart

00:21:58 — And gratitude, journaling, tapping, mantras, chanting, you know, trying to bring a bit more of the ancient wisdom in this year, because I've been researching that in the last year. So yeah, things like that.

Jake Humphrey

00:22:15 — And for people who are watching or listening to this thinking, I doubt the benefit of some positive thinking is going to make a difference to my life, it's so full on, there's so much stress, what does the science tell us this will do for them and why should they at least give it a go?

Tara Swart

00:22:35 — So when you're under stress, then your brain tends to go into scarcity mode because you're stressed in the first place because there's some kind of perceived threat or scarcity. And to protect you, your hippocampus and your amygdala, which are the memory centres of the brain and the emotional centres of the brain, they get together and they remind you of all the times that things went wrong. So let's say, you know, you did drop a ball between all the businesses that you're running at the moment.

00:23:06 — Well, you would remember more vividly the time that you couldn't cope with the job in London. And your brain would say to you, see, you can't do this. The GP was right. You should have left London. You should have, like, gone to the countryside. Or let's say you snap at one of your kids. Then it'll bring up all memories of you, like, you know, every breakup you've had, every time like, you know, your parents were strict with you and you didn't, it didn't feel good.

00:23:30 — So the brain's doing that to protect you. And that means that you've got high levels of cortisol and the kinds of emotions you're experiencing are fear and sadness and disgust. So by doing all of the practices that I've mentioned,

you're pushing your brain into the bonding or attachment emotions, which are love, trust, joy and excitement. And with joy and excitement there needs to be a balance because there are some industries where there are high levels of excitement but not much joy and that's actually quite corrosive.

00:24:05 — And then there are industries where there are quite high levels of joy but not enough excitement to keep you motivated, so you get a bit like, it all becomes a bit mundane. So oxytocin and cortisol are like on a seesaw so if you express gratitude you immediately get like a burst of oxytocin and that means that the cortisol has to go down in relation to that so you're moving yourself from a fear state to a trust state.

00:24:31 — So I actually start my morning as soon as I realize I'm awake before I even think of anything like what's the time or what do I have to do today, I do my gratitude practice straight away because then it's like almost like washing your brain with like the love and the trust before the fear can creep in.

00:24:48 — The way I would put it is that we over identify with our thoughts and our emotions and one way to tackle that is to get a level of perspective by just stepping away once. So if it was if it was one of your siblings or your wife that came to you with that thing you would be able to give this good advice and it's your brain playing a trick on you but it's quite hard to do that for yourself. You've managed to do it but most people can't.

00:25:13 — So I often say what would you advise if your like best friend or your sibling was in this position to try and give people that perspective? And another one is this really good question which is, is this a fact? So you know a couple of weeks ago I was completely catastrophizing about something and as soon as I realized it I was like is this is this actually definitely going to happen? And of course I knew that the answer was no. And then another really nice exercise for people is to sort of you know sit here and say I'm Tara I'm the age that I am now and I'm you know dressed like this.

Jake Humphrey

00:25:47 — 21.

Tara Swart

Thank you. And then take seven steps forward and turn around and say I'm now 28 and I'm going to give advice to my younger self and so you know go from that place of being you with seven years more experience than you've got now and like you know it's basically accessing your own intuition But it's just a good way of not being in this, you know, whatever you've got yourself into mentally.

Jake Humphrey

00:26:13 — Something else that helps me, right, is that if I look at all the things that actually are keeping me awake at night and are adding stress, anxiety and worry to my life, almost all of them are a product of success actually.

Tara Swart

00:26:25 — Interesting.

Jake Humphrey

00:26:26 — So I worry about my kids, but how lucky am I to have children? Or I worry about all the jobs I've got to do in the garden, well, how lucky am I to have a garden? Or I worry about high performance, or my production company, the Whisper Group, or a few other financial investments. Well, how fortunate I am to have these businesses, have these investments. I think that's a really important thing as well, to remind ourselves that these are because things are going well, that you have challenges.

00:26:53 — So therefore be grateful for the challenge.

Tara Swart

00:26:55 — I think for you, journaling would actually really help, because what tends to happen is that you have these moments of insight, but then you forget them once you're back at work or you're busy with your kids. If you write them down and then you read over your journal, like the last three months, the last six months, you might see patterns that will just bring it more to the front of your mind quicker the next time you're lying in bed worrying that it's actually all good things, that you're just trying to maintain them now.

00:27:21 — That's your issue.

Jake Humphrey

00:27:22 — Why is it such a big deal for us to have purpose in our lives, then the challenge of not having purpose, what it does to us?

Tara Swart

00:27:28 — Yeah, it's a really interesting one because when we talk about all the factors that contribute to mental health and well-being and resilience. There's all the foundational ones that I've spoken a lot about before, you know, just get good quality sleep, eat healthily, don't be sedentary, can't drink enough water.

Jake Humphrey

00:27:46 — And I think, I like to think we know all that now, right?

Tara Swart

00:27:49 — Yeah, yeah. I think we're there with those messages. But the ones that like have come to sort of transcend those ones are positive, meaningful for social relationships, you know, they, so all these things I'm about to say impact your mental health, your physical health, and your longevity. So older people who do have, who are still social, live longer and get less dementia. And it also counts for younger people in terms of just your mental health.

00:28:18 — Time in nature, I mean, it literally changes your lifespan and your health.

Jake Humphrey

00:28:25 — How?

Tara Swart

00:28:28 — So any trees really, but particularly cedars, pines and cypresses, release compounds called phytoncides that trigger the release of natural killer cells in our immune systems. So it basically boosts our immunity. Yeah.

Jake Humphrey

00:28:44 — Wow.

Tara Swart

00:28:44 — Yeah.

Jake Humphrey

00:28:45 — How am I 46 and didn't know that? It's ridiculous, isn't it?

Tara Swart

00:28:48 — It's quite recent research, but you know, it's a lot of what I like about science fiction or what people consider woo-woo, like, you know, tree-hugging hippies, right? We've all been kind of thinking that was a woo-woo thing. And now it turns out that these trees are actually secreting chemicals that interact with our immune system. I mean, it's insane.

Jake Humphrey

00:29:09 — Absolutely.

Tara Swart

00:29:10 — Yeah. And the other one is that one of them is having a sense of purpose that transcends yourself. So that kind of connects to loneliness, because we're not meant to live in isolation. We're not meant to, you know, only fend for ourselves. We had to exist as part of a tribe to survive. And that seems to be very wired into us. So, you know, contributing, donating, volunteering, random and planned acts of kindness, things like that.

00:29:37 — They boost our immune system as well. And they put us in that oxytocin state. And then there's a newish field of research called neuroaesthetics, which is about beauty and creativity. Both beholding and making, so it could be singing or listening to music, it could be dancing or watching the ballet, it could be going to an art gallery or, you know, painting something yourself.

00:30:05 — And within that, they say that nature is the palette that we've existed in, you know, for all of humanity, and therefore we all find it calming and beautiful, you know, unless you've got like terrible allergies or something, so it's the beauty and the awe of it that's also having an effect on us mentally. And things like the reason that birdsong reduce our blood pressure and our breathing rate and our stress levels is because if there was a predator around, birds wouldn't sing.

00:30:36 — So the fact that they're singing means we're safe.

Jake Humphrey

00:30:41 — Isn't Tara cool? I just love talking to one of the world's top brain experts. And when. When I also found out that she's the Chief Science Officer for Heitz, I became even more of a fan because she's the brains behind Biotic, developed with a team of experts specifically for the gut, the mind and the immune system. Look, I think trust is so important when it comes to this kind of stuff and when a neuroscientist is the Chief Science Officer of a supplement company, I just think we should take note because I take Biotic from Heitz every day and I promise you I feel a difference.

00:31:14 — I feel more energised, I feel sharper, able to perform at my best. But don't just trust me, don't even just trust Tara. Trust the masses of scientific evidence that backs Biotic. So join tens of thousands of high performers and try Heights with an exclusive 20% off your first month. Just go to heights. Com forward slash HP or enter the code HP20 at checkout and see the difference that Heights makes to your health.

We've Ignored Nature

Jake Humphrey

00:31:39 — What's amazing is that so much of the things that you're talking about, you know, often people sit here and talk so much about science, supplements that we can be taking or things that we can be doing, whereas you're kind of saying this stuff's already there, like let's look at nature and realise the value that nature holds, which I feel like if you go back thousands of years, they understood, you know, they

were making sounds which we're now using on apps to repair DNA and things like that, right?

00:32:10 — But our ancestors knew this stuff and then we kind of forgot it, didn't we? We just ignored nature for so long.

Tara Swart

00:32:16 — I know. And if you think about it, as cave people, we wouldn't have done anything that wasn't crucial to our survival because we just simply didn't have the resources. So that makes you think, then why were we drumming and chanting and singing and dancing and looking at the stars in the sky at night and walking barefoot? Because those things are actually crucial to our survival. And just like you said, we've forgotten that.

00:32:40 — And I do see a return to it, and I'm passionate about advocating for a return to it.

Jake Humphrey

00:32:45 — But I think this is also great for our audience to hear this as well, because I think, I know that I definitely, maybe less now, but a few years ago, would have thought of someone, I don't know, even doing Tai Chi on the beach, I would have gone, oh, come on. You know, I remember at my school, we had a friend whose mum only bought vegan food and organic food. We thought it was the weirdest thing in the world, right? People sort of dancing barefoot around a tree. My mum and dad are quite hippie-ish, so I grew up with a little bit of that going on. But you'd still kind of laugh at it as a kid. Now suddenly it all makes perfect sense that this is like a proper connection with nature.

Tara Swart

00:33:17 — Yeah, and some of the things I've mentioned, like chanting and humming and stuff, might not be for everyone, but there's research now that shows that electronic music can also, you know, have a beneficial effect mentally and heal some of your, you know, physical issues.

Jake Humphrey

00:33:32 — I think it's so interesting. And I know that some people will go, well, I'm not that kind of person. This idea that they're fixed. And it's the biggest frustration for me, people that go, well, I'm not resilient. Or, you know, they've already decided that they're not able to do things. Can we talk about actually how much our brain is plastic and how much it can change and evolve and the fact that we are in control of it in so many ways?

Tara Swart

00:33:58 — Yeah, absolutely. So awareness and mindset are the sort of important first step to that because there's a quote in my book, *The Source*, that says if you think you can or you think you can't, you're probably right. So, and like you, I am passionate about these people that I would say you're stuck on the wrong side of neuroplasticity. You believe those phrases you can't teach an old dog new tricks or a leopard can't change its spots.

00:34:23 — And so neuroplasticity is relatively recent, like even in my time from being at medical school and being a doctor and then doing what I do now, we didn't know about it when I was in the early half of that. So if you think about your kids from zero to two, they went from being completely helpless and vulnerable and dependent on you to walking, talking, and children can learn up to five languages when they start speaking, as long as it's five different people talking to them in each language, being able to control their bladder, their bowels, have opinions, personality and everything. So there's a lot of growth in that first two years. And then obviously there's a lot of learning, you know, formal learning and growth in the brain.

And then in the teenage years, there's a level of pruning, which just makes the brain more sophisticated for adulthood, so it kind of prunes away some things that they don't really need anymore and prepares them for... What sort of stuff? Things like, if you haven't learnt certain families of languages, you will lose the ability to fluently speak those languages. So if you think, for example, about...

Jake Humphrey

00:35:36 — So my 11-year-old is really struggling to learn one new language. If she was two years old, it would have been way easier for her.

Tara Swart

00:35:43 — Yeah. It would have been easier, but it should be quite easier to 11. She'll get there. But if, for example, the African languages that involve a certain form of tongue clicking, if you haven't learned that in the first few years of your life, let's say by the age of five, you'll never actually fully be able to do it. So there are just some things that if you haven't used by then, the brain will say, well, we haven't used, I'm 16, I haven't used this, we don't need it.

Jake Humphrey

00:36:06 — Amazing.

Tara Swart

00:36:07 — And then things like being pro-social and emotionally intelligent and appropriately sexual, those things become more important at that age. And this process is actually very active till we're 25, not till we're 18 and we stop growing. And

then from 25 to like about 70, the ability is there but it's not as active so you have to stimulate it and you stimulate that through learning new things.

00:36:35 — And there is a level of being attention intense enough to actually change your brain. So it's got to be hard work, it can't be too easy, it can't be crosswords or sudoku, it's got to be a language or a musical instrument. But personally, I'm a big advocate of it just being new experiences, meeting new people, traveling to new places, eating food you've never eaten before, you know, making a recipe you've never made before. And just, you know, sort of experiencing new things all the time.

00:37:06 — I do try to formally learn one new thing each year, but I also have traveled a lot and, you know, speak several languages and I love meeting people of all different ages and backgrounds and things like that. And then from about 65, 70, some forms of memory, so things like the sequence in which certain events happened become harder for people to recall, but their like wisdom and judgment actually become like super pathways.

00:37:36 — So there's no, the only bad part to neuroplasticity is if you constantly obsess over something negative. Like if you have a breakup up and you just keep thinking about everything that you did wrong, then you're going to embed that into your brain. But the opportunity to, I say neuroplasticity is hope, the opportunity to improve your brain, to change the way that you think, to have lifelong learning, it's all there.

Not Watching The News

Jake Humphrey

00:38:02 — So I love this conversation about hope that you just mentioned and it reminds me of my mum saying you're a product of your thoughts. And I guess now that kind of makes sense and. And I worry about the modern world where we can see anything, you know, like literally anything on social media. Some of the darkest, most horrible things that we would never be exposed to can now be found by you or I on our phones in the next 20 seconds. And I wonder about the impact of that kind of negative imagery and pretty poisonous content that can be found at any time and what that's doing to us.

Tara Swart

00:38:37 — Yeah, so I don't know if you're saying this based on the fact that you know that I don't watch or read the news.

Jake Humphrey

00:38:42 — Was that right? No, I didn't.

Tara Swart

00:38:43 — Yeah, no, I don't, at all.

Jake Humphrey

00:38:45 — And when did you make that decision?

Tara Swart

00:38:47 — I made that decision after 9-11, when I read the research that showed that people who repeatedly looked at images of the Twin Towers falling, who had no connection to New York, had no loss, you know, personal loss, got PTSD.

Jake Humphrey

00:39:06 — Wow.

Tara Swart

00:39:06 — Yeah, so that's how powerful particularly visual imagery is. I mean, with words, you know, I think that, so there's two areas of research that I could mention here, one called ghosts in the executive suite, but it can just be ghosts in your normal life as well, which are the things in the first seven to 14 years of your life that were really embedded into your brain by the family that you grew up with and in terms of their values, their secrets, their, who they identified you as, like your role in the family, like were you the peacekeeper or the messenger, boundaries, and you know comments like, oh you're just like your father, or you know sort of stop showing off, don't talk too much, you know that kind of thing. So those like negative comments they go into your shadow because, and your shadow is the part of your personality

00:40:01 — that you reject, because you know that you have to have the love of your primary caregivers to survive and if there's things they don't like about you then you hide those things away so that they'll still love you and then later when you become an adult you've got these hidden aspects of yourself that you've projected that you're not conscious of but they're still driving some of the things that you're doing so that could be related to where we started off with you saying you know why am I lying lying awake at night worrying about these things that what actually I'm doing.

Jake Humphrey

00:40:33 — It's so interesting when we really delve into what these things are doing to us. You know, like, and this idea of watching the news or not watching the news. You know, if I listen to a radio phone-in, a topical radio phone-in, I am so much more depressed and negative about the world and genuinely think, well, we're all fucked then. I mean, it sounds like everything's a disaster. And if people are regularly absorbing that stuff, right, it doesn't come for free.

00:40:59 — Is that what you're saying? Like, there is a residual effect that you might not even notice if you're allowing yourself to see and hear this negativity.

Tara Swart

00:41:08 — Yeah, there is. I mean, what I say is that what you're feeding your brain is not just what you're eating, it's what you're exposing it to, particularly visually. So, everything that we see, every interaction we have with the person, every memory that we recall is being wired deeper into our brain through neuroplasticity.

Jake Humphrey

00:41:26 — And what about use of social media? Do you just go in there and look at anything? Do you not use it? Do you filter really carefully what you do?

Tara Swart

00:41:33 — Yeah, I curate it very carefully. So I only really follow either people that I know personally or science stuff that I'm interested in or fun, beautiful nature or fashion or beauty kind of things that are really positive.

Jake Humphrey

00:41:51 — But you must slip as well, you must make mistakes.

Tara Swart

00:41:54 — If there's something big going on in the world that I really feel I need to know more about, I hear from my friends and family, obviously, that if there are major things going on in the world, and I'm not making them watch the news for me, they are making their own choices, but obviously I will hear if there are major things going on, then I might go on to X to just read about it, but just enough so that I know about it and I won't repeat it, any bad news.

The Power Of Manifestation

Jake Humphrey

00:42:18 — And what about being kind to yourself generally, not just watching the news, but forgetting to manifest, not doing the journal, not sticking to the principles that you planned at the start of the year. I sometimes think one of the reasons why a lot of people don't start is because they think, well, I know what'll happen. I'll mess it up and I'll feel even worse because I can't even do that right. So how are you with that?

Tara Swart

00:42:39 — So I'm, you know, a normal human and I really like to say this because I don't want people to think that I'm manifesting every day and journaling every day and always keeping up with my exercise schedule because that's not normal. And that's not what I'm suggesting that people should be doing. When I started my journaling practice, I journaled every day for a year. But now I just do it if I, you know, I've got something that I want to remember or an insight.

Tara Swart

00:43:07 — Or I just feel like actually writing a gratitude list instead of just thinking it. And with exercise, I have been through the journey of, okay, you know, this is the plan for the week. And then if I, usually when I travel, I fall off that schedule. And then I'm kind of like, it's hard to start.

So what I've learned is that there's no point in saying, 'Oh well, you know, I messed that up, so I'm done now.' Just start again as soon as you can.

With manifestation, I really think it comes in waves, and there are many factors that contribute to that. It could be that you're feeling a bit down, so you're not really in an abundant mindset. Or it could be something to do with the seasons or the moon, I don't know.

But sometimes I think, 'Oh my goodness, be careful what you wish for.' When I'm manifesting a lot, I ask for some of the other things that I've wanted, like the little things that haven't happened yet. And when there are periods, sometimes weeks or months, where it feels like nothing is manifesting, I'm just okay with that.

Jake Humphrey

00:44:11 — Can you explain to someone that's never manifested before why it's important why you do it and whether they should begin?

Tara Swart

00:44:19 — So at its simplest simplest level it's literally just setting a goal or a desire or a dream and doing whatever you can to achieve that. So in my book, *The Source*, I wrote about vision boards and how they work on the brain, but I actually called them action boards because I said, you can't just create a fantasy and sit on the couch waiting for it to come true. You have to take action in real life.

Jake Humphrey

00:44:42 — And that's the misnomer, I think, about manifesting. And so people go, I just want to be successful. But they don't change the behaviours or their habits or their approach to life. They just wait for the success to come from thinking about success, right? That's not manifesting, let's be clear.

Tara Swart

00:44:54 — Yeah, yes. And the other thing is that, you know, when I wrote *The Source*, I wanted to put all the cognitive science, so the psychology and neuroscience behind what we consider to be manifestation rather than what had previously happened, which was that it was about frequencies and vibrations and the universe and quantum physics. Because if it's cognitive science, which is the science of your thinking, then you're in control of your life.

00:45:22 — And that's how I wanted people to feel, that you have agency, you're in the driving seat, not that life's happening to you. And so the reason that it's important from the cognitive science is that, a bit like the Twin Towers, if you look at your vision board or your action board every day, I have mine by my bed, so I would see it like first thing in the morning and last thing at night, minimum.

00:45:46 — And especially if it's last thing at night, it kind of, it's more likely to get like into your subconscious overnight.

Jake Humphrey

00:45:52 — What sort of things have you got on there?

Tara Swart

00:45:54 — Oh, in the past I've had things like, you know, the flat or house I would want to live in, the places I would want to travel to, some work targets. I once had like a cute little old-fashioned typewriter because I wanted to write a book. Romance stuff. So yeah, like health, everything.

Jake Humphrey

00:46:15 — And if someone's never manifested before?

Tara Swart

00:46:18 — That's a really good way to start doing a vision board. Because it's kind of, it's an easy thing to do, you know, well not easy, but it's a fun, creative, tactile 3D. You do it with your kids? You do it with your kids, yeah, yeah. And it's quite good to have maybe a friend say, you know, Jake, is everything you want really on there? Or are there some things that you thought you wanted but now you see it on the board, you feel like you don't want it on there? And, you know, I think with you,

00:46:45 — I can imagine that if we, you know, I helped you to make one that it would be very full and I would probably say, Jake, don't you want some space in your life?

Jake Humphrey

00:46:52 — How do you know me this well after a one hour, one and a half hour conversation? You're totally right, it would be overfilled.

Tara Swart

00:46:59 — Yeah.

Jake Humphrey

00:46:59 — And you'd be trying to get me to pair it back.

Tara Swart

00:47:01 — Yeah.

The Optimal Diet

Jake Humphrey

00:47:02 — Talking of being overfilled, could we talk about food? Because we've spoken so much about the information going into our brains, through our eyes, through the media that we're consuming, through our thoughts. How much is food playing a part if we want to get to our own version of high performance.

Tara Swart

00:47:21 — It's so, so important. I usually say with the things like sleep, diet, exercise, hydration, mindfulness, how long would it take you to die if you didn't have one of those things? So if we only had water and no food, people could probably live for about a month. But, you know, that shows you how crucial it is. And then it's not just any food. It's really, you know, for high performance, there are some very specific ways that, you know, we can eat to boost that.

Tara Swart

00:47:51 — So an interesting thing, I think, for your audience is that if you change the way that you eat, your gut microbiome will adjust to that within one to two days, so you will get an immediate benefit from changing the way that you eat. And some of the guidelines are things like 30 different varieties of plant foods per week.

00:48:12 — Now that sounds like a lot, but if you, you know, it includes tea, coffee, spices, black pepper and then even if you had like, say you bought a three pack of peppers and one was green and one was yellow and one was red, that counts as three. So I suggest that people keep a food diary and see how they're doing against that and maybe they're not doing as badly as they thought and then be more conscious of trying to bring that variety in.

00:48:39 — For neurogenesis, which is the hardest form of neuroplasticity in the brain which is the growth of embryonic nerve cells into fully formed neurons that then connect up with the other ones that you have in your brain. Happens a lot in the zero to two year olds but not so much right with us.

Jake Humphrey

00:48:56 — And why is that so important?

Tara Swart

00:48:57 — It's just the hardest one. Right. Because then there's also synaptic connection and myelination which are all boosted by food but neurogenesis is particularly boosted by dark-skinned foods. So where you can make a choice to have purple sprouting broccoli instead of regular broccoli or currently I'm like overeating purple asparagus because it's the season. Had to actually make myself get a bunch of white asparagus to not just be too purple. I'll turn purple at the rate I'm going. Black beans instead of white beans, dark chocolate instead of like light chocolate.

00:49:30 — For the dark foods a good quality like organic coffee also counts. And then the, you know, the brain's made up mostly of water and fat so hydrating foods like melon and cucumber, and good fat foods like avocado, olives, nuts, seeds. And then, depending on your age group and your lifestyle, the right amount of protein. And obviously there are arguments about whether this can be done fully plant-based or not.

00:49:56 — From a brain point of view, I would have to say that having some animal protein in your diet is beneficial. And I know that a lot of people won't like that, but I'm just going to state the facts and obviously people make their own choices. So yeah I would say if you were eating like that then you're supplying your gut and your brain and they're very connected in a two-way conversation with enough hydration, enough good fats, enough essential amino acids, enough antioxidants and then with the dark food polyphenols which are an even like you know next level of high anti-oxidant. So if people did that they would notice a massive difference in in their skin. And I say that because I feel like if you eat in a brain first way, you're naturally taking care of your cardiovascular system, your gastrointestinal system.

00:50:49 — And where you see, the way that I would see how healthy someone's brain is, is by looking at their skin, their hair, their nails. Because these are all on our extremities and no nutrition is going to be given to that your skin is your largest organ if your brain and your gut aren't getting enough in the first place. The skin isn't just the physical boundary of our body, it's also the organ of psychological boundary transgressions.

00:51:17 — So if someone's taking advantage of you emotionally, physically, sexually, financially, that can often show up in the skin as a flare-up of eczema, dermatitis, psoriasis, a rash, poor wound healing.

Jake Humphrey

00:51:32 — That's so interesting. I'm like everyone else. If I start getting spots, I know something's going on. Ulcers is another one for me. I imagine that's a similar thing, right? If I get a mouth ulcer, I'm like, right, I've been overdoing it. I remember, I used to be a football host and I was coming towards the end of the football season, I must have had 20 ulcers in my mouth. I was having to stop and mouthwash all the time and it was just pure being at the edge, basically.

00:51:56 — And I think there's a good lesson there for people not to ignore the physical signs of the mental exhaustion that they might be experiencing.

Tara Swart

00:52:03 — A few little quick fixes for people with diet is take a good quality probiotic, you know, if you've traveled or had antibiotics particularly, but I say, you know, no harm in adding one in just to boost your gut microbiome. Eat fermented foods, so things like sauerkraut, kimchi, kefir, kombucha, that's good for your gut microbiome. Also, if you know your cultural heritage, then eating foods that naturally occur in that country is important.

00:52:34 — So for example, I don't know yours, but I'm imagining that, so for example, if coconut trees grow in the country that your heritage is from, coconut products are super healthy for you, but if, let's say, you don't come from a country like that, then it could actually be bad for your gut microbiome to have a lot of coconut products.

00:52:55 — So for me it's quite important to incorporate like Indian spices into my cooking more than it's kind of easy for me to do living here.

Failures In Change

Jake Humphrey

00:53:02 — One thing I just want to mention is if people try and make changes and it doesn't happen, how long do you give yourself as a kind of, don't worry about it, look, you know, sometimes life is hard and therefore we fall off the wagon, we don't do the things that we've been doing and then we're even harder on ourselves because we've failed. How should we best deal with that?

Tara Swart

00:53:24 — So when you're trying to make a change, there's a four-step process in practical terms which is raised awareness, so basically what is it that you need to change, and then focused attention which is looking out for examples of you, you know, why you make certain decisions and get yourself into that situation, so like an observation period, and then deliberate practice which is doing the new behavior that you think is going to serve you better, and.

Tara Swart

00:53:55 — And the fourth part isn't a step, but it's accountability, which is how are you going to hold yourself accountable? You know, that's what I do as a coach. Or do you have like a friend or a partner that can do that for you? Or, you know, I use this HabitShare app to like track my progress on things. All the wearables can help with that kind of stuff too.

00:54:15 — And what's going on in the actual brain is, because we often think psychological work isn't physical work, but now that we've had brain scanning, we know that when you're changing a behavior or regulating an emotion, it is actually changing neurons and wiring and pathways in your brain. And that's hard physical work. You often feel like you need to sleep more and eat more. And an element of it is patience, because there can be a period of time, and this could be anything from depending on, you know, it's how hard the change is, so it could be anything from a few weeks to 6, 9, 12 months.

00:54:52 — You know, think about learning a language, how long that would take you. But the neurons are growing, they're connecting with each other, they're, you know, myelinating the pathways which make them more efficient at electrical transmission. So it can feel like I'm doing all of this like trying, but nothing's changing.

00:55:15 — And a lot of people will give up before you reach that tipping point where suddenly this pathway of your new behaviour is thicker and stronger than the pathway you've been using for the rest of your life, and it just feels more natural. So it's hard to tell people really how long that would take because it depends what it is that you're trying to change.

Threats For Young Men

Jake Humphrey

00:55:34 — You know, we have a strong male listenership. A lot of them are quite young men trying to figure out their way in the world. What do you sense are the biggest challenges in front of them that they should be aware of?

Tara Swart

00:55:46 — Yeah, I think that what it means to be a man has really gone through the ringer and made it very difficult for young men to know where they should stand. I know that as a woman when I hear about anything from the Me Too movement to very recently a friend's daughter said to me that a man had, like, grabbed her on the beach when she was on holiday, that.

Tara Swart

00:56:20 — I, you know, I have a lot of conversations with, like, taxi drivers and I was saying to them, you know, what I was hearing with the backlash of Me Too, I felt that

I had to keep saying to my friends, male and female, that most men are good, we have to remember that. It's way too easy to start demonising men and creating such a divide and not doing the part that we as women have to play as well to nurture what is a good man.

00:56:47 — And I said the same thing to my friend's daughter, I said, I'm so sorry that that's happened to you. I don't know a woman that that hasn't happened to, but we still need to remember that most men are good. And so even in my career, like at MIT, which has been 10 years now, I remember when lecturing still feeling that corporately, there was very much a big boys don't cry kind of culture.

00:57:11 — I would like to think that that's changed or changing. I think for men to be able to regulate their emotions is really, really key and so that doesn't necessarily mean crying or being really angry but it means understanding your emotions and kind of being able to keep them within a narrower range than tipping over into anything like too sad or too angry.

00:57:39 — And that goes for men and women as well, but I think it's harder for men because they're almost told not to be emotional. I do want to say to you, and, I really mean this from my heart, that you just existing and doing this podcast is such amazing role modelling for these young men that I know are big admirers of your work. Because I think you've got the balance just right.

Jake Humphrey

00:57:59 — And why do you think it's so important?

Tara Swart

00:58:02 — Because one of the main ways that people can form their choices is through seeing role models that expand their view of who they can be.

Jake Humphrey

00:58:12 — Yeah, I love that. And I sort of, I rally against the modern discourse of one way or the other. I think you can be, I do think you can be everything as a man. I think you can be masculine and male and kind of visceral and how men traditionally were seen, as well. Let us be vulnerable, thoughtful, kind, caring. Sometimes you can be ladsy with your mates, but then you can be sensitive with a partner or a friend.

00:58:37 — Sometimes you can be sensitive with a friend and ladsy with a partner. You know, we must be allowed to kind of be all the things that I think men can be, rather than having to fit this traditional stereotype that society maybe wants a lot of men to fit into, because then I think it leads to a dangerous rise of the extremes, and that's never a good thing, I don't think.

Tara Swart

00:58:59 — No, and of all of those options that you mentioned, all of which I think are really great, I think the one being sensitive with a ladmate is important because women have more access to that through the female friendships. And I'd like to think that that's changing. I've seen some very good male groups and stuff like that, but that I think maybe is still where I'm hearing men say, oh, I can never talk about my mental health with my male friends.

00:59:25 — That, I think, it would be amazing if that could change.

Jake Humphrey

00:59:28 — I hope so, and I think one of the best ways to help us to change that, right, is to remind people that when you are anxious or stressed or feeling triggered, right, that's when you're at your strongest. Because people who are not anxious people, people who aren't scared of certain situations, people who aren't living with fear, they don't need to be brave because they're not scared. So this feeling that as a man that's scared of things, you're a weak man.

00:59:55 — You're the opposite of a weak man. You're the strongest. A man with mental health challenges is a far stronger man than a man with no mental health challenges, because he still has to get up and go forwards and be in the world and find the answers. That takes strength. Real strength. And that, for me, is a very important distinction that we need to make.

Tara Swart

01:00:16 — Yeah.

Quick-Fire Questions

Jake Humphrey

01:00:17 — Shall we do some quick-fire questions?

Tara Swart

01:00:18 — Okay.

Jake Humphrey

01:00:19 — The three non-negotiable behaviours that mean the most to you?

Tara Swart

01:00:26 — Honesty, generosity and being loving.

Jake Humphrey

01:00:33 — Wonderful. For someone that's listened to this conversation and feels ready to make a change in their life, whatever that change might be, what's the very first thing that you would advise them to do?

Tara Swart

01:00:46 — I think a really practical one that people could do today would be to start looking for images for their action board.

Jake Humphrey

01:00:52 — Great. What makes a great leader? Yeah.

Tara Swart

01:00:56 — Someone that you can trust.

Jake Humphrey

01:00:59 — What's your biggest strength? What's your greatest weakness?

Tara Swart

01:01:02 — I think my resilience is my biggest strength. Obviously, it's my work, so it's my life's work. My greatest weakness? I think that I can go into, like, carer mode and do too much for others and overextend myself sometimes.

Jake Humphrey

01:01:24 — What's the best piece of advice you've ever been given?

Tara Swart

01:01:28 — Well, this, there's two, but they were both about writing but that's because that's something I find quite difficult. So one of the neuroanatomy professors when I was writing up my PhD said just write something it's a blank page that's the worst you know challenge and I think that's got a bit of a metaphor for life and then the professor who was my tutor at Oxford I said oh people are saying I should write a book about neuroscience and leadership what do you think I should do and she said Tara where one day you'll wake up and there will be a book that you have no choice but to write and wait until that day. So I think that speaks about like passion and purpose and motivation.

Jake Humphrey

01:02:06 — Lovely. And the final question, what you'd like to leave ringing in the ears of our audience, your one golden rule for living a high performance life.

Tara Swart

01:02:15 — Your brain is so much more amazing than you think it is and you have so much potential and you know, there are tiny things that you can do that can really unleash that potential. Show.

Jake Humphrey

01:02:24 — Wonderful. Tara, I love that. Thank you so much. That was brilliant.

Tara Swart

01:02:28 — Thank you.