

How to achieve your worthy goals – #319

James Taylor's **SUPERCREATIVITY™** PODCAST

HOW TO
ACHIEVE YOUR
WORTHY
GOALS

MICHAEL BUNGAY STANIER

How To Achieve Your Worthy Goals

Perhaps you've already achieved things in your career, but now feel it's time to "climb that second mountain" and think about your legacy. Or maybe you're unhappy with how the world is working out right now, and you want to change your part of it for the better. You want to start doing something that matters. My guest today would like to help you find that 'something'. That Worthy Goal, that big project, that next chapter of your life. Michael Bungay Stanier has a gift for distilling big, complex ideas

into practical, accessible knowledge that helps anyone become a force for good. As well as writing the million-selling bestselling book *The Coaching Habit* he also founded Box of Crayons, a learning and development company whose clients include Microsoft, Salesforce, TELUS, and Gucci. Welcome to the SuperCreativity Podcast, Michael Bungay Stanier...

Download the PDF transcription

[For More of SuperCreativity Podcast By James Taylor](#)

Artificial Intelligence Generated Transcript

Below is a machine-generated transcript and therefore the transcript may contain errors.

James Taylor 0:00

I'm James Taylor and you're listening to the super creativity podcast a show dedicated to inspiring creative minds like yours. Perhaps you've already achieved things in your career. But now feel it's time to claim that second mountain and think about your legacy. Or maybe you're unhappy with how the world is working out right now and you want to change your part of it for the better. You want to start doing something that matters. My guest today would like to help you find something that is worthy go that big project that next chapter of your life. Michael Bungay Stanier has a gift for distilling big, complex ideas into practical, accessible knowledge that helps anyone become a force for good as well as writing the million-selling best selling book *The Coaching Habits*. He also founded Box of Crayons, a learning and development company whose clients include Microsoft, Salesforce, TELUS, and Gucci. Please welcome to the super creativity podcast, Michael Bungay Stanier. Welcome, Michael.



Michael Bungay Stanier

Michael Bungay Stanier 0:54

Thanks, James. It's really nice to be introduced, you know, do people just say you're immediately better because you have a Scottish accent. It's like, I'm just gonna get going. I'm just gonna sound mediocre, compared to James because he's got that lilting thing going on.

James Taylor 1:12

But I'm guessing you have a little bit of Scottish. So your father's name was Robert McTaggart Stanier so that's a pretty Scottish-sounding name. There it is,

Michael Bungay Stanier 1:20

you know, my grandmother was Scottish. Her name was Mater Eufemia. Kerr made it named after the wolfhound that lies at the feet of Sir Walter Scott's statue on Princess Street. So she was very Scottish, the best story being after my grandfather died and the kind of priest came around to console her. Scotland was on the cusp of winning the then-five nations rugby there and she was like, not the least bit interested in being consoled. She wanted Scotland to beat England. And you know, as an Australian, I too have inherited the belief that you support two teams, your home country, Australia, and whoever's playing England. I probably got that from my Scottish grandmother.

James Taylor 2:05

It had been a year in Canada. So it's always ice hockey. I'm guessing

Michael Bungay Stanier 2:09

it's all ice hockey, which I don't fully understand. But my wife is Canadian. First of all, she would slap both of us. We're calling it ice hockey for her. It's hockey. And, and, but she loves it. It's her favorite sport. So I carry it along kinda.

James Taylor 2:24

Well, that's something you and I both share. My wife is also a Canadian Canadian citizen. And the only thing she's really introduced me to fully Canadian is Tim Hortons. So that's my introduction to the world of Canada. So the rightest Steven Covey once said that begin with the end in mind, you very much begin this book with the end in mind, September 14, 2043, to be precise, why is that date important to you?

Sense of like immortality

Michael Bungay Stanier 2:50

Yeah, you know, that is my death date. And of course, it may not be the actual day that I die. I'm kind of hoping it's not actually because it'd be too weird, actually knowing that that actual day, but the writer Kevin Kelly, kk dot August, his website, talks about this countdown clock, he says, Look, you can actually go into actuarial tables, and kind of calculate when in insurance terms, they expect you to die. And he says, Look, every year that date passes, and we don't celebrate it, we celebrate our birthday, but we don't celebrate our death date. And reading this article from Kevin Kelly, he also said, Look, you basically you got 511 big projects every five years or so. So you can kind of figure some stuff out and kind of go, what am I got left? Because even when you start getting kind of older like I'm in my early 50s, you still have this sort of slight sense of like immortality, like you can't quite get your head around that you're going to die. And that's why it's a spiritual practice in so many places. But I'm like, Okay, I've got roughly 2025 years left somewhere in that range for five projects, maybe? What am I going to do? How do I make this? I don't make this a life where I've squeezed it. And I've been the best version of myself, and I've had the impact that I want. And that death day can be a bit of a kind of a focusing moment.

James Taylor 4:14

I remember years ago when there was one of these sites where you buy things before they actually made a kickstart. I think it was a site, and I bought a watch. And my wife lovingly called it the Death Watch. So what you did is you bought this watch, and you went on to the actuarial tables, there was an app for and it basically, it was a countdown timer of how many roof months, years, days of seconds that you had left.

And so you sort of look at this watch, and actually the battery ran out after six months. So I'm not quite sure what that says. But so you're saying in these let's say if you've got 2025 years left, that's four or five projects. You talk about then in that those five years you'd have four or five worthy goals perhaps left in you. To define what is a worthy goal? Could you say there are three elements to a worthy goal?

Worthy Goals

Michael Bungay Stanier 5:05

Yeah, there are. Before I jump there, let me just talk have a little bit of a whinge about how people talk about goals at the moment. And you know, if you ask anybody, you know, so what you know about goals, like 98% of people listening to this podcast, we'll go with smart goals like exactly, and what does a SMART goal stand for. And we'll get about 8000 different variations on the acronym because every quite knows what it stands for. But above and beyond that, when I started writing this book, I suddenly realized that actually, I really disliked SMART goals. They have never worked for me. But I sort of just accepted them as kind of the handed-down wisdom with Tommy came down from the goals mountain with tablets, smart goals. But actually, a SMART goal is all about kind of hind things down and refining it and making it sensible and measurable and small. And if you have the wrong goal, it doesn't matter how smart you make it, you're still polishing the turd. So what I want people to find, I want this for myself, a goal, a way of thinking about goals that tap into my ambition for myself and for the world. How do I find the best version of myself by the work that I'm doing? How do I make the world a bit of a better place through the work that I'm doing? So the idea of a worthy goal is that it should be thrilling and important and daunting, thrilling. It lights you up, you care about it, and matters to you rub your hands and go, This sounds amazing, I would love to put some time and effort, and energy into that. So it's going to have a degree of you care about it. And that's helpful because it's just worth acknowledging that often we inherit goals that we think we should be doing, we ought to be doing it, you know, somebody had this time of life or this stage or this there has that expectation either internally or externally imposed, that they should be doing this call, and thrilling as a kind of counteraction to that. But you don't want to just be trolling, because it's a bit self-indulgent, you also want it to be important. So important means that it is contributing to the bigger picture. The phrase I love is it gives more to the world than it takes. So how do you make the world a bit better? Obviously, there's a really interesting and useful tension between thrilling and important. The third element that is daunting and daunting is simply to ask, Are you going to learn and grow by taking this on. Because the emotional heart of the book is how to begin Bach is the phrase, we unlock our greatness by working on the hard things, and you choose to work on the stuff that, you know is daunting, you don't exactly know how to do it, you don't know how to, you might know how to start it, but you don't know how to get it finished or completed at the end. And it's in taking on something that is thrilling and important

and daunting, that you like something that likes you up, serves the world helps you stretch and grow and become the next best version of yourself.

James Taylor 7:53

In reading this book, I kept thinking that it almost sits between these two, polar opposites. It's in the middle, somewhere between one end you have like Simon Sinek, start with y, which is a very, very big picture. And the other end, you've got one of our guests we've had David Allen, you're getting things done, which is a very granular, like exactly like very tactical. What I think I liked about this book was it came from a coaching perspective. So it's a series of questions, you're asking yourself a series of questions in it. And you're going into finer and finer detail in that. So you mentioned that first of all, there are three different elements. Yeah. And then you kind of go, like peeling an onion level deeper. And you make an important distinction between projects, people, and patents when it comes to setting what goals to focus on. And so can you explain what that is? I think that's another layer.

Goals To Focus On

Michael Bungay Stanier 8:43

Yeah, for sure. And I love the way you framed it as in-between kind of the bigness of Simon Sinek or maybe even the bigness of something like Jim Collins and the B hagn plucky, ugly acronym. But you know, that big, hairy audacious goal was many people have heard of that. But it often is in the context of our organization working with Simon Sinek. It's like, what's the why of my organization? Fewer people go what's my why in the world? And then David stuff. I love that you brought David Allen up because 20 years ago, he wrote the first blurb for my first ever book. So it was an influential frame of my name, and he's getting things done stuff. There's actually part of his writing where he talks about different levels to think about the projects that you're working on. But he never quite caught on as much as they get that task did it.

James Taylor 9:33

Yeah, he never spoke about the 50,000 they wanted him to do another book on the 50,000 to 30,000 It was always 10,000 5000

Michael Bungay Stanier 9:40

That concept is there and his staff but inevitably gets down to that can you manage the inflow of your email, which is helpful as well. So yeah, right in the middle, which is like how do you find something that is not so big as to be a life purpose, but not so small as to be one my tactics for today and Two key insights one is when you find your worthy goal, your first draft of it is going to be a bit crap. And I key mistake we make is that we think our first draft of our worthy goal is our worthy goal. We go Hi, this is sounds pretty good and pretty exciting. Okay, let me try it. And when it doesn't

play out as it so often doesn't, that can be traced back to the fact that we haven't kind of poked it and project it and interrogated it and kind of gone. Can I can I draft and redraft this to make it as strong as possible. And one of the ways to think about drafting and redrafting, it is this kind of these lenses by which you can think about where you find your worthy goal. And as you said, it's the three P's its projects, its people, its patents, and any worthy goal is likely to have all three of these and let me explain what they are. But you're waiting on might have an emphasis on kind of more one than the other. So project, just kind of like getting the thing done was like how do I get the dirt underneath my fingernails? Whether they digital dirt or real dirt? How do I build, create, launch, stop, stop, reinvent whatever it might be for you? The second thing is around people. She's like, okay, so what? How do I work with people in a different ways? And sometimes for some people, their their worthy goal is how do I be a better boss, a better leader, a better dad, a better child? You know, it's about the how do I show up in relationship in a different way. And then the third one, which is, in some ways, the deepest of them is patented, which is how do I break the white patents of my behavior, so that I show up in a different way, so that I actually changed the way that I work. And I changed, not just my doing but my being. And that is often that's often a really worthy got, you know, you got to kind of rewire yourself to think differently about yourself and about the world. And I do think that almost every worthy goal has will have a degree of getting something done, will have a degree of rethinking how you work with other people, and will have a degree of thinking, Who am I in this world? And how do I want to be different, so I can get this worthy goal accomplished.

James Taylor 12:12

Now that kinds of three projects, people patterns, always feel that the project is that in some ways, it feels like the easier one to kind of create those, okay, these are the milestones. These are the things the being one that's that's much more difficult. And in the book, you're very open, you go through these two goals can that you're considering and you can go through and take us through that process of refining those. One of them was starting a podcast and you've done a number of podcasts, and you're on this podcast just now. So it kind of interests me like where you're thinking everyone has different perspectives on podcasts and why they want to do podcasts why they want to be on the podcast. But I noticed this maybe a little small thing. One of the reasons as you went further into why are you considering this goal is that you said that you consider TikTok and things as narrowing the culture rather than books or perhaps long-form podcasts that broaden your understanding of the world. It's not absolutely related to this book. But could you just kind of unpack that a little bit for us?

Michael Bungay Stanier 13:12

It's interesting. I mean, I love TikTok. I love them I mean, I'm not I'm not I don't put content on that. But I love it actually reminds me of Kevin Kelley again, in his book

called The was a chord something about the 12 technologies that are reshaping our world. And one of the 12 ways of thinking is remixing. And what TikTok does so brilliantly is it allows people to take content and repurpose it and redo it in their own way. And it has a lightness and a playfulness about it, which is wonderful. So I'm not sure actually it's an interesting question, James. And I'm not sure I have a slick answer for you. Because

James Taylor 13:58

even when I was researching you today, I was going on like, Hmm, this is interesting. He doesn't do many social media. You don't do Twitter and you don't do things. You do books. You are heavily obviously in the training and development and the coaching side, which is very, I think of coaches as it's almost like long-form personal stuff. And I just wondered if that was just a person I looked at you said and you mentioned, the other thing you mentioned you went into the book was going to understanding your values, what draws you to things. And in your book, it was very much freedom and creating your creativity. Yeah. And I wondered that and it was just something I would just want if you had any kind of sense of that. So,

Michael Bungay Stanier 14:39

um, I, I think of myself at at my heart as a teacher. You know, that's kind of what I did. So whether it's through my podcasting or the training or the books I'm trying to teach, and I'm trying to find ways of kind of It's attention to this, which is to make stuff accessible and practical for people. So you know, the Coaching Habit book has sold a million copies because it kind of unwaged coaching, takes it out of a black box of woo-woo Enos, and says, look, here's seven good questions. And so I'm always striving to try and get to, as they say, simplicity on the other side of complexity. And I find myself in social media, always tempted to have simplicity on the first side of complexity, which is like, here's the glib statement is though, here's the 1234567 list of things you can do to be super creative, or whatever it might be. And I find the unimaginative, regurgitating, or some of that stuff, and that kind of uncritical acceptance of some of that stuff, less inspiring. But the people who have a gift of saying, Look, let me make stuff that kind of has a has a weight to it. And actually, it's a kind of robustness to it. I mean, this is off track, change it, here's a metaphor for it. Sometimes you see kind of a visual of like, three columns, and they're like, it's symbolizing something about getting stuff down, or making it work or the like. And the designer has put the three cogs in a way that they're kind of that the three of them are touching each other. And it just means that it wouldn't work, because the cog would immediately kind of move the other one. Yeah, they would just jam immediately. And, and that image drives me nuts every time I see it, because I'm like, it can't, it doesn't even work. And I feel the same about some of the stuff that gets put out under the, under the guise of profundity in, in short, film form ways, the same time, um, you know, I am trying to create content that is light, and playful and entertaining, and personable. I mean, social self help stuff typically drives me also

drives me nuts because of how seriously it takes itself. And how, how dull most of it is, and its self-absorption. So I don't know what I'm I don't know, I'm just trying to find no, I mean, it's interesting to in between these. I mean, tension is where creativity flourishes, right? Yes, like, how do I be profound, but playful? How do I be accessible, but helpful,

James Taylor 17:21

it almost feels you know, a little bit, you know, those letters, TikTok, and there are lots of great TikTok people I see doing that meet amazingly creative stuff. But some of it is that first part almost at that first pass, the stuff that as a creative you'd often destroy because it's always like working, it feels like a work in progress at times, which is fine, it's nice to kind of show it, you know, those ideas showing work, right? And then you can go to this middle stage where you have to kind of go, you go deep on something, and you come at the third stage, which is, it's like poetry, it's much harder to write poetry than it is to write long, long-form. Right? I'm interesting, like

Michael Bungay Stanier 17:54

Oscar Wilde, you know, I would have written you a shorter letter if I had more time.

James Taylor 17:58

Exactly. I don't see too much poetry on social media. But maybe, maybe this is the this is. So another kind of layer as you get into the book, and I think this is a really, this is when you mentioned self help, the love, I think a lot of self help books, they love talking about the prizes, the nice, bright, shiny things you're going to get. Imagine yourself in the future, and you're doing that thing. And what does that look like? How does that feel all that stuff? Right? Don't speak so much about the other side. And you call it the punishments. So it writes the praises and punishment? Why is this important to think about this, reflect on this in thinking about your worthy goal?

Michael Bungay Stanier 18:34

For the book has three sections? The first one is drafting away the Goal? So how do you find it cut through kind of recommend two or three iterations to kind of get closer to the real thing? The final step is crossing the threshold. How do you start this? I can't promise how you finish it, because who knows how the scene unfolds for you, but how do you make the first steps across the threshold? And then the middle section is around commitment? How do you commit to this worthy goal? And it is the most this is the deeper of the three sections? Because it is a question around, I really look for this. And too often we set ourselves a goal and we just kind of an accepting, we just kind of go right, just startup, and you don't really think of the consequences of committing to this. And this section, asking about prizes and punishments is a conversation about consequences and commitments. And you know, if you were to summarize the the inside at the heart of this middle section is

we are more firmly attached to the status quo than we realize. Like even though we you know, we talk a big game, and even then we might be frustrated about some of the ways things are happening right now. There's contentment we have around things is how things are right now.

James Taylor 19:50

So there's a bias of like sunk cost bias. Yeah, it's like a sunk cost



Benefits From Worthy Goals

Michael Bungay Stanier 19:54

bias. And we don't often even realize the word I have the of the current behavior. And that's what this is about. So it says, having named your worthy goal, you've got a choice. It's very Yoda like this, you can either do it or not do it. And they're both good choices. Sometimes, you know, they but they're both valid choices to make. But don't do it. Unconsciously do it consciously. So the first thing and this is this is a counterintuitive act is to imagine having to find a worthy goal, something is thrilling, important and daunting for you. You actually then go Alright, let's, what if I walked away from this? What are the prizes of walking away from? What's the punishment? You know, what's the, what's the benefit for not doing this, but what's the cost to me and others for not doing this. And the benefit for not doing it is actually meant to motivate me, multitudinous manifold, you know, it's like, look, basically, you preserve

the status quo. You don't risk your reputation, you don't risk failure, you don't risk others' expectations of you, you don't risk expectations of yourself, you don't risk time you don't risk money. You know, this is a familiar price that all people who, you know, play with SuperCreativity wrestle with, it's like, you know, what, what do I risk by taking something on? So here you go, okay, I get to just keep things as they are. So there's a whole bunch of stuff I don't put on the line. But then you go, but if I didn't do this, what would be the cost to me and to others? And there's a cost to you. But it's really helpful to go, how would this be? What price would be paid by the other people who might otherwise benefit from my worthy goal? And then you've asked the same question. But now you go imagine you fully committed to this. I mean, didn't just dabble but you just really went, I'm going all-in on this. First of all, what are the prizes for that? And in some ways, you're kind of restating stuff you've already overcome, which is like, so what do I get from really taking this on? How do I benefit? How do I win? How do I seek glory? How do I feel good about myself? And how do I make the world a bit better? But then you also got to say, but what's at risk if I really fully commit to this, and it again, probes into the kind of the opportunity cost of you taking this and what happens if you fail, because with a worthy goal, something that is daunting, there's no guarantee of success around this. And what we're doing is we're trying to make the consequences of the choices just a little more obvious, a little more apparent, make them above water, rather than below water. And so when you say yes, I'm up for this, you know, what's at stake?

James Taylor 22:38

It reminds me a little bit, as I was reading that part of the book it reminded me of, to two other writers, two other people. One was Austin Kleon, where he says a lot of people want to be the noun without doing the verb, which, which I thought was a lovely line. And the other one it reminded me of was Elizabeth Gilbert, where she was, I think it was an interview with Marie Forleo. She talked about a few years ago, where she said, every job does matter how glamorous, it has a sandwich. Yeah, it has something in the job, that it's just the not the nice bit of the job. But it just goes with the job. So let's say you know, you and I both speak with keynote, a lot of conferences, and part of the damage is sitting a lot of airport lounges, sitting eating bad hotel food, that's the bit. That's but she said, she loves she needs to get to the point of being so invested in so into doing that job in that role. She said, if another speaker says or another interface, another author doesn't want the sandwich, she says, I'll eat yours. Can I have yours? I'm happy to have yours because I'm so into doing right. Right. Right. In your role as an author, as a teacher, a coach and a trainer, a trainer? What's the short term which your job? Just one thing that you're willing to you just to get? Get over the other side? Oh,

Michael Bungay Stanier 23:58

that's a really lovely question. So the thing that I so when I think about my worthy goal for 2022, we're recording this year in February. The way I'm articulating it is I

want to write three books this year. Wow. Because, you know, daunting to write a book,

James Taylor 24:22

what are you doing speaking to me?

Michael Bungay Stanier 24:26

I'm wasting my time here. I need to be writing my book. And when I say that, I feel quite daunted about it. But when we come back to projects and people and patterns, it's less the project piece. It's less the writing of the three books. It's more the identifying myself as a writer for the first time. Yeah, because I'm an author. I've, I've got books published in the world, but I've never thought of myself as a writer. I thought of myself as somebody who kind of creates stuff and shares it with the world. But the writer feels like an idea. the entity that is lonelier, and less needy of approval. And I, I think I'm the sandwich of claiming identity of a writer. I mean, there are benefits to it, hopefully three books, partly written or mostly written. And a commitment to teaching and a commitment to trying to share stuff in a way that's accessible and useful for people. But it means turning down opportunities and being more isolated, and not distracting myself with emails and miscellaneous BS tasks that I can set up for myself, turning down bad podcasts, but even brilliant podcasts like this one, go, Look, I'm gonna say no to that. So I can say yes to trying to write that. So I think the thing for me wrestling with this identity of being a writer is the anonymity of it. Because I quite like being in the spotlight. I like performing. I like trying to be entertaining and useful on podcasts or giving talks or whatever. I like being paid for some of that, as well. So I think that's probably the the choices that I'm weighing up.

James Taylor 26:18

I think the past few years that many speaker authors have gone through, I think there's a lot, a lot of them goes to grappling with exactly that same I was just speaking the other day, which is grappling with that same thing that that sense of moving his identity from being the person who's traveling and speaking all the time, to the person that's the author and he said it's it required him to physically change his physical environment, the actual place where he lived was found and worked in order to help make that mind that mental jump, but he's gonna enjoy that this is it's a fight there that happens with your identity. But he said, what's interesting is that, once you claim that identity, you do everything to back up the identity, because it feels like there's a dissonance

Michael Bungay Stanier 26:59

if you don't, and if I show you my, my, how my office is set up, so I've got my table I work at here, but over there is the table that I write at. And you know, I've done some

kind of resetting of, of this space, those are the books that I'm using for research for the current book over there. And I've done some resetting of the space to kind of go that's a better writing space. For me, that's where I do my thinking and try and create the shape of my books. Because when I'm, for me, books come into focus when I had the the arc of them the shape of them. Once I see how it fits together, then I can fill in the content. That's the hard work for me around book writing. So I've done a little bit of that kind of, you know, that Winston Churchill quote, which is like we shape our buildings, and thereafter they shape us, you know, you have an identity. How do you frame it in? How do you frame your environment in a way that enlivens that identity or that new identity rather than diminishes it?

James Taylor 27:58

It's like this idea that like the genius loci that the Romans used to say that the places themselves have their own genius, and they really have that. One of the final chapters in the book is about building the band. So you ever you've described it to an author, that sounds like a lonely path. And building this idea of building a brand is deciding who you need on your journey towards your worthy goal and who you have to leave behind. Now, you said that there are five types of people that you definitely want or five archetypes in your team or in your band, regardless of what your worthy goal is. Yeah. So could you maybe just briefly just kind of share what those are? And I'm sure a lot of people listening to this will really be doing a little mental checklist, do I have that archetype in my team?

Building The Band

Michael Bungay Stanier 28:41

And you know, five archetypes, you don't need five people, one per archetype, you know, you can have different people play more than one one role in this. And you may also say, Look, I've already I bring this energy myself, I don't need somebody else to provide us. I've already got some of that. But I, you know, this comes from my learning about North American indigenous wisdom calling in the directions. And the four kind of energy archetypes is associated with four different directions. You have the warrior energy. So this is a sense of fierceness, a sense of boundaries, a sense of pushback against resistance. You know, it's kind of like I'm stepping forward here, and I'm holding the line. Sometimes that's really helpful. The second is the healer or the lover. And this is the place of comfort and rejuvenation and I can be messy and confused and fall apart here and kind of safety. And sometimes you need that gentleness and that place of sanctuary, which I think is that energy. The third energy is the teacher or sometimes the magician energy. And this is the, you know, I need knowledge. I need to sit at somebody's feet. I need to know, things that I don't yet know. And to be kind of hungry for the lesson. I think of that scene in Lord of the Rings where again, I've got I've got to go off and do some research about a ring Yeah, some sort of Kevin somewhere dusky scrolls, it's like that energy. And then the

fourth energy is the ruler or the visionary. And this is about ambition. And this is holding the bigger picture. And this is about, I think, also a degree of ruthlessness, which is like what needs to be done to achieve the vision that I'm holding. And then beyond the forward to the four directions, you also have the Trickster energy, which is kind of an interesting, which is like, this is the person who teases you and challenges you and tries to distract you the shapeshifter or Yeah, exactly the shapeshifter, the jackal, or the raven is it sometimes appears in myth. And I found it helpful to reframe some of the resistance that I sometimes get from myself or sometimes get from other people as trickster energy. And I'm like, okay, so how is this helping me, I was just actually making myself get clearer and bolder about the journey that I'm on.

James Taylor 31:01

It's almost a little bit of the hacker mindset that kind of goes along with that as well. It reminds me, something I do is I actually have on my desk in my mind where I do my writing, I actually have these little statues of these five before, real historical figures. They're my allies because I know enough about them. I've read enough about them to be able to almost like, it's almost like a, what they call a mastermind. Virtual brain trust. Yeah. But I feel then I can go a little bit deeper, because these are historical characters. If I can be nosy, yeah. Marcus Aurelius is one. The Buddha is one. Actually, you mentioned Winston Churchill was church, although I may have changed him because I got some dubious views and a lot of things. But who was the other one, Marcus Aurelius, Buddha, actually, Bruce Lee, because you mentioned that you know, that, that type, that type of thing, water as well? And then there's actually kind of two other people who are just friends of mine, who I kind of know, but I know them well enough to be able to get there. And yeah, it's kind of what you said, you know, people like Joseph Campbell taught this idea of the hero's journey, this hero's journey, and having that kind of allies that you have whether you were the architect people, you know, have or fictitious going with you on that journey.

Michael Bungay Stanier 32:20

And they don't even have to be people. You know, I also think there's a way that you can look at organizations or concepts that can play that kind of mentoring role for you kind of virtual mentor him for many years when I did something similar. Cirque du Soleil was yeah, we just had me with

James Taylor 32:39

Daniel Lamarre on this week, actually on the show from perfectly,

Michael Bungay Stanier 32:43

but you know, it's like, how do you break rules? How do you explore where the edges are? How do you create something that is, you know, has people rethink a whole concept surfaces that will never be thought of the same as and Cirque du Soleil came along. So you can kind of go to beyond just the individual sometimes it's interesting to go and like how this thing is showing up in the world.

James Taylor 33:12

So one of the things that I asked Daniel Lamarre, who's the executive vice president was CEO of Cirque du Soleil, um, gosh, you as well, how do you keep your thinking fresh? You mentioned like the people you try and surround yourself, but what are the things you do in order to keep your thinking fresh all the time?

Thinking Fresh

Michael Bungay Stanier 33:27

Well, I a few things. I try and read broadly. So I you know, I have a background in literature. My wife also has a background in literature. So I read young adult literature, science fiction, serious literature, business books, self help books, science books. I mean, I just have a, you know, I'm going to show you over here is my pile of books that this is the unread book guilt, I caught the guilts pile. I'm trying not to be guilty about it. So I try and just have input coming in. And it's the same with newsletters. I try and curate my newsletters to be diverse and interesting and push me in in ways that I didn't know whether it's from like somebody like Austin Kleon whose newsletters wonderful and right in my bailiwick, but some of the kind of I get someone on more around like Bitcoin stuff for some of them they're all interested in but I'm interested in in what's happening out there just so I can try and go what the heck out about

James Taylor 34:31

then you mentioned you mentioned that on the Bitcoin so what is it you're looking for as it you're looking for just a different perspective, it's almost like a, like a new ingredient like finding paprika for the first time and you're not even sure whether you ever gonna use it, but it just opens your palate up.

Michael Bungay Stanier 34:47

It's a place of disruption. And I'm curious, I don't understand Bitcoin and AI and or NF T's or any of that kind of thing, but I'm like, there are lots of people getting really excited about What does this mean? And how might this shift my thinking on something? So I'm like, Okay, so I've got a new book coming out. And NF T's. Alright, so how do I want if I made my book and NF T? What does that even mean? I'm sorry, I don't know and the least. But if I designed a book to make it more amenable to being an NF T, is that interesting? Could I do something like that? And it

just kind of makes me find an edge around, maybe there's something interesting to poke at this. The other thing I do, James's, particularly now COVID, has kind of lifting a little bit, I host a regular dinner. It's called the three interesting people dinner, it's me, plus two other people. I people sign up in a slightly random way. So they don't know who the third person is. They know, it's me. And it's her. It's them. And there's another person. And I will bring five questions to that dinner. And each person has to pick one of the five questions, and it's trying to provoke a deeper conversation. So it's like, what's the gift that hasn't yet been given? What is the crossroad you're at? What's beckoning you? And people will pick one question, and then all three of us will answer that question. And then the second person will pick a question and all three of us will answer that question. And so in those questions, and also in the kind of serendipity of who shows up as a combination, there's a way that I try and stay fresh to what's going on in the world. But these are people I typically know a little bit. I don't know them particularly well.

James Taylor 36:38

So you're, I think you're based in Toronto, is that correct? Right? Yeah. So you're almost doing a little bit like a goat what Gertrude Stein, were doing a Paris in the 1920s you're doing in Toronto, inter you're doing in the 2020s. A salon.

Michael Bungay Stanier 36:52

I love the idea of these artistic salons, I think they're so wonderful. But I've found that if it gets beyond three people, I lose some of the intimacy. And I don't have the capacity to be Gertrude nearly as interesting as she is. And kind of that kind of hosting cocktails and smoking cigarettes and lounging around, change roles. A lot as good as that sounds. So this is a way of me going. Okay, I'm now old enough to know a bunch of people who I think are probably kind of interesting and quirky in their own way. And I'm hoping that I can help other people make weak connections so that they meet people that they might not have met before. And I'm hoping to strengthen my own kind of, as I say, weak links. Because interesting things happen with you, with that community. That's, you know, a step away from your inner crowd.

James Taylor 37:42

It reminds me of the I've just finished reading a book it was Edward de Bono, the creativity expert, the writer and, and he was a bit of a rogue, a nice rogue, I think, as well in some in some respects. And it was a Rhodes Scholar as well. He was a Rhodes Rhodes Scholar. Exactly. And I find it very interesting, man. But one of the things he did is he got I think it was a shell or BP to basically rent an apartment a flat, it of a famous flat, I think it was maybe Gladstone deposits you guys can watch live there, right in the center of London, and he would host this monthly sell on so you're talking about we bring leading thinkers, business people, artists together, and basically, he got BP to pay for his apartment in London, is what he was doing. And I

just thought How brilliant is that? That you can? You can do that he was very creative mind can sadly be lost recently

Michael Bungay Stanier 38:37

died recently. Yes. I don't know that. I've Yeah, I've been wondering, he was really a significant voice in the kind of I'm going to say like the 90s. Particularly around creativity. I mean, he coined the idea of lateral thinking, I believe. That's right. And I remember reading his book around. It's like, how do we peel a banana? Because your monkeys peel it from the bottom. We wrestle with the STEM at the top, and you know, squash, the banana, and stuff. And he had so many he wrote really short books, but they often had a kind of quirky way of going his way of understanding the world that you haven't thought of yet.

James Taylor 39:15

Yeah, I know, I met you met your three books you have this year. I know that in reading that biography. He would write a book over a weekend, you just been a stenographer, and he would just he would just speak it like a scribe, he would have a scribe there and that's how he got his books out so so quickly, but I can't believe you mentioned NF T's do you do use to kind of technology in any way either too kind of free up your time for the creative what you do, or do you use any kind of technology to augment the creative work you do?

James Taylor's
SUPERCREATIVITY™
PODCAST

**HOW TO
ACHIEVE YOUR
WORTHY
GOALS**

MICHAEL BUNGAY STANIER

Technology To Augment The Creative Work

Michael Bungay Stanier 39:46

This is a very, very tactical thing is a very David Allen thing to kind of bring it full circle but on TextExpander I have an automatic way of saying no. So when somebody writes to me I'm like, I just I, particularly if I'm tempted by it. I've got I type in semi-colon fully. And I get a message. I'm reading it now that's very kind of you to invite me. I'm afraid I must say no, because I'm fully committed to writing my next book right now, and do my best to try and resist temptation such as these. I do appreciate the kind thoughts nonetheless. And so if I get an inquiry, I'm like, it's not a hell yes. I'll just write that. And it saves me from trying to overthink how I say no to people.

James Taylor 40:33

And also, I like there I mean, Derek Severs THE HELL YES. They also like that you. You gave a reason, it seems to be no, there are all those stats that when you give a reason for saying no, people are much more, okay, that's fine. Where if you don't give a reason people like this, you know, at times as well.

Michael Bungay Stanier 40:50

So we're favorite. My favorite kind of canned version of this is, I must say no for secret reasons. That's it. I love that. I've used that line once or twice, but I'm not brave enough to do it consistently.

James Taylor 41:05

I think there was a Haley forgotten. Sorry, I can't pronounce a second name that Jamie highly Kissena hapkido from Chicago University, who also passed away last year, who wrote flow and a great book on creativity. He, when he looked to interview the top Nobel Prize winners, he tried to say, Are there any patterns between them all right, and the most common pattern was that they said no to his request to be interviewed, that was the most common pattern amongst them. So they really, they really respected their own time as well. So

Michael Bungay Stanier 41:37

but here's the other, here's the other thing that unites Nobel Prize winners, they're much more likely to have a hobby, then they're no Nobel Prize winners. So they're like, they're kind of like, they love physics. And they geek out on Dungeons and Dragons, or playing the violin or doing some other thing. And there's been some really interesting research around. It's that cross-fertilization, and then other specialization that allows them to flourish in in particularly in the sciences, I think, the Nobel prizes.

James Taylor 42:07

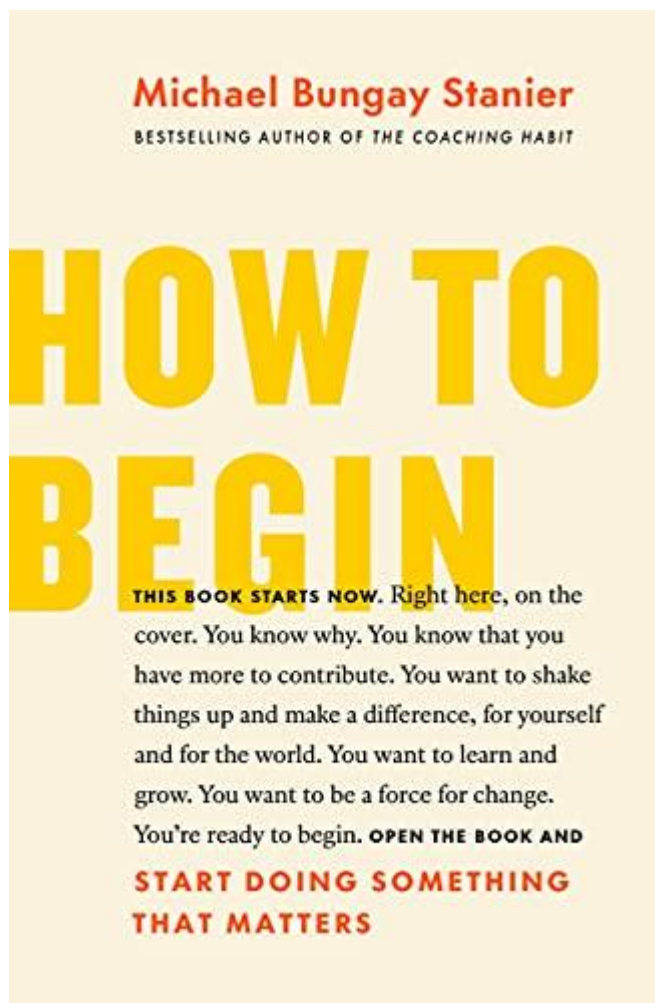
So what's yours? I can ask you this question. Now before you win the Nobel Prize.

Michael Bungay Stanier 42:12

Well, I do play the ukulele although I really badly. But you know, when I, I did recorded an audiobook for the bass trap. And it was the first audiobook that I recorded myself. And what I loved about it is because it's my audio book, as like, I'm going to play my ukulele in between each chapter, just a chord. So I can say I've got a professional recording of me as a ukulele player. So for somebody who's as bad at the ukulele, playing as I am, I feel like I've achieved something.

James Taylor 42:44

Jake Shimabukuro, watch yourself. We've got Michael Bungay Stanier, coming along soon to take your places atop the ukulele player. Michael, thank you so much for coming on. Talking about how to begin, start doing something that matters as new book is out. Now is an absolute pleasure speaking to you as as always West, we'll put a link so people get their copy of the book, but where should they go if they want to learn more about your other things you've got going on? Obviously, your training business as well. Yeah. So



Michael Bungay Stanier 43:12

[How To Begin](#) to accomplish anything about the book. More generally about me and the other bits and pieces, I offer. My website is [MBS.works](#). I've got a nice free one-year thing called The Year of Living brilliantly, it's got 52 Different teachers and you get a short video every week. And if you're keen on the corporate stuff, box of crayons.com is where you can find information about corporate training.

James Taylor 43:35

One for All. Michael, thank you so much for coming on the show today. Getting us all thinking about worthy goals has been a pleasure having you on the Super creativity

podcast. Thanks, James. You can subscribe to the super creativity podcast on Spotify, Apple podcasts or wherever you get your podcasts while you're there. Please leave us a review. I would really, really appreciate it. I'm James Taylor, and you've been listening to the super creativity podcast.