

## EPISODE 248

## The Power of Vulnerability and Taking off Our Masks – With Lewis Howes

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**Shawn Stevenson:** Welcome to *The Model Health Show*. This is fitness and nutrition expert, Shawn Stevenson, and I'm so grateful for you tuning in with me today.

It's a very, very special episode because we're talking about something that I feel to be the number one most influential factor in our health and our wellbeing and our success in our lives. And what do you think that is?

You think it's the food that we're eating? You think it's the exercise program? No, absolutely not. I truly do believe that it's our relationships, and specifically our relationship with ourselves because at the end of the day it's really that internal gain that's going to get us to do the things that we need to do in our lives, and also how we relate to each other is immensely important.

I was just listening to my friend ET, a.k.a. Eric Thomas, and he's arguably the number one motivational speaker in the world, and he was just talking about the fact that he loves being around healthy people, and it's because it makes it easy for him, you know?

It makes it easy for us when we're around that environment, when we're around the environment that uplifts us, but we need to make sure that we're doing the same thing for other people as well.

And at the end of the day, you know our relationships are really the biggest influence on our health, on our fitness, on our wellbeing, and those relationships- and you've got to remember, too. Humans were very social creatures. We evolved in tribes.

We evolved having each other's back and helping to build civilization through us being together, and working together as one.

But today, we have a situation where we have more friends on Facebook than friends in real life, you know? We've become more connected in some ways, but more separate in other ways.

And this is bringing about some new challenges. And also just the massive shift that's happening in this whole female, male, feminine energy, masculine energy perspective as well, and some of the things we're seeing in our culture today.

And I felt there was no better person in the world to bring on to talk about some of this stuff, to help us to better relate to ourselves, and the people that we care about, than our guest today.

Before we do that, let me give a quick shout-out to our show sponsor, Organifi. Head over to [www.Organifi.com/model](http://www.Organifi.com/model) and you're going to get 20% off your entire purchase from Organifi. Now the reason I love them so much- people come to me all the time, they're asking me, 'Shawn, what do you think about this multivitamin? Do you suggest that I take a multivitamin?' And my answer is no, don't take a multivitamin.

This is synthetic. Generally they're synthetic and they're also not abiding by the fact of certain nutrients are heat sensitive. You know, they're going to change in their chemical construct when you heat them up, and I really believe that we need to get something that's from earth grown nutrients as well. Something that your cells can actually recognize.

And so for me, if you look at something like Organifi that has spirulina, it has chlorella, moringa. You guys know about moringa? We're talking about seven times more vitamin C than oranges, seven times more potassium than bananas, two times more protein- and we're talking about gram for gram, than milk. Four times more calcium than milk, four times more beta carotene than carrots.

These are all supposed to be top of their class in those nutrients. You get all that concentrated in moringa, so it is really the definition of what a superfood is. And that's just one of the different ingredients that are found in Organifi, alright?

And also by the way, it tastes good, and that's the kind of bottom line. Kids love it, my family and I enjoy it every single day. I absolutely love Organifi. So head over, check them out. It's [www.Organifi.com/model](http://www.Organifi.com/model) and now let's get to our special guest and our topic of the day.

Our guest today is the one and only Lewis Howes. He's a New York Times bestselling author, and creator of *The School of Greatness*, one of the top podcasts in the world.

And he's a former athlete in football, and professional athlete in two sport All-American? Right, man? And just had this amazing transformation take place where an injury kind of shattered his dreams of playing professional sports, and he had to figure out his life, and eventually that led him to stepping into a whole new domain, and becoming an entrepreneur, and building an amazing business, and from there impacting the lives of literally millions of people now in a very, very positive and powerful way.

And outside of that he's just a great guy, and he's a good friend of mine, and I'd like to welcome him back to *The Model Health Show*, Lewis Howes.

**Lewis Howes:** Thanks, brother. Appreciate you, man.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Very happy to have you on, man. It was great hanging out last night.

**Lewis Howes:** Good times, man. Dinner with you and Prince is always a good time, you know?

**Shawn Stevenson:** Yes Prince Ea who was on the show as well. We'll put that in the show notes if you guys haven't seen that episode. But yeah man, it was just so good to see you and this book.

And you know, I told you even then, like I'm not going to pull any punches. If it was hot garbage, I would tell you.

**Lewis Howes:** Yes.

**Shawn Stevenson:** This book is so engaging. I started kind of wrapping it up this morning. It's so good it doesn't even make any sense, and it's so necessary, and it spoke to a lot for me personally.

And I'd love for you to share, man. Like after- no, before we even get to that, what's the experience been like since having this huge mega hit New York Times bestselling book, 'The School of Greatness'? What's life been like since then?

**Lewis Howes:** You know, I thought the heavens would open up and all this money would pour into my hands, but not much changed, you know? It was a great moment for me because I almost flunked out of English in high school here in St. Louis. Back in 2001 I almost didn't go to college because you had to pass English.

And my teacher, she really supported me to make sure I got the minimum grade I needed to pass. So to go almost fifteen years later, and write a New York Times bestseller, I don't think anyone else from my high school had done that.

So it was kind of a fun moment for me, and some things opened up and I got some cool press hits, but you know it's just another day.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Yeah, yeah it's powerful though still, man. I mean just that story of coming from where you come from to be able to achieve that, I would think that you would have this moment of like 'I made it,' but that didn't necessarily happen. Talk about why.

**Lewis Howes:** There was a moment of 'I made it but then nothing really changed.' Like sure, I made it in the New York Times list, and I could circle my name on there or whatever and say, 'Okay this is cool.'

But it's funny, as a driven athlete, even then I still wasn't fully happy. I still wasn't fully happy, I was like, 'Well I didn't get number one.' I got number two on the New York Times bestseller list, so I was like, 'Oh what could I have done differently?'

So I kind of like went back into this beat up mode for a few moments of how could I improve and get better, as opposed to fully just celebrating and appreciating the moment.

And these are some of the things that I talk about in 'The Mask,' about how men tend to look for things that aren't to impact others, but to only impact themselves, and yet it's never enough because our self-worth is determined by material possessions, or the amount of women we sleep with, or whatever it may be- our athletic accomplishments to prove our self-worth to others, as opposed to trying to impact others.

There's a slight difference when you apply that mindset.

**Shawn Stevenson:** So that really leads to what the inspiration was for this book, 'The Mask of Masculinity.' So number one, what was the inspiration? And also why do you think it's so important that this book is coming out right now?

**Lewis Howes:** Well four years ago I went through a really bad breakup, about four and a half years ago. I was going through a breakup with a girl that I'd moved to L.A. for from New York City.

Now I loved New York City. This place was like a dream for me. I felt like I was taking over the world just walking around the streets constantly.

And I met a girl that I fell for hard really quickly. Let's say I fell in lust for her, right? Moved to L.A. to try it out, to see what it would be like being in a relationship in the same city as opposed to a long distance.

Right when I moved, I got rid of my lease in New York City, I didn't have a place yet in L.A. so I was AirBnb'ing it for a month. I had two bags, a guitar, and a laptop. Right the moment I landed, she broke up with me.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Wow.

**Lewis Howes:** So I didn't have my place in New York anymore to go back to, I didn't have a place in L.A., and so I was like, 'What am I doing?'

Now we had gotten back together, she was just like sabotaging the whole time, so this was just her nature. So we were together for six or seven months on and off. Just kind of like two days of amazing times, and five days of hell. Like that was the cycle of us, right?

And I didn't know as a man how to end it. I didn't know how to emotionally end it because those two days a week were just explosive. It was so intimate, there was so much love and connection- what I thought was love, and I didn't think I'd be able to find it somewhere else.

So as a man, I didn't have the emotional capacity to communicate what I needed to express myself, and to really take care of my emotional needs, so I stayed in this toxic experience.

Now I also didn't know how to express myself outside of the relationship. So even though I was angrier and angrier because of this, I would take out this anger and frustration on other people; my family, friends, business partners.

I would take the frustration I had with my relationship and put it out, spread the negativity in the world, because I just didn't know how to deal with my emotions.

Now this came to a boiling point where I started playing pick-up basketball a lot more often, and every time I would step on the mean streets of the West Hollywood courts, I would find some seventeen year old punk that was half my size but had the gift of gab, who would talk trash to me. Just like any normal person would do on a basketball court.

And for whatever reason, it was like I was trying to defend my life. Every time someone said something to me, it was like I had to defend my life in front of this person. And to everyone else on the court, I had to prove that I wasn't going to let anyone say anything to me, push me around, whatever.

And so week after week, this was probably for six to eight weeks, would go out there pretty much every day and assert my alpha masculinity on people. Act like I was the biggest toughest guy anytime something tried to attack me.

I would scream back at people, I would get in their face, I would do whatever, I would start shoving people. I never hit anyone, but I'd start like shoving people and getting them to back down, and they were always stronger than me, so that shows you how much of a man I was.

One day I get into- I guard a guy who's bigger than me, older and bigger by about sixty or seventy pounds. And we're guarding each other, he's talking trash, I'm not backing down. He's fouling me hard, I'm fouling him hard, but it's kind of clean in the sense that we're fouling each other hard.

It gets down to the final point, game point both teams. He fouls me so I don't score, I foul him so he doesn't score, but I grab his arm in a way that I guess he didn't like because he was about to go up and take a lift, so I grab his arm down so he can't score. Hard foul, right?

All of a sudden I guess he couldn't take it anymore. He snaps, he head-butts me right in the eye, I see stars and it's kind of like I went into another zone, and I pretty much UFC tackled the guy and just pummeled his face on the ground, straddling him just pummeling him in the ground which felt like a few minutes but it was probably a few seconds until someone took me off.

And he got up, I got up, I'm screaming, 'Why did you head-butt me?' All this stuff, and then he looks at me, and I can't recognize his face. And at that moment I was like shaking, I was like- the adrenaline, the anger, the rage, and just kind of like, 'What the heck did I just do? Like why did I allow myself to physically hit someone and go to this place? Why couldn't I do something different?'

So the police department is right across the street, so I start to come to my senses and I'm like, 'I have everything to lose here. I have my business to lose, my credibility, my brand, like all these things. I could go to jail, who knows what could happen. I don't know.'

Plus it's like some of these guys are kind of like- you don't know what these characters are like. Like some guys threaten to have knives and stuff like this, so I was like, 'I just need to get out of here.' Like I could hurt myself, whatever.

So like a coward I ran home. I ran home because I was so afraid. Ran home, and I'm shaking washing my hands off, and I look in the mirror and I'm just like looking at myself saying, 'Who are you? Like why are you doing this? What is wrong with you?'

So these six, seven, eight months of the relationship, these arguments, this fighting, like all these things kind of came to a place where I was aggressive to the place I couldn't express myself or diffuse a situation. I didn't have that emotional capacity to diffuse situations because I was so unhappy inside.

And I started asking friends- there was a buddy of mine who was there who was like, 'You need some work done or something. You need to like figure this out because this has gone too far. You can't keep doing this.'

So I finally was awake and called and feeling like, 'Okay what is going on? Where can I seek help? Information? Whatever it may be to learn how to overcome this stuff within me?'

Because on the outside looking in, I had achieved a lot of success. I had made millions of dollars, I had a hot girlfriend, you know I was living in a nice place, I had accomplishments. All these things were happening, yet I didn't have inner peace. I

was suffering and it was affecting my dreams, it was affecting the way I connected with people, it affected my health, everything.

So I went to an emotional intelligence workshop actually. A friend told me I should check this out. Imagine like an intimate version of like Tony Robbins where what they do is they put you through all these different exercises and games to re-enact life. So they re-enact situations you might have had like growing up with your parents, with friends, getting bullied, re-enacting certain things to see how you respond, to show you in front of other people and give you feedback.

**Shawn Stevenson:** So this is re-enacting yourself or with other people?

**Lewis Howes:** Yeah they put you in different like exercises, they put you in different games with a group of people.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Okay.

**Lewis Howes:** So you might be partnered up with someone, you might have a small group of people, and they would put you through different scenarios kind of like a puzzle and see how you react, how you respond, who steps up as a leader, who sits back passively and doesn't talk, who- just to kind of see like how you show up in real life.

When a situation like this occurs, are you passive? Do you engage? Do you use your voice? Do you hide behind something? And then we ask ourselves like, 'Why do you always need to stand up and be the first one to speak? Why do you never say anything? Why are you soft-spoken? Why don't you use your voice and like stand in your power?' So kind of just like understanding how we are in the world.

And for the first three days of this experience, we went over a lot of stuff. We went over experiences with our parents, exercises like with our parents. They weren't there but kind of like in our minds, right?

We addressed certain things from our past. We talked about all the things that we've struggled with in the past that have held us back in our life from achieving our dreams.

And at the three day mark, the trainer of this workshop said, 'Okay-' and at this time people were really opening up at this time. People were very vulnerable, people were crying, people were talking about the different stuff that have held them back their whole life, and having these great breakthroughs, and like awareness moments of like, 'Okay I understand this is something that I've been holding back.'

And at the three day mark he goes, 'We've addressed everything from your past, and now we're moving forward. We're going to move towards the life you want to live, the vision you have for yourself, your dreams, your goals, and we're going to move



towards how to accomplish them. But you can't accomplish your biggest dreams and feel fulfilled until you've addressed everything from the past. So if there's anything you haven't addressed yet in these last few days, now is the time or forever hold your peace type of moment,' is what he said to this group of fifty of us.

And I'm going in my mind, and I'm thinking- because he gave us a few moments to think about it. I'm going in my mind, I'm like, 'You know I talked about my parents getting divorced, and talked about my brother going to prison for four years, and visiting a prison cell, and what that was like, not having friends during that time. I talked about being bullied and picked on as a kid, getting picked last. I talked about feeling stupid my entire life because I couldn't read and write. I talked about all these things being in the special needs classes. What about that time I was raped by a man?'

And I just remember like, 'Huh, how come I never told anyone that I was raped by a man, and sexually abused, and molested? Why have I never told anyone?'

And I remember in that moment just being like, 'If I don't say something now, I'll probably never say it to anyone.' So I stood up, I didn't even raise my hand, I just stood up and walked to the front of the room. And I think because of everything that happened in my life, I just felt like I guess I needed to do it then.

You know, people were- the fights I was getting into, the relationship that couldn't get out of, I was just like, 'I've got to do this for myself and talk about it.'

So I get up in the front of the room, and for the first time I walked through the entire story of when I was five and I was raped by the babysitter's son.

And I re-enacted the whole thing. I re-enacted the whole thing, and I couldn't look anyone in the eyes. I looked down at the carpet the entire time because I was so shameful, so guilty, so embarrassed. So I looked down at the carpet, walked through the entire thing, and I wasn't crying, I wasn't like shaking or anything, I just felt like I needed to get through it.

And as I completed the story I sat down, and just erupted with the most tears I've ever had in my life. I just bawled, bawled. I was afraid, I was scared, I was just letting it out, and thankfully there were two women on both sides of me who were just like holding- like squeezing me and crying with me, so it kind of like made me feel a little bit better because I wasn't just isolated by myself.

And I couldn't take it. I ran out of the room because I just couldn't stop crying. I ran out of the room, it was in a conference room in a hotel, I ran outside to get some fresh air, and there was a street- like a back street with a wall, and I put my head up against the wall with my arm against the wall like this, and just kept crying, kept crying.



And one of the most beautiful things ever happened to me. There were men from this group who walked out and hugged me and looked me in the eyes and they said things like, 'You're my hero.'

They were just like, 'You're my hero. I've been judging you this entire time, I've assumed things about you.' One guy was like, 'Wow I had no idea, and I've never shared this with anyone but I was sexually abused, so thank you for giving me permission to tell you, and now I want to go tell my wife, my kids, or my family.'

And other men had other things that happened to them. They weren't sexually abused, but they had other things and they were like, 'I've just felt like ashamed of these other things, but again you've given me permission to open up, and I respect you, I trust you because you shared this.'

And one guy was like, 'I will follow you anywhere. Like now that I know you're a vulnerable man,' he's like, 'I will- you can watch my kids,' he was like, 'I will trust you with my life.' I was like, 'What?!'

It was just like this- it was crazy because I was so emotional, terrified, guilty, embarrassed, all these things, yet all these people- and women were coming up to me being like, 'This is- you are like-' they were like, 'I'm so turned on by you.' Like all these- everything, it was like all at once. Like the greatest compliments that I could ever- and acknowledgement I could ever get.

**Shawn Stevenson:** You were sharing the most hurtful thing.

**Lewis Howes:** Yeah the thing I was terrified to share with the most, and everything. You know, all the stuff. I don't really talk- I didn't talk about being bullied or picked on a lot either. I didn't talk about like feeling stupid all the time, or not being able to read, because I didn't want people to know that about me.

**Shawn Stevenson:** So why do you think that you doing that gave them permission to share as well? Because they were in the same process. They were supposed to be sharing everything, but they were still holding back, especially the guys.

**Lewis Howes:** Yeah, yeah. I think we are just conditioned specifically as guys not to talk about these things. There was not like a hotline when I was five that says, 'If you've been sexually abused, call this number as a five year old boy.' 'If you feel picked on or bullied, call this number.'

You know my parents didn't really have the emotional capacity to be like, 'Hey Lewis, like if there's ever anything going on, you can talk to us.'

Even if they did say those things, I don't even know if I was able to resonate with it and feel comfortable, because I think just the shame of the societal pressures, from peers, from whatever it may be.

You know, eventually then being in the locker room and kind of that whole environment.

So what it did for me, a long story to talk about why I decided to do this topic, is because I was achieving great accomplishments on the outside my entire life that were driven by pain, anger, resentment, fear, not feeling enough, and the need to prove everyone else wrong.

And every time I achieved these things, sports, business, whatever it may be, it was never enough. It was like I was angry and upset the moment I achieved them because I thought I was going to have some feeling of like, 'Oh now people want me more, desire me more,' whatever.

But I still wasn't happy with myself. It still wasn't enough for me. And this kind of experience of opening up, and then I started telling-

**Shawn Stevenson:** So that was your mask then.

**Lewis Howes:** I mean, I wear lots of masks. I mean what I realized is that I just wanted to know why was I first doing these things. Why was I conditioned to not share? Or why was I conditioned to suffer inside so much, and create that suffering? Because I believe we have every opportunity to either suffer or let go of that suffering at any moment. It's a decision we all get to choose.

And I just said, 'Okay I want to go deeper down this process for myself and start healing,' because I always had a sense of insecurity, and a sense of weight on my shoulder. Like I thought I was carrying the weight of the world.

And when I started to open up about this, it was like this weight lifted off me. And the more I started to talk about it, the more I started to just share all the stuff that I was unhappy with about myself, or insecure about, or fearful, it's like people still accepted me.

They still liked me, they still wanted to be around me, and I think the biggest fear was if they knew this about me, would they still love me? Or would they still have me around? Or would they look at me the same way? That was the fear.

And when I realized that they'd love me more, I was like, 'Wait, what?' It was like, 'You appreciate me more? You trust me more? You finally feel like you can understand me more?' I was like, 'Huh, there's something to this.'

So I decided to tell all my family members one by one, which was really challenging. But the beautiful thing- especially to my mom. But the beautiful thing that happened is as I told them, one by one they started to open up in ways that they've never shared with me before about stuff they went through.

About their fears, or about their insecurities. It's like, 'What? I've known you my whole life and I didn't know these things about you.' And we have a deeper relationship because of it, because I see them differently, and I understand them, and they understand me differently. It's like wow, we felt like we were able to open up to our own family in a different way.

Then I started sharing it one by one with my friends, and this was terrifying because I felt like growing up I didn't have any friends.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Yeah.

**Lewis Howes:** So like my inner child was like, 'Maybe the family is okay because they have to love you, but your friends aren't going to- maybe they won't accept you now.'

And one by one I shared with them, terrified, and they all were so accepting, so loving, and again they started to open up about things that I didn't know about them. I was like, 'What? What is this? Like what is this world?'

And my friends, after I shared more and more I became less scared to talk about it. I became less fearful, my lip didn't quiver as much anymore, like it became more of like, 'Okay I can get this out without my heart palpitating, without breathing so shallow, like I can get this out and it doesn't own me anymore.'

It's been four years now so I can talk about it very comfortably where it doesn't own me, and I realized, 'Okay now I own the situation. I'm in control of it.'

And for 25 years it owned me. That plus everything that I was afraid of.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Right, that's also what makes you great though. You know, is going through that stuff and of course having the courage to share it.

And what you shared in the book- and I shared this with you yesterday.

**Lewis Howes:** Yeah.

**Shawn Stevenson:** I love the fact that you shared so many powerful statistics to accompany the content. And one of them, and it's a result of what you shared. You know these bullying points, these breaking points especially for men is 90% of homicides being committed by men.

And also men committing suicide six times more because of these masks, and holding these things inside is a big reason behind it.

**Lewis Howes:** Yeah I think it's because men typically don't feel like they can express themselves. They feel like they have to hold everything in that's happened, and men don't even feel like they have a good guy friend they can talk about with these things.

Whereas women in general talk about this stuff all the time. I hear this from women like, 'Yeah we talk about all of our insecurities like every day, or what's happening in our life, or like we're feeling like we're going through a divorce, or whatever it may be. Like the struggles, we're always sharing.'

And there's more of a community feeling as opposed to isolated feeling. With men it's like isolated. I've got to keep in this pain myself, and I can't share it with anyone, I've got to be strong all the time. And you're only as strong until you commit suicide and then you're not strong anymore.

You know so you're only as strong until you're a heart attack waiting to happen. It's like you boil in this emotion so much that you cause cancer in yourself because you weren't able to just express it and start healing from whatever it is you're afraid of or insecure about.

And I started to- to wrap up the story, I started to share more and more with friends and they said, 'You've got to share this like with your audience.' And I was like, 'There's no way that I'm going to openly talk about this.'

Like yes, my family is okay, close friends are okay, there's no way- they're like, 'You've got to put this on your podcast.' I'm like, 'Absolutely not. Like I don't need the world to know about this, you know?'

And again I was still having this mask on. I was like, 'Okay why? Why don't I want other people to know?'

At first I was like, 'You know, I just don't want it to be like some weird thing, like a marketing thing, I don't anyone to think I'm doing it for a specific reason.' But they were like, 'This is an opportunity.'

So many women were like, 'Not many men are talking about this, especially guys that look like you who are big jock white guys. And for you to come out and do this, you can see the impact from the other men that you've already talked to about this.'

And so finally I got the courage to open up on my podcast and it was the most powerful thing that ever happened for me. It's the most downloaded episode I've ever had.

And the impact of it is the most profound impact I've ever had in my life on anything I've ever done. The hundreds of emails I got from men opening up, writing essays saying similar to the things that happened in the room.

'Thank you for giving me permission. I've been married for forty years and my wife doesn't know. I've always felt like I've suffered inside because I've had this secret. Now I'm going to go talk about it.'

And the healing that men can have- and that's just one thing, you know? Sexual abuse. But men have a lot of stuff we hold onto, and I was like, 'Wow there's something to this.'

One for me, the amount of like freedom that I was feeling. So if you feel like you don't feel free in your thoughts, or your heart, or your emotions, like ask yourself the question, 'What am I keeping from people? What am I hiding? What am I not sharing?'

It can just be with one person, it doesn't have to be the world. 'What am I not sharing?'

And it's been such a profound impact in my life. You know selfish reasons, my business has exponentially grown since I've started to shift in this energy. People notice and they're like, 'Something's different about you, and I just trust you more. So I'm going to buy more from you.'

And I'm just like- it wasn't the goal to like be vulnerable to make more money or something, but the results in all areas of my life. My relationships, they're all growing, and I feel better about myself. I feel more confident because I don't care what people think of me anymore. I don't care if they think anything about me.

I've shown all- it's like my *8 Mile* moment where it's like, you know I'm on the mic, I'm like, 'I shot myself, I did this, my girlfriend cheated on me.'

It's like you know all this stuff about me, what are you going to say about me now?

**Shawn Stevenson:** Right. What do you have?

**Lewis Howes:** It's like drop the mic, I win. You know what I mean? Not that I'm trying to battle the world here or something, but it's like you don't feel the fear of what other people think about you anymore. You don't care what people judge. It's such a relief to be able to walk through life feeling free, and I knew that I had to share this message because- and do the research to back these things because especially now, we were talking about this last night, the shootings that are happening are just unbelievable to me.

The racial wars that are happening in our country just blow my mind that this is still happening in America.

The political destruction that is happening, the environment destruction, it's caused by men who live in fear. Men who live in fear and want to dominate because they're afraid of something.

And this is really what's causing so much pain in the world, in relationships, environment, politically, and it's just like if we started to heal and process some of these things as men, literally humanity would be so much better.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Yeah.

**Lewis Howes:** It's that simple.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Instantly. Man, and this is all in the book, and guys it's available for pre-order right now. They'll just go to-

**Lewis Howes:** [www.MaskOfMasculinity.com](http://www.MaskOfMasculinity.com).

**Shawn Stevenson:** And you've got some bonuses available as well. This is going to be a huge, huge hit book guys, so make sure to pre-order the book right now. And it comes out officially?

**Lewis Howes:** October 31st, on Halloween we take off our masks.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Whoa! That just happened.

**Lewis Howes:** We reveal ourselves on Halloween.

**Shawn Stevenson:** That just happened. Oh my goodness.

So in the book- and also before we get into some of the content in here, because it's so powerful, why do- because this is the mask of masculinity, automatically that is a deterrent or opposite from female and from the women that are out there. According to our belief system, why do women need to have this book?

**Lewis Howes:** I wrote this book for me and for men like me, and then as I was writing it I said, 'Wow this is the keys to the kingdom for any woman who wants to understand the men in their life better.'

If you want to understand why men are the way they are, if you want to understand why they're stoic in moments, why they're driven to make a lot of money in moments, why they're constantly going to the gym, why they don't look you in the eyes.

If you want to understand why your son is disconnected to you or never talks about anything, if you want to understand the men in your life; your husband, your father, your brother, your uncle, your son, this is going to break down with research and

backed by psychologists why men have- are guarded or have certain drives, or certain emotions, and how to understand and have awareness around it first.

Then at the end of every chapter we share with you how to get them to take off the specific mask. So whatever mask they're living with right now, you're going to be able to understand it, and you're going to get them to take it off without making them wrong.

I think one of the biggest challenges men have in relationships with intimate female partners is feeling wrong about who they are.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Yeah.

**Lewis Howes:** They don't want to feel wrong. They don't want to be made wrong. Sometimes women will make men wrong more than they'll make them right. So we talk about how to make a man right for who they're being, the good they're doing first before making them wrong.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Yeah. In many ways we're big adult babies.

**Lewis Howes:** That's it.

**Shawn Stevenson:** It's that nurturing up-front to know that we matter, to know that we're important, and then you can of course lay on the constructive criticism.

**Lewis Howes:** Exactly.

**Shawn Stevenson:** It's just a ninja tactic.

**Lewis Howes:** It is, it is.

**Shawn Stevenson:** But again there's so much research to affirm a lot of this stuff, and I'd love to talk about- you mentioned this earlier, you have a lot of masks. So let's talk about some of these various masks that men wear.

One of the first ones you talk about is the stoic mask.

**Lewis Howes:** Stoic mask. You know the man that has to have it all together, that never shows emotion, that's strong but doesn't open up. You know he's just got a look on his face constantly and you never know what he's thinking.

But he's always strong, always reliable, but doesn't really show emotion. That's a heart attack waiting to happen. For a guy that can't express himself, the guy who can't open up, the guy who can't feel because he has to be so tough that he can't feel, or so strong in that moment emotionally that he can't feel.



That is going to build a lot of disease and it's not going to allow you sleep. Being a sleep expert, it's hard to sleep when you have that much emotion bottled up and you're just like this all day long. Just like, 'I've got to keep it together. I've got to keep it together.'

How are you going to sleep if you haven't let things go? Your mind is going to be racing. You're not able to talk about things, you're not able to let things go, your mind is going to be racing, and it's going to hurt you, it's going to compound.

Like you said- I think you said there's no such thing as like a sleep bank. You can't like get it back I don't think, right? And so it's a heart attack waiting to happen, and you get to feel. You're a human being.

You know when I was a kid, and I lived with the stoic mask a lot. When I was a kid I used to feel all the time. I used to cry more than girls, like I used to feel. I used to like reach out for my mom, I used to be emotional, sad, happy, and feel.

And then I was told that wasn't cool a number of times in sports or whatever it was to do that, and so I started to wear that mask. And it affected me, you know?

I'm not saying I need to be a cry baby every single day, and cry, and be vulnerable all the time, and like constantly express myself.

We get to be discerning as well and know when and how, but you've got to have a process for these things, otherwise we're going to be causing so much disease within ourselves and other people.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Yeah. When you're talking about this, and just for everybody, we recently had on Dr. Bruce Lipton who's a cell biologist, the author of 'The Biology Belief,' and just really hammering in the fact that your thoughts create chemistry in your body. Always, all the time.

Your brain is like the most powerful pharmacy in the world.

**Lewis Howes:** Wow.

**Shawn Stevenson:** And so when we're talking about literally causing yourself a heart attack, we know this stuff but we just ignore it. We think that a heart attack is caused by bacon or something, you know what I'm saying? Which can sometimes be the furthest thing from the truth because you can eat the best diet in the world and exercise, but if you're carrying around all this hostility and anger.

You know, I'm actually- pretty much everything in here I've been guilty of.

**Lewis Howes:** Me too.

**Shawn Stevenson:** But you know, the stoic mask, I remember recently my son Jordan who I just mentioned, you know we talked about this. He had his best game of the year, and he broke his leg in a football game, and I was just- I wasn't doing too well, you know and I'm somebody who- and he said this as well.

He's very considerate of everybody else, but not so much with me. And one day some things happened and I pointed it out, and he was like, 'But nothing bothers you.' And I was just like, 'Wow he never really sees me sweat. He always sees me focused.'

**Lewis Howes:** Because you're the father figure, always got it together, always strong for the family.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Yeah and I'm much more aware of these things, but around him I never really talked about how I felt before. And so now our relationship has changed significantly and just from that, and me sharing more about how I feel.

But when he broke his leg, he's the most optimistic person the world. He's already like looking at game film, and like, 'I can't wait until next season.'

Whereas- and I'm much the same way, I'm the most optimistic person I feel, but it just really hit me because I just- you get into this thing like, 'What could I have done different? What could I have prevented?'

You know, but this was again something that having that stoic nature created a little bit of a disconnect. And it's nothing- again, it's a mask. You put it on and take it off, but this is just one of them.

**Lewis Howes:** And here's the thing, you know some of these masks actually are helpful sometimes. You know, being put together in a time of like chaos is helpful.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Yes it is.

**Lewis Howes:** Like being able to make a decision, having stuff figured out, like not processing your emotions during these certain moments is helpful. It becomes hurtful when the man wears it 24/7.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Right.

**Lewis Howes:** You know, it's helpful that I wore the athlete mask to drive me to be a great athlete, but when I couldn't take it off after practice, and was constantly driven to win at all costs in my intimate relationships, in my family relationships, in business, because I needed to win. It hurt other things.

It constantly created chaos and disconnection. So it's like yes, it drove me to be a great athlete, but it drove me to go through a lot of pain in other areas of my life as well.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Man.

**Lewis Howes:** You know what I'm saying?

**Shawn Stevenson:** Yes, absolutely. And as soon as- when you said that I realized another big part of the process of just acknowledging this in myself, we're also teaching the people around us to do it. So I'm unknowingly teaching him to do the same thing.

**Lewis Howes:** Especially kids. Of course, yeah.

**Shawn Stevenson:** You know? And so let's talk a little bit more about the athlete mask, because this is one of the most profound things. Like I highlighted, wrote a note about, and with this one you mention that sports are how men prove themselves, and as a good athlete, this means you're a good man. Period.

And we do this. All of us do this. We see a great athlete and we think that they're a great man. They're a hero, right? When it can be something that's further from the truth. You know, you think about even some of the stories today with the domestic violence, and with the gambling problems, and things of that nature, and abuse of all types.

And you know Ezekiel Elliott for example, this is one of the recent stories.

**Lewis Howes:** So sad.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Yeah, and you see him prior to the NFL and you're just like, 'He just seems like such a good guy, and he seems like he's grounded,' and these kinds of things, and then you see some of the video clips of him like pulling a girl's shirt down and these kinds of things.

And I just- and the reason I'm saying this specifically, I was just in the locker room at my gym, and a couple of- and this is crazy about us too, is like this guy, he wears his Cowboys jersey. He lives in St. Louis, you know? And he's just like, 'Yeah we're doing good this year.'

You're not playing!

**Lewis Howes:** Right, exactly.

**Shawn Stevenson:** You're not in the NFL.

**Lewis Howes:** Yeah.

**Shawn Stevenson:** You know but he's like all upset because Ezekiel was going to be suspended and he's like trying to like put off his upsetness on somebody else about it.

It's just like but he- there's a situation that's kind of important going on, you know? Let's analyze it. We're not going to just say that he's guilty. You know we've all seen these little clips and things like that, but we don't know the whole story.

What if this is an issue and you're worried about your team?

**Lewis Howes:** Yeah.

**Shawn Stevenson:** You know?

**Lewis Howes:** Yeah.

**Shawn Stevenson:** So let's talk about that, man. How we identify a good athlete as a good man.

**Lewis Howes:** Yeah I mean I think there are a lot of great athletes who are great men as well. I look at Steve Weatherford, I think you know him, I'm not sure if you know. But he's a father of four, he's got another one on the way, and he's there for his kids, and there for his wife.

He left football to essentially spend more time with his family and pursue other things. And he's always of high morals, high ethics, he's just a guy who cares.

And so there are great examples like someone like Steve Weatherford, and then there are other examples of- and I'm not here to say like what's right or wrong, or to judge people, and then there's other athletes that have ten, eleven kids with six different women.

And again, if that's the life you want to live, great. But it's like how are you treating those people? How are you taking care of these situations that you're creating? And do these people feel loved? Or are you just having children and sleeping with a lot of women because that's what you want?

So I think it's about being mindful of- and again I'm not here to judge certain things of what's right and wrong, good and bad, but be mindful of how you're affecting the people around you. If you're doing it all for selfish reasons because you just want to, that's hurtful. So make sure you're being mindful of these things.

So yeah, I mean the athlete mask, but it's really- a lot of it is around like the need to win. This is what I felt growing up. If I lost any game, I felt like a loser. If I felt like a

loser, I felt like no one was going to accept me, and acknowledge me, and appreciate me.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Right.

**Lewis Howes:** So I was so driven to win, and I was the worst loser. I was such a sore loser, I was like mean, I was bad to be around for days until the next game. And if I lost two in a row it was like a nightmare to be around me, right? I felt bad for my parents to like have to deal with me all those years.

And then I took that into other areas of my life. In a conversation, if I'm not right, then I'm wrong and I lost. And so I'd feel like mad, and angry in arguments if I didn't win the argument.

Then if I win the argument, I made the other person wrong, and they lost. And I never understood this concept until four years ago of win-win. I never got that concept.

Four years I got that in the same workshop where I was like, 'Wow my whole life I had to win, and that meant everyone else had to lose with this athlete mentality.'

That puts me isolated on the island by myself because no one else can win. If I'm alone by myself, and everyone else loses. As opposed to why don't we all win together? How can we create every experience, every game, even if it's a winner and a loser, how can I still be a good sport about it? And how can I- even if I lost, how can I win by being a good sport and learning something.

It's finding those other experiences in our life that for so long it was just like I had to win, and it was just constantly killing me inside.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Yeah. It's the concept of- you know especially in the relationship context, do you want to win or do you want to be happy?

**Lewis Howes:** Exactly.

**Shawn Stevenson:** You know? And you have a choice, and every interaction is an opportunity for this to kind of manifest itself. That's really awesome, man.

So let's talk a little bit about the material mask. I think this is a really important one to note.

**Lewis Howes:** And here's the thing. The material mask is tricky because I was broke eight years ago on my sister's couch, and I remember saying like, 'I never want to feel broke again. I never want to feel like in scarcity, like I need other people to depend on.'

I was living on my sister's couch, she was paying for stuff. I was like, 'I never want this feeling again.'

So I put on the material mask, and I started fixating on money. Millions of dollars that I wanted to make, sort of fixating on nice things I wanted to have. I was like, 'I'm going to fixate on this, I'm going to meet people who are rich, I'm going to learn from them, and I'm going to figure this out.'

And it worked. I made a lot of money, I was off my sister's couch, I have a nice place, I could afford anything I want essentially, got a lot of money in the bank. It worked but I gained fifty or sixty pounds, I had zero relationships, and it was never enough.

We talked about this last night, like there was never a moment where I was like, 'Okay I feel worthy now.' Like no, my worth was dependent on how much money I had in my bank account, and talking about it with people.

And I think that's when this becomes a slippery slope. I had to like constantly tell people, 'This is how much I have. This is how much I'm making,' and like talk about it to like prove like, 'Oh you're great. Like you're a good guy. Like I want to be around you now.'

And that was a challenge because it worked to wear this mask, but then I was attracting people in my life that weren't there for the right reasons, I wasn't feeling authentic, I wasn't feeling all these things.

So I'm all for making the most money in the world that you want to make and having nice things, but there's a way to kind of showcase these things that uplifts and inspires people instead of showing off these things. You know what I mean?

So I think there are some people that show off certain things. There are some people that show off their money to make them look good and make them look worthy, and there's other people that showcase their lifestyle, and it just happens to be a part of their life. I don't know if that makes sense.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Absolutely it does. And so we see this with the athlete mask, we see this with the material mask, that you start to attach your identity to these things.

**Lewis Howes:** Yes.

**Shawn Stevenson:** You know, and if you have the money then you're good. You are who you are. If you're an athlete, you are who you are. For you, you had that happen as well. When the athlete mask was stripped off in a way-

**Lewis Howes:** My identity was gone.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Exactly.

**Lewis Howes:** And then my self-worth was gone because I didn't have any other worth attached to me. It was around my accomplishments in sports and my ability to play in front of thousands of people. And the same thing happens when all these athletes go bankrupt. They lose their sport and then they lose all their money two, three years later.

You see them go down a dark hole, like depressed. They don't have the entourage anymore because there's no more handouts, you know? The girls that were around them now think he's a bum, whatever it may be, and they're not getting that attention and that acknowledgement that they once got.

But if those men showed up differently and just lived in service, cared about people, had a big heart, you know were there for friends in other ways. I bet a lot of those friends would stick around if they came before all that stuff came.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Yeah.

**Lewis Howes:** And that's the thing. We get to realize that things come and go in our life. You know, my sports career was over, that was the only thing I cared about my whole life.

Money is going to come and go, I'm probably going to lose money, I'm going to make money, it's going to come and go, but if I'm always an emotional wreck when my bank account goes down a little bit, and living like in fear like, 'Oh no, people aren't going to love me anymore,' that's not a healthy life.

And I'd love to get more into the research about the person you had on, around the emotional connection to our like everything. You know? Sometimes you see these healthy people who are like 45 that like work out a lot, but then they have a heart attack and die.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Right.

**Lewis Howes:** I always wondered why that is.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Yeah. I mean the truth is, it's really simple, you know you could under-exercise your way unhealthy, you can over-eat your way unhealthy, you could under-sleep your way unhealthy, you can over-stress your way unhealthy.

**Lewis Howes:** Really.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Definitely, yeah especially stress, man. A lot of people don't realize this, but over 80% of physician visits today are for stress related illnesses.

**Lewis Howes:** No way!



**Shawn Stevenson:** That have a huge stress component to it. And this is the CDC. Like the- this is like where all the major statistics are coming from for our healthcare system. It says it right there on their website.

**Lewis Howes:** Stress.

**Shawn Stevenson:** But we're not really understanding because stress is invisible, that's the thing. And we're carrying all this stress because- and you've just built on just a few of the masks that we carry that induce so much stress that can be valuable for you're aware that it's a mask. You know?

And I really love the fact that you kind of start to peel layers in a way in the book for us to understand like how good it feels, and what it feels like to just be yourself.

**Lewis Howes:** Yeah.

**Shawn Stevenson:** But how scary it can be because you haven't related to yourself, or spoken to yourself some times many, many years.

**Lewis Howes:** A long time. Yeah, that's interesting. I mean I feel like- and it's all compounding, right? If you're stressed out, you're probably not going to sleep, and if you don't sleep and you over work yourself, and you overeat, it's like it continues to compound.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Yeah.

**Lewis Howes:** Like all these things, right? And then you continue to wear the mask, and like, 'I've got to make more, I've got to do more, and then I sleep less,' and all these things continue to build up this trauma.

And I can only imagine like when the heart is pumping in a certain way and the mind is stressed out and sending signals to the rest of our body what that's causing in ourselves. I can only imagine.

I mean I don't know the science behind that but-

**Shawn Stevenson:** Yeah, man. You know, we were just talking about this last night too, and it was just a great conversation with you and with Prince Ea. Because for us, even with- no matter where we are, if you don't think you're carrying this material mask, you are because none of us want to end up invisible.

And what I mean by that is this is one of the number one remarks that folks who are homeless express is that they feel invisible.

**Lewis Howes:** Wow.

**Shawn Stevenson:** And how often do you walk right by that person who is in need? You know maybe it's food, but of course something happened. And this for me, I always see individuals in these situations and I realize something happened. Somebody probably loved them at some point. They probably had a family. Something happened, you know? We don't know what their story is.

But we all carry this fear that we don't want to end up there, and that's natural, but we cannot let that run our lives. Like you can be aware of that and take care of your survival needs, but how do we do that in a way that's healthy and that is life-affirming?

And I think it's something that you've really gotten tapped into today which is not just accumulating for the sake of accumulating, trying to prevent your security need from being triggered, but also so you can help more people.

**Lewis Howes:** Yeah, absolutely.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Right? If you could tie that to it of being of service. So for you-

**Lewis Howes:** Yeah and if we're not of service, we're going to feel stressed in my mind.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Exactly.

**Lewis Howes:** Because we're going to feel like we have no meaning, we have no purpose, and we're not seeing like our efforts making an impact on even one person's life.

And so probably homeless people when they're sitting there and not in service, they're probably feeling a lot of stress, and a lot of insecurities, and a lot of frustration.

But it's the people that have the ability to give more, or just be in service more, or just pay attention more. Those are the ones that have the ability, and when they're not doing it, it's more focused on what I need. It's like you have so much already, you know? Just start giving a little bit. Giving a little bit back.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Right. Hey and also, something we mentioned yesterday is that no matter how bad off you are, there's always somebody who is doing a little bit worse than you that you could help to uplift.

**Lewis Howes:** Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely.

**Shawn Stevenson:** So let's dive in and talk about maybe two more, because there's ten, right? These ten masks.

**Lewis Howes:** Nine, there's nine masks, yeah.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Nine masks.

**Lewis Howes:** I'll do a bonus chapter on ten though, yeah.

**Shawn Stevenson:** And then there's the incredible introduction in the book. The book is really good, man. Like I mean this is really powerful and it's very timely.

Let's talk about the aggressive mask. I think you highlighted that a little bit with the basketball.

**Lewis Howes:** Yeah, exactly. I mean this is the man that just doesn't know how to express himself in any other way, and so he uses aggression to assert his dominance, and he reacts with aggression because acting in any other way isn't manly.

Acting any other way is weak, is soft, is girly, whatever it may be, other words that are not in this PG rated podcast.

And again, I don't know many things good that come from anger. Like even fighting anger with anger back, like I don't know many things that are good.

And so is it Dr. Martin Luther King who said something- did you give me this quote about Martin Luther King?

He said something like, 'I'll never get angry because of a man's efforts.' I'm messing up the quote but, 'I'll never get angry because of a man's efforts because I will never give him power over me.'

**Shawn Stevenson:** Yeah.

**Lewis Howes:** Getting angry over someone else's actions gives them power over you. You're saying that, 'You have control. I'm going to react to your control.'

As opposed to, 'I'm going to be at peace, and I'm going to have control over my reactions.' And that's some power right there.

When you don't respond with anger, that is the ultimate power. Even when the worst things happen.

Now I'm not saying you shouldn't be frustrated, you shouldn't be angry from time to time, and things like that, I just think again we get to be aware.

If our default is anger when someone cuts us off and we start freaking out. If our default is passive aggressive anger when our girlfriend or wife does something we don't like. When our kids do something, we're going to constantly snap at them and get angry and like get the whip out or whatever it is?

It's like how does that serve humanity? How does that teach the people around us what a man is supposed to be? Always angry? Is that what a man is? Is that healthy to teach that?

So we get to look within ourselves. Again, I got- I was telling you, I almost got so angry the other day because I missed my flight.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Yeah.

**Lewis Howes:** And the TSA people took forever to get through, and I was like, 'Come on guys, get me through here. I'm going to miss the flight.' The door shut like as I'm coming around the corner of the gate, and I wanted to freak out on like the whole airport.

I wanted to scream, I wanted to kick over the trash cans, I wanted to punch the walls, I wanted to like yell at the customer support person. And I was like feeling this rage boil up inside of me. I was just like, 'Breathe.'

You know I was just like, 'Breathe, don't make a scene.' Because that would be my natural default.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Yeah.

**Lewis Howes:** I'd still be like, 'Yes this is what's okay. I'm allowed to do this.' But that doesn't serve the situation, it doesn't help me, it makes me look like an idiot, and it causes chaos that then I have to deal with at a later time and apologize and all these things.

So it's like in those moments of anger, breathe. Breathe. Like continue to breathe until you're not angry. It may take you an hour, you know what I mean? For some of us. It took me like ten minutes standing there, like standing there with the customer service person. I was like, 'I'm not going to speak until I'm able to be in control of my emotions.'

**Shawn Stevenson:** There are so many things in the book, but they're so simple you can overlook them.

**Lewis Howes:** Yes.

**Shawn Stevenson:** But just breathing, you start to turn off the sympathetic fight or flight, if you just focus on your breathing. Our breathing is part of what's called our

autonomic nervous system. So it's like tied in with your heart beating, with your digesting of your food.

You don't have to think about those things or do those things, they happen automatically. And so your breathing, even everybody right now, you were probably not paying attention to your breathing until we brought it up because it's on automatic.

But what's different about it is you can jump in and grab the steering wheel on your breathing, and I think it's like a biologic- like an evolutionary advantage for us because if it's triggered for something that we don't need that fight or flight system for, we can calm ourselves back down because it expends so much negative energy that causes a really challenging side effect. You know, like you're going to crash also, and you've probably experienced this too.

**Lewis Howes:** Right.

**Shawn Stevenson:** And that can like mess up your whole day, like all the things you want to accomplish. And if we're talking about evolutionarily speaking, this is like procuring your food, taking care of your tribe, all because you got scared of a bear that wasn't there, it was really a shadow.

**Lewis Howes:** Yeah.

**Shawn Stevenson:** You know?

**Lewis Howes:** Yeah. I'm curious- you know, I'm curious what your thoughts are. If someone is angry like in their heart and their mind aggressive, or there's like just tight all day. They're kind of like constantly strong, and tight, and clenched. Emotionally clenched, mentally clenched, physically just holding this. What does that do like to your heart, your mind, like the blood?

Like from a doctor point of view, what does that do to your body if you're never relaxed.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Yeah, this is a tough one too, man. And your heart is really a muscle in many ways, and so is your brain in many ways.

And that constant tension, you know you're going to be releasing a lot more adrenaline, noradrenaline, cortisol, things of this nature. These stress related hormones that are not bad, but when they're producing this kind of chronic amount.

**Lewis Howes:** What does that do?

**Shawn Stevenson:** They can cause just for starters, we're talking about- I mean your blood vessels started to get constricted but again if that's chronic we can easily

see a particle that's trying to make its way through like an LDL particle that normally wouldn't cause a problem, it can become an obstruction and you can have a heart attack, or a stroke, or something like that.

**Lewis Howes:** Really? How long it would take? You know, let's say you were consistently that way for a year or a month.

**Shawn Stevenson:** I don't even think it has to be that long. It just depends on the degree.

**Lewis Howes:** Yeah.

**Shawn Stevenson:** You know, and I think today we really need an outlet, you know? We need to be aware of these things. I think today more than ever, we live in a very stressful world, just the environment itself.

We need to have a daily practice, I believe, for everybody who's in this kind of modern society to let go of this stuff, you know? And it could be just five minutes, but just give yourself a chance to shift over from that sympathetic into parasympathetic.

And you know what, something else I want to talk about with this one, and I'm feeling a little bit nervous even talking about this, but you shared earlier.

But with this aggressive- when you mentioned- you said something that triggered this, which is we teach it to other people. And so what I'm teaching my kids right now is so important to me, and for me the aggressive mask was the thing that almost destroyed my life.

**Lewis Howes:** Wow.

**Shawn Stevenson:** And I was five years old, just a year younger than my son right now, and in my household with my mother, in her belief she was teaching me to be a strong man, but you know it was a situation I kept getting into a little scuffle with the kid next door.

He was a couple years older than me, and I remember his name was Alfonso. And so we kept getting into a scuffle so our parents decided to have us fight.

**Lewis Howes:** No way.

**Shawn Stevenson:** On a stoop in front of the apartment building.

**Lewis Howes:** No way.

**Shawn Stevenson:** They had these two little boys, and I was very little, I was in preschool, fight each other like dogs.

**Lewis Howes:** Oh my gosh.

**Shawn Stevenson:** And I remember he was bigger, you know he was a bigger, stronger kid, and he pushed me into the corner of a brick wall and busted my head wide open, and I still have this huge scar to this day.

**Lewis Howes:** Holy cow.

**Shawn Stevenson:** And I remember- this is one of my first kind of conscious moments.

**Lewis Howes:** Gosh.

**Shawn Stevenson:** And I was just like- before it was happening I was like, 'Why am I here? Why is this happening?'

And I remember being wheeled into the surgery, and I was just like, 'I'm going to get him. I'm going to get Alfonso.' And sure enough, a couple days later- maybe it was even the next day, he was out like digging a hole in the backyard and I hit him with a truck, with a Tonka Truck.

**Lewis Howes:** No way.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Yeah. Yeah and I don't remember what happened after that, but it's just one of those memories that carried on. And I remember like feeling proud that I fought back, and from there man, I mean I got suspended from elementary school, middle school for fighting several times, and it all culminated in high school I got kicked out for my entire junior year.

**Lewis Howes:** No way.

**Shawn Stevenson:** And given straight Fs because of a fight. It was a huge fight.

**Lewis Howes:** But you fought back, you stood up for yourself, you were a man.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Exactly. Because- but the thing was, I didn't have to do it. It was because of words, and a threat, but I just punched the kid in the face.

**Lewis Howes:** And what was the consequence? A year of your life.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Almost destroyed my life. Yeah.

**Lewis Howes:** Could have gone an even darker path.



**Shawn Stevenson:** And you would think I'd learn my lesson then, but I was still in that environment, and even when I was kicked out I still was fighting. And it wasn't until college, I got kicked out of college, and this is a story I don't know if I shared before. I got kicked out of college for fighting.

**Lewis Howes:** Wow.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Who does that, you know? And this is where like you're an adult now, assault charge, all these things.

**Lewis Howes:** No way.

**Shawn Stevenson:** And people that know me today, it's like there's no way I would do this kind of stuff.

**Lewis Howes:** Wow.

**Shawn Stevenson:** But it was finally then that I realized that this way of responding to adversity, of being taught when something happens, you fight back, instead of understanding the situation, being more patient, understanding, looking at the bigger picture.

I was very just in the moment reactive, and it wasn't until then I realized that this had this huge control over my life and it was destroying my livelihood because of my need to prove myself. Right?

And I'm walking around even in college like, 'I wish somebody would say something to me.' This crazy, little, small thing.

**Lewis Howes:** 'Don't look at me.'

**Shawn Stevenson:** I was a great student, I was a nice person, but I had this programming from my childhood. And when I finally became aware of it, it literally changed everything. It changed everything and I became just so much more compassionate, and patient, and kind, and understanding.

I'm not perfect by any means, but my first reaction is not to want to hurt somebody. In fact it's the opposite. I want to see people doing well, and so that was part of the catalyst of how I changed my life and devoted my life to helping other people.

**Lewis Howes:** That's pretty cool.

**Shawn Stevenson:** You know? So taking that mask off.

**Lewis Howes:** Isn't it crazy how one instance when we're kids can literally- for me, it was when I was picked last on a dodgeball game. Fourth grade, they had two- our

whole class had thirty, forty kids or something. The teacher picked two of the boys to be like the captains. You know, you pick one at a time who you want on your team.

And they picked- all the boys were being picked, and I thought they were going to pick me as one of the first because I thought I was a great athlete.

And then it comes down to the last two boys, and they picked the other kid. And then I'm like, 'Okay they're going to pick me.'

Then they pick a girl, and then every other girl in our class they pick, and I'm the last- I'm not even picked, I'm just like by default on the last picker's team.

And so that moment- I was like, 'I'm going to destroy everyone on this dodgeball game.' Right? I was like a maniac catching everything, like throwing it in kids' faces, I was just like- the Hulk came out.

And it was in that moment where I was like, 'Never again will I get picked last.' And I associated like my worth with like if someone picked me. So I was like, 'I'm going to be the biggest, fastest, strongest person I can be so that I'm always picked first, and I'm always valuable, that I'm always like needed and wanted so that no one can take advantage of me again.'

It's crazy how like one thing, that fight for you, and obviously multiple things that occurred after that with each other, that built this story in our minds that we had to be a certain way.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Yeah, crazy.

**Lewis Howes:** And then the pain, and the stress it causes, and it hurts us, it hurts our bodies. You know what I mean?

**Shawn Stevenson:** Yeah.

**Lewis Howes:** You know you could have all the like sleep habits, stake plants, the blackout shades, you know the- what's it called, the ChiliPad? You could have all the things for sleeping habitat, but if your emotional wellbeing is stressed throughout the day, it's only going to do so much, the sleep you get. I think, right?

If you go right back into this like tension the next day, and that's why I think this is the most important thing for our health.

You know, like you said there are some people that don't eat well, but they live a long time because they're emotionally stress-free, or they feel just like happy. They don't feel guilty about themselves, they don't feel like embarrassed, and you're like, 'How is this person 100 years old and been eating McDonald's their whole life?'

**Shawn Stevenson:** Right.

**Lewis Howes:** You know, I'm not saying that like I recommend that, or that-

**Shawn Stevenson:** Right, disclaimer. Don't try this at home.

**Lewis Howes:** I'm sure there's health challenges there, but I think like there's so much to be said for living a happy, fulfilled, freedom- a life of freedom internally, and how that can solve a lot of our health problems.

You know Lissa Rankin, I don't know if you know Dr. Lissa Rankin.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Yeah.

**Lewis Howes:** She quit her practice because she was like, 'I was on seven medications, I was always prescribing things to people, but nothing was working. They kept coming back and needing more prescriptions.'

So she said, 'I started asking about how their marriage was. I started asking about how their kids were. I started asking about how they were feeling. And I would give them emotional prescriptions, and they would go out and have those hard conversations they'd never had with their intimate partners. They would go out and take care of themselves. They would take a break from work. And they started not needing the prescriptions anymore.'

You know not as simple as that, but it's like a process of the emotional healing that we've been so conditioned to not do for ourselves because we're so good at beating ourselves up, and needing to be strong, and not showing these things.

The emotional healing for a lot of people created- took away the disease, you know? This is what Dr. Lissa Rankin talks about, mind over medicine.

And Dr. Gundry, a heart surgeon, talks about again having a more healthy lifestyle. He talks about eating certain things differently, and just feeling more fulfilled, and you're not going to need heart surgery anymore. One of the top heart surgeons stopped being a heart surgeon because he realized it wasn't working.

It's not- and people were still coming back to get surgeries three years later. So he said, 'Okay this isn't working when my patients have to keep coming back, so what else can we do?' Then he got into food, and holistic types of healing.

And that's the thing for me. It's like it doesn't matter if you eat perfect, sleep perfect. If your heart has constant tension, or your mind is constantly stressed, you're going to cause disease somewhere.

That's what I believe.

**Shawn Stevenson:** It's powerful, man. So powerful. And I agree 120%. You know the last thing I want to talk to you about, because so much man- I mean I love talking with you about this stuff.

But I want to talk to you about the concept of affection. This is something that is counter to masculinity. I'm not talking about sexuality, I'm not talking about sex, I'm not talking about affection.

**Lewis Howes:** Hugs, touching.

**Shawn Stevenson:** I love you.

**Lewis Howes:** Oh, verbal affection.

**Shawn Stevenson:** All of it.

**Lewis Howes:** Yeah, yeah.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Why is that- well first of all- no let's just start there. Why do you feel that that is something that is so difficult for a lot of men to just- without a tie to sex to be-

**Lewis Howes:** To do or to receive?

**Shawn Stevenson:** Both.

**Lewis Howes:** It's a good question. I don't know why it's hard. I think it depends on the person's upbringing and the conditioning from parents. I think like if your parents were affectionate and said certain things, and touched you, and gave you hugs then we live by example usually. You know, we're going to probably be that way.

If they weren't, if your parents don't say, 'I love you,' or they weren't affectionate, then you might fall down that conditioning.

You know, I think for me it was always like a defense mechanism. Like I wanted to protect myself.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Yeah.

**Lewis Howes:** So I didn't want someone to say like, 'I love you,' and then not get it later. Because what if they didn't say it like a month from now? Then they don't love me anymore?

So it was always like I'd rather just not hear it. I'd rather you not say it.

**Shawn Stevenson:** That's interesting.

**Lewis Howes:** I'd rather you not touch me, because then what if you stop touching me, hugging me next year?

**Shawn Stevenson:** That's nuts, man.

**Lewis Howes:** Right?

**Shawn Stevenson:** Yeah because I understand.

**Lewis Howes:** Then I'm not worthy anymore. Then I'm not like worthy of your love and affection anymore, so don't even give it to me.

But I find that it's the most- it's so powerful to acknowledge. This is why at the end of my podcast I acknowledge my guests. I try to acknowledge and appreciate all the time, you know?

At dinner last night I was just like, 'I appreciate you for bringing us out here. I appreciate you for picking up the bill,' all these things. I was like, 'I appreciate you,' because I want to constantly be in appreciation of others.

And if- it just feels good to know that- one it feels good to give, but to- like the thing I always wanted growing up was to be seen just like the homeless people. Like I wanted to be seen and acknowledged for the good I was doing as like a ten year old.

I didn't want to be acknowledged for the bad, I wanted to be seen and acknowledged for the good, and I think it's a lost art, the art of acknowledgement is so profound.

When I acknowledge someone for who they truly are, and I see them, and I acknowledge that one thing in the moment, just my guess it's like sometimes people light up and they're like, 'Wow.'

Sometimes people are uncomfortable. It's interesting to see the response.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Yeah.

**Lewis Howes:** It's hard to receive acknowledgement for what we're good at, and I think it's just- I don't know, it's human nature to be uncomfortable sometimes. But I feel like that's the thing that so many of us want.

We're seeking acknowledgement. Why do you think we're so driven to write books, and to make money, and build a business, and create art, and music, and videos, and movies?

It's like yes it's a creative outlet, but we want others to see it, and see the beauty behind our work.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Yeah.

**Lewis Howes:** And see like the magic behind who we are, and how creative we are. We want to be seen and acknowledged. It's what drives us, and yet it's the thing that few of us do for others. We don't acknowledge others.

I feel like it's a lost art.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Yeah.

**Lewis Howes:** And I think to give you guys something to take away, find three people today that you can acknowledge. It can be a simple sentence, just like I acknowledge you for the incredible research, and thoughtfulness, and detail that you do, Shawn, for each one of your episodes because it literally transforms lives.

And you put so much effort and energy into knowing all the research. And I hear this all the time of people that listen to you.

They're just like, 'He's so thoughtful with his research,' so I acknowledge you for that. It can be that- you're welcome.

It can be that, do that for three people today. After you listen to this podcast, do it to your partner, your boyfriend, your girlfriend, your husband, wife, do it to your kids.

Your kids need acknowledgement the most.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Yes, yes.

**Lewis Howes:** Like I felt like I didn't have acknowledgement, even though I'm sure I did. I felt like my parents didn't look me in my eyes and say, 'You're doing so good right now. Like you're doing so good. Today you did such a good job like being patient, or being this. I acknowledge you for this. Keep it up. I love you.'

Like find those three people and just practice it. Practice it every day. It's a lost art but I think it's a powerful thing to do.

**Shawn Stevenson:** I love it, man. I love that you shifted the word affection to acknowledgement, because affection is a form of it, and the more that we get that- get our cup filled with that acknowledgement, the less that we're likely to do things of an extreme nature to try to get it.

**Lewis Howes:** Yeah we're not going to act out either.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Yeah, so powerful.

**Lewis Howes:** You know the reason I acted out as a kid, the reason I got into fights, was I wanted people to see me.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Yeah.

**Lewis Howes:** The reason I said that I wished I were dead and wanted to commit suicide as a kid is because I felt unloved. I felt unseen. I felt like no one cared either way. So I might as well act out, maybe someone will care. Maybe someone will pay attention.

And I think, you know when these bad kids are doing things that are bad all the time, it's just like can you take three minutes with them to look at them in the eyes and just say, 'I'm here for you.'

These simple little things could shift everything in our life.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Absolutely. I'm calling everybody listening to- just like Lewis said, to start to employ this because especially with our kids, because there's probably some- especially if you grew up like I did, some issues with the affection.

**Lewis Howes:** Of course.

**Shawn Stevenson:** And it's something I've worked through, and now today a day rarely goes by that I don't tell my kids that I love them.

**Lewis Howes:** That's powerful.

**Shawn Stevenson:** And just loving on my son, and just- I'm his best friend in the world, and it's beautiful, and I know that he has this base of what acknowledgement and affection feels like. And it just so happens all the time, people are telling me how helpful he is in the classroom, how well-behaved he is.

And I'm not like badgering the kid to be good, it's just like he really does feel I think fulfilled in a way in his own little way.

**Lewis Howes:** And I think when you acknowledge someone for the good they do, they want to do the good even better.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Exactly.

**Lewis Howes:** So he probably feels like, 'I like this feeling of being loved and acknowledged by my dad, or my mom, or whatever, my teachers. So I'm going to keep improving, and hopefully they'll keep feeding it to me,' you know? It's a good cycle as opposed to a bad cycle.



**Shawn Stevenson:** My man, I just- I'm blown away right now. This has been incredibly powerful and valuable for me, and for I'm sure everybody listening as well.

And I just want to thank you for having the courage to do what you do, man. To say yes to these incredible opportunities that you have in front of you, that I know some of these things are gargantuan, man.

But you know, you take them on and you put the mask on and you take it off as well, and you connect, and you're a genuinely good person, and you make people feel great being around you, and it's just- it's a gift.

And I know that this was something you didn't have before, and it gives all of us inspiration that we can become more like Lewis in the fact that we can be more loving, and attentive, and great. So thank you, brother.

**Lewis Howes:** Appreciate it, man. And to follow up on that, I could easily go back into an angry, negative, passive aggressive, unforgiving person.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Kicking the trash cans.

**Lewis Howes:** At any moment. And that's why I constantly practice these habits, and check these things, and have people around me check me. You know, they give me feedback like, 'Hey you're living kind of like defensive right now. Like why? You don't need to do this.'

So for me it's important to have those routines that actually remind me what my vision is and stay committed to that as opposed to the things that upset me, stay committed to things that inspire me.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Yes.

**Lewis Howes:** And that keeps me motivated to be a better person, and that's what it's all about.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Love it, man. Let everybody know one more time where they can find your book, and where they can connect with you online.

**Lewis Howes:** Yeah, you can go to [www.MaskOfMasculinity.com](http://www.MaskOfMasculinity.com) or Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and then my website is [www.LewisHowes.com](http://www.LewisHowes.com) and @LewisHowes everywhere on social.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Absolutely. Of course check out *The School of Greatness Podcast*.

**Lewis Howes:** Yeah, check it out. Check it out. Check out our interview with Shawn. It was amazing.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Oh thanks, bro.

Alright my man, Lewis Howes. Everybody, thank you so much for tuning into the show today. I hope you got a lot of value out of this.

These are the important conversations for us to have, to talk about the inner gain, because the external stuff, the eating good food, the exercise, the stress management practices; all of those things are driven by what's happening in our inner psychology.

And at no other time than today do we need to be proactive in getting ourselves around great community, and getting ourselves around information that keeps us uplifted.

But most importantly, it's us becoming the type of person that can bring value to those situations as well. Not just somebody who's there to take, and take, and gimme gimme, but taking off the mask and being more open, being more vulnerable, being more giving, being more forgiving, and all of these things take work.

And it's not about being perfect, it's just about making progress, and that's really the key, alright?

So I appreciate you so much for tuning into the show today. Make sure to go and pick up a copy of 'The Mask of Masculinity.' It is an incredible book.

And we've got so much more good stuff to come, some incredible guests coming up. I appreciate you immensely. Take care, have an amazing day, and I'll talk with you soon.

And for more after the show, make sure to head over to [www.TheModelHealthShow.com](http://www.TheModelHealthShow.com). That's where you can find all of the show notes, you can find transcriptions, videos for each episode, and if you've got a comment you can leave me a comment there as well.

And please make sure to head over to iTunes and leave us a rating to let everybody know that the show is awesome, and I appreciate that so much.

And take care, I promise to keep giving you more powerful, empowering, great content to help you transform your life. Thanks for tuning in.