

GAME CHANGERS

What Leaders,
Innovators and
Mavericks Do
to Win at Life

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NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF
THE BULLETPROOF DIET

Dave Asprey

**Game Changers: What
Leaders, Innovators and
Mavericks Do to Win at Life**

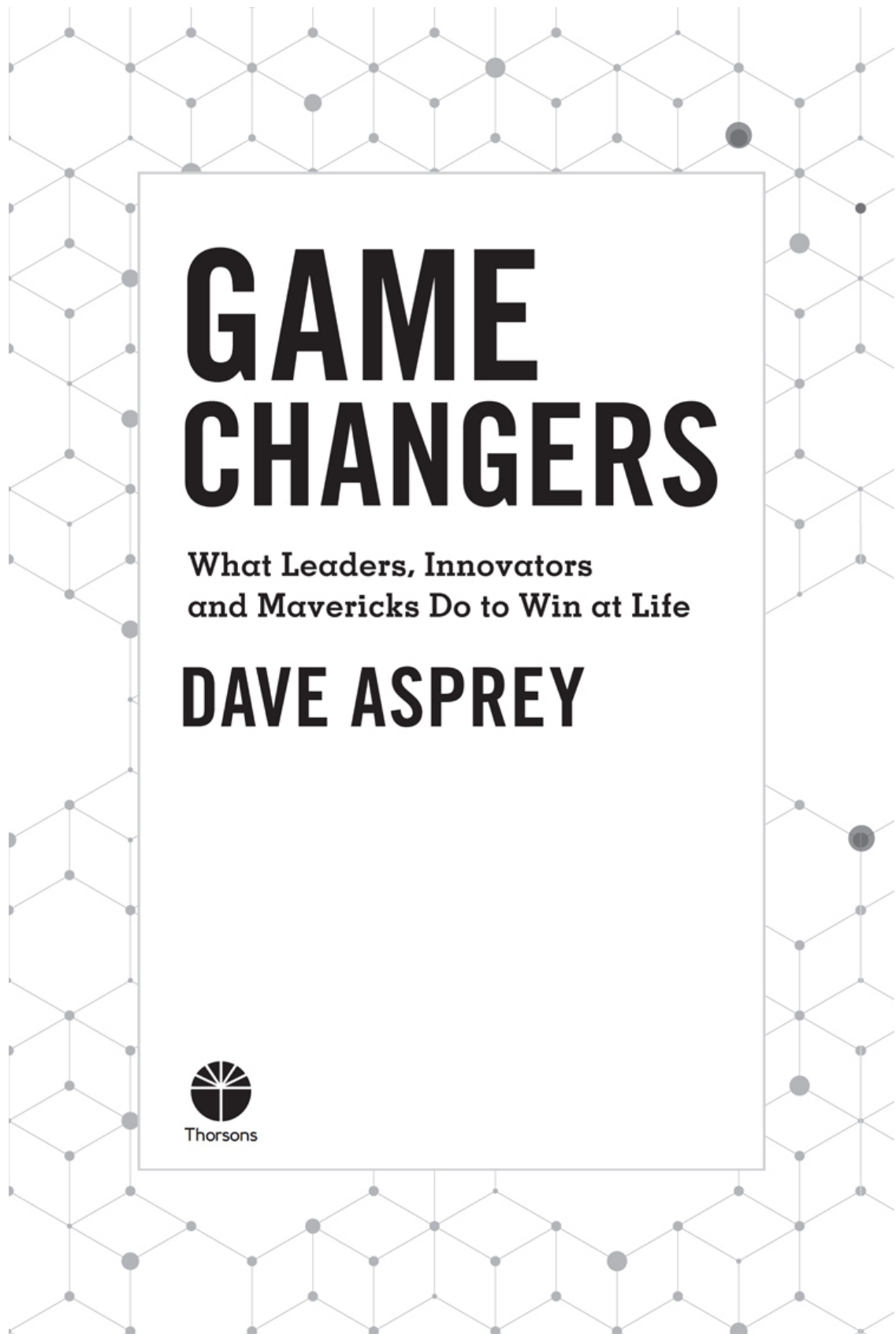
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The bestselling author of *Head Strong* and *The Bulletproof Diet* answers the question "How do I kick more ass?"—providing proven techniques for becoming happier, healthier, and smarter, culled from the wisdom and insight of world-class thought leaders and mavericks of science and business. When Dave Asprey started his *Bulletproof Radio* podcast more than five years ago, he sought out thought leaders and influencers in an array of disciplines, from biochemists to business titans to mediation masters. These folks were some of the top performing humans in the world, people who had changed their areas of study or even pioneered entirely new fields. Dave wanted to know: What did they have in common? What mattered most to them? What makes them so successful at what they do—and what makes them happiest? And so, at the end of each interview, Dave began asking the same question: "What are your top three recommendations for people who want to kick more ass?" Combing through the recordings, looking for patterns and common threads, he found that the wisdom gleaned from these highly successful people can be distilled into three main categories: body, mind, and spirit. *Game Changers* is the culmination of Dave's years-long statistical analysis of these conversations, offering thirty-six science-backed, high performance "laws" that are a virtual playbook for how to become not only more successful, but also happier and healthier. Each chapter of *Game Changers* is structured around one of these laws. Dave combines anecdotes from game changers like Daniel Amen, David Perlmutter, Arianna Huffington, Dan Harris, and Tim Ferris with his own research and practical advice that readers can put into action immediately. From practising gratitude and mindfulness to prioritising social connections and sex, taming fear and anxiety to optimising nutrition and movement, Dave brings together the wisdom of today's game-changers to help everyone optimise their lives.

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[DEDICATION](#)

To Bill Harris, one of the most charitable and game-changing brain hackers I've been honored to call a friend, who passed away during the writing of this book.

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[INTRODUCTION](#)

What would happen if you sat down, one on one, with 450 successful, unusually impactful people and asked each of them their secrets to performing better as a human being based on their own life experience—and then took the time to statistically analyze their replies and organize what you'd learned?

For one thing, you would be able to use the resulting data to create a word map like the one below. The bigger the word, the more times the experts said it mattered most.



For the past five years, I've been having those conversations with people who are unusually noteworthy in their fields, and this book is based on those interviews and that data.

It all began when I first launched my podcast, *Bulletproof Radio*, with the goal of learning from people who had gained mastery in their respective fields—often in fields they themselves had pioneered. Since then, it has evolved into an award-winning podcast that is consistently rated as one of the top performers in its category on iTunes with about 75 million downloads. My interest in interviewing these experts was originally born out of my now nineteen-year, multimillion-dollar personal crusade to upgrade myself using every tool in existence. This journey took me from antiaging facilities around the world to the offices of neuroscientists to remote monasteries in Tibet to Silicon Valley. I left no stone unturned in my obsessive mission to discover the simplest and most effective things I could do to become better at everything.

Obviously, I needed help.

So I sought advice from maverick scientists, world-class athletes, biochemists, innovative MDs, shamans, Olympic nutritionists, meditation experts, Navy SEALs, leaders in personal development, and anyone else who had an unusual ability or knowledge that I could learn from. Those people changed my life. Using their cumulative wisdom coupled with my own research and endless self-experimentation, I was finally able to lose the hundred pounds of excess weight that had plagued me for decades. My perpetual brain fog lifted, and so did my IQ. I grew a six-pack for the first time in my life—after the age of forty. I learned how to focus. I ditched the fear and shame and anger that had been hiding in plain sight (at least from me) and slowing me down. I got younger. I built a multimillion-dollar company from scratch while simultaneously writing two *New York Times* bestselling books and being a loving and kind husband and father to two young kids.

And I learned to do all of this while exercising less than I had when I was fat, sleeping fewer hours but more effectively, eating tons of butter on my veggies, and, for the first time, enjoying life in a way that had previously been invisible to me. I reached a level of performance I didn't know I was capable of, and doing big, challenging things actually became easier than doing the smaller things I'd once struggled with.

When I set out on this path of self-improvement, I already had a very successful career, but it came with an enormous amount of effort and misery—more than I had the courage to admit to myself. I had no idea how much room there was for improvement until I gradually came to experience what it was like to be in the state of high performance that became the name of my company: Bulletproof. It happens when you take control of your biology and improve your body and your mind so that they work in unison, helping you execute at levels far beyond what you'd expect—without burning out, getting sick, or acting like a stressed-out jerk.

It used to take a lifetime to find fulfillment and realize your passion. But now that we have the knowledge of how to rewire the brain and body, this kind of radical change is available to us all, and new technologies provide us the ability to see results faster than ever. It's freaking awesome—so awesome that I felt obligated to share some of what I've learned.

I started a blog in 2010, written with the idea that if someone had just told me all this stuff when I was sixteen or twenty or even thirty, it would have saved me years of struggle, hundreds of thousands of dollars, and a lot of unnecessary pain. I truly believed that if only five people read it and experienced the kinds of results I did, it was worth the effort. I still believe that. In fact, the desire to offer other people the tools that have changed my life is the guiding force behind my entire company, and especially *Bulletproof Radio*.

On this quest, I have had the unique pleasure of interviewing nearly five hundred people who have impacted humanity with their discoveries and innovations while hundreds of thousands of listeners eavesdropped on our conversations. You may have heard of some of these experts, such as Jack “Chicken Soup for the Soul” Canfield, Tim “4 Hour” Ferriss, Arianna “HuffPo” Huffington, and John “Men Are from Mars” Gray. But the vast majority of my guests are not household names. They are university researchers who have spearheaded new fields of study, maverick scientists who have conducted incredible experiments in their labs, innovators who have created new fields of psychology, doctors who have cured the incurable, authors, artists, and business leaders who have boiled thousands of hours of experience into books that have changed the way we think about what it means to be human.

These experts are not only pushing boundaries in their fields but also often extending them to the cutting edge of what is possible. They are game changers who are rewriting the rules, stretching the limits, and helping to change the world for the rest of us. It has been a rare honor to talk directly with so many of these originators and learn about their ideas and discoveries. As you can imagine, it's incredibly satisfying to get to spend an hour learning about a game changer's life's work. But the real treasure lies at the end of each interview, when I ask them how they have managed to reach the high levels of performance that allowed them to achieve so much. The question is not *what* they achieved, not *how* they achieved it, but what were the *most important* things that powered their achievement.

I posed the same question to each guest: If someone came to you tomorrow wanting to perform better as a human being, what are the three most important pieces of advice you'd offer, based on your own life experience? I was intentional about the phrasing of the question, asking about human performance instead of just “performance” because we are all human, and we all have different goals and definitions of success. You can perform better as a parent, as an artist, as a teacher, as a meditator, as a lover, as a scientist, as a friend, or as an entrepreneur. And I wanted to know what these experts thought mattered most based on *their actual life experience*, not just their areas of study. I had no idea what to expect.

To say that their answers have been illuminating would be a tremendous understatement. Yes, some were shocking. Others were predictable. But the real value came after I had accumulated a large-enough sample size (over 450 interviews) to conduct a statistical analysis. After all, it's easy to ask one successful person what he or she does and to copy it. But the odds of that one person's favorite tool or trick working for you aren't very good, because you aren't that person. You have different DNA. You grew up in a different family. Your struggles aren't the same. Your strengths aren't the same. After asking hundreds of game changers what mattered most to their success, however, there was an incredible amount of data, and I noticed certain patterns emerging. When examined statistically, these patterns reveal a path that offers you a much better chance of getting you what you want.

My analysis revealed that most of the advice fell into one of three categories: things that make you *smarter*, things that make you *faster*, and things that make you *happier*. These innovators were able to grow their success because they also prioritized growing their abilities.

But the things that these top performers *didn't* say were just as revealing as the things they did. Their answers were unanimously far more focused on the things that have allowed them to contribute meaningfully to the world than what may have helped them attain any typical definition of success. My guests include lauded businesspeople, entrepreneurs, and CEOs, but not *one* person mentioned money, power, or physical attractiveness as being key to their success. Yet these three things are what most of us spend our entire lives striving to obtain. So what gives?

If you read my book *Head Strong*, you know that our neurons are made up of energy-producing organelles called *mitochondria*. Mitochondria are unique because, unlike other organelles, they come from ancient bacteria and they number in the billions. Our mitochondria are primitive. Their goal is simple: to keep you alive so you can propagate the species. They therefore hijack your nervous system to keep you unconsciously focused on three behaviors common to all life-forms, intelligent or not. Call them “the three F’s”: fear (run away, hide from, or fight scary things in case they are threats to your survival), feed (eat everything in sight so you don't starve to death and can quickly serve the first F), and ... the third F-word, which propagates the species.

After all, a tiger can kill you right away. A lack of food can kill you in a month or two. And not reproducing will kill a species in a generation. Our mitochondria are at the helm of our neurological control panel—they're the ones pushing the buttons when you back down from a challenge, overeat, or spend too much time trying to get attention and admiration from others. We're wired to heed these urges automatically before we can stop to consider what really brings us success or happiness, and they will relentlessly take you off your path if you don't manage them.

When you think about it this way, it's kind of sad that our typical definitions of success represent those three bacteria-level behaviors. Power guarantees some level of safety so you don't have to run away from or fight scary things. Money guarantees that you'll always be able to eat. And physical attractiveness means you're more likely to attract a partner so you can reproduce.

Power, money, and sex. Most of us spend our lives pursuing these three things at the behest of our mitochondria. As a relatively stupid tiny life-form, a single mitochondrion is too small to have a brain, yet it follows those three rules millions of times a second. When a quadrillion mitochondria all follow them at the same time, a complex system with its own consciousness emerges. Throughout history people have given different names to this consciousness. The one you're probably the most familiar with is ego. I'm proposing that your ego is actually a biological phenomenon that stems from your hardwired instincts to keep your meat alive long enough to reproduce. Sad! The good news is that those mitochondria also power all of your higher thoughts and everything you do as you become more successful. They're stupid but useful.

The people who have managed to change the game don't focus on these ego- or mitochondria-driven goals, but they do manage the energy coming from their mitochondria. They have been able to transcend and harness their base instincts so they can show up all the way and focus on moving

the needle for themselves and the rest of humanity. This is where true happiness and fulfillment—and success—ultimately come from.

I have experienced this shift in my own life as a result of my journey to become Bulletproof. As a young, secretly fearful, yet smart and successful fat guy, I spent years fighting these instincts—striving to make money, seeking power to be safe, looking for sex, struggling with my weight, and, frankly, being angry and unhappy. Using many of the techniques in this book, I was able to finally stop wasting my energy on those mitochondrial imperatives and start putting it toward the things that really mattered. And I've seen that when you manage to do this, success comes as a side effect of setting your ego aside and pursuing your true purpose.

That purpose is unique to each person. This book is not going to tell you what to do. Rather, it is meant to provide you with a road map to setting your own priorities and then following techniques that will be noticeably effective in helping you kick more ass at whatever it is you love. This order of operations is important. If you try to implement tools and techniques before setting your priorities, you'll do it wrong. But studying the priorities of game changers, identifying your own priorities, and then choosing from the menus of options throughout the book will help you make the biggest difference in the areas that matter most.

To make it simple, you'll find these options broken down into laws summarizing the most important advice from my high-performing guests, concentrated and distilled, along with some things you may want to try if they resonate with you. This style and structure was inspired by that of *The 48 Laws of Power* by Robert Greene, one of the luminaires I interviewed on the show whose books have made an enormous difference to millions of people, myself included. These laws fall into three main categories, which are the areas to focus on when you want to transcend your limits and learn to like your life while performing at your peak: becoming smarter, faster, and happier.

Smarter comes first because everything else is easier when your brain reaches peak performance. Just a decade ago, most people believed that you couldn't actually get smarter. If you'd talked about taking nootropics—aka “smart drugs”—or upgrading your memory, people would have thought you were crazy. Trust me, I know. I included my use of smart drugs in my LinkedIn profile starting in 2000, and people literally laughed at me. But times have changed, and now it's almost mainstream to talk about microdosing LSD for cognitive enhancement. Whether you choose to experiment with pharmaceuticals or upgrade your head by learning visualization techniques, it's okay to want to maximize your brainpower so you can perform at your best. That will free up energy for you to do other things you care about. This part of the book will show you how.

Next up is *faster*, a goal that humans have been striving for since the beginning of time. Hundreds of thousands of years ago, if you could light a fire in your cave faster, you won because you survived, and we haven't stopped working to be faster ever since. The laws in this part of the book will help you make your body more efficient so that you have as much mental and physical energy as possible for the things you want to do. It's difficult to change the game if you're sluggish and weak, but when you maximize your physical output using all of the tools at your disposal, you can do more than you ever imagined you could.

It is only after you gain some control over your mind and body that you can become *happier*, and that's why this section comes last. It was amazing to learn how many game changers had some sort of practice to help them become more aware, centered, and grounded and how those practices led to a higher level of happiness. In huge numbers, they talked about meditating and using breathing techniques to find a state of peace and calm. I didn't draw that answer out of them in the interviews—it's what they actually do.

Remember, these people could have answered the question by saying literally anything. One person said that coffee enemas were one of the most important things! Yet the vast majority credited one of these ancient practices for helping them find true happiness. I have no doubt that these practices have also played a huge role in helping these game changers become so successful in the first place.

The people who are moving the needle prioritize their own peace and happiness because they know that at the end of the day it doesn't matter how smart or fast you are; if you're miserable, you will be stuck in mediocrity. This is why happiness plays such a big role in this book.

Of course, all the sections and all the laws in this book are interconnected. If you do one thing to become faster, for example, you will also gain more energy to focus at work, and you will feel happier because life is less of a struggle when you're faster. Likewise, if you practice breathing exercises that increase the amount of oxygen flowing to your brain and muscles, you'll recover from both mental and physical stress more quickly. This will change the way you feel and experience the world and make you happier.

Ultimately, when you change the environment inside of and around you, you can finally gain control of your biology instead of being jerked around by your base instincts. Your biology is everything—your body, mind, and even spirit. This is the core definition of biohacking, and it turns out that professors, scientists, and Buddhist monks were doing it long before I defined the term and created a movement around it. To become the best human you can be, you have a responsibility to design your environment so that you are in control. This book will give you forty-six life-changing “laws” about where to start. Each interview I do takes about eight hours of preparation. That's 3,600 hours of study when you multiply it by 450 interviews distilled into the laws in this book, or about two full years of working full-time.

I wish I'd had access to the information in this book (and that I had been wise enough to listen) twenty years ago, when I was unhappy, fat, and slow and life was a constant struggle because I was chasing the wrong things and wondering why I wasn't happy when I got them. It would have saved me hundreds of thousands of dollars and years of wasted effort. Yet I'm grateful for every bit of struggle, because otherwise I wouldn't be able to share what I've learned along the way with you.

Now you have the opportunity to pay it forward. The wisdom in these pages represents hundreds of thousands of man- and woman-hours of study, experiment, and results. These are the things that no one taught you in school, the real secrets straight from the people who have succeeded in the fields they've mastered. How different would your life be if you were even just a little smarter, faster, and happier? You would gain the power not just to change your own life but to move the needle forward for the rest of humanity. The more of us who do this, the more we can redefine what it means to be human. I invite you to join me in this ultimate game changer.

PART I

SMARTER

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