

This is the **DO IT SCARED PODCAST** with Ruth Soukup, **EPISODE NUMBER 54**. On today's episode, we are going to talk with elite performance coach and bestselling author Todd Herman about using the power of a secret identity to transform your life.

Welcome to the Do It Scared podcast. I'm your host, **RUTH SOUKUP**, and each week on the show we will talk about how to face your fears, overcome obstacles, and, most importantly, how to take action and create a life you love.

Today's episode is sponsored by the **DO IT SCARED CONFIDENCE CHALLENGE**, our five-day boot camp designed to jumpstart your self-confidence and overcome fear. I am not even kidding when I tell you that this incredible challenge will change you in ways you never thought possible and help you overcome some of your biggest limiting beliefs, in just five short days. Best of all, it's completely free to join. Simply go to [doitscared.com/confidence](https://doitscared.com/confidence) to get signed up, and I will see you there.

Hey, there, and welcome back to the show. As always, my name is Ruth Soukup, and I am the founder of Living Well Spending Less and the Living Well Planner, as well as the founder of Elite Blog Academy, and the New York Times' bestselling author of five, very soon-to-be six, books.

In today's episode, we are going to be talking to author, entrepreneur, speaker, elite performance coach, and productivity expert Todd Hermann about the power of creating a secret identity, an alter ego, to help you access the best version of you. Todd is the creator of the 90-Day Year, which has been named the top performance system in the world, as well as the bestselling author of *The Alter Ego Effect*. Todd is incredibly passionate about helping ambitious athletes, entrepreneurs, and leaders up their mental game and create astounding results and success. And, you guys, he has so much insight to share, not just on improving performance but on what it takes to master your mental game and why we even need to rethink who we really are and who we want to become.

And ultimately, that is exactly what this podcast is all about. It's about taking the steps that will help us make necessary changes so that we can create a life we love, because in the end, courage doesn't mean that we're never afraid; instead, courage is being scared but taking action anyway, despite our fear. It's putting one foot in front of the other, even when we're not quite sure where the path is going to lead.

All right, guys. Just a couple more quick things before we dive into all of the goodness of today's episode, and I'm going to warn you right off the bat, this is a long episode but it is worth listening to the very end because, oh my gosh, there are so many gold nuggets in this episode that you are going to want to hear. Grab a pen and paper; you're going to want to take notes. It is so, so, so, so good. And we will have all the show notes on our website at [doitscared.com/episode54](https://doitscared.com/episode54). Once again, that's [doitscared.com/episode54](https://doitscared.com/episode54).

Also, if you have any questions, or if you just want to share feedback on this episode, you can send me a message on Instagram, or better yet, tag me in your story, tag Todd in your story, and if I share your post, we will send you a “Do It Scared” T-shirt.

And now, without further ado, I am so honored to introduce you to bestselling author and high performance coach Todd Herman.

**RUTH:** Hey, Todd. Thank you so much for being here today. I am so excited to talk to you. Oh my gosh.

**TODD:** Little Ruthie Soukup, it’s so great to be here. I wanted to bring my radio voice to this.

**RUTH:** You know, I only let people that I really, really like call me Ruthie, ever. So, maybe that should be my alter ego.

**TODD:** You call me Toddie, I’ll call you Ruthie, we’ll be friends forever. It’s all good.

**RUTH:** That sounds awesome. Okay, so you and I met not that long ago, just, what was that? Maybe a month ago?

**TODD:** Yeah, it was about three weeks ago.

**RUTH:** At a weekend event. And I don’t know how you feel about it, but I feel like we have a cosmic connection.

**TODD:** No, we do. Yeah.

**RUTH:** I know. I came back, and I was, like, oh my gosh, I just met my new best friend. I hear that you came back and told your assistant the same thing.

**TODD:** I did, yeah.

**RUTH:** And so, when I got home, I started reading your book, almost immediately, *The Alter Ego Effect*, and, oh my gosh, so good, so good. And I have already recommended it to so many people, and I have so much that I want to talk about with that, but before I get ahead of myself, let’s, first, just start, for my listeners who don’t know you, can you just give us a quick introduction, the brief overview of who you are, what you do, and how you got to where you are right now.

**TODD:** Yeah, sure. So, for all of you that grew up in the middle of nowhere, we are kindred spirits because I grew up on a big farm and ranch outside of Medicine Hat, Alberta, Canada, in the southeast corner, right above the American border. Middle-of-nowhere kind of thing. And always longed, as a young kid, I felt like I was maybe a fish out of water, that I belonged in big cities and all that kind of stuff. And now I live here in New York City and achieved that kind of brass ring that I wanted. But grew up as a

farm kid; was a good athlete; had amazing family; and ended up getting a college football scholarship, playing sport at a high level; and I was a nationally ranked badminton player as well, and I always tell people, of course—

**RUTH:** Is there such a thing as that?

**TODD:** Oh, yeah. I'm so offended that you don't know that there's—that that is—

**RUTH:** Well, I'm not really into sports. I'm also surprised, actually, that they have football in Canada. Is that the same football?

**TODD:** Same football. I mean, our football fields are a little bit wider, a little bit longer, but the rules are pretty much the same as well. But, yeah.

**RUTH:** My mind is blown.

**TODD:** We've just expanded your knowledge of the world. So, there we go. But anyway, so I played sport at a high level, but I'm not physically gifted. I'm not 6 foot 4, and 246 pounds, an imposing human specimen, or something like that. So my great superpower that I used to help me get those scholarships and play at a high level was I really helped kind of master my mental game. And you talk to anybody who does anything, whether it's entrepreneurship or a leader in an organization or a sport, a lot of what we do is very much an inner-game thing. So I was fortunate to kind of find that path early on.

And when I got out of college, I ended up mentoring some kids at a high school on the football team, and I'd spend a lot of times saying, "You don't have to work any harder. You're already putting in the effort. You already can run fast and hit," and all this kind of stuff, "but your issue is you don't prepare well, you don't have good routines to set yourself up for success, you're not focused on a specific goal for developing," and I was giving them all the strategies that I was using—visualization, imagery, breathing techniques that I used to really calm myself—and they start getting great results. And that snowballed into people asking me to do workshops.

This wasn't a business still. I was about 21 at the time. And then, parents are asking me to mentor their kids, and I was like, "Oh, yeah, sure. I'd love to." I mean, I loved sport. I loved talked to these young people, which were literally just six years younger than me sometimes, not even in some cases. But when they would ask me, "What would you charge?" I didn't know. So, I was like, "Seventy-five dollars for three sessions." And that was where I started. I charged basically \$25 a session. They were in-home visits as well, where I was going around, lugging my—

**RUTH:** And this is still Canadian dollars.

**TODD:** These were Canadian dollars, yeah. So very different.

**RUTH:** Not even \$25.

**TODD:** I used Quicken as my accounting system back then. This is 1997. And I was calculating how much money I was actually making, and my real profit was \$8.56, when you calculated the cost of the gas and everything. And I like saying that to people because (a) I loved what I was doing. Like, I loved what I was doing. And I wasn't making millions of dollars and all this kind of stuff. Because a lot of times they see you at the finish—like, everyone's experiencing me at the finish line or past the finish line, where I do have a big platform and wrote the book and have programs that have won awards and all this kind of stuff. But I like telling where I started, and I still long for those days a lot of times because I loved that work that I was doing. And I'm lucky I still get to do that work. So I started to get these clients at a young age, and then I was like, "But is this actually even a business?" And I think we all go through that, like, this is a real thing, am I taking this seriously? And so I was like, "Well, I don't know. All these people know me." And the only thing I knew how to do well was speak. I was a 4H kid. You know, 4H which is like agricultural Boy Scouts.

**RUTH:** I know 4H. I come from a small town, too. An agricultural town.

**TODD:** Oh, really?

**RUTH:** I was not in 4H because I was not a farm kid, but lots of dairy farms. Close to the Canadian border, also, but on the American side.

**TODD:** Dairy-farm kids, the hardest-working people in agriculture.

**RUTH:** Oh, for sure.

**TODD:** At least, they used to be. Now there's a lot of electronics in it. Long story short with it, though. I was like, "Wait a second. Why don't I do as many speeches as I can in the next 90 days, and if it fills up my business, great, I'll continue it. If not, I'll move on or I'll do something else and just call this a hobby." And so I did 68 speeches in 90 days in my province. And that catapulted my business.

I actually didn't even have to market my business for a very, very, very long time, because I did such focused, specific action, I had such a word of mouth spread, everyone in the province of Alberta basically either knew me or you're one person away from knowing me. And it filled up my practice, and I ended up doing some mentorships and apprenticing under these people way smarter than me, and that's what grew my business. And then it took me around the world, being able to work with top pro athletes all around the world, worked with leaders, now public

figures, entertainers, and, yeah.

**RUTH:** So, how did you go from basically working in a province in Alberta to starting to work with pro athletes? Was that—there were some there at first in Canada, and then it just started to spread from there?

**TODD:** Yeah, so there was, but I think the great problem of today for people that are trying to serve others, whether it's coaches or consultants or advisors, everyone tries to make themselves out to be far more successful than they need to off the bat. Like, I was only working with 11-, 12-, 13-, 14-year-old people. I had no aspirations even at the time of working with pros, even though I could, but I still needed to develop my skill set. I wasn't there yet, but I was really good at resonating with that crowd.

And one of my first clients, Brendan, his cousin was a rookie in the NHL. He had just got into the NHL. He was a very good hockey player, but he was struggling a little bit with just the transition. And his aunt, Brendan's mom, reached out to him and said, "Hey, Brendan's working with this young guy who's"—I was actually the same age as Brendan's cousin—and he's like, "You might want to talk to him. Brendan's getting some really good results." And took his credit, he did, because he could have said, "Oh, Auntie Ruth. Brendan is not playing at the level that I'm at." So he did, and he ended up finishing top of his rookie class that year.

But that wasn't where all the pro athletes started, so I kind of got a little bit fortunate for word of mouth, and I just kept on slogging away. And what happened was when I started working with my mentor Harvey Dorfman, who is known as the Yoda of baseball, wrote *Coaching the Mental Game*, he's just a pheno—I mean, he's amazing. He's the best there ever was, I think. And so I went down, spent 33 days with him at his home in North Carolina to really work underneath him, and I did anything—errands for him, organized his office, just trying to get around him.

It was after I left—because he's reached out to by every major league baseball player all the time, and he's only one person, and he works with teams, so he would say, "Listen, I don't have the time for you, but there's another guy that I work with who's just as good, if not better, than I am, and I'll put you in touch with him." And so he started sending me the deal flow and then referrals. So—

**RUTH:** And how did you meet him?

**TODD:** I cold outreached to him. I was in this passionate pursuit of being better at what I was doing, and I was reading so many research papers on neuroscience, plasticity, just anything, kinesiology, biology. I was really trying to do with the whole athlete, the whole body of the person. And

when I was reading some of these books on psychology, I was like, “Well, this stuff, you can’t do this with an athlete. It’s going to make them think too much out there.” And so there’s a lot of stuff that just fundamentally I had this visceral, “that’s crap” kind of response to.

But Harvey’s book, when I picked it up, it was the only one that was pragmatic, it was practical, and it made sense in my head as an athlete and as someone who is now trying to help people. So I reached out to him because my mom gave me this amazing advice when I was leaving the farm because she knew that I wasn’t returning. My older brothers were going to be on the farm and taking over it, my sister was going to be probably doing something similar, so they knew that I was going to go off and conquer the world or whatever, go live somewhere else. And she said, “Whatever you go and do, find whoever is the absolute best at it. Don’t settle for anything less, and learn from them. Be humble enough to do that.” And she said it because I wasn’t humble enough at the time. I was a know-it-all, definitely. But she knew if I could actually maybe take 10% of what she said and implemented it, it would probably serve me well. So that’s what I did is I’ve always had the approach of, who is the best at this and how can I work with them? And so I did. I cold, I outreached—

**RUTH:** Oh, that’s amazing. That’s such good advice. Have you thanked her for that advice? You should call your mom right now.

**TODD:** No, I don’t thank my mom for that. She can find it out while listening to—no. Yeah, I talk to her. Yeah, there’s two very—and I’ll share one of the pieces of advice that my father gave me, which has served me exceptionally well over the years.

But, so, I did. I cold outreached to him and just said, “Hey, Harvey. I’ve never had the pleasure of meeting you yet, but I’m new in this world of mental game coaching, and I’ve read a lot of stuff. You’re the only one who makes sense, and I know that you’re someone who runs a private practice, and you probably have another book in you or you’ve got something else that you would like to do, but you get bogged down by just the day to day of what it is that you’re up to. So if I can come down to your neck of the woods and help organize your office, take anything that’s mundane off of your plate and do it, I know that my benefit is I’ll probably learn from osmosis from you.” And so I did that, and he reached back out to me, and he’s like, “All right, kid. You don’t think you’re living with me, do you?” And I was like, “No, no, no. I’ve got an aunt and uncle who live in the area, and I’ll stay with them, and I can drive to you, whether it’s a week or whether it’s a month, anything. You’re just someone that your message resonates, and I’d like to be 10% as good as you are.”

And so after some back and forth, he agreed. And it was during the baseball off season, so it was December/January. I went down and stayed with him in January. And I mean, eight days in, the greatest baseball player arguably to ever live as well came down to make his annual pilgrimage, and he invited me in to sit on that session. And so now here I am seeing the best of the best work with the best baseball player at the time, which was Roger Clemens, pitcher for the New York Yankees, and I saw exactly what Roger's issues were, not what I thought they would be, because I hadn't worked with someone at his level yet, and I saw how Harvey handled it as a master. And then the next day, another phenom athlete came in, and another, and it was, this was just cycled through for about eight to 10 days, and he invited me on every single one of those sessions.

And you know, just think about it. I was about three years in on my career, and I just saw very quickly how to do it, and that accelerated. And I think that's one thing that today if people would be a little bit more patient with the process, and then—but really, what I did was I accelerated the process by being willing to be an apprentice. And apprenticeship is so lost nowadays.

**RUTH:** Oh, people are not willing to do that, and they want instant answers, and they want to know exactly where they're going to go and how they're going to get overnight success. I think there's so much—

**TODD:** Instant influence. They want instant platform, they want instant everything. And when you think about having—any time someone gets instant something, if they haven't developed a strong foundation of skill but also, I think more importantly, you haven't found yourself through the process, all that stuff ends up breaking you. I mean, I've seen it with—

**RUTH:** Oh, totally. And it's because you have to really hone in on who you are, who you're talking to, what your message is, what you're going to say, and develop original ideas before you can go out. And that takes time and effort. The time and effort that you are putting in there testing, trying, trying new things. Just go out and try to emulate somebody else, which is what a lot of influencers do these days is just regurgitate what everybody else is saying.

**TODD:** And now you're a thought repeater and not a thought leader, right?

**RUTH:** Exactly, exactly.

**TODD:** And when you take a look at where all the values sits in life, it exists on the field of play by doing. And then when you can actually stand next to the person who's the best at the doing in your craft, you get to understand the nuance, all the stuff that you don't pay attention to.

I talk about grout and tile, grout and tile. So you walk into a kitchen, and there's tile. It's a tiled floor. Or you look at someone's backsplash and it's tiled up. And that's the thing that pops at you. That's what you're paying attention to is the iridescent of the tile or the beautiful Spanish tile that's on the floor, and that's what you're looking at because that's the bigger piece of the floor. But what's the most valuable part of the floor? It's the grout. It's the stuff that sits in the middle that holds everything together. It's the glue.

Well, in life I look for the grout. I'm looking for, what's really the little nuance thing that Ruth is doing that allows her to build up such a phenomenal, powerful community around her, that other people are doing similar things as her, but what is different about it? I mean, I've unpacked a little bit of that grout with you, and some of it is just your constant refinement of the message, trying to find the most elegant way of saying something powerfully. That simplicity of the whole idea of doing it scared. That's one of the things that we bonded over. I was like, "That's a brilliant name."

It's a brilliant name because that's my experience, working with people who do hard things. They don't do it because they're—they don't wait for the confidence and then they do it. No. You do it scared because a mindset that helps you do it scared is, I can't wait to find out who I'm going to become because of me doing it this way. That's so powerful for someone. If you really adopt and ingrain that as a paradigm that you live inside of shifts the approach that you take. And again, like, so many people are waiting for confidence before they get momentum. Confidence never comes first. It never—it defies the laws of nature. Momentum begets confidence, confidence begets certainty, and when you find someone who's certain that they can do something—because once you're certain about something, that's now a part of your DNA. You own it. It's so powerful.

**RUTH:**

It is. And what I really love about your story is how you so clearly took the time to go through all of these phases and having to learn it and having to figure it out and having to wrestle with it and taking this step not knowing—you were like, "I don't even know if this is a thing, but I'm passionate about this right now."

I think a lot of times so many people think you need to have it all mapped out and it's all figured out before you can begin. And that's not usually the case. I think so many times you can just try something, see how it goes, and see what step it leads to next.

**TODD:**

Well, and when you think about everything—like, I mean, again, like so, you and I we met at a weekend event, right? I couldn't have predicted that. You know, I'm not going in there knowing that I'm going to walk

away with a new best friend or something like that, or whatever the case is. You know, I'm going there with—so most people'll go with the, I call it the two-domino technique. They topple one domino to hit that other one. So I'm doing this action to get this result. And that's like, another way of saying it, that's like the low-hanging-fruit approach, right? So it's like here's a low-hanging fruit, there's so many low-hanging fruit that you can do right now, simple actions you can take right now to make money in your business. And that has its time and place, and that definitely has value for some people. But if you only ever approached life in two dominos—take this action, get this result, and that's the box that it sits inside of—you're really limiting yourself on way more possibility, because typically in life, all of the real value sits on the dominoes that you don't get to see that fall afterwards, right?

**RUTH:** Oh, that's so true. Yes, yes. I mean, just take that event as an example. I had really, actually, no reason for going. It was an event about speaking, which I don't really do except for my own events, and I didn't really have any plans to. And I could have looked at it, and honestly, my team was like, "Really? You're going to fly all the way across the country during this super-busy time of year, right before we're about to launch Elite Blog Academy. It's bad timing. Why are you going to go to this thing? It's not a good use of your time." I'm like, "I just feel like there's something good might have come out of it. I feel like it's an opportunity that I need to explore." And I had really no good reason for going except that my gut was like, something good is going to happen out of it, and here we are. I always like to approach things—again, not every single thing in my business is serendipitous. Certainly not at all. I have lots of plans. But I think there are those opportunities.

**TODD:** But were you always that way? Were you always that way, though?

**RUTH:** Where I would just kind of take chances?

**TODD:** Yeah. Where you took chances, where you approached it with that sort of mindset? Because I wasn't that way. I sort of developed it.

**RUTH:** You developed it over time?

**TODD:** Yeah.

**RUTH:** I think I've gotten better at realizing that sometimes those opportunities—I think that's come from experience of the times that I've taken chances in my business, realizing, oh, something really good has happened out of that. So I always try to approach any time I go someplace or say yes to something, with the idea of, I'm not going to have expectations, but I feel like something good could come out of it.

**TODD:** Yeah. So the one thing that I've learned, too, on whether or not to say yes—because I get invited to, I mean, every week there's something that I'm invited to to go and be a part of it or to speak at it or whatever—and I always go to what is the quality of the person that's hosting like, because that is going to be an indicator of the quality that other people are going to be there. So a

good example—and this is an obvious one—but last year or a year and a bit ago, I was invited by Sara Blakely and her husband Jesse Itzler to come to Spanx and speak at Spanx. And—

**RUTH:** Oh my gosh. You know, I'm obsessed with Sara Blakely, right?

**TODD:** Oh, really?

**RUTH:** Obsessed. Like, I feel like she and I could be best friends, and I would dump you in a heartbeat if Sara Blakely wanted to—

**TODD:** You would, oh, and I wouldn't blame you. I'd be like, "Oh."

**RUTH:** —be my new best friend. Like, I—

**TODD:** Go right ahead.

**RUTH:** —totally—some day. Like, that is top of my wish list of people that I want to meet, it's Sara Blakely.

**TODD:** Yeah, I know. She's a superstar. I said this right afterwards on a Facebook Live. I said that she is the most impressive entrepreneur I've met. In that, I have met a lot. I know billionaires here in New York City, where I live. I'm around a pretty cool, powerful group of people, some of them, not always nice, but they're still great at what they do, though.

And she's the only one I've ever met that's built a billion-dollar business without ever taking outside financing. She owns 100% of her business and has never gotten an investment dollar from anybody. Now, when you know what it's like to scale a physical-product business and the cash flow that you need to make that scale happen, that is beyond impressive, right? That is, yeah.

So, anyways, to kind of wrap up the point about going down there, and it's an obvious one, the quality of the people that were in the room that they attracted in was outstanding, and when ranked against probably the 11 other events I went to, I met more fantastic people from that one event than I did of all those other ones combined. Okay?

**RUTH:** I can imagine. She collects amazing people.

**TODD:** Yeah. So any time you're making that decision, always look to, okay, so what's the quality of that person that's—and you go, okay, yeah, I'm sure they're going to be attracting a really good crowd.

**RUTH:** That's really good advice, yeah. Because that is true. I mean, the more you grow in your business, the more opportunities you have, and you can't say yes to everything. You really can't. But it is good to say yes sometimes, and when you're just starting out, you should be saying yes a lot more. And not every opportunity that you take is going to be great. Some of them are going to be total flops, where you're like, "This is a complete waste of time. Why did

I do this?"

**TODD:**

You just brought up an important point, which is probably one of the most-shared type of memes or ideas out there is this one from Warren Buffett, where he has this quote where he says, "Success people say no to many things. Really successful people say no to everything." Okay. So, someone takes that, and they go, "Oh, I need to say no a lot more." You know what? That's right. I need to say no to when my friends are reaching out to me and asking me to come help them move their house, and so that's the advice they take. No. That's out of sequence. So sometimes the proclamations that are being stated by people need to be taken in context of where is that person right now and are they actually good at coaching and mentoring other people, to understand the nuance of things, because I want to know, what did Warren Buffett do in 1961 when he launched Berkshire Hathaway? Because here's what I know: he probably didn't say no to everything. And people take it too far.

And so what you're talking about is really important because when you are starting out, you do need to say yes because you typically lack the confidence in knowing what you want to be pursuing as a business, like, you're still trying to figure that out. Well, the only way to figure that out is to expose yourself to many things. You also need to be building up your skillset which you do by saying yes, and the only way you can figure out what to say no to is to say yes to things.

**RUTH:**

Yes. You're throwing spaghetti against the wall.

**TODD:**

Yeah.

**RUTH:**

And trying to figure it out. I have another pet peeve along those same lines with this, when people start listening to a lot of leaders and thought leaders and super-successful people who spend a lot of time talking about work-life balance, and I only 20 hours a week. And then people who are just starting out are thinking, "Well, I should only be working 20 hours a week if this super-successful person—" Like, I guarantee you, not a single super-successful person worked only 20 hours a week at the beginning while they were building their business. You're figuring things out, you're hustling like crazy. And it drives me crazy because then people have this false sense of, "Oh, I'm doing something wrong if I'm not getting the results I want and I'm only working 20 hours a week."

**TODD:**

Yeah, and the reason you get triggered by it just like I'll get triggered by it because we actually care, because I want people to realize, like, what I talk about in the book is unlocking this heroic self. And so it does. It pees me off more than anything when people are sharing those kinds of concepts because what it creates is a ton of self-judgment for the person who doesn't have that yet. And they're like, "Frick, I'm hustling 50 hours a week. I'm an idiot. I should know how to systemize things better, and I should be able to delegate." The only way to get to the temple of simplicity is to walk through the valley of complexity.

**RUTH:** Ooh, that is so good. That is so good.

**TODD:** It's the only way to get there.

**RUTH:** But it's so true. And people forget that it's supposed to be hard because it does—there is a point where it starts to make sense, and you get that clarity, and then all of a sudden you can delegate a bunch of stuff, and you have your systems in place, and that's great. But you're exactly right. That valley of complexity is so messy and ugly and hard and painful, and if you're not in it, in the mess, and if you give up or think that you're doing something wrong because it's messy, then you're not getting it. There's only one way through and that's to walk through it.

**TODD:** That's to walk through it. And where does all the value sit in life? All of the value is listening—I mean, how many inspirational stories do you read or watch on Facebook or Instagram or in your favorite magazine, or seeing the Hero's Journey story of the person who walks through the complexity and the valley of many, many issues in life only to finally get on stage on America's Got Talent, and you're crying at the end because they're just amazing. And yet, everyone wants to short-circuit that journey for themselves, and what you're doing is you're simply denying yourself the opportunity to tell the same story to inspire other people to do that exact same thing.

I specifically use the words hard and difficult in a lot of our communications for our company because it attracts in such quality people that are not afraid of the hard. Like, I'm not making something hard for you to do in order to make it hard to do. I'm going to give you—I'm very good at building out systems. It's just sort of how my brain works. But what I never sell you on is that this thing makes it simple. No. I'm going to give you a system so that the hard work you're going to do is going to produce a better output than if you tried to do it a different way. And that makes sense, right? Like, all the value in life is sitting inside of the hard things that we do because what happens? You know, the friction creates a better version of yourself.

**RUTH:** Yes. Yes.

**TODD:** You sharpen yourself.

**RUTH:** And it's so easy to see that when you're standing on the other side, but I think when you're in it, it's so difficult, and we forget that everything—if you look back on your life and everything that you've done in your life that you're proud of or that you're most excited about or that you just want to shout from the rooftops, it's all tied to the hardest, most painful stuff that you've ever done. It's always that way. You're always going to be the most satisfied and the most proud of the stuff that you worked the hardest for.

So, we've got to talk about your book. I mean, we could go on about this all day, but let's talk about your book because it's so amazing, first of all, and I just want to say, everybody needs to get this book. It is so, so good.

I texted you as soon as I started listening to it because I was like, “Oh my gosh. This is amazing. It is incredible.” And I have to tell you, my alter ego, as I was thinking—because I have a fear of rejection, and I was like, “I need an alter ego to help me deal with my fear of rejection and my fear of putting myself out there.” And guess what my alter ego’s name is.

**TODD:** Sara Blakely.

**RUTH:** Blakely.

**TODD:** Really?

**RUTH:** Yes!

**TODD:** That’s hilarious.

**RUTH:** I’m like, I need to channel my inner Sara Blakely because she is not afraid of rejection. She just puts it all out there. And so as soon as you said that, I’m like, “Oh my gosh. This is cosmic.”

**TODD:** What’s her totem? What’s her totem from her story? It’s her red backpack. You know, if you go to the Spanx headquarters in Atlanta, they have this beautiful wall mural in neon, and it tells the whole story. I’ll send you the image of it, whether you can share on the blog or whatever. But it’s beautiful. But on it is, in this acrylic case is the red backpack that she lugged around all of her samples to all of the meetings that she was taking at, say, Macy’s or whatever. And her friends used to tell her, “Oh, girlfriend, you’ve got to get a Louis Vuitton bag. You can’t walk into that.” She was like, “No. This is—” it’s like the classic hardhat, boots, “No. I’m going to truck in there with this.” And it’s a great story.

**RUTH:** I have heard that story, because she talked about that on the How I Built This episode. Yeah, now that you say that I remember that story. She’s amazing. She’s incredible.

So is your book, so let’s talk about your book. So it’s called The Alter Ego Effect, and you basically introduce this concept of creating some sort of secret identity for yourself that pretty much gives you the courage to do the things that your normal self wouldn’t do. So can you just unpack that for us a little bit?

**TODD:** Yeah. So, the first thing to share right off the bat is if there’s any resistance point with this is where people go, “Yeah, but shouldn’t I just be my authentic self? How does this reconcile itself with authenticity?” And I get it. But what people need to understand is the greatest judgment that we place on ourselves, I call it the pillow effect, is when we end our day and our head hits the pillow at night, that’s when a lot of people start unpacking what they did in their day or what they didn’t do in their day. And they say things like, “Why didn’t I raise my hand and offer the idea when I was in the boardroom meeting?” Or, “Why didn’t I ask for the sale when it was obvious that the person wanted what I had?” Or, “Why didn’t I actually tick those boxes off of

the action items I was going to do today when I said I was going to reach out to those brands and see if they want to do some sort of sponsorship deal on my blog, or whatever?”

And imposter syndrome is sucking you into the ordinary world, which I talk about. It's like these sinister things that the enemy uses to pull you in. And the pillow effect is when you can do something, when you have the capacity to actually outreach to people, but you don't, when you have the capacity to ask someone, "Hey," all of those problems you just unpacked are exactly what my program can help you with.

There's no need to be sitting inside of those issues for a long time. I have the system for you. When you don't offer that to someone or when you don't raise your hand or when you don't defend your friend when someone else gives them a cutting comment and it makes them feel bad and then you feel terrible because you didn't defend them in the moment, that's you being inauthentic, because you had the capacity to do something, but something got in the way, right? And it's the enemy getting in there, and so that is being inauthentic.

And so, okay, well, it's one thing to say that, which is what I have an issue with the self-help person \_\_\_\_ (35:52) world where they go, just use willpower. You just got to say it; why didn't you say it then? Well, why are you throwing all these arrows of judgment at me, right? I have a story of my life where it's got narrative built around it, where I've had some tough things happen to me, or whatever it is for someone. There's many reasons why people stop themselves from doing the things that they want to do. And the danger is, for some people, is trying to unpack that stuff because the reality of the mind is very complex. Why we don't go and do something is a rabbit hole that for many people is an endless void to jump into because there's no telling how many strings you're going to have to try to find of negative beliefs that stop you. Okay?

And so that's the stuff that is what makes authenticity not quite work as a paradigm to look at this through, because the reality of what this idea is (a) every single person that's listening to this or watching this has already used this idea. It's built into the human psyche. We do it naturally as children from the ages of zero to seven, specifically, because it is that age-gap range when children operate inside of a brainwave state called theta. Theta is the perfect brainwave state to access the great superpower that we're gifted with as human beings, which is our creative imagination.

I've got little ones, I know you've got little ones as well, and when you watch a three-year-old or a four-year-old play—like, my middle one, Sophie, has got this fantastic dialogue that she has back and forth between her little dolls that she has, and I love watching it, and that's her just being untethered from the judgment and the worries of what other people are thinking about her, the resistance of something. She's just accessing the creative imagination.

And we do this where we say to ourselves, "I wonder what I could do if I

jumped off the couch as Superman or Batman?” I would put a cape around ourselves, or we go out into the front yard and we’re playing on our driveway, and we’re pretending that we’re our favorite hockey player or football player or basketball player. And that’s us asking the question, what could I do if I was Sara Blakely? What could I do if I was LeBron James? And that’s such a natural, powerful question to ask ourselves, and then over time as we become adults, we start moving away from that idea, and we start getting concerned about what other people are thinking us, or we have to act our age or grow up, and we think all the stuff that we did as children was childish. No, it wasn’t. It was child-like, but in that playfulness is a great gift that we can give to ourselves now to allow us to navigate and find the courage to combat the natural resistance that we face.

And so the power of this is that we all carry with us some story that might not be supportive in helping us to get out there. That rejection that you talk about, the worry of other people, the judgment of others—natural; it’s part of the human condition. But it frustrates you when you get to end the day and you think that it stopped you in some way because you’re like, “I let myself beat me.” Because we all know that it’s really ourselves that we’re battling out there, even the athletes. Every athlete I work with, it’s no, it’s not the competition that you’re—if you’re always worried about the competition, you’ve created another existing enemy that you need to battle, and it’s ourselves that we’re trying to move past.

And so instead of us getting entangled in this resistance, the power of asking that question and then acting through our inner Sara Blakely or our inner Oprah or LeBron James is you’ve just now created another identity for yourself, which is actually very healthy, psychologically proven. It’s called multiple-self theory, and the people who have the greatest mental health are people who see themselves in context to the many roles that they play in life. So the Ruth that shows up as a mom, I hope has different qualities than the Ruth who’s sitting here interviewing me, right?

**RUTH:** Some, yeah.

**TODD:** I’m sure some things are going to be—yeah, yeah. I’m sure some things are going to be the same. Or the killer Ruth that shows up in business to make the decisions that you need to make in order to write the books and make the product decisions that you make and all that kind of stuff, right? Of course. So we understand that contextually. That’s multiple selves.

The great danger is that you think you’ve got one identity, and you take that one identity on every field. Now, it’s been proven that people who have a single identity that they try to act through, it creates the highest level of mental-health disorders—depression, anxiety, stress—and then catapulting down into even worse things. But people who have multiple selves see themselves in context in life, and they custom build an identity to help them to win out there. And whether you’re doing that and you’re just bringing the heroic self that naturally sits inside of all of us out there or whether you

use an alter ego to help you navigate that, it doesn't really matter to me. It's just that this is natural. It's psychological switches that we're automatically flipping to turn this concept on, and it's really powerful.

And I talk about it in the book, all the different leaders throughout history that use it. Beyoncé—Sasha Fierce—is an easy example that people can go to; David Bowie and Ziggy Stardust. Those two people are using a new way of creatively expressing themselves to move past what they feel is their owned identity. I earned the identity of someone who's a gospel-singing girl in Houston, Texas, that comes from a conservative family, but now I'm asked to go out and perform provocative dances with provocative lyrics. Of course that's going to create friction if you think that that's one identity. Instead, dividing line was built, and she said, "No, no, no, no. This person that I'm taking out there is going to be custom built to win." David Bowie did it with Ziggy Stardust. I talk about all the athletes that I work with. I talk about other people—Winston Churchill, Martin Luther King—who used an alter ego to help him move past the natural resistance that he had of being concerned about the slings and arrows that would be sent his way of leading a movement that he felt very responsible for. And so instead of him shirking into the resistance and worried about rejection with his ideas, he went out and got a pair of non-prescription glasses, like I have or I used—

**RUTH:** That's amazing. I love that story.

**TODD:** —and he went out and he created a distinguished self. And so when he did his writings, he would put on those glasses to put pen to paper for the ideas that would serve the movement and not edit himself.

And so, just even the people that I know that you serve, imagine if you had that powerful self; that powerful, trusted friend and identity that you brought to the act of putting words on the screen that you end up sending out to your listeners or your readers or whatever. Like, that's powerful, and it moves you past—

**RUTH:** It is powerful. And I think the point that you make in the book is that your alter ego is actually your truest self.

**TODD:** Actually you. Exactly.

**RUTH:** Yeah, it's actually you, and you're not being inauthentic because it's helping you tap into—

**TODD:** It helps you to reveal it to yourself, right? And so, there's this great quote that I share in the book from this guy Carey Grant. Cary Grant is a Hollywood golden-era-age actor known for being—

**RUTH:** I have heard of him before.

**TODD:** Yeah. Debonair. Well, not everyone else has. There's some Millennials out there that wouldn't have heard of him, maybe. But, you know, like, debonair,

charismatic guy, very good looking, and wrapped with insecurity, though. He came from Bristol, England, and wanted to make it in Hollywood. But he wanted to step past that insecurity and make something of himself, and he created this self, and he talked about it at the end of his career, how he said, "I pretended to be somebody I wanted to be, and I became that person, or he became me. But we met at some point." And it's such a powerful—it's probably the best quote encapsulation of what an alter ego does for people. And the only thing I would change in it is instead of saying "I pretended to be," it's "I activated somebody I wanted to be, and I became that person."

And for me, that's what happened. I talked about how I started my business early on, and I was young, but I was actually just wracked with insecurity about how young I looked, because I looked like I was 14, had a baby face, and I didn't think—I'm like, "Who's going to listen to me on there? I should probably have a leather patch on my elbow and have five degrees to talk about this stuff. And I don't have any pro clients, so how could anyone listen to me?" And I was all these rules, all these rules that I'm stacking up in my mind that's pulling me back despite the fact that I was good at what I did and I loved what I was doing. But it was stopping me from making the calls I needed to make to book the workshops I needed to book.

And I was like, "Wait a second. I used this alter ego called Geronimo when I played football, and it allowed me to play way bigger than the scrawny self that I was." But I'm like, "Wait. Geronimo really doesn't work in business, though." He's a little bit too aggressive, let's say. And I thought, "Well, how do I want to be showing up?" And I want to be showing up articulate and confident and decisive. And when I thought of all the people that I respected—it always went back to, the people that I think are smarter people wear glasses.

So that's what I did. I went out and I called it my reverse Superman. Superman put on glasses to become mild-mannered Clark Kent, to be accepted by people and mute his superpowers. I did the opposite. I wanted to put on those glasses to become Super Richard. And Richard's my first name, actually. Todd's my middle name. And so Super Richard was who I was showing up as, and it was me activating those qualities of being decisive and articulate and taking action and confident with my abilities.

And when I put on those glasses back then—and I went to LensCrafters in West Edmonton Mall to buy them, and this is 1997 when people wearing glasses wasn't cool. Everyone's getting Lasik eye surgery. Nowadays, people wear them for dress, which is what I now wear the glasses for. But when I put those glasses on, I was transformed. That was my switch.

And the moment that any seeds of doubt would—I'd immediately take those glasses off because Super Richard would never think that way, and I would never—and this is really key with this idea. This is the root power of this, because when you think about what causes the ideas that someone has, which is thought, to not get extrapolated out onto the field of play of action, the bridge that thoughts need to walk across is emotion. And that's where

resistance sits. That's the strings that can stop us. Their trauma sits there. Some people have lived a hard life. There's some tough things that have happened to them that has built a story and narrative doubting their self-worth. And that isn't you. That's a layer that's been built on top of the heroic part of you, and it's encapsulated and stunted that heroic self that's in there.

I look at everybody not as broken people. I think of it like Michelangelo thinks of the marble. David is in there. My job is to strip it away, okay, and chink it away. And so that's what an alter ego does. It's the great pickaxe of performance that unlocks the heroic you that's inside of you already and move past those strings that have stopped you. And so in that emotional plane, in order to get thought out there so that resistance or rejection isn't the thing that stops you, instead, I want to powerfully connect emotionally to honoring the idea and spirit of my alter ego, because if you're stepping into your Sara Blakely, what's really important to honor, Ruth, is imagine Sara was standing there next to you, watching your every move, and you're saying that you're showing up as her. I would never dishonor the memory of Geronimo or Walter Payton or Ronnie Lott, the people who were inspiring that alter ego. I would never go out onto that football field and dishonor their memory by not bringing them out there and acting through them. I mean, Walter Payton was my hero. I would never dishonor his memory by doing that. Same thing with Super Richard. I would never dishonor—because I was using a composite of some of my family members and Superman as the kind of meta concept idea. I would never dishonor Superman or my nana by not showing up like they would. Screw that. I'm not going to let anything stop me from bringing that self out. And it's not only helped me, but I talk about the thousands of people in the book and the tens of thousands of people that have used this, how it just bypasses the forces of resistance that sits inside of our unconscious mind, sidesteps that stuff that we've attached to our narrative of ourself, and now we're acting through a new narrative. And because our superpower as human beings is our creative imagination, which is where storytelling sits, that's what an alter ego is tapping into, and what it's revealing is the real you, the most authentic you that there is.

**RUTH:** And you talk about that so much in the book. You use different examples, and there's so many good stories that are so powerful that you share in there. But you can really use this in so many different aspects of your life, from business to sports, as you've talked about, to parenting, to—

**TODD:** Which is one of most powerful ones to use it for.

**RUTH:** Oh, I bet. Anything you feel like you're not doing well or you're struggling with—your temper. You talk a little about that. That's how you originally developed that in school, right, when you were playing sports, because you had a hard time with your temper. And so there's so many different ways. And then it also can help with trauma and dealing with drama. Do you want to talk a little bit about that?

**TODD:** Yeah, yeah. And so I brought it up because it's a very natural place. That's part of my kind of origin story. So I grew up on that farm in western Canada.

Every time summer came around, I was trying to look for any church camp to go to so that I could go out and meet people, and I would be an evangelical one weekend and a Catholic the next, and if they would take me, I'd be a Jewish person the next. I mean, whoever had a camp, I wanted to go to it.

But unfortunately at one of the camps—I was 12. I went to one. And over the course of a couple of days, two men sexually assaulted me and sort of brutalized me in many ways. And that shattered my world because I had a beautiful, loving family, and we didn't have any of that kind of chaos around us. And, yeah, so that really broke me on the inside. And in fact, when I came home from that experience—it was a long car ride in the back of a Buick La Sabre car—I grabbed my duffel bag that was sitting next to me, set it by the front step, my mom came out to go and talk to the people who dropped me off, the friends, and I went into the backyard. We just put a pool in our backyard on the farm, and I changed into my bathing suit, and I jumped in the pool, and I tried to drown myself. The shame and the guilt that I'd had around it, that was building, and then just all the words that they were saying to me about, yeah, terrible person that you are, and things like that, I just didn't want my family to know.

**RUTH:** So you didn't tell them.

**TODD:** No, no one. I actually only told my family for the first time four months ago. I wrote it down in a letter, and I not only told—the first person I ever told was about a year and a half ago, and that was my wife and a good friend of mine here in New York, where basically, I'd kept this thing underneath the surface for such a long time, and it was just rotting away at a lot—a big part of me—and I was going through a lot of stress at the time. I was writing the book. I was going through a lawsuit; in my business I sued someone. And yeah, so there was just, like—

**RUTH:** It's, like, the perfect storm.

**TODD:** The perfect storm. And in fact, if you want to know why I got into mental game work is, now you know why. I had to because it was survival. I needed to find any strategy and tool I could use to help me sort of manage this turmoil that I was going through in my own mind, because I still wanted to pursue goals and dreams that I had for myself. I still wanted to go out and conquer the world. But, man, like, there was some pretty heavy chains wrapped around my mind to hold me back, and so I latched onto these concepts. And it was only over time that I realized how fortunate I did and how I actually found a concept, which is this alter-ego concept, that many really successful people have used as well to help them navigate the challenges of life.

And anyways, I had kept it to myself for a long time, and, finally, what happened was, it was two years, three weeks ago, where I was picking up my two daughters at preschool. We had just had our third child, Charlie, and I picked up Molly and Sophie at preschool. Valerie was at home, resting; she'd just had a really tough childbirth. And I put Sophie in the carriage, and then

I picked up Molly and put her in the carriage. And Molly's just a really—her disposition is a real sweet kid but very emotionally intelligent. And she put her hand up to my cheek, and she's like, "Daddy, are you happy?" And I said, "Yeah, I'm happy. Why?" She's like, "Oh, because you've been yelling at us a lot lately, and it's making us sad." And I was devastated.

That's probably the one story of all the ones that's hardest for me to actually tell because you want so much for your kids, and in that moment, now there was a reflection of how all of that stuff that I held inside was now manifesting in the way that I was reacting to life in some ways. And I call it second-hand trauma. I was giving my kids second-hand trauma, and they didn't deserve that. And so I resolved to kind of, in that moment, that I was going to really finally unpack the trauma. And that's what I did. I walked through it. And I can only tell that stuff now because I'm on the other side of it. I worked really hard with people to face it down and everything. And now there's a beautiful gift that's on the other side of it. And some of it is just—

**RUTH:**

You went through the valley.

**TODD:**

Yeah, I had to. And kept on facing those demons that were there. But the skills that I developed as working with people on mental game stuff for such a long time really helped me to pick up a sword and enter that dark cave, as Joseph Campbell would call it. And it helped me navigate that with more grace and more grit. And I say those two words specifically because in the book I talk about the science of why this stuff works as well. And there's this great experiment and study that was done at the University of Minnesota, where this lady had heard about this alter-ego concept and decided to run a test with four- to six-year-olds, and they brought a bunch of 4- to 6-year-olds into a room, and they gave them a puzzle that was unsolvable. And they wanted to see how long that they would stick it out before they would quit on it, and that's going to measure their grit. A byproduct of it was, though, they also were able to track the things that they would say, so their self-talk, or their expressed self-talk anyway. And they'd say things like, "Oh, this is too hard," or "I can't figure this out." And on and on.

Then, they brought in a rack of superhero costumes—Batman, and Dora the Explorer, specifically—and they asked the kids to pick their favorite superhero, brought in another puzzle that was the same-ish, unsolvable, as well. And now with the costumes on, they wanted to see if it changed anything. Well, it did. And their level of grit and perseverance went way up, which means that they stuck with the problem longer, but their expressed self-talk sounded like this, "Well, Batman wouldn't quit, so I'm not going to quit." They immediately saw themselves differently. And they were honoring—this is the honoring—they were honoring Batman, because "Batman wouldn't quit, so I'm not going to quit. I'm wearing his costume; I'm not going to quit." The conversation around Dora the Explorer was like, "Dora always finds a way, so I'm going to find a way." It's so powerful. And so in that moment, okay, they're wearing a cape or they're wearing a costume.

And someone once talked to me about authenticity, and I'm like, "Why are you arguing for your limitations in life? This is the stuff that really successful people are using." And so there's a very dangerous part of the self-help \_\_\_\_\_ (56:39—personal vomit) and what I call this average middle that will argue and pull people down in a way, and so what people want me to do is pander to make those people that are arguing for their limitations feel better, and I'm like, "No. This is the stuff that's being done at the very top level, and you have access to it. You could do it right now." And those little kids, their entire concept of what they think that they can do now has shifted and changed because now once the Batman costume comes off, they're still left with the skill that they developed. That's powerful.

Just like I was left with the skill that I developed of putting on those glasses, that over time what happened was—there was this view that I had of myself, and you think of it like a Venn diagram circle. It was a circle of the way that I saw myself. But there was another circle of what I thought Super Richard could go and do, and what I wanted to go and do, and so when I put on those glasses, that's what I was activating. And then what happened was, over time, it was about six months later, I was sitting at my desk. I had just booked two workshops. And you know what I didn't have on? My glasses. And it was in that moment I just thought to myself, "Wow. I became the person I wanted to be."

**RUTH:**

That's amazing. And I think exactly what you said, people do argue for their limitations. They will sit there and argue with you all day long for why this isn't going to work for them, or why it's wrong or it shouldn't be that way. But why not try it? I mean, literally, try it.

**TODD:**

To your point about the whole "but why shouldn't we?" So I have a bunch of videos that I released with the book, and they've all gone viral, some more than even other, like, millions of views. And there's one specific, there's one, like, you go into the comments and people are like, "Well, shouldn't everyone just love themselves? If you just loved yourself—" And I'm like, "No." It's a wonderful idea, and in the vacuum of the comment, beautiful idea; I love it. But the reality of life is that some people have some challenges. Some people didn't grow up in a loving family like I did, and they didn't get told that they could do things in life. Some people don't have a group of allies and friends around them that are supportive and that they can access to. And so, it's a wonderful idea. But in the interim, why wait for success? Because I can tell you with this concept, because I'm known as the quick-hit artist, when someone has a competition on a Saturday out at the U.S. Open in Flushing Meadows, Queens, New York, to play in the U.S. Open, and I get called on a Wednesday, here's what I can't do: teach them meditation. Meditation is the greatest long-term strategy for success I could ever give someone, but I need to help someone now, and the way that I could do it is to custom build a new identity that's going to help them win out there that doesn't bring with it all the narrative that you've got with you that is somehow holding you back. And so it's a lovely idea to love ourselves, but here's the thing. Over time, this thing does, because I've seen it happen. It happened with me. It's happened

with other people. You find yourself with it. You strip away all that gunk that just builds up over time.

**RUTH:**

It's amazing. Happened with Sasha Fierce—Beyoncé—she retired her. It's so true. So I want to make sure that we get practical on this. How do you actually go about creating this alter ego in your—because, I mean, from what you're saying, it's fairly simple. It doesn't have to be—and to the point that we were talking about earlier. Just because it's simple doesn't mean it's easy, and there's still going to be hard things that you have to go through, but the alter ego can guide you through those hard things. You can fight the battles as your alter ego.

**TODD:**

Yeah, 100%. And so the great thing about this is, like I said before, I think of the book as a—like, I am on a mission of the great remembering that you already know how to do this, because people's responses to me all the time—I've gotten stopped at airports. It's been out now just for six weeks, maybe, but I've gotten stopped in a lot of places. And people are like, "I feel like I've been doing this before." And I'm like, "I know you have, because it's the most natural human thing that you could be doing."

So number one—that's an important mindset. Just know that you already know how to do it, okay? I'm going to give you the process to unpack it powerfully, but number one is, find a place or find a role or a field of play in life that is frustrating you the most, that's just creating the most stress for you or you're not liking the way that you're getting results for yourself right now. And people automatically go to business. But like I said, I've probably worked with more people on parenting, in some ways, for people that are in entrepreneurship. So find that area. What's that role that's pressuring you the most right now? So that's number one.

Number two question is, is what's frustrating you about the way that you're showing up or the lack of results that you're getting or what you're not doing right now? Like, I'm not making those phone calls, or I'm not reaching out to people, or I'm not writing enough. I'm so concerned what other people going to say about my punctuation and grammar. I'm dyslexic. I don't care about punctuation grammar. I've got more people reach out to me, and I'm like, "But did you get the idea? The whole point of communication is to convey one idea to another person. Did you understand what I said? Okay, I don't care that I put the wrong they're, their, there." So what's that thing that's frustrating you?

Then, the flip of that, on the third phase is, okay, what do you want to be showing up as? How do you want to be showing up? Who inspires you with the way that they show up that you wish that you had that quality or that trait or whatever? Just like you're doing with Blakely, right, where she doesn't care about rejection. It's just here's all of me, kind of thing. Take it, leave it, own it, love it, discard it, whatever. Okay? And now we're getting into now possibly you finding who the inspiration for your alter ego might be. Okay? And so how do you want to show up out there? So it's the flip of the frustrations, it's the what you want, what are the traits and the qualities you

want to bring to it? I was talking about me being decisive and articulate and confident with that.

And then, the fourth phase. So if in that phase you found, you know what, I know exactly who would inspire me. I would love to bring out Oprah or—you know who actually the number-one alter ego, if there's a percentage of them, used is? Shocks everybody—grandmothers.

**RUTH:**

Really?

**TODD:**

Yep. Number-one category of people that others are inspired by. Why? Rule of this, you need to emotionally connect to the spirit of the alter ego that you are attaching yourself with or that you're leveraging. It's so easy for people to go, "Oh, I'm going to be Wonder Woman or Superman." You know, I've got a lot of clients that have used Wonder Woman, but that's because they're connected to her story. They love Wonder Woman. You know, you don't go to like, "Oh, I just want that person's superpowers," because, again, that's intellectual, that's not going to allow those qualities to run across the bridge of emotion, okay, and out onto the field of play of action. But grandmothers, many people have a great experience amongst their grandmothers, so it's not hard for them to—when I say, "Are you going to honor that alter ego? Are you going to not dishonor them by showing up as someone who's worried about what other people are thinking of them? Because you know what? Your spitfire of a grandmother didn't, kind of thing. So why are you doing that? You're dishonoring that memory of her." So powerful.

And then, that gets to the fourth part, which is what's the totem or artifact? I talk about the power of a totem or an artifact. What it's tapping into is the science of this concept—or not concept, but principle of enclothed cognition, which is we as human beings, we attach story and meaning to the things that we wear or other people wear. So when I see someone come in with a doctor's coat on, I ascribe a whole bunch of character traits to that person. When people see someone wearing glasses—now, this isn't why I wore the glasses—but the perception of people that wear glasses is that they're smart, they're articulate, they're studious, they're trusting, all things that have been unpacked inside of studies). So we want to use a totem that carries the meaning of that alter ego.

And for me, when I played sport, I had five trading cards, three of Walter Payton and two of Ronnie Lott, who were Hall of Fame football players. And I've got this mental movie theater that I go into to see myself speak on stages, to practice new skills in my mind, and so I would go into that mental movie theater. Walter Payton and Ronnie Lott would walk in through a doorway, Geronimo and four other Native American warriors would walk in through the other doorway—I'm a huge Native American buff. I grew up in an area of Canada that has a rich history of Native American history—and they would walk towards me, Geronimo would be carrying five trading cards—he'd be carrying the trading cards—and Walter Payton would say to me as they approached, "Take these cards as a representation and an embodiment of each of us. But don't you for one second dishonor our legacy in how we

would play the game or how we would show up by not activating us out on that field." And then Geronimo would hand me them, I would take them, and literally sitting next to me would be those five trading cards.

And I would take Walter Payton's and shove it in my helmet, I'd take his other two and I'd put them in my thigh pads because I wanted to think like him and run like him, and I'd put Ronnie Lott's underneath my shoulder pads, and I wanted to hit like he was because he was a devastating defense player. And then I would carry the spirit of the Native American warriors with me in my heart out there. And, I mean, even when I say it, I almost get choked up talking about it because I am so deeply—I look at it as I'm so honored that they would let me do that, because that's the realism of it. That's the power of our mind, our creative imagination. There is no line of delineation between the imagination and the real world. That's why we create heavens from hell and hells from heaven. That's the superpower of human beings. An alter ego can actually create the heaven from hell, because you're going to walk through the fire, you're going to walk through the complexity, but you're going to do it with grace, you're going to do it with grit, you're going to do it with a greater spirit and confidence and all that kind of stuff.

And so the moment I snapped my helmet on, that was when the switch happened. And so the glasses, Super Richard, Martin Luther King with the distinguished self. I've got a client who has a bracelet, and when she snaps it shut, that's when Wonder Woman takes over. She's an equestrian rider, and it allows her to get past being stressed and anxious. Think about it. What are horses? Horses are the most beautiful and perfect transmutations of—they transmute energy flawlessly. That's why they're used in therapy for people that have got autism or traumatic disorders. And, you know, when you're sitting on top of that horse and you're doing dressage, which is basically like horse dance, doing choreographed moves out there with a very specific posture, if you're nervous and stressed, that horse will be nervous and stressed, and it won't hit its mark. And so now she's activating Wonder Woman, and the reason why for her is because she owns her space. She owns it. For her, that's what her connection is. She's like no matter what's going on and all the fury that's happening around her, she would remain calm. And for her, that's snapping of it shut. And the reason we use sound a lot, it's because sound is a phenomenal trigger for some people. And most people think visual, but really sound and smell really are powerful triggers for people. And so that's the fourth one is having a totem or an artifact, necklace, whatever, shoes, socks, sometimes it's the field of play.

**RUTH:** Spanx.

**TODD:** Spanx, 100%. Oh, if you only knew.

**RUTH:** Oh, I know.

**TODD:** Yeah, right? Hey, now. I'm svelte. I'm svelte, come on.

**RUTH:** I'm talking about myself.

**TODD:** I'm teasing. This is what friends do. This is what friends do. And then the final one is to activate the intention, is that really—you're activating it for yourself, not for other people. Any time you're doing something to trick or deceive others, that's being inauthentic, 100%. If you're wearing glasses because you want other people to think that you're smart, that's deception. I'm wearing the glasses because I am wearing them as a method to trigger the qualities that I want to embody so that I can serve people the way that I most want to show up and serve them and really reveal that heroic identity and self that's already there, but, you know, because of just tough things, I somehow can't release it. But now all of a sudden, over the course of weeks and months for some people, could be days for others, it's natural. You don't need to think about it anymore. It's just there.

**RUTH:** Wow. It's so powerful.

**TODD:** I'm telling you, like, everyone has to buy the book because at the end of the day you're going to be buying it anyway because I am not done on this planet until there's a book in every single person's hands.

**RUTH:** But it is so transformative to do this. Like, it really is. And you don't have to spend any money, beside buying the book, but you can just do it right where you are, right now, and see immediate results. And, I mean, I can't think of anything more powerful than that.

**TODD:** Imagine you honoring the idea of seeing yourself as already having the qualities and traits that you need to succeed at whatever you're trying to pursue right now, because here's what I know, you do. I've done this. I have over 16,000 hours, Ruth, working with people one on one. I'm not someone who just leads group trainings or something. I started out one on one, and, actually, I didn't graduate out of one on one for about eight years. And I still do it. It's my favorite thing, having conversations with leaders like you and helping that person just bring more of themselves out there, untethered to the psychological or emotional resistance that they have. It's my favorite thing.

And so 16,000 hours, and here's what I know. That's the number-one response from people is they go, "I had it all along, didn't I." Like, "I know you did." You didn't have to go and acquire it. It was there. You've got it. And so my question for you is always this, what else is there? What else you got in there that you don't even know is there? I wonder. And that's one of the great phrases that if people can take this one phrase away is. I wonder. It's such a powerful—it taps into that phrase that a young kid would use, but it's such a powerful way to look at life when you say, "Hm, I wonder what I could do." (A) It starts to take and look at life as if you're a mad scientist in a lab just testing things out, not being so concerned about what the product is that goes out to people, but you're just in there. You're just doing the work you loved, and you're just figuring yourself out. What else can I do, I wonder. I wonder. I wonder.

**RUTH:** So good. Oh my gosh.

**TODD:** So, buy the book. Buy the book.

**RUTH:** I don't even know how to follow up, so let's do rapid fire.

**TODD:** Let's do it. Fire away.

**RUTH:** Yeah, I'm going to just do rapid fire for the rest of my questions. I have so many that we haven't even gotten to yet, but this has then incredible. Okay, first of all, what is something that has really scared you in life, and how'd you move past the fear?

**TODD:** Really scared me in life? I wanted to become a marine biologist. That's what I actually wanted to pursue. But I was terrified of sharks, somewhat because of *Jaws*, and I'm terrified of sharks. So even when I go swimming—and I am a fish. I love being in the water. If I could spend 18 hours a day in a pool, I would be in the pool. I was a lifeguard when I was a teenager. So I went and I went Great White Shark cage diving, and then I've swam in the open ocean with sharks as well. So, there's just no way about it. Anyone who—

**RUTH:** So you just did it scared.

**TODD:** Yeah, yeah, yeah, 100%. Oh, yeah. And, well, actually, no. I was scared, but I did not want to be getting in the water scared, because—

**RUTH:** They can smell fear.

**TODD:** Yeah. It's this thing where sometimes the most dangerous thing is knowing too much. I know too much, maybe, sometimes, about the psychology of life or human beings. So, no, I got into a really calm state, and I got in. And I went in thinking that I'm going there to meet some friends. It was literally there.

So, in getting into the wrapping into the mental game side of it, I named the sharks. I was like, "Oh, I'm going to see Barry." For me it was like—because if they're a shark, that's this amorphous thing that's fear in my head, but Barry wasn't. I talk about in the book—

**RUTH:** So you gave the sharks an alter ego.

**TODD:** I did—well, I gave—yeah, 100%. I talk about it in the book, the power of naming the enemy, giving it form and substance, because then you can actually talk it back into the corridor of your mind, or get rid of it entirely. So, Barry and Sam and Kevin—because, I mean, how can you be—you can't be scared of someone whose name is Kevin. You just can't. Anyways, so that's the thing that scared me.

**RUTH:** Okay. What is the one of the hardest lessons that you've had to learn in either business or life?

**TODD:** Definitely vulnerability and asking for help. Nothing has frustrated me more or caused more regret than sitting with a problem longer than I should have when I could have just reached out to other people to help me

get perspective on it. And so now I am militant about asking for help. The moment I've got to lock clarity, I have my posse, like, rapid fire out to people.

**RUTH:** Oh, that's really good.

**TODD:** Yeah, I don't want to sit with it, because it helps me talk things out with people.

**RUTH:** Yeah.

**TODD:** Yeah.

**RUTH:** So, what is the most common mistake that you see business owners make, and what advice would you give someone who's just starting out in their career or business?

**TODD:** Okay. So I'll give you two, there. One is humility, trying to act like you've got it all together, which causes you to not ask for help or reach out or go to someone and be humble. And, again, hard lesson learned. I'd probably still say that's something that I still work on, but I'm a billion times better. And then the second one is a dogged, passionate pursuit of constantly trying to expand the allies, mentors, coaches, network of friends that you've got, because there's nothing that helps you travel to the top of the mountain faster than being within arm's reach of someone who can help you get over the rock because they've been there. They are just as passionate about helping you out. Again, that's the quality that you want. I mean, I am so excited to help out friends. It's the juice of my day. And I want other people around me that are like that for my goals. I'm just as passionate about my buddy Dan's goals or your goals as my goals because if I help you achieve your goals, it helps me achieve my goal, right? It levels me up. So those are the two things. Never stop finding good people.

**RUTH:** Oh, I like that one, yes. How do you practice self-care in your life and business?

**TODD:** Great question. So, meditation. I've been teaching meditation for, like, 21 years, back when yoga wasn't even cool. And so that's a big one. Another one is I love movies. Movies are my way of shutting off the world and just getting engrossed in a story. So I'm a big movie lover. I am not a great critic, so never ask me if a movie is good, because I tell you that every movie is in my top three. Friends will text me, and they're like, "Dude, I went to that movie, and it sucked." And I was like, "How can it suck? It was amazing." Gigli by Ben Affleck was just—

**RUTH:** That's probably why I love you because I am the same way. I like every movie unless it has a really horrible ending, and then I don't like it. But that's the only time I'll give a movie a bad review.

**TODD:** Yeah. I mean, of course I've seen some bad movies, but, no, I am not a good movie critic at all. And so that's another one.

Another way that I—so practice self-care sounds strange, but, I mean, I had one of my best friends, he lives in Panama. He was in New York City yesterday, and we went off, and I like to smoke a cigar every now and then with people. And it's such a form of like—because it's relaxed. Cigarette smoking is like shhhew, people do that. I've never smoked a cigarette, but cigar smoking is contemplative, so great conversations with it. And for me, like, self-care is going off and doing adventures with my kids. You know, just being around them and seeing them. That's my juices, that stuff.

**RUTH:** What are you working on right now that has you really fired up?

**TODD:** Well, the book. I mean, really just getting more of the book getting out. I just started today. We launched the Alter Ego Effect Method master class. So this actually gives me the chance to work with people. And I tell people, "Listen, all the ideas that you need are in the book." I didn't want to have one of those books where you read it, and then the person keeps on saying, "And when you come to my workshop..." No, no, no. Everything is in there. But even when we were running the ads for the master class, I said, "Listen, there's nothing new that I'm going to be teaching you. I'm just going to be expressing it in multimedia format. I've got videos for you, and you can see me do it. And we'll coach you. I'll be able to coach you through it." But that's the big thing is really the book itself.

**RUTH:** It's amazing. It's so good. It's so good. And I bet the master class—I mean, there's so many people learn in so many different ways, so having something like that I know—like, I'm not a video learner. I like to listen or read. But there's so many people that want to see it, actually see it and see you face to face.

**TODD:** Yeah, and because I'm a coach-type person, all it takes is someone to ask me one question in the chat role, where I go off on a tangent, and then 36 people are like, "Oh, now I get it. It's just the way that you articulate it in a different way, and it just lands differently."

**RUTH:** Is this a live master class?

**TODD:** It is, yeah.

**RUTH:** Oh, that's cool.

**TODD:** So, I'm recording it all live with people over the course of four weeks. And I find that that's the best way for me because this is my beta group. And then I can go into the community group, and then people are asking me questions, and it helps them to just refine and see where they're sticking points of people so that I can just train it so they can unlock it. Yeah.

**RUTH:** Awesome. What is the best piece of advice you've ever received, and why?

**TODD:** Well, the one that my mom gave me, which we talked about earlier, so this is a good opportunity for me to say the second one that my dad gave me. So we were working in the corrals one day. We were separating out some baby

calves from their mothers, and we took a break, and we were having a pop, for you Canadians—soda, for you Americans—and so were drinking the pop, and my dad points over to something and he goes, “You see that piece of cow sh— over there?” And I was like, “Yeah, I see that piece of cow sh—.” He said, “You can take a piece of cow sh—, wrap it in a red ribbon, but it’s still a piece of cow sh—.” And the lesson that he was giving me, because we talked about it later, was, Todd, you’re going to go out, and you’re going to live in big cities or you’re going to travel the world, and you’re going to meet a lot of fast-talking or people who have blazers on, pocket squares, everything looks right, but you’ve got to be able to look past the red ribbon and see if there’s substance that’s there or if it’s just a piece of cow sh—.

And so that one thing that he shared with me—and I’ve done speeches at big colleges, and I’ve been sharing that story for 20 years now. I’ve had people that have looped back around five years later and be like, “I could never not think of the red ribbon and the cow sh—. And it saved me from accepting a job when I came out of college and working for the wrong person, because I looked at that manager and thinking to myself, “Wow. I’m going to spend my entire day in a manure pit with you.”

**RUTH:** So good.

**TODD:** So, that’s been super valuable.

**RUTH:** All right. Final words of wisdom, and then let us know where we can find you online.

**TODD:** Yeah, final words of wisdom. I like going—but first, if there’s just an idea I’d like to reinforce, beyond the alter-ego thing, is that the quality of your life is in direct relation to the quality of the people that you’re around. Multiple studies, if there’s one common thread that weaves studies on fulfillment and joy in life or happiness or whatever, the one common denominator is people talk about the value of the relationships that they have. And so always be pursuing and nurturing good relationships because it serves you in more ways than you can ever imagine, and where it serves you the most is when you do get into those tough times, because anyone who is ambitious, you’re going to reach more of those tougher times than others, and having a posse around you that’s helping you out is just beyond powerful. So, don’t be a hermit in that process.

And then where they can find me, [toddherman.me](http://toddherman.me) is where my home base on the Internet is, all my social kind of links are there, on Instagram and Facebook. And if you want more information about the alter-ego book, it’s [alteregoeffect.com](http://alteregoeffect.com), and all the links to all the different retailers. It’s everywhere right now. You can go and buy it, or listen to it. And, yeah, I’ll see you inside the book.

**RUTH:** Yeah, and we will include all of the links to everything in our show notes as well. If you can’t find it, you’ll be able to find it there. Todd, thank you so much. This was amazing. So good. Oh my gosh, I’m so glad we met. I’m so

glad we're friends. Thank you for being my new best friend. Thank you for coming on the show. And, yeah, thank you for your book. It's amazing.

**TODD:** Anything for a little Ruthie Soukup.

**RUTH:** Oh, Toddie, stop.

**TODD:** Thank you.

Okay, so, don't forget that if you want all the show notes for this episode, along with all the links to everything that we've just talked about, you can find it all at [doitscared.com/episode54](https://doitscared.com/episode54). Once again, get all the show notes, all the links, on our website at [doitscared.com/episode54](https://doitscared.com/episode54).

And then, before we go, I just want to say, as always, that I love, love, love hearing from you. So if you have any questions about what we talked about today, any topics that you want to see addressed on the podcast, and guests that you want to see me interview, please feel free to reach out either via email or just by messaging me on Instagram.

And that about does it for this episode of the **DO IT SCARED WITH RUTH SOUKUP** podcast. Thank you so much for joining me today. And if you liked what you heard, you can leave a review on iTunes, or better yet, share this episode on your Instastory and tag me just to let me know. If I repost your story, we will send you a "Do It Scared" T-shirt just for fun.

Also, be sure to subscribe either on **iTunes or Stitcher** or wherever you like to listen, to be notified of new episodes.

And speaking of upcoming episodes, be sure to join me next week as we continue our conversation from last week about the seven fear archetypes and talk about the seven principles of courage that you will need to start adopting as core beliefs in your life if you really are going to start conquering fear. After today's conversation about the alter-ego effect, I think these principles will be even more powerful. So, believe me when I tell you that this is an episode you do not want to miss. And I will catch you then.