

## Finding Your Zone of Excellence: What Separates the Good from the Great with Jeff Salzenstein

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Susan Quinn: Today I'm sitting down with Jeff Salzenstein, a former professional tennis player who has focused his career on understanding what it takes to be a high performing individual, whether in sports or in business. And he's on a mission. He wants to help us understand that the zone of excellence involves the mind, body and soul. He's also a believer that the companies who embrace this concept are going to be the ones who thrive, and the ones who dismiss it, well, he's not sure they will survive. I think you're going to love this conversation. Jeff, it's such an honor to have you with us today on the podcast. Welcome.

Jeff: Thank you so much.

Susan Quinn: Well, I know we met earlier this year at a conference, and I was blown away by your speech. We had a couple of opportunities to go to different sessions, but yours was entitled Zone of Excellence. You captured me [laughter] immediately. I don't know what you were going to talk about, but I wanted to know anything that had a zone of excellence to it. So, I know that you are an executive coach today, but I also know in your earlier life, you were a top professional tennis player. And I'm pretty sure part of that included an epic match with Michael Chang at the US Open but would love to hear you begin this conversation with what a zone of excellence looks like against your match on that epic day.

Jeff: Sure. Thank you, Susan. It's a great question. And when we first connected at that summit, when I gave my talk on the zone of excellence, my opening story is about my match with Michael Chang. So, it's only fitting that we start with it today. I've been in an incredible journey around in my life around performance and health, and probably one of my biggest moments as a professional tennis player was playing Michael Chang at the US Open 1997, so you can start to do the math on how old I am. I'm on this big stage, second round, Friday night match. New York City, Arthur Ashe Stadium, 24,000 people in the stands. USA Network is the cable company that used to do all, broadcast all of the US Open matches, and of course, John McEnroe is announcing who's a fellow former Stanford player like myself. So, you picture this little kid from Colorado that bursts on the pro scene and all of a sudden, I'm looking up and I see a lot of people in the stands, and this was my big moment. And I remember walking out on the court and seeing the 24,000 people and my family in the box, my friends, and I was pretty overwhelmed. Leading up to that match, I had won my first-round match. I had about two to three days between the match to prepare. And I just remember a lot of stress, a lot of anxiety, you know, feeling the pressure to perform in a front of a lot of people. And here I'm playing the number two player in the world, so there's a real good chance I'm going to get my butt beat. And so just dealing with the nerves before the match was tough enough. So, I get out on the court and somehow despite the nerves, I get it to two all in the first set. So, I held serve twice, even though I was really nervous, maybe

Chang was nervous as well, and at that moment I took my first deep breath, first deep breath of the match, and I dropped into the present moment, which is something that's very elusive for a lot of us, and for the next 15 minutes, I started kicking Michael Chang's ass. If you were watching the match, you'd say, that kid, Salzenstein's number two in the world, and the other player's 140 in the world. So, it's almost like I accessed a next level of zone, of performance for 15 minutes where I was the better player. So, we fast forward 15 minutes and now it's five games to four and I'm one point away from winning the first set. I'm left-handed. I hit a lefty serve. I serve in volley. I hit a beautiful backhand volley to the open court. Michael Chang is one of the fastest players in the world. He couldn't track it down. I win the first set against the number two player in the world. So, how about a fist pump for the small wins? We win a first set off the number two player in the world. The crowd goes crazy. There's people standing up pointing at me like, where the heck did this guy come from? And I've got this grin on my face. The TV cameras pan in on me. I was looking at my box. I got my parents there. My ex-girlfriend was in the box that night who went to Stanford with me. Now she wanted to be my girlfriend again because I was famous. And that's when I tell people the match ended.

Susan Quinn: Hmm.

Jeff: And the reason that the match ended was because the dominant thought in my head in that moment on that big stage was Jeff, thank God you didn't embarrass yourself.

Susan Quinn: Mm.

Jeff: I couldn't overcome my limiting thoughts and beliefs. I couldn't overcome the waves of pressure, stress, and anxiety coursing through my body and mind. So even though I won that set, my set point was not high enough. I had an upper limit. I had a ceiling that was blocking me from beating the number two player in the world. And we'll go into more of that today. But I ended up losing the next three sets and the match to Chang, the more experienced player, the player that believed in himself more. And you could argue that that was the beginning, obviously, there were things but that happened before that match, but that was the beginning of my journey into the zone of excellence concept of how can I improve as a professional tennis player with my body, with my mind, with my soul, with my emotions so that I could perform at my highest level? And so that was a culminating moment that kind of woke me up to, hey, wait a minute. I'm really good, but I'm still scratching the surface. And I think a lot of leaders, teams, organizations, what I'm doing now. They can relate to that story because they're doing big things in the world and they're feeling the pressure and the stress. And dealing with stress and pressure is what separates the good from the great and what allows us to live our best lives possible.

Susan Quinn: So, I'd love to circle back on you hit a ceiling. So was the ceiling self-doubt or you had already achieved what you thought was the zone of excellence and you couldn't continue, like, what was going through your mind at that time?

Jeff: Well, the research says that we have 60,000 thoughts per day, whether we realize it or not. And 80% of our thoughts are negative. And so, I can only imagine that that thought, thank God you didn't embarrass yourself, that was the dominant thought that was overriding any thoughts like, I'm going to kick this guy's butt, I'm better than the number two guy in the world. And so, I think our limiting beliefs and our thoughts, they get in the way of us performing at our highest level. And that set point plays a role in us stopping going to that next level. And then we end up

sabotaging in some way. And we go to our level of our belief system, the level of our identity. And for me, growing up, you know, I grew up in Colorado. It's not a tennis state. I grew up in a nice neighborhood with my family. I wasn't raised to be a pro tennis player. It wasn't indoctrinated in me that I was going to do all these things. So, I believe that when I got on that big stage, there was that little Jeff, that little Colorado kid that didn't really believe I could do it. And I do think we all have that voice. We all have those inner voices and the ones that hold us back. But I think we now know, at least I know, that we there are tools available and strategies and ways of working with that little voice and playing bigger, and stepping into something greater, and being the best version of ourselves. And so, I just didn't have access or awareness of that to be able to practice it enough. And that really is what separates the elite from those that are wanting to get there is, well, one of the big things is the mind. And so, for me, what a great experience and lesson where I can share with people, listen, we're all extraordinary, we all have our geniuses, but we're also at ordinary when we're not focusing on the right things and we're in behaviors and habits that aren't our best selves. And so, sport and tennis is a great microcosm of life and business. And that's what I love sharing with folks in a relatable way. That just because you're on this big stage and everyone thinks you're the best at what you do, there's still the inner demons that can hold you back.

Susan Quinn: Well, I think life is a team sport, you know, whether it's personal or professional. But after the US Open, the Michael Chang match, what happened next? Did your tennis game improve? Did the self-doubt go away? Did you start to teach yourself what the zone of excellence looks like?

Jeff: Yeah. So, I graduated from Stanford in '96. And, you know, we may go back to some of those stories, but I graduated and turned pro at 22 years old. And most of the time the pros turn pro sooner than that. And so again, playing pro tennis was really not part of the plan. And when I turn pro at 22 with my degree from Stanford, nobody came calling. There was no agent, there were no big deals. Whereas if I was 17 years old and I was this superstar, the agents are flocking. So, I go out on the tour that first year before I played Chang and I went from 800 in the world to 150 in the world in 12 months. I just shot up like a rocket ship.

Susan Quinn: Wow.

Jeff: And that's what allowed me to get a wild card in the US Open, and get this opportunity, and to win my first match, and then play Chang. And so, the next day after I lose to Chang, even though I lost in four sets, people were seeing like, oh my gosh, this guy is six foot one, he's 175 pounds. He's left-handed. He's athletic. He's having a good time on the court. He's got a big serve. And so, the next day I'm in a midtown Manhattan hotel suite sitting with Jeff Schwartz, who is the agent for Pete Sampras, and he's looking at me like, hey kid, you're like the next it player. So, it just came so fast for me in that for so many years, people counted me out, so many people thought that I would never be a pro, and so, I think I had that kind of belief that like, yeah, this is where I'm at. And then as soon as it happened, it was like, oh my gosh, now I have these expectations. So, I signed with the agent and for the next three months, I went on the challenger circuit, and I really struggled with the expectations. I didn't play well, and I was feeling the pressure.

Susan Quinn: Hmm.

Jeff: And I get to the off season and I'm playing a pickup basketball game and I come down for a rebound and I feel a sharp pain in the front of my right ankle. It was misdiagnosed for eight months, and I ended up having surgery. Six months later in my first pro tennis match back at the Miami Open—it's one of the largest tournaments in the world—and I feel a sharp pain in the back of my knee and that led to knee surgery. So, before the age of 25, I had two surgeries, and I thought my pro career was over. I was riddled with self-doubts and fear and anxiety like my dream was ending and what do I do now? And I was on the shelf, and I wasn't making money and I was living in my parents' basement. It was rough. And it was at that time, and this is one of the lessons that I always like to share, it's our adversity, it's our tough moments is what defines us. It's what allows us to go to that next level. And so, during that time, I made a decision. I became obsessed with all things high performance. I said, I am not going to accept that my body is failing me, that I have these limiting beliefs, that I'm choking in big matches. I'm going to learn everything I can about performance. So, I went on a quest. I went on a hero's journey, if you will, at 25 years old. And it started with my first yoga class. My doctor said I had terrible ankle flexibility instead of just saying, well, my ankle flexibility is bad. You know, I'm not cut out for this. I said, no, I'm going to solve this. I'm going to figure this out. So, I go to my first yoga class, started rebuilding a body that was out of balance. I started eating organic food. I started going to biomechanics on my serve. And I started going to astrologists and studying Buddhism. And like I did everything I could, Susan, to understand myself and see if I could get back and play my best tennis ever. And so that was the true beginning through the adversity and the injuries of how the zone of excellence developed. That we are not subject to our genetics, that we can actually change. We can get better. Our brains can change, our bodies can change, and we can improve. And it's a never-ending process. And I just went on that holistic journey that led me through a lot of hardships and ups and downs. But ultimately, I did break the top 100 in the world for the first time at the age of 30. So, it took me seven years. I learned a lot of lessons, a lot of skills, and my pro tennis journey provided a stronger foundation from which to go on to coach in tennis and then coach founders and entrepreneurs and CEOs and executives, and then now to do the speaking. What's interesting about the pro tennis journey is that if we backtrack and trace it back to my childhood and to my college years, all of those lessons around adversity and resilience, they were all there then. So, I'm 50 years old now, and I've been practicing the art and science of resilience and adversity since I was five years old. And that's a lot of reps where I bounce forward, a lot of people that might quit or get distracted or try different things, I stick with it. And it's just ingrained and embedded in my body, my mind, and my soul to bounce forward, to stay with it and to find solutions. And so, it's probably the thing I'm most proud of around my journey is not really the successes, but actually that I have this kind of built in wiring that I've trained myself to keep going. And there's a lot of leaders that can relate to that, that they keep going and they fight, and they find different ways to be better. And, you know, obviously those are the type of leaders that I really connect with.

Susan Quinn: Yeah. I was struck by understanding, you said I needed to understand myself and we're not subject to our genetics. Quick sharing here, I grew up with a mother who had health issues, from my earliest memories until she left us way too young. But I was told in my 20s, basically, you need to figure it out because you got some bad genes. You're going to have a bad heart. And I went on a mission of health. And people used to say, what are you competing for? I said, to live [laughter], to out-beat the genes.

Jeff: Yeah.

Susan Quinn: So, talk to us a little bit about how understanding yourself got you to where you were, you're a top 100 player in the world. But the understanding yourself doesn't have to be a professional athlete. It can be every single person in the world [laughter].

Jeff: Right.

Susan Quinn: What does the journey look like? You mentioned some holistic things and yoga and health, but how do you coach people to find their zone of excellence as we move to the business side of things?

Jeff: Sure. So, I have a lot of core beliefs, but also, I'm open to them being challenged as well. And I think that's a tenet. I remember when I was 14 years old, I had a coach, and I was going through some tough times with my ranking had dropped. And I remember the coach said to me, you ask more questions than anyone I've ever met in my life. And this is at 14. So, there's been this natural built-in curiosity to always ask questions and to not just accept things as truth. And so, when I went through my injuries, I had doctors telling me things about my ankle and my knee. I remember with my knee, initially with an MRI, they told me I had a strained ACL, and they came into the office, and they were going to put a knee brace on me that went from just below my hip bone all the way down to my ankle. And they said, okay, you're going to wear this knee brace on the court, and I looked at everyone in the office and I said, no, I'm not. And they're like, what do you mean? I said, I am not wearing a knee brace that covers my entire leg on a tennis court against the best players in the world that's going to show weakness. You've got to figure out how to help my knee so that I don't have to do that. And they came back actually with a different diagnosis after I challenged them. But what happens if I just would have said, okay, great. I'll take the knee brace and wear it. I would have walked out of that office. And so, I think it's so important for us to not just accept what the outside world and what people tell us.

Susan Quinn: Mm.

Jeff: If someone says you have genetics that are like you have a bad heart, I'm going to say, listen, I know a guy in St. Louis who is a functional cardiologist who will tell you differently. He'll say, yeah, your genetics are maybe not working for you, but there are lifestyle changes. There are decisions you can make that can change your cells and change your biology. And instead of it being more genetic, it's actually more environmental, like what you do with what you have. And yes, you're gonna have some weaknesses. So, I really just try to impress upon the clients that I work with and the ones that are attracted to me have the growth mindset. We can spot the fixed mindset from a growth mindset a mile away. As soon as we start having conversations with people, you can kind of figure out. You start listening to their words and what they believe. It's really fascinating when you look at politics or when you look at the way the world works, just hearing people, how they speak about the world. You learn a lot about them. But this open-minded, curious, inquisitive approach to life, to challenge, it is a very important skill to have and that I obviously want to help people with. And so that's been my North Star, has been to follow my own path, and to learn my lessons, and to find people that can help me close that gap with the things that I don't know about. And then really when you ask the question like knowing yourself, I mean, there's many layers to that, but if we look at the zone of excellence, body, mind and soul. The body is around taking care of yourself. So, if you are grinding in your business and you are not sleeping well, you're not going to show up as your best self. So, really knowing yourself means you're getting plenty of rest so that mentally and emotionally and physically

you're feeling good on a consistent basis. On the mental side, you're aware of your thoughts because our thoughts can create our reality. If we think things a certain amount of times, we can actually create that. There's plenty of neuroscience that proves that the more you think certain things, the more it manifests in the real world. So, my belief that thank God I didn't embarrass myself tonight came true. I didn't embarrass myself, but I also didn't win, and I didn't get to that next level in that particular match. And then with the emotions or with the soul, when I talk about the soul, I'm really talking about in simple terms how we can regulate our emotions. Because if we can be heart-centered leaders, if we can connect to our heart more, and get out of our ego, and not be in our head all day long, then we're more connected to our intuition, making decisions to really, like you said, know yourself. How do you work on knowing yourself? Well, you've got to be in your heart more. The irony is that in the world today, we are not taught to be in our hearts. We are taught to be spinning up here all day long, all night long, ruminating, overthinking, and that's where a lot of the anxiety and the worry comes from. So just learning the skills of dropping down into the heart and being in the body. Helping people get into their hearts so they can make better decisions so they can follow their North Star instead of somebody else's North Star or what their ego wants them to do is really important part of this holistic process to showing up and finding your zone.

Susan Quinn: What do you think, I mean, I probably could extract it, but I want to just have you reinforce it. You talk about mind, body, and soul, that rest, awareness of thoughts, regulating our emotions, being more heart centered. What keeps us from just being able to do it?

Jeff: [Laughter] Yeah. What keeps us from being able to do it is, number one, childhood adversity or upbringing, conditioning, what our parents believed, what the world taught us, all the setbacks that we had at a young age, even if there are many little setbacks, a coach or a teacher telling you you're not good enough, or you don't write well, or you're not smart enough, or you're this, or you need to do that. Like, we are just bombarded by external stimulus, and it's even more intense now, right? Social media, how fast the news is moving, the divisiveness in the world. It's all designed to actually pull us away from ourselves. So, I think we're in the ultimate time period in our lives to individually connect to ourselves, to learn these tools of how to take care of our body, mind, and soul so that we can be leaders in the world, that there is a better way and a different way.

I always tell people that you have two choices, especially if you're a successful leader or you're running a successful organization. You have two choices. You can be successful and stressed out, or you can be successful and happy. Which one do you want? Like you really, you actually could choose to be successful and happy and instead of successful and stressed out. But I think we're conditioned by the world and by who we were raised that you got to work hard all the time. You got to grind. You got to hustle. It's the only way to win. And to a certain extent, it's true. Like in tennis, you have to suffer to win. But what about practicing the other tools, you know, a mindfulness practice, getting your sleep, eating healthy food, cutting back or eliminating alcohol, reducing or eliminating caffeine, like all of these external things are, helping us in the moment, maybe be calmer or have more energy, but it's that short term gain that hurts us in the long term because we're using external things to feed us and to give us energy. What about knowing ourselves where we really have the tools, the strategies, and the perspectives that take care of ourselves? What about that? And who is teaching us that? We're not taught that in school. We learn math. We learn English. So, we have all these years of conditioning in school and at home. Imagine a place where parents and teachers and coaches were actually teaching the things

we're talking about every day. Like, hey, kids, you get your sleep. Hey, how are you eating? And a lot of kids, they're not going to eat well right now, but maybe they're small little things that we can help them with. Or can we give them a mindfulness practice? Can we teach them how to, a gratitude practice? So many tools, cool little micro habits that are not front of mind until we have a conversation like this, and then we're like, wait a minute. We haven't been doing these things. Let's get back on it. And you'll see the best companies, the best sports teams, they have a culture where this is embedded into it at some level. You see LeBron James and Stephan Curry in basketball, you know, you'll see them meditating. You didn't see this stuff before. You're seeing more and more leaders, athletes and entrepreneurs and founders and CEOs embracing this because the science shows and the research shows that it improves performance and that's what I'm about is like how do I help people improve performance and become successful and also be more peaceful and happy and calm that's the part that's the journey I went on because I played pro tennis, and I know what it's like to be burned out I know what it's like to be stressed out, and unhappy and I know I wasn't doing a lot of the things to so support me during the tough times.

Susan Quinn: I love that. You talk about culture and one of the reasons why I wanted you on this podcast. This is all about better experiences by design. It's a continuation of the work that the amazing team that I get to work with every day, we believe that strong brands create strong employee experiences, employee experiences that are awesome, create strong client experiences. And writing a book about it, *Does Your Company Show Up or Stand Out?* But it's literally the flywheel, like Jim Collins talks about in *Good to Great*. I'm hearing a flywheel that you talk about of the body, mind, and soul, the discipline that we have. I want people to understand that the employee experience does include, as this book will talk about, you have to support the team and health and wellness is a part of it. How are you supporting companies in that way?

Jeff: Sure. So when I speak, when I get on stages, like the talk that you heard, when I go into boardrooms and I work with teams and CEOs, I get a lot of intel, and one of the things we know to be true on the physical side is of course we can focus on exercise, we can focus on nutrition, both very important things that I teach, but we have a global sleep epidemic. We have 50 to 70 million people in the world that are affected by a sleep disorder and 62% of adults around the world are not sleeping as well as they'd like. So, this is what's so interesting, a lot of smart people out there, but if you can connect the idea that if I only sleep five hours per night, then I'm decreasing my ability to handle stress, I am decreasing my ability to communicate at a higher level, I'm more impatient, I'm more anxious, so you not getting enough rest impacts you mentally and emotionally. They're connected. It's not separate. And this notion that I can sleep when I'm dead, well, the counter to that is your mortality rate goes up by 65% if you average five hours of sleep per night for years. They've also shown that you're more productive when you sleep better, so when I work with companies, I shine the light on that. And when I listen to people share, they often tell me, I wake up in the middle of the night. I'm ruminating. All the deals that I'm doing, I can't get out of my head. Most people don't have a nighttime routine, a sleep hygiene practice, if you will. They're on technology until they go to bed.

Susan Quinn: Yeah.

Jeff: They're sleeping with their phones. They're drinking alcohol before they go to bed. It's not set up for success. And if you think about in sport, if I were to sleep five hours a night in sport, how would I do long-term? I wouldn't have the energy on the court. I want leaders and companies to make the paradigm shift that you are an elite athlete. You are an elite performer. Yes, you're

not using your body the same way athletes do or artists or dancers. But you are a performer because you are using incredible amount of bandwidth every day and you need that time at night to rest and to sleep. You can't go against nature.

So that's the physical side that I really like, want to hammer home is that like, what if companies started making that the priority? The WOOP, which is a wearable device here, they actually give cash rewards to their employees that get a 85 or higher sleep score. So, what if we lived in a world where maybe we didn't get so OCD about it, but we were aware of people's sleep scores to a certain level, and they were rewarded for that instead of just for the bottom line. because there is a direct correlation. If people sleep better, if they rest better, they're more creative, they're more innovative, they're happier at work, they stay longer, all of it's connected to sleep. On the mental side, when I'm in these rooms and people are willing to open up and share, I hear about imposter syndrome. I hear about it, what if they find out that I'm not a good leader? Or maybe my parents handed me this company and I don't think I'm as good as my dad was, or what if they find me out that I'm not a good leader? I don't have enough time in the day. All of this head trash, all of these beliefs, they drop performance. It's no different than me saying, gosh, I hope I don't double fault here. I hope I don't miss my second, like, my forehand sucks today. You know, I work with athletes as well. And when they're not doing well, guess what? They're really negative. So, if a leader's not doing well or not performing at his best or her best, they're oftentimes too negative. They don't have an awareness of where the thoughts are coming from. And then on the emotional side, imagine a world where before every huddle, before every meeting, we did a one mindful minute, and we took a deep breath, and we grounded ourselves and we focused on some gratitude in our hearts. Just one minute can completely change a culture, can change if companies are struggling with psychological safety. Well, what if everyone just starts with this as the foundation. So, gosh, going into companies and being able to infuse a way of being that takes five minutes a day and have it be permeating on an individual level, where individuals can go home and they can actually share it with their kids and share it with their partners, but also have a team dynamic, an organizational dynamic where everyone's moving in this direction. This is the future. This is the next frontier, whether, the companies that embrace this are the ones that are going to be there and the ones that don't, they will not. It's just the way the world is moving, and the ones that see this are the ones that are going to thrive. And so, I kind of feel like it's my mission. It's my North Star that the people that get it, and I know Susan, you get it, we've had some wonderful conversations about this, you're on leading edge with your book and with your beliefs around this. The right people, the people that are ready for this are just gonna gravitate and then their companies are gonna thrive.

Susan Quinn: Well, I love creating this community of people. It's not like we have to have like-minded every single thought, just like when you were told to wear a certain brace, you're like, oh, well, I don't know. I'd like to look at another option here.

Jeff: Yeah.

Susan Quinn: I find that the powerful questioning, not they're questioning you, but is there another way? I'd love to spend time with that mindset. I also am fascinated in the research we did, and I know we've talked about this, the three attitudinal mindsets that came out. The satisfied people, they were a third. Pretty much, yeah, we got it. We're at the top of our game. Don't really need anything else. The simplifiers, and I'm sure in health and wellness we all know those, just tell me the three things that I can do and then I know it's all going to be perfectly fine. Same thing



happens in business. I'll do two or three things. That was a third. Aspiring mindset was the other third. And they like all nine traits. They want to do all nine of them. And it reminds me of how you speak about health and wellness and the components to it. My question for you, a couple of them, I don't think all nine are what we would want to talk about today, but some of my favorite of the highest performing companies, they avoid complexity. There is this notion of keeping it simple. Is there any part of that in health and wellness?

Jeff: Yes. I was talking to another coach slash mentor of mine the other day, and I said, imagine a world where everyone slept better, seven hours a night, six and a half, seven hours a night. If everyone was thinking better, like really conscious of their language, the way they communicate, even their tone, and a world where they were emotionally regulating with breath work. How many problems would be solved in the world? Like how much peace would there be in the world? And he said, I think it's probably like 80 or 90 percent. So, I like to look at it that way, like, if you just do these three things, you'll be 90 percent there. Because from there, then you will have more gratitude, then you will come up with new ideas, then you will compliment your employee when you walk through the door, and you'll be vibrant, and you'll have energy and people will feel that. So yeah, if I could simplify it, it's really, that's what I've tried to do as a coach. When I was playing tennis on the Pro Tour, I had coaches that couldn't explain it well to me. And I got very frustrated.

Susan Quinn: Yeah.

Jeff: I wanted it to be simple and distilled down into these bite-sized chunks. So, when I was on the Pro Tour, I told myself, I said, someday, if I'm ever coaching, I am going to do it in a way where it's understood. And what's interesting is that when I finished playing pro tennis, I started coaching and I was coaching tennis players, and immediately I would get comments from people that I was explaining it well. I was explaining it clearly. So, I've been obsessed with communication and sharing a message for over 20 years. And then I started making all these YouTube videos in tennis. I had this online tennis platform that I created, and people would comment. You have these four-minute videos, and you break it down into these three to five bite-sized chunks that is digestible and understandable. So, when I give my keynote now and I talk about sleep, change your thinking and emotionally regulate, people are like, I already know this stuff, but the way you explained it and the data you brought into it and the stories you told made me want to do it. And so that feels good to me that like there's a message that people hear it, they've heard something like it before, but maybe because of my background and the way I teach it, they want to start implementing some of these things. And I think that's what true coaching is, or getting change to happen is helping people see it in a way where they're willing to give it a shot instead of making it complicated.

Susan Quinn: I'm pretty sure we could stay on all day long because I just am so inspired by another human being that is as passionate about health and wellness and bettering our best. In fact, this book about, do you show up or stand out? I'm so intimidated that you know circle S studio and our voice is helping people think through it. But you know why not? It's things that we have experienced. It's the, in consulting, we see what works and what gets people over the speed bumps. My favorite, though, of the nine is this simple notion of continuous learning.

Jeff: Mmhmm.

Susan Quinn: And I have a final question for you. What do you do, Jeff, to keep bettering your best?

Jeff: Oh my gosh, what do I not do? Well, funny story before I answer that question. I know we didn't get into my you know my upbringing. There's a lot of rich stories there. My Stanford career, my brother's journey. Maybe someday you'll bring me back and we can talk more about that. But I remember coming back from those injuries and I was practicing with a guy who was number one in the world. He had dropped to about 20 in the world. His name is Jim Currier. And we were practicing one day, and I was about 25, 26 years old trying to make this comeback. We're sitting down, we're sweaty, and he looks at me and he says, you know what your problem is, Jeff? I'm like, oh gosh, the number one guy in the world's gonna tell me something. He said, you think too much. You're one of those Stanford guys that just over-thinks everything. And part of that is true. You know, some of the best athletes in the world, they don't think. They just get out there and do it, and they couldn't even explain it if they tried. But it wasn't like that for me. I always felt like I needed to understand everything. And so, my strength is sometimes my greatest weakness in that I do overthink. But at the same time, it's made me who I am. It's made me the coach that I am, the person that I am, because I like to understand things. You don't always have to understand everything, but this notion of continuous learning. I just love to learn, and so, I think life is so rich. Business is so rich when you have that approach of like we're here to learn and grow and we're actually here to make mistakes because the more mistakes we make, that's how we get better. You know, fail forward fast, make your mistakes so you can course correct. When you're afraid to make mistakes, you don't learn as much. And so, you gotta be able to swallow the ego and feel some of the pain and realize that mistakes are actually your growth opportunity. So, I embrace mistakes. Yes, it's painful sometimes, but I go after those mistakes. I go after the learning. Some of the things I do, I hiked my first 14,000-foot peak last year at 49 years old. I like to do different things I love going to new cities. I've never been to Richmond, Virginia before. I love universities. So, like, I want to see the University of Richmond. I want to see all these different cities and places and I'm just, yeah, I'm just curious. And as a coach, I'll finish with this part. I always tell my clients; I might be two steps ahead of you. I might be a half a step ahead of you, a quarter step. I may even be a little bit behind you because you say something like, hey, Jeff, I've been meditating 15 minutes a day for the last two years. And I'm thinking to myself, I don't meditate every day for 15. What's he doing or what's she doing? So, I'm the student just as much as my client is the student, right? And so, I take that approach that I am learning just as much if not more from my clients than they're learning from me. And that approach takes the ego out of it. It's a reciprocal relationship where I really feel I'm getting the gift and I'm learning when somebody decides to work with me.

Susan Quinn: I don't want to end this on the word fail but fail forward fast. I appreciate and I feel that I do the same. I mean, failure, we do learn a lot from that. In fact, I think some of my greatest lessons have been things that didn't work out, and instead of crawling in a fetal position it's like what did I learn and how can we move forward in a better way you also mentioned you've never been to Richmond so I'm gonna offer this up, we need to get you to Richmond I want to create an event where our town can hear you.

Jeff: Oh, amazing.

Susan Quinn: We'll put in our notes how to get in touch with you. is helping us change through health and wellness. And I believe that we have to start. If we don't have this, we have nothing. And you know we can work forever, but for what? If our health is at peril as we do so. In our

conversations, I know you've got a lot of material that you are curating, and so we will get you back on the show.

Jeff: Let's do it. I'm all about the zone of excellence, helping people perform at their highest levels and be happy and healthy doing it.

Susan Quinn: Well, you're teaching us that there are ways to have a better experience, and I'm grateful for our time. Thank you so much.

Jeff: Thank you, Susan.

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