

Disrupt Yourself Podcast

EPISODE 119: ADAM GRANT

Welcome to the Disrupt Yourself Podcast. I'm Whitney Johnson. I think, write, speak and live all things disruption.

My guest today is Adam Grant, organizational psychologist, Wharton professor, New York Times bestselling author and host of the WorkLife podcast with TED.

Whitney: Adam Grant, welcome to the Disrupt Yourself Podcast.

Adam: Thanks Whitney.

Whitney: First question for you is where did you grow up and what did you want to be when you grow up?

Adam: Uh, I grew up in the uh, Detroit Suburbs and I hated the question of what I wanted to be when I grew up (laughs)

Whitney: (laughs)

Adam: Because you know, first of all, I had all these unrealistic aspirations, like I want it to be a professional basketball player but you know, when you start high school at four foot nine and end up five foot nine, not that likely.

Whitney: (laughs)

Adam: And then, you know, after I got over some of those uh, pipe dreams, I realized I didn't want to be one thing, I wanted to do many things. And the idea of, you know, having to, to take on one career as my sole identity and you kind of get stuck in that, you know, in that one box, was incredibly limiting. And so, uh, I was, I was really undecided until, uh, I guess until the, right before I started my senior year of college, I had no clue what I wanted to be, let alone do.

Whitney: All the way until your senior year of college you didn't know what you wanted to do?

Adam: I was completely lost when it came to career.

Whitney: And so you didn't like the question in part because you didn't have an answer to it, but also because you felt like it was restrictive to your identity, is that, is that what was happening?

Adam: Yeah, I wanted to be more than just a job-

Whitney: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Adam: Or just to a career field. And I also didn't want to have to lock into, one path as who I was going to become, uh, I felt like I had many different interests. I was, you know, starting to develop different kinds of skills and I wanted to get to combine them in all sorts of interesting ways as opposed to say, okay, I'm, I'm going to go down a path and I'm stuck on it.

Whitney: What were some of the interests that you had in college? I suspect there were two or three things that we're all kind of tickling your brain, what were some of those things?

Adam: Yeah, I, so going into college uh, probably my, my two strongest passions were, were diving, springboard diving and magic. Uh, and you know, not (laughs) not very practical careers in either case, right? I, I did actually when people would ask me uh, when I was, I was going from high school to college what I wanted to do for a career, I told them my dream was to be a diving coach because it was the thing that I loved doing most. And I, I had an incredible coach Eric Best who really fundamentally changed my life and I wanted to try to pay that forward as much as I could. And you know magic I loved, because it was really fun to you know to watch a trick, see if I could figure out a way to do it and then surprise and delight audiences. And (laughs) I felt like okay, I'm probably not going to be a professional magician ever and that means I just, I have no idea what to, what to do from here.

Whitney: Interesting. Okay, let's go into the diving. I want to come back to the magic later, but for right now, let's talk about diving. So reading, *Give and Take*, um, I learned that you started diving when you're in high school. Tell us about that. How did that happen?

Adam: Well, so actually right before I started high school, uh, it, it was the summer and I guess I was playing video games, you know, 10 or 11 hours a day. And my mom decided that she was going to drag me out into the sunlight, and she took me to go swimming at a local pool. And there was a lifeguard there who uh, was not a regular guard, he was subbing for someone. So total serendipity. On one of his breaks, he gets up on the diving board and starts to do all these mesmerizing flips and twists. And I guess I'd seen diving on TV in the Olympics, but there's, there's something different about seeing it up close.

And I just thought it was extraordinary, and I said, I want to learn how to do that. The, the athleticism, the control, you know, the ability to, to jump high and spin fast and then, you know, land precisely without a splash in the water and just kind of disappear. I just, I just, I said, I, I have to learn how to do that. And I started taking classes that summer and then, you know, in high school, rolled around. I showed up for the very first day of, uh, of the swimming and diving team I guess it was, it was a tryout. And I, I don't think I've ever been so focused, at least up until that point in my life. I had never been so determined to, you know, to achieve something as I was to make that freshman year of diving team.

And afterward, Eric said, "do you want the good news or the bad news?" And you know, here I'm looking at this brilliant coach and, and saying, oh gosh, what's, you know, tell me if there's bad news, I want to know right away. And he says, well, uh, diving requires three things. It requires flexibility, explosive power and grace. And he says, you know (laughs) to be perfectly honest, uh, you can't touch your toes without bending your knees.

Whitney: (laughs)

Adam: Uh, my grandmother can jump higher than you-

Whitney: (laughs)

Adam: And you walk like Frankenstein.” (laughs) But he's laughing because as he says this and I'm like, what's the good news? And he goes on to tell me that diving is sort of a nerd sport, that it attracts all the people who were uh, too short for basketball, too weak for football, too slow for track. And so, if I work really hard at this sport, he believes I can be a state finalist by my senior year and that he will no matter, he doesn't care how good I am. That whatever level of effort I put in, he's willing to put in that level of effort as a coach too.

Whitney: Wow.

Adam: Yeah. He actually said, he said, " I will never cut a diver who wants to be here." And, I mean to me that is the epitome of what a coach is, right? To say, look, you know, I, I respond to your motivation, not what I think is your talent level.

Whitney: Okay. So you, you won the lottery when it came to coaches basically?

Adam: Oh, I did. I mean, I, I have never met a better coach. Uh, and I think, you know, I, I worked with lots of diving coaches over the years and you know, now I've had the chance to work with the coaches of professional sports teams and world class executive coaches, and Eric is still the best coach I've ever met.

Whitney: Wow, what a gift. Can you think of a moment where you had a dive and it was just the most splendid dive? What was the dive? Where were you? What happened?

Adam: Haha, I can think of lots of moments where I thought that until I came out of the water and saw the judges' scores.

Whitney: (laughs)

Adam: (laughs)

Whitney: Okay, one where the judges' scores and your feeling of the dive aligned.

Adam: Oh, sure, I can do that. So, one of the best moments I had as a diver was, uh, was actually on the heels of uh, of a little bit of, of disappointment. So I, I got, I got better over time, (laughs) obviously from being really bad uh, and I ended up being a state finalist my junior year. And my senior year I had a bad, uh, I missed my best dive actually, I had a bad meet. And then I went off to, to dive in college and I felt like, okay, you know, (laughs) I need to do something to, you know, to make up for the, the horrible performance I had and the biggest meet in my life that I had been training for, for, for almost four years.

And I remember, um, I was doing a, uh, I guess it was a, it was a reverse one and a half straight uh, which was, it's, it's sort of an unusual dive. You jump off the board forward uh, and you do a back flip and then a back dive. Uh, you might also know it as a, know it is a gainer. And uh, the thing that I did that it was unusual about it is instead of curling up into a ball and a tuck position uh, instead of, you know, folding in half with my legs straight in a pike position because I still wasn't that flexible I just did it straight. And so I had to whip my body into this kind of um, kind of like spinning like I was a ruler and it was, it was one of my hardest dives.

And, uh, there was one meet where I just, I felt like I had the rhythm of the board really perfect. Um, you know, you, you jump up and you, you raise one knee and then you step down and then you're just waiting to land up on the board and swing your arms. And my timing just felt impeccable. And I reached up and I felt like I, I jumped a little higher than I normally did. Um, I spun a little bit faster than I normally did, and so I had lots of time to prepare for my entry.

And I remember grabbing my hands to punch a hole in the water, uh, right after I looked back to see the water behind me and just feeling like this is, this is as good as I could ever do this dive. And it might be as good as I can ever do a dive, period.

And then as I hit the water, I heard that, that sound that every diver looks forward to uh, which is like a poof! Sound when you, your hands puncture a hole in the water and then your hope is that you disappear through it. And it just, it just felt like I did everything right and I came out of the water and, uh, I got my highest scores ever on the dive. And, uh, I actually ended up retiring after that year, feeling like I kind of peaked and I'd gotten as good as I was going to get.

Whitney: I'm just smiling from year to year. So was this your freshman year in college?

Adam: It was.

Whitney: I love it. So, you had, speaking of diving, let's continue with that theme a little bit longer. You had an experience in high school that was formative. It sounds like it was your senior year, maybe your junior year, you can tell us which, where you volunteered to coach two of your competitors. Will you set the stage for us and what happened?

Adam: So junior year I, uh, I've, I make the state finals and this was, this was a really big year because I'd also qualified uh, for my first and my second time uh, for the Junior Olympic Nationals. And that, that made me, I think one of the top 40 divers in the country. And I was like, this is incredible I've already exceeded you know my expectations of what I'd be able to do after I graduated from high school. And then the summer rolled around, and I was you know, I was training at a diving camp and there were a couple of younger divers uh who were working on various skills. And the one, I feel like the one gift I had as a diver was uh, was the entry. You know for whatever reason uh, you know might be like the, the shape and size of my hands. It might be you know my, my body alignment uh, it never actually got to the bottom of this but um, I remember uh, one, one day uh, a coach actually complaining to, to Eric and saying you know well, all Adam can do is rip his entries like all he can do is vanish without a splash. And Eric is like so? That's the most important thing in diving.

Whitney: (laughs)

Adam: You know, it was a commentary. They're like, well, he doesn't jump very high and you know, he doesn't spin that fast and his twisting is kind of off axis. Oh, like, like all, all, all that's good is the entry. And Eric is like, yeah, but that's how you, that's the biggest driver of the score on a dive. So, um, that was my skill. It was one that, you know, I came in good at, um, and I got even better at as I practiced it over time.

And so, uh, then there's one diver, uh, Ryan who was, was really struggling with his entries. Uh, he'd been a gymnast and so he was kind of the opposite of me. He could jump, he could spin fast, he could twist uh, he had great air awareness, he was extremely flexible, but in gymnastics, uh, it, you never land on your head it's deadly. And so, he really struggled with his entries and I, I saw him struggling and I just immediately started to, to give him some tips. And one of the coaches at camp, uh, called me over and said, you know, don't, don't give, don't pay attention to other people, focus on your own diving.

But I, I really enjoyed teaching and sharing my knowledge and I just, I just thought, hey, you know, there's, there's something that I know how to do well that I can help him get better at that'll improve his skills. Yeah, I'm happy to do it. And so, he improved his entries over the course of the summer and I really didn't see him because he was way across the state, uh, until state meet, and he'd kept improving. And in part, using that beautiful entry that I taught him, he beat me by a couple of points at the State Championships, Ugh, still hurts thinking about it.

Whitney: Well, and what's interesting, and I might be completely wrong, but it seems to me that that experience planted the seeds for this book, this brilliant book called *Give and Take*.

Adam: It might've. I think I kind of did actually. I don't, I definitely didn't know it at the time, but looking back it was, yeah, Whitney, it was, it was, it was a defining experience in the sense that I, I didn't want to, I didn't want to be in a world where (laughs) my, my motivation to help others uh, would, would be in conflict with my motivation to succeed. I wanted to find a job, a career where I could be ambitious for myself and be ambitious for others and those goals would actually sometimes align. And I also wanted to know why, you know why some people were, were really motivated to be helpful and, and others saw it as irrational or self-sacrificing or stupid.

Whitney: Yeah. There's a piece of me that wonders would we have that book if that hadn't happened? Would we have this book? Something else might have happened...

Adam: Are you trying to justify my misery? Is that what's happening right now?

Whitney: (laughs) I'm not trying to justify your misery but I am, I, in fact, it's interesting that we're having this conversation because I know you've co-authored a book with Sheryl Sandberg and I remember when, um, she, writing a piece that, you know, she wasn't on the board of Facebook for such a long time. And I remember having this thought, would we have gotten *Lean In* if she had been put on the board of Facebook when she probably should have been? I wondered that. And so now I wonder this and I'm not trying to make you feel more, misery-

Adam: (laughs)

Whitney: I'm trying to find meaning in your life. Anyway, it's just a question that I, that came up for me as, as I was, as I was preparing for our conversation. So let's now talk about *Give and Take*. You've gone to college, you finally decided to major in psychology, you get this PhD in organizational psychology, 2013 you published *Give and Take*. Let's talk about styles of repro, reciprocity, the givers, the takers, the matchers. Give us at a very high level for people who aren't familiar with, with what these are.

Adam: Sure. So this, this will be like any framework for, for personality or motivation. It'll be a gross over simplification of how complex this is in the real world, but, um, there is a huge body of evidence that around the world and in every industry that's been studied, there are these three styles of interaction that people adopt. So, and one extreme we have takers and their primary focus is on trying to figure out what they can get from other people.

Givers are the opposite, right? The question is how, what, how can I add value? And so they actually enjoy helping other people without strings attached. And then most people don't want to be too generous, they don't want to be too selfish. And so their default is to go into this third mode called matching where, you know, I will reciprocate whatever you do. So Whitney, I'll do something for you if you do something for me. And I think it's, you know, it's important to recognize that we all have moments of giving, taking and matching, but we also have a dominant style, right? Which is the way that we prefer to treat the majority of people, the majority of the time.

Whitney: What's yours?

Adam: So I don't actually think I'm qualified to judge-

Whitney: Uh-

Adam: I think-

Whitney: Interesting.[crosstalk 00:15:45]

Adam: You know you, you're so, I can tell you what motivates me, right? I can tell you that I-

Whitney: Uh-huh.

Adam: Enjoy helping others, uh, and that, you know, I prefer to operate like a giver-

Whitney: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Adam: But if you really want to know what my style is, you also have to gauge whether my action lives up to that motivation, right? So you'd have to ask the people who interact with me, uh, how they perceive me and uh, and then judge from there.

Whitney: Interesting. I was going to ask you that question because I can, I look at myself and I think, you know, there are certain contexts where I'm absolutely giver, there are contexts whereas, you know, we all have our, our, um, our shadow side. I think we all have context where we're takers and then matchers.

So, so for everyone who's listening and thinking, you know what? I want to be more of a giver, what suggestions would you make? And then maybe add onto that, if you're a person who wants to create a context where people are more likely to give. And maybe that's a much more complicated question than just what suggestions would you make, but just what are your thoughts?

Adam: Sure. So one of, one of the best pieces of advice that I've gotten on, on how to increase generosity, uh, in a way that doesn't seem(laughs) you know it's too daunting or too costly, uh, it comes from Kat Cole, uh, who, who ran Cinnabon and a number of other franchises. And what Kat recommended, uh, that was really critical early in her career and she's continued to adopt throughout her life is that you just go into every interaction asking, how can I be a mini-helper?

Whitney: Hmm.

Adam: So, you know, you don't have to spend-

Whitney: Mini-helper?

Adam: Yeah. You don't have to spend nine hours helping every person that you meet, right? Or, or responding to every request that comes in. What you want to do is, is try to figure out, okay, is there, is there a small way that I can add value? And so when, when Kat would meet someone new, one of the things she started doing when she was 19 or 20 was to ask, what's the biggest problem that you're facing right now? Or what's your toughest challenge?

Whitney: Hmm.

Adam: And then, you know, she would try to, to come up with a piece of knowledge or a story of something similar that she had faced or, you know, someone she knew who might be able to, to help with that. Um, and you know, it's, it feels like a, you know, sort of a small thing, but over time, those actions that add up and pretty soon if you know (laughs) a bunch of, uh, a bunch of moments of being a mini-helper add up to turn you into kind of a real helper.

Whitney: Hmm. Okay, that's great. That's great advice. Okay, so-

Adam: You also wanted to know how to instill that norm in your organization, is that right?

Whitney: I do. You want to answer that one too?

Adam: Sure.

Whitney: Okay.

Adam: So I think that there are, I mean, there are a lot of things that, that help on the margin. I think the reality is that people overlook how important help seeking is for creating a, a culture of help giving. And I think a lot of people shy away from asking for help because they don't want to be takers-

Whitney: Hmm.

Adam: But there's a huge difference between taking and receiving, right? You, we actually don't need takers in the world to have givers. Takers are people who use others. Receivers are people who say, look, you know, I, I'll accept your contribution with gratitude and then if I can, I'll pay it back or pay it forward. And we, we do need people who are willing to receive in order to, to have giving exist in the first place. And so I think the problem is that a lot of people don't ask for that reason. You know, they think, oh, every ask is taking, which is not true. Uh, they think, I don't want to be at a burden to others, you know, I don't want to look incompetent. I, I prefer to be on the giving end of the exchange.

And the problem is that there are lots of people who'd be happy to help you if only they knew what you needed. And frankly, who else needed help, right? So the data suggests that 75 and 90% of all helping in organization starts with the request. So, if we want more giving, we need more asking and my favorite way to make that happen is through an exercise, uh, that now has an online version, it's called Givitas. Full disclosure, uh, uh, I got invited in as a co-founder but this-

Whitney: What is it called? Givitas has-

Adam: Yeah, it's Givitas, G-I-V-I-T-A-S.

Whitney: Okay, okay. Got it.

Adam: So it's a, it's an online platform for giving and receiving help. And the, the simple idea is that you bring together a community of people, a team, a network, a whole organization, and anybody who wants can submit a request for something they want or need but can't get on their own. And then everybody else gets to view that request and then weigh in if they think they, they might know something or someone that would be helpful. And over time you start to see this explosion of generosity where you know, where people realize, oh gosh, there are all these ways that I, I can help. You know, some of my own colleagues, I just didn't even know they wanted that thing.

You know, we've, we've had people fulfill requests to see a Bengal tiger in the wild, uh, to synthesize a strain of the PCS alkaloid, uh, to get a job at Google and discover you didn't want a job at Six Flags. (laughs) And you know very often, uh, people are surprised, uh, at how much they enjoy helping, at how easy it is to help and how little they really knew about what the people they thought they knew were trying to accomplish.

Whitney: And you said you started to, you started answering the question of doing this inside, you know, how do you do this inside of organizations? Have you seen this work inside of an organization where there's this, this reciprocity ring? I think you initially called it, but now, um-

Adam: Yeah.

Whitney: But, have you seen that happen inside of organizations?

Adam: Yeah, absolutely. So, one of the most interesting examples is, uh, there's a, a pharmaceutical company that ran this exercise and somebody said, all right, I'm, I'm trying to synthesize this PCS alkaloid, it's going to cost 50 grand US, can't afford that in my budget, does anyone know a way to do that cheaper? And one of the colleagues in, in that room from a different division of the company, they don't even know each other, uh, actually volunteers and says, you know, actually we have slack capacity in my lab right now, this sounds like a great learning project for my team, I'll do it for free and save 50 grand on the spot. And you know, I think it's, it's, it's kind of a simple form of crowdsourcing where you-

Whitney: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Adam: Say, look, the mistake that most of us make is when we need help, we only go to the people that we've traded favors with in the past or expect to in the future. And you know, the odds that that person who's helped you before or that you know well is the most qualified person to help you with a completely different request are pretty low.

Whitney: You said you wanted to be a ma, magician and you loved the discipline of performing magic tricks and surprising and delighting people, this sounds like a magician to me.

Adam: (laughs) Uh, if your idea of magic is, uh, conducting lots of, uh, of experiments and longitudinal studies and reading tons of research and then trying to, pull it all together into some practical ideas, sure.

Whitney: No, I mean, the part where you surprise and delight people by hey, people saying, Hey, I'd like to see a Bengal tiger, or hey, I'd like to get this \$50,000 funding.

Adam: Oh yeah, of course.

Whitney: That's surprising and delighting people.

Adam: That makes more sense, I'm with you now.

Whitney: Yeah.

Adam: (laughs)

Whitney: One of the concerns I think that people have and is, they want to be givers but they're worried about being doormats. And you talked about a couple of things, um, sincerity screening and generous tit for tat. Could you, um, explain what those are?

Adam: Yeah, so let me, let me put them in a little context first. So that, when you study successful versus failed givers, you see that it's less about intelligence or competence or talent and more about the choices they make every day. Failed givers help all the people all the time with all their requests. And so they ended up prioritizing other people's needs so far ahead of their own that they either burn out or just plain get burned by takers. Um, what you see with successful givers

is they're much more thoughtful about who they help, when they help and how they help. And so if, if you break that down, sincerity screening is the idea saying, look, you shouldn't just be, just because you like to be helpful, it doesn't mean you should help everybody who asks. What you should do is find out if, if the person who is seeking help from you has a history or reputation of selfish behavior.

And then if they do, you want to say, maybe this is not the best time to go into extreme giver mode, I should be flexible and adaptable in my style. And maybe when dealing with a taker I should be a matcher and say, look you know, I'm happy to help you if you know, if you will help somebody else that I'm trying to help. And I think that you know at some level that's, that's the way to go but there is this little wrinkle uh, which comes from research by Robert Novak out of the, the evolutionary biology world. Which you know, starts from the idea that, you know, if you've ever studied game theory, you know that you're supposed to do tit for tat because you know, if, if you start out cooperating and then somebody else cooperates, you want to reciprocate and so you have two matchers who basically evolve a, a giving relationship.

And then if you know, if somebody's defects or cheats, then you know, you should also reciprocate and then two matchers, you know, become more cautious and they protect themselves. And what Novak shows is that, that is true if you have a one shot game and you don't have to interact with the same people over and over again, but that if relationships and reputations exist, you might actually want to move instead of pure tit for tat, which is just straight matching. If you're generous, I'll be generous, if you're selfish, I'll be selfish. You want to move in a generous tit, tit for tat, which in their models is often a, if you know, if you screw me over uh you know one out of three times, I will forgive you-

Whitney: Hmm.

Adam: In the hopes that, you know, maybe it was a misunderstanding.

Whitney: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Adam: Maybe I misjudged you, maybe you are turning over a new leaf and I want to give you a chance to reset your style.

Whitney: Interesting. Okay. So that's sincerity screening, we've got the generous tit for tat. Um, any thoughts on when you're hiring someone specific suggestions on being able to detect a giver versus a taker? Are there any quick tells that you, you would suggest or you've seen?

Adam: Um, yeah, I, I think there's, there's good evidence for a few strategies that are at least, they give you clues. So one is takers tend to take more credit for teams successes and they're more likely to blame other people for their failures. So, you know, if you find out about somebody's accomplishments or struggles, ask them the extra question. Okay. What do you think caused that successor? You know, what, what-

Whitney: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Adam: What was the reason for that failure? And see whether they're, they're willing to, you know, admit that they might've done something wrong and they're willing to credit others graciously. That would be one. Another that, that I find pretty useful is looking at the expectations that people have of others. So, there's a bunch of research suggesting that takers actually anticipate more selfish behavior from others and that's part of how they rationalize but, and justify being a taker, right? It's not me, I think all you people are selfish and so I'm just being smart and cautious.

Whitney: (laughs)

Adam: Um, and then uh, a third strategy that I really like is to, to look at a pattern of kissing up and kicking down.

Whitney: Hmm.

Adam: The idea is that you know, that, that everybody engages in some helping behaviors and takers tend to direct theirs mostly upward because they know that the way you get ahead with powerful people is to help them out and be generous with them. But then they learn like, gosh, it's a lot of work to pretend to care about everybody. So, they let their guard down with peers and subordinates who gets to see more of their true colors. And what that means for me is, it's often a red flag if somebody has a great reputation upward, but it's more mixed, lateral and downward.

Whitney: You talk about, um, the research says that the smartest negotiators, the more intelligent ones don't get better deals for themselves, but for their counterparts. Any quick thoughts on that?

Adam: Yeah. The (laughs) it's such an interesting finding. Basically the smarter you are, the more you realize that life is not a zero sum game. And the more likely you are then to find ways of, of benefiting others a lot that costs you a little or nothing. And also the more likely you are to, uh, to, to realize, look, you know what, I, I'm not going to let anyone take advantage of me. And in fact, you know, I believe that by conducting my life in a generous way, that, you know, there are enough matchers in the world that this is not, even, even if it costs me in this interaction, it's not going to cost me net in life.

Whitney: Yeah. Okay. So, which goes to the next thing that I wanted to raise. Um, you cited research that says that the more people get they, the more they give, um, but as a percentage it gets less. Um, you said specifically people making less than \$25,000 donate 4.2% to charity and more than 100,000 they donate 2.7%. You then though, talk about - this is on page 182 - you're talking about in the context of a story that you were telling about Jon Huntsman that for every \$1 in extra to charitable giving, income is \$3.75 higher.

Adam: (laughs)

Whitney: Wow. Any thoughts you want share on that, on that piece of research?

Adam: Yeah, so I might have been wrong about the first part.

Whitney: (laughs)

Adam: There's a big debate that's just, just been kicked off by some new research suggesting that in fact uh, wealthier people are not less generous.

Whitney: Oh, good! That's good

Adam: So um-

Whitney: To hear.

Adam: Yeah, I think the, the jury is out on that one and I-

Whitney: Okay.

Adam: I haven't figured out yet where, uh, where the truth lies. But uh, on the question of what's going on, the, this is crazy. Arthur Brooks has this evidence that the more you give this year, the wealthier you become next year. And you know, that kind of doesn't make economic sense. I think that, you know, it is possible that, that people have high expectations of their future wealth and then maybe they start giving earlier. But Arthur, Arthur is convinced that actually what happens is, uh, is more psychological. That there's a warm glow of giving, that when-

Whitney: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Adam: When you give money away, away this year, it motivates you. Uh, you, it brings more meaning to your life, uh, you enjoy it, uh, and then you become energized to earn even more so you can give you more away. And you know, I don't, I don't know whether that's true or not, but I think it's, it's a pretty interesting idea to contemplate.

Whitney: Intuitively that's what makes sense to me, is that you start to imagine, you know, instead of, I want to make X amount of money because I just want more money. You're saying I want more money to put into circulation because my ability to do more good extends beyond where I am and here's the good that I want to do or I am doing. I, I think that makes sense intuitively to me from a psychological perspective. Interesting, it'll be interesting to see what the uh, ultimate conclusions are.

Um, okay.. Your origin story as we talked about, the, the diving story in high school would suggest to me at least my experience of you is that you are a giver and I have certainly been the beneficiary of your giving. You blurbed my book *Disrupt Yourself*. So I just wanted to go on the record and say thank you for that. Uh-

Adam: (laughs) Thank you, I'll try to live up to it.

Whitney: I, I (laughs) I was very appreciative. And then the last question that I want to ask you, um, no second, penultimate question is, um, is there something that you need right now? Let's do a little, GIVITAS or um, re, reciprocity ring at the moment. Is there something that you are trying to get done that you need uh, that our podcast listeners could be aware of? And could possibly help you do.

Adam: Aha, that's very kind of you to ask Whitney. Um, I don't know. I think if I had, if I had to say there's one thing, uh, I am always looking for new vehicles to share ideas. I guess the, the easy way to answer that question is to say that I do a monthly newsletter called Granted, uh, which, uh, which is kind of my excuse for, for taking the articles and ideas and, uh, and videos that I found most interesting each month about work in psychology, uh, and sharing those with the, with, uh, with an audience.

And one of my favorite things to do is, uh, his answer, interesting reader questions about things they're wondering about in that realm. And so I would say if anybody uh, has a question about work or psychology that they are curious about, um, I would love to hear what it is. Uh, and you can find the info for that at, uh, Adamgrant.net.

Whitney: I love the name of your newsletter, that's so clever. Okay. Any last thoughts or advice that you have for our listeners?

Adam: My best advice around, around give and take is to say that, you know, I, I really believe that the most meaningful way to succeed is to help other people succeed. And I think that the mistake too many people make is they just end up helping other people indiscriminately. And I think that we should all be a little bit more proactive in trying to figure out, okay, where are the places

where I make the, the most distinctive contribution? What are the forms of giving that energize me rather than exhaust me? And then if you focus on those, it's much more likely that you're both helping other people in meaningful ways and also doing that in ways that strengthen you. That to me is, is probably the best way to think about being a giver.

Whitney: Adam Grant, thank you for giving your time to be with us.

Adam: Thank you for having me.

It will never cease to surprise and delight me at how our early experiences are woven into the choices we make, and the lives that we end up leading.

Like with Adam and his diving experiences.

First, with his diving coach Eric. What a gift to work with a coach who has the mindset of looking at a diver's motivation and not their talent level. He said, "I will never cut a diver who wants to be here." Perhaps you have someone on your team who is at the low end of the curve skill-wise, but is motivated to learn and wants to be there. What support can you give? What are you doing to not "cut" that person?

Second, there's the story about Adam coaching his competitor on his entry into the water. Though helping ultimately allowed that competitor to surpass Adam, I loved what he said - "I didn't want to be in a world where my motivation to help others would be in conflict with my motivation to succeed."

Live the way you want the world to be. Do you want to be a matcher? Do you want to be a taker? Or do you want to be a giver?

Practical tip:

My first inclination was to call out the suggestion Adam shared from Kat Cole - look for ways to be a mini-giver. While that is an excellent suggestion, and you can work on that this week if you'd like, I wanted to go with something a bit more challenging, how can you show up as a receiver? As Adam said, in order for there to be giving, we have to be willing to receive. And there are a lot of people who'd be happy to help you if only they knew what you needed. If we want more giving, we need more asking. We need more receiving. So, what do you need this week? Be specific. Make an ask. Be willing to receive.

So I'm going to practice right asking right now--you knew this was coming, didn't you? Would you take a moment and leave a written review on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or wherever you listen to your podcasts? By doing so, you will be helping guide new disruptors to this corner of the internet. If you've left a review already, thank you! And thank you for continuing to share the episodes and what you're learning on social media. It is kind of you to give, and we are grateful to receive.

Thank you to Adam Grant for being our guest, thank you to sound engineer Whitney Jobe, manager / editor Macy Robison, content contributors Emilie Davis and Nancy Wilson, and art director Brandon Jameson.

I'm Whitney Johnson
And this is Disrupt Yourself.