

Episode intro:

My brain isn't in a place where I can trust my thoughts, so I am going to go get my brain in a place and my body in a place where I can trust my thoughts, where I am out of my trauma, so that I can think clearly, because if I am acting out of the trauma, I will recreate it over, over, over and over again.

Welcome to the Art of Accomplishment, where we explore how deepening connection with ourselves and others leads to creating the life we want with enjoyment and ease.

My name is Brett Kistler. I am an adventurer, entrepreneur and a self exploration enthusiast. I am here with my co-host, Joe Hudson. Joe is a business coach who has spent decades working with some of the world's top executives and teams developing a unique model of human patterns that underpin how we operate with ourselves, each other and the world. A good entry point into this model is a mindset called VIEW, vulnerability, impartiality, empathy and wonder.

Through understanding and cultivation we learn to easefully drop into the VIEW state of mind, deepening self awareness and increasing our connection with the world around us. To learn more about this podcast or courses, visit artofaccomplishment.com

Brett: So wow, that was quite an opening Q&A.

Joe: Yeah, Art of Accomplishment is on. Holy crap.

Brett: People went there.

Joe: Oh my gosh, unlike any start of anything I have ever been in. It was amazing how vulnerable it got and how quickly. It was really cool.

Brett: I remember the first Q&A after the first week of work went really, really deep, and we were all blown away. But this was just like the orientation. You are going through a bunch of PowerPoint slides, and it was like oh man, I can bet half the people here are probably bored to tears. Then, before you know it, a couple questions come through and it is straight to the core.

Joe: Straight to it. Sara was saying to me— She said I was scared. Last year, we got lightning in a bottle, and it might not happen again. She says that fear is completely gone. First thing she said when I called, she said I miss AoA calls. This was great. It was awesome.

Brett: Something I wanted to talk about today is something I saw today in this call. So many of the things we do in this work, so many of the times I see you work with people, it often boils down to some form of family dynamic. We have talked about

this before. We have these projections we carry from our childhood, people who are caretakers, parents or family members, but also projections of society, projections of money. But in particular, there is something to this concept of family dynamics that just continually comes up. I have noticed it comes up in my life a lot, in my relationships. I have projected my mother onto basically anybody I have ever dated to varying levels of effect. I have projected my mother and my father onto the management in the company, in my company and in friendship groups.

A lot of times when we do this work, there will be a group. It is often in a group setting, and I know that you size those groups such that family dynamics can come up and then be worked with. So let's talk about that a little bit. Tell me a little bit about what family dynamics mean to you, and what makes this important.

Joe: Something that is most interesting about it is that family dynamics are cool in the fact that they allow you to see why things are coming up, and they are also cool in the fact that it gives you one way to heal patterns that are no longer useful to you in your life. That's what makes them cool. If you look at Freud's work or a lot of the early psychotherapy work, it was all very focused on that early family stuff. There are a lot of ways to have significant transformation without ever really going into it. I say that at the front end just to say that there is lots of avenues of transformation. There are lots of ways of healing. There is no one way, and so this is a cool thing to talk about, but if anybody is listening and thinking this is the only way, please let that go in your head.

The way I think about it, the best explanation I have ever heard is that our brains, there are many brains that hang out— There is delta, alpha, beta, and theta, and theta is kind of the brain wave that we get into right before we go into sleep or right as we are waking up. It is the brain wave that happens when you are under hypnosis, and it is the brain wave basically you are in basically from zero to seven, eight years old, for the majority of it. It is really a way that you are being programmed just like you would under hypnosis. As kids are young, they are in this theta brain wave. It is why fairies are real for them, and it is why they are in a magical reality. It is that dream state, between that dream and awake space. In the American Indian culture, it was represented by dragonflies, which I just think is a beautiful imagery of what that is.

We are being programmed in that young age, and we are in that brain state that tells us what reality is. This is love. Love is what we experience mom and dad doing and how we experience their interactions with us. This is what money looks like. This is what power looks like. This is what nature looks like. We get taught this whole way of looking at the world in those young times. If you are three years old and you are scared and you run to mom, and she is like it is time for you to be strong, that's what you are going to learn. If the mom pulls you up and holds you,

that's what you are going to learn. If the mom slaps you and says why do you always bug me, that's what you are going to learn. That's how you are going to react to fear. That's the way I think about it.

That zero to 8 years old particularly is very much your programming. I think it continues. I think we learn things. Traumatic events can teach us and unteach us things, so there are other experiences we can have. Therefore, that's reality. If we stay on that path, whatever we learned in that time frame, even though it might be painful, it is very easy to stay there. It is when you move out of that path that it becomes challenging. The other thing about this, which is ancillary, but I think cool to think about, is that most of the transformation techniques I have seen are very useful to tap into the theta brainwaves. Oftentimes, when people finish Groundbreakers, that week-long course that we do very rarely, people are like I can't remember anything that happened. I don't know what happened. When you and I did ESF together, people were like what the hell happened. I spent 3 days, and I don't know what the hell happened.

Brett: I still can't remember 95% of what happened there.

Joe: It is because you are in that theta space, and that's where you are doing the reprogramming.

Brett: To bring some examples into this, in the Q&A today, somebody made a comment in a session with you. They were like I am enduring the storm. I am weathering the storm. You were like wait a minute, in that, there is still an enduring going on. You can see the whole fractal family dynamic show up of like, I was taught that life is a storm to be weathered, and you could see how that might create a pattern. If I am carrying that belief, then I will be attracted to people who are also experiencing life as something to be endured, and then we find this thing where we are enduring it together. That could be one way. If my mother was that way to me or was that with life and taught that to me, then I might find myself in a relationship— If I am resisting that and I am like I don't want to live a life that feels like enduring, then I will find myself living a life where I am resisting the perspective that it is being endured and finding others in my life to feel that resistance with.

Joe: Yes. Sometimes you are finding people who are seeing the world that way you see it, but you are also finding people to prove the way you see it is right. If you are somebody who believes that the world should be endured, then you are probably also finding somebody who makes you endure life. You will find people who both become the thing to be endured, and the people who you can say isn't true we have to endure together. That seems to be the pattern that you recreate over and over again.

Brett: Right. Let's talk about a couple of other example patterns just to make sure we are not in one particular zone here. Another thing that might happen is that somebody might grow up with a father who is somewhat emotionally absent. They are always working, but they are providing for the family. Their role is creating space in the home, but they are not as present maybe because they can't be. Then that person grows up, and then they find themselves doing the same thing or also just expecting the same of others.

Joe: Or marrying that exactly. They might become the role of the father, or they might marry the role of the father and expect that is just normal.

Brett: Maybe another example, to paint a third example into this picture, is a mother who has a hard time accepting the way that her child is different from her or following a different path and struggles with that, so then the child grows up with a belief and then dating people who have a hard time accepting parts of them and feeling judged.

Joe: There is an immediate step there, which is, "Mom doesn't fully approve of me. Therefore, the voice in the head doesn't fully approve of me. Therefore, I date other people who don't fully approve of me." That's all part of that scheme. We can find one of those for all of us. We can all find one of those, but there are also ones that almost pertain to almost everybody, not everybody but almost everybody.

I will just give a really simple example of that. As a kid, one of the things that you learn is that there is a mother and a father. They are authority figures and they have control over your life. Most people walk around the world with a boss, who is an authority figure and who has control over their life. Not everybody, but most people walk around the world with that. Now, I will often tell clients you don't have a boss. You have a client. You have a customer. Unfortunately, you are not diversified. You don't have lots of customers. You only have one, but you have a customer. They are not your boss. They are not your authority figure. They are somebody who is a customer, and you can lose them or you can get another customer or another client, however you want to look at it. Just even the perspective that you have a boss who has some sort of control over your life is a projection of a family dynamic typically.

Brett: Yeah, and that points to something which this family dynamic thing is, which is when you were growing up, it was real. Your parents had authority over you. You didn't have certain kinds of power that you do as an adult, but the perception continues.

Joe: Yes.

Brett: That's the way that the lives that we lived in our family become the lives that we recreate in subtler and subtler ways as we mature and develop.

Joe: That's right. That's exactly how it works.

Brett: What are some examples of how this shows up in the workplace? You just had the boss projection. What about in a team? What are some ways that perhaps some people's family dynamics issues interact with one another? What are some examples you have seen?

Joe: One of the coolest things, you just said in the team. One of the tricks I will teach to executives is that if they aren't the authority figure in the room that everybody is reporting to, then a lot of these dynamics diminish. One really cool way to stop those kinds of projections that we are about to speak to, is to make the team report to itself, meaning every time you have a team meeting, somebody else is responsible for holding accountability, meaning that the team when somebody fails, it is not the boss who says hey, what happened. It is the team that says hey, what happened. To really make the accountability to the team, which is really where the accountability lies. It is not to a boss.

That's just a cool way that you can create a structure inside of an organization and that changes a lot of this kind of dynamics, which is just a drag on an organization. The drag can be so many ways. It can be I project onto my boss that I need to please them. I project onto my boss that they are never happy with me. I project onto my boss that their opinion matters more than my opinion or that they have more authority than me. One of my favorites is I project onto my boss that they are a bad authority figure and I need to rebel against them. One of the more destructive ones I see a lot of, is if I grow up with a father or mother who I always disappointed, I will recreate ways to disappoint my boss. You see that happening all the time where people are creating ways to disappoint their boss, but they can't see that they are recreating it.

All of that happens, and then the boss also has projections back, like I am responsible for these people. No, the boss is not responsible for them. Everybody is responsible for themselves. Or these people, I cannot depend on them. I have to do it all myself, or I can't let them down or nobody can do it except me or I am necessary. That's one of my favorite ones that bosses have. You see this especially at like not exactly the top tier of an organization, but that level below that. When I work with executives that are not quite at the C level, oftentimes those people, the big thing they have to do to get to the next level is learn that their job is to become unnecessary. They aren't necessary anymore. They can create a structure that basically makes them irrelevant. When they do that, they just take it to the whole next level. It's when they think they need to be needed or that they

offer something special that the team can't offer without them that they hold themselves back. All of those are projections of family dynamics as well.

Brett: Absolutely. That kind of points to something you said earlier about how family dynamics is an interesting way to think about things and it can be useful, but don't get too hung up on it. I can imagine some of these dynamics that come up, issues with authority, might not have actually come from your family. It might have come from your school. It might have come from a mixture of those things.

Joe: There is a tremendous number of men in Silicon Valley who are in the top tier of their game who got bullied pretty heavily. These are a lot of the billionaires, a lot of the biggest players in Silicon Valley are men that don't have an inherit large social intelligence that got fully bullied. They learned there is such a thing as power, and it is real. It is a dog eat dog world, and they need to be in the place where they have the power. They are incredibly smart and they can do it. That also in itself is a project. Obviously, it is not the only people who are near the top tier of Silicon Valley, but there is quite a few of them.

Brett: Seems like a common cluster characteristic. This then also brings us back to what we can do about this. If we are using this kind of framework to start recognizing that a lot of the patterns that are occurring in our lives are being recreated from our family of origin and then kind of spreading out from that to our community or whether we were bullied or how teachers treated us, how church treated us, various things, and we are still recreating these patterns, let's talk about an example of a team or a personal relationship or a group of friends. When people's stuff comes up, they start to slide into these roles where one person will have a set of projections onto the group. Then that will just happen to click into place when someone else has their set of projects, and so on around the group.

Joe: I would say it doesn't click into place unless they meet the right opposite or right corollary projection. It is like they find themselves, and they are like, click. This happens in almost every marriage I ever seen where their traumas overlap in this perfect way where they can play the opposite roles with each other, where they can therefore learn to grow and transform because of the relationship.

Brett: It is like people find each other based on the complementary surface area of their traumas, and that's the thing that makes a team.

Joe: And the best part is when they get into blame, one of the main moments when I am working with a couple where something gets undone, is when they realize it's perfectly matched. There is no one to blame here. I am holding my side. You are holding your side. That's a great moment when people see that. It loosens the whole thing.

Brett: Then the dynamic can change and loosen. The relationship can grow or develop, or they can move in separate directions, whatever is right.

Joe: If they move in separate directions without healing it, they will most likely create another relationship that's very similar.

Brett: Yeah, that sounds right. It is interesting. There is almost this way that you could frame our family dynamics or our family projections as something that holds us back in the world, but it is also the exact kind of thing that is heat seeking, seeking us into exactly the kind of situation we need to solve those dynamics and grow through them in connection with people.

Joe: The reason I said don't make too much of the family dynamics is, because knowing this doesn't help you heal it very much, a little bit it does. But let's take this exact same metaphor, but we will talk about it on an emotional level. Instead of saying family dynamics, we will say what's happening emotionally. In your family, you were taught certain emotions you couldn't have. Your body needs to get homeostasis. Just like if you were taught you couldn't pee, you would be walking around trying to find a place to pee. Your body is trying to get the emotions to move through so that you can get back to homeostasis. What the subconscious is doing is it is recreating patterns where that emotion can come up so that it can be felt. As soon as you fully allow that emotion, you fully surrender into that emotion and let it move all the way through you, then you will stop recreating the pattern on an emotional level.

The intellect, understanding it is useful. It loosens it up. Emotionally, feeling the thing that the pattern has taught you not to feel will very much loosen it up. That will change it pretty dramatically, and the other thing that helps on a nervous system level is that when you are in that pattern, there is a felt sense that is different. If you think about the time that you got most angry for no good reason, or felt most out of control for no good reason, even though you might identify the reason, you realize this doesn't make logical sense that I would be this upset. That's the sensation that you have, not the upsetness, but the sensation that's carrying that upsetness. That's how you know you are in your trauma. There's a felt sense of going I am in my trauma. I am in the pattern here. I know this, and then that's where the rational brain can be really helpful and say when I am in my pattern, I just can't believe my thoughts right now. I can't believe this.

I remember in my journey there was this really wonderful moment where somebody came to me. It was in a business thing. They were like hey, what should we do? I said I can't trust anything I think right now. My brain isn't in a place where I can trust my thoughts, so I am going to go get my brain in a place and my body in a place where I can trust my thoughts, where I am out of my trauma so that I can

think clearly, because if I am acting out of the trauma, I will recreate it over, over, over and over again.

Brett: Yeah, it seems like a great way for the rational, intellectual mind to be able to support the emotion and its process, and then on the opposite side of that, I can see that the thing you just said. My emotion that just came up is way more than it should be. I could also see that being a rationalization for I should down regulate that emotion and not have it, because it is clearly too much for the situation. Somebody just looked at me a certain way and I am all upset. But another way to frame that is this is exactly the amount of emotion my system needs, and this thing brought up a bunch of bottled up, pent up stuff that maybe I don't want to bring up right now in this environment and attack people with, but it is a pointer to the fact that it is there.

Joe: Yes, and it wants to be felt, it wants to be processed, and it wants to be loved. That's exactly right. That is beautifully said, better than I could have said it.

Brett: Keeping on the topic of family dynamics, there is another thing that I can see that occurs. People will go through a story of life. This is maybe one of the ways this can be a trap. They will say I just keep dating my father. I keep dating my mother. Then that becomes a belief about themselves, and it becomes a learned helplessness within that. It seems like the emotional stuff we were just talking about is a way through that. It seems like there is something useful about recognizing that. I can see what is happening here, because that might be one breadcrumb back to the thing for me to work with, the emotion to be felt. It also might only be a breadcrumb back to the thing next to it, and it might not have been a family thing.

Joe: Intellectually, you can learn this thing. This is a family pattern, and then it can not change. Then you can start the belief system of I can't change this, and then you can start the belief system of, I am always going to be in this. Or you can notice the pattern and you can have the belief system of, this is going to be really tough to change. Then you can say, look, I have changed it a little bit, but I am not making progress quick enough. All of those things are more of the projections from your early childhood.

Brett: The belief that I am not quick enough.

Joe: Emotions are hard. Transformation is difficult. I am not quick enough. I can't do it. I am helpless. Mom was helpless. Blah, blah, blah.

Brett: I will always be controlled by my emotions.

Joe: Or I can't trust emotions. Emotions can't be trusted. All of these things are learned from somewhere in the childhood. What often happens is somebody sees

the first thing that they have been working on, and they stick right there on that thing. But they don't see it is held in place by a whole bunch of other ones. As one or two start falling apart, it is easier that the rest start collapsing.

Brett: If somebody is listening to this episode and they are starting to look for family dynamics in their life from the perspective of this might be interesting, might be helpful or it might be a trap, not to take it too heavily, and they start to see something. What's the next step for somebody who starts to recognize, "I have had this pattern all of my life, I can see how it comes from some form of these dynamics. How can I start to see people as an individual, unique human that they are and not as the people that I was raised by?"

Joe: The next step to take outside of learning to recognize it, and the best way to do that is when you are triggered, to know that you are in it then and to feel through it, which is another great step. The other thing that is like a couple really cool tricks to play with are, if you find yourself in an emotionally triggered space, stop everything you are doing, feel the emotion and without any intellect, just feel that emotion. Trace it back to the first time you ever felt it. That will really teach you where this thing came from. That's a really useful trick.

Sometimes just feeling where it came from, and this happens oftentimes with things you don't expect. You might be triggered over a boss and you find out it has something to do with a babysitter, or you might be triggered over money and you find out it has something to do with a dad. That's a cool trick.

Another really trick as far as next steps of dilapidating the program is to remember that all of these programs came for good reason. If you were striving your whole life to find your dad's love and so you are programmed to strive for love, that's your job as a kid is to make sure you are loved by your dad or you might not survive. It is instinct, and it is beautiful. Can you love these patterns? Can you respect them for what they tried to give you? Can you just help them find new ways of doing it more effectively rather than move into you shouldn't be doing this? I keep doing that. What's the problem here? Because that's just more of the pattern.

Learning what the pattern has done for, how it has served you, its intent even if it is mean and vicious, its intent is to take care of you. To see that and honor that also is really effective in allowing the patterns to become more useful and more effective and more functional.

Brett: It is almost like honoring your path to have been perfect as it is, and your behavior to have developed according to very logical, environmental shaping. It makes it easier to step forward and say that my future behavior is also going to make perfect sense in some regard, and I don't need to be self critical. I can just feel what's true for me.

Joe: I was just dealing with a person recently, an old friend who I love dearly, and just going through the heat. At some point, he looked up and said to me, “I realized that it doesn’t matter who would have been put into my position, this is what would have happened to them.” He saw that it wasn’t personal to him. The life, the patterns, all of it wasn’t personal to him. Anybody put into that situation would have ended up that way. It was so much relief in that.

Brett: Do you have any integration questions for us about family dynamics?

Joe: Yeah, the first one would be, “What’s the pattern in your life that you most feel holds you back?”, and then the second question would be, “What’s the way you try to avoid it that is actually keeping it in place. What’s the way you are trying to avoid that pattern, that actually holds the pattern in place?” That would be the other way to say that. Then the third question is, “What is it about this pattern that has been serving you, has tried you and has served you in the past?”

Brett: Great questions. Thank you, Joe.

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