

Welcome to another edition of *Self*, a podcast where you join me, Jacob Craig, as I research both the physical and the mental sides of self-improvement. I am a researcher and author and my mission with this podcast is to share what I am learning in hopes you get as much value as I do. This podcast covers several topics, including health, fitness, motivation, personality types, and more so that we can develop ourselves into who we strive to be and reach new heights both personally and professionally.

This episode is going to be different than the four before it because I am not doing a book review or anything like it. I decided to use this episode to answer two questions. Where am I now? And What has led me to here from the release of my first book? Following my answer to those questions, I am also going to talk about the topics that have been inspiring me most and that I plan to research and write on in the near future.

The main purpose of this episode is to give context as to why I am researching and discussing the books that I've been choosing to and for those of you who have not read my book or have heard of me before, to give you some insight into why I do the work that I do.

Certainly, a lot has happened that has led me to produce this podcast so let's get right into the episode...

Where am I now? What has led me to here from the release of my first book?

It's just past a year since I published my first book, *Inspiring Leaders in Health & Fitness, Vol. 1* and it has been a hell of a year. I'd like to use this episode to explain further what brought me to releasing this podcast and the path I see my research going. You may find it helpful to have some context as to why I'm reading the books I am and why I choose to share information from certain ones on this podcast so every now and then, I will do an episode discussing my thought process and where this research is taking me.

Inspiring Leaders in Health & Fitness, Vol. 1 was a project I began at the start of 2019. I had been intrigued with the self-improvement space for some time, listening to podcasts and reading books by Eric Thomas, Tim Ferriss, Joe Rogan, and most of all, Jocko Willink. They motivated me to keep my hard work ethic I had through college and use it for things inside and out of my career as a Civil Engineer. I had realized the level of enjoyment I get out of writing and researching through books and podcasts and at the time, I had also realized I needed to make some serious improvements to my health & fitness.

I was 25 and my weight was getting to a point where I decided I needed to make a change. In my mind, I was pretty active and my eating habits weren't too bad so I took my hobbies and made an extreme approach to finding a diet and exercise plan that works for me. I had found an incredible world of resources through the health & fitness podcast world so my plan was to write on 12 experts in 12 months. I would choose 1 expert each month, getting a wide variety of physical therapists, nutritionists, strength & conditioning coaches. A book was an extremely exciting project for me that I knew would be challenging but I figured if the writing didn't work, I'd still learn a ton along the way and have fun doing it.

Well, 12 experts in 12 months turned into 6 experts in just over 2 years but I can definitely say, "Mission accomplished." I published *Inspiring Leaders in Health & Fitness, Vol. 1* on March 30, 2021 and I'm happy to say that I didn't just find a diet and exercise plan but how to adjust my diet and exercise plan to suit my goals - whether I want to cut weight or build muscle and in a way that I enjoy the process either way. I'd learned to love weightlifting and that life does not have to be any less enjoyable when I'm on a restrictive diet.

After publishing, I knew I didn't want to immediately start writing Vol. 2. I celebrated the fact that I could now call myself a published author and made a plan to promote the book by being featured on podcasts and doing what I could with the small advertising budget that I had. As I contemplated what I wanted to do for my next book, I had the privilege of being featured on around a dozen podcasts and to even host my own conference titled How to Achieve Both Personal Happiness and Professional Success with some friends I had made in the self-improvement space; Terry McDougall (Executive Coach), Kevin McShan (Motivational Speaker), and Brandon Eastman (Life & Career Coach).

I could go into further detail but to save your time I'll just say much of the year was exploring and getting to know other young authors and speakers in the space while I did what I could to promote my book.

Now where exactly did this podcast come in? Well, a couple ideas came to me for my next book over the year but I ended up shooting them down. For instance, my first idea was to do a work titled *Inspiring Leaders in Motivation & Success, Vol. 1* - it would fit the book series perfectly and there are plenty of experts in motivation and/or success to write about. What I realized only after doing research on some of these individuals is that this book would simply not be worth writing. If you look into motivational speakers and writers, the advice they give is not science-based like those in the health & fitness space is. Much of it is mindset, positivity, and many of these experts inspiring by sharing their autobiography. I'm not saying these individuals aren't worth studying but I would rather not write a book that tells the

reader they need to improve their mindset and be positive over and over or regurgitate autobiographies. No thank you.

That being said, since my first book was improving your body, I know for certain that I want the next book to focus on improving your mind. Lately, the books I have been reading have been a mixture of philosophy and psychology and that is what has led me to Self. This podcast really forces me to not only read a greater variety of books but also consistently write about what I am learning. I'm not far in my work for this podcast but I can already say it has given me strong insights into topics that I am interested in learning more about and that I'd like to cover in my next book.

Three topics that I've found to be important topics to research are:

1. Free will.
2. The power we have in making decisions.
3. How to find experts we can trust to help us make decisions.

So first, let me discuss free will and why this is something I'd like to research and write on.

First, I can't help but want to dispute those who insist we are living in a simulation - as if we aren't in control... This to me just seems wild for someone to believe but I want to dig into why people, even psychologists might say this. Susan Blackmore is someone who has an interesting view on this subject. From what I've heard from her thus far, she seems to strongly disagree with ideas of any force guiding us outside of our brain - destroying the ideas of a soul or a "self" in any spiritual sense. Similarly, she seems to think any talk of a "unconscious mind" is nonsense.

This outlook seems to destroy the thought of ourselves being in control, which is a wild thought... Anyways I don't want to get too far ahead of myself but I look forward to learning more from her.

Tangled in with this, I'd like to learn from other experts on how genetics and our environment influence our decisions. And this leads me to my second topic. If we are conscious of biases we may have or can see a bigger picture of our lives or even the quick conclusions we jump to, does that not allow us to make better decisions?

To me, it's insane to think I'm not in control. Right now I could choose to put my computer down and start playing video games. It's a Saturday night when I'm writing this but I've made the choice this is what I want to do right now. The first 20 years or so of my life, I can say I mainly enjoyed life and lived. Maybe then I can see a simulation making sense because a lot of the bigger things were controlled by my parents' decisions on things like where to live. But since I left home for college and after that, 100% of what I do and how I live has been my decision.

With this, I'd like to research those that have powerful examples of what one person can do just off of the decisions that they make. People like David Goggins, who come up through hard difficulties and achieve unimaginable things. For those who do not know, David Goggins was someone who had a very difficult upbringing living with an abusive father. At one point, he decided to flip the script and pursued becoming a Navy SEAL and he now is a motivational speaker as well as an ultramarathon racer amongst many other things. Goggins clearly overcame and still has to overcome obstacles to reach his goals but he makes the decision every day not to get too comfortable in his pursuit to be the toughest man on earth, if he hasn't earned that title already.

As I'm thinking right now, this will be the core idea of my next book - the power of choice. If you are a grown adult and fortunate enough to have freedoms like we have in America, it is amazing what you can accomplish if you put your mind to it.

This book will definitely be a challenge because it will be much different from my first book. I will be doing the same level of research on experts from just as great of variety of perspectives but I don't believe it will be profiles of a certain number of experts but instead, each chapter will be a different topic and what various experts have to say about it.

For the majority of the book, I want to have the same unbiased approach as I did with the first book. I want it to be clear that I am not the expert and I don't want to discredit any of the experts I reference or give the impression I have the right to say that they're wrong. All that being said, it will be impossible to be bias when discussing the power of choice.

Simulation theory is a thing that people believe and there are people who believe we don't have free will in a sense. I need to respect those people while explaining my perspective. I think this perspective is what some people need to realize what they can accomplish if they worked on improving themselves and that is a major driver for this book.

And hey, maybe after all of my research my opinion will change; that is totally possible and that's why it's important to do as much research from as many perspectives as I can. At the very least, I'm sure I will learn a lot through the process and be able to share what I learn, just as I have already from the books I've shared on this podcast.

And this leads me to my third point - how we can find experts who we trust to help make decisions. I don't have any regrets with the experts that I chose to research for my first book, I learned a lot from all of them but I do want to make sure I am more careful with this next book. For my approach, the best way to do that will be to find as many resources as I can and really dig into their work before committing them to being an expert I discuss on a serious level in the book. Also, just because an individual or their book is featured on this podcast, does not mean that they will be referenced in my next book.

But let's think bigger picture - I'd like to learn and discuss in detail how the reader can find experts that *they* want to continue to learn from or the information from my book that is referenced that they find trustworthy and helpful for them in their lives. Obviously, I personally find value in searching for experts and learning from those that I trust and I want to encourage the reader to not just listen to me but to form their own opinions and choose for themselves on who and what information to trust.

There's a reason I do not dig into scientific research myself and instead look to experts. The experts who are involved in science know the difference between an article or study that is backed by good science and one that is not. From studying people like Greg Nuckols of Stronger by Science as well as Nobel Prize winning psychologist Daniel Kahneman, they have made it clear how we should be wary about scientific research. All of us, even experts, can make mistakes in judgement or jump to conclusions because they understandably don't want the study they've worked on for years to have insignificant results.

If I studied scientific articles, it's not an impossible task for me to judge if an article is trustworthy or not but it would certainly be tedious and I would not want to end up cherry-picking studies that lean towards my biases. There are experts with different perspectives that have made it their life's work to perform experiments or research a specific area and so I think studying those individuals and looking into what they find to be significant is a more sensible approach.

I understand with this third point I have been jumping between how I will find experts for my next book and how this topic could help others find experts that they trust but I hope you can understand what I am getting at. Bottom line, I have found this method useful and I think it's important for the common person to educate themselves and know what resources they can trust. Whatever area of your life you are seeking to improve, there are experts who are give out information that could help you make that

improvement. But it's important that you don't just blindly follow what they say and I'd like to help you understand how to know what information you can trust.

So, there it is. I hope this episode has helped you see where I want to go with this podcast and the type of things you can learn if you continue to listen in. You got to know more about me and the work that I do and the why behind all of this work. I'm seeking to improve myself and simply sharing what I learn along the way.

If you have any feedback on any of this (questions, comments, suggestions, whatever it may be), you're always welcome to email me personally at jake@inspiringleaderscollective.com. The writing for this podcast started by asking myself a couple questions. If you have any questions for me or any topics you'd like me to discuss on the podcast, shoot me an email – I'm all ears.

And if you enjoyed this episode, here are three ways that you can help this podcast grow:

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3. This is the way you can help the most - it would mean the world to me if you shared this episode or another with someone, whether it be on social media or by word of mouth.

Thank you again, I hope you have an awesome day – let's go crush it and think about what we can do to be just a bit better than we were yesterday.

Alright, I'm out.

