

The Social Capitalist: Jonathan Fields

A serial entrepreneur offers lessons on creating value and staying relentlessly innovative – in any climate.



Never Eat Alone co-author Tahl Raz interviewed author, speaker, and entrepreneur Jonathan Fields about his book, *Uncertainty: Turning Fear and Doubt Into Fuel for Brilliance*. Zappos CEO Tony Hsieh says that Fields, “provides the tools necessary to take consistent action in the name of great work.”

Through Fields' experience, which includes, among other business successes, launching one of New York's most profitable health clubs of its time, you can expect to learn: what makes people innately or genetically disposed to “lean into uncertainty,” how to overcome creative anxiety, and how to craft rituals and “certainty anchors” that protect your creativity (and your sanity) during times of tremendous change.

This is an edited transcript from a live Social Capitalist event. The Social Capitalist is sponsored programming of myGreenlight, the only comprehensive on-line learning platform for critical relationship development skills. The interactive interview series is dedicated to delivering in-depth discussions on relationship science with the best and brightest thought leaders in business and academia. Enjoy!

TAHL: I'm Tahl Raz, as you know, and this is the Social Capitalist. Nearly every critical work and life decision is a leap of faith that requires us to grapple with fear, not to mention all the technology that's out there. Those who do this successfully transform that fear into confidence and creativity, taking more leaps, more successfully, than the rest of us.

But how is it done? The answers come to us from Jonathan Fields, who is particularly and personally well-versed on the topic of uncertainty. He gave up a six-figure income as a lawyer to make \$12 an hour as a personal trainer. Then, married with a 3-month-old baby, he signed a lease to launch a yoga center in the heart of New York City. He signed that lease a day before 9/11.

His book, *Uncertainty: Turning Fear and Doubt into Fuel for Brilliance*, is his incredibly well-received tome, demystifying creativity with research, tools, and tactics. I'm very excited to welcome you Jonathan.

JONATHAN: It's great to be here with you.

TAHL: All right, so from your biographical sketch, you seem to have led an exciting life of numerous reinventions, entering and exiting different careers, businesses, and doing so with a fair share of success. Of all the lessons and areas of interest to pull from that experience, when and why did you settle on uncertainty?

JONATHAN: You know, it's an interesting question and like you said, I've made a number of fairly major leaps, and one of the things that I've discovered is no matter how much you plan, no matter how much you think you know what's going to happen as an entrepreneur, you just don't. In fact, the more you plan and the more committed you stay to that one plan, like, "This is the way I knew it was going to happen and this is the way it has to happen," the more you miss all sorts of opportunities that would potentially make that original plan of action ten times better.

So I began to really get curious about what allows certain people to be able to be highly adaptive, to walk away from the need to have to know what's coming next and in doing so open up a world of opportunity that so many other people miss.... I was struggling with the answers myself and I wanted to get a better understanding of what happens in the world, in the mind of entrepreneurs, people in high-level careers, innovators and artists.

TAHL: I thought a story of yours was telling. When you were leaving law, everyone questioned why you would be going into the wellness industry, and you said that at the time you were afraid of being laughed at. Come a few months later, your colleagues were asking you, "How did you pull this off?" Can you talk about that?

JONATHAN: Well, I found myself working really hard in a field where increasingly I was getting sicker and sicker and less and less happy. I ended up in the hospital in emergency surgery. I had actually perforated an intestine and had a huge abscess in the middle of my body, and I ignored the pain for the better part of a few days because we were on a deal.

It was kind of a wakeup call. You know when your body physically rejects your career, you have to take a step and say, "Okay, what's going on here?" But then, like you said, there came a time where I left this to make very little money and learn an entirely new industry that a lot of people with my background would have looked on as, and *did* look on as, "What a shame. He couldn't hack it and now he's doing this thing that you don't need any professional training to do and you don't make any money." Well, I took a very different business-like approach to it and sure enough,

as that business started to explode people did start to circle back and say, “What exactly did you do to be able to make this happen?”

So it was an interesting moment when that started to happen, and it was fun because I love teaching and explaining what I do. I’m not a secret hoarder. I’d rather just let it all out, and let people figure out how to be healthy in the world.

TAHL: You have plenty of examples in the book of people who do this masterfully. Was there one in particular, in the early stages, that sort of captured what you had done and maximized and leveraged their experience for everyone else’s benefit, that essentially served as your template? Was there someone whose story encouraged you that, with research, you could uncover a real process here?

JONATHAN: What I found was that different stories uncovered different pieces of the process. There was no one story where I said, “Okay, now I can basically follow it through and say this person did these 10 things, which allowed them to go from point A to point B in a way that would kill most people.”

What I found was there were a number of different stories that really beautifully highlighted really critical practices or strategies along the way. Like the story that opens the book, for example, which is Randy Komisar, who is kind of a legend out in Silicon Valley. He was the head of Lucasarts and on this amazing track to be the CEO, very likely, of a huge multibillion-dollar company, and he just completely jumped out of a plane and said, “This isn’t right for me.” Instead he created a job and a title that didn’t exist in Silicon Valley and the rest of his story is pretty amazing.

The big piece of the puzzle that came from him, and then was repeated a number of times by other people, was that he pointed to a particular strategy that he credits as being his source, his cue in the story ... at one point, I remember I said, “What allows you to do this?” He said, “*Equanimity* is a powerful muscle to flex when you step out into the ambiguous void.” For him, his source of equanimity, his stillness and balance, was his spiritual practice, and more particularly something called *insight meditation*. It was interesting to hear him say that and that particular practice, or variations of it, started to emerge from the mouths of people that I never would have expected it to. So it was kind of fascinating to see that piece of the puzzle evolve.

TAHL: At this point, you might be scaring people, *uncertainty* being quite an amorphous topic itself, and then *insight meditation*. But the refreshing distinction of this book is that you pull all of this down into the trenches and get very tactical.

In fact, even if no one person gave you a template, you did, in a sense, create one and essentially structure the book in that way. So I want to go through some of the major ones. The first is one that involves something that you call *certainty anchors*. You found a high degree of ritualization in people who handle the unknown well. Tell us about that.

JONATHAN: This was really fascinating, because when you talk to a lot of the most creative people in the world, they have a knee-jerk reaction against routine, and they'll say, "I can't be bound. I can't have structure. I can't have all this constraint. I need to be able to freestyle and create and innovate."

Then, what you find is that it's actually less so within their working lives, but many of those same people, in their nonworking lives, in everything that goes on outside of the time that they're tasked with saying, "I'm working," is insanely ritualized. So if you ask that same person who said, "I could never be bound like that," "Well, what did you have for breakfast today?" They'll tell you, "Well, I had a sesame bagel with a smear of cream cheese and a half a tomato and a half café latte." Then you'll ask them, "Well, what did you have the day before that?" and you'll get the exact same answer. And you start to realize that probably dozens of small touch points throughout their day have become highly ritualized.

What they've done essentially, and I started to see this as a pattern across a wide variety of people in all careers, arts, and entrepreneurship, was to create all these little moments where they're removing uncertainty, removing the decision making element of a lot of the day-to-day decisions.

It's like it had a side effect of dropping all these little *certainty anchors* throughout the day where they knew what was coming next and it allowed them enough creative space to go up into the ether and to take bigger risks, and to feel like they were less tethered during that part of the day where they said, "Okay, this is my job to go and do things that scare me." So it was really something to see that pattern.

TAHL: So, what kind of anchors are we talking about?

JONATHAN: The most fundamental thing was what you wear every day. A classic example is Steve Jobs. He essentially wore the same thing for decades. So, all the way from that to ritualizing the actual work process.

You know Steve Pressfield, who is a legendary writer and wrote a great book *The War of Art*? He sits down at the exact same time every day. He places his desk the same way. He incants the muse from Greek

mythology before he writes, and that's his ritual. He commits to a fixed time, where that's sort of the way that he frames himself.

What you find is it creates a lot more stillness in people, and it allows them to go to that place where they know, "This is the time where I have to do the work and take risks."

TAHL: It's interesting because you know all of this is in the service of, or much of this is in the service of, reducing fear and anxiety. You site research that was enlightening to me. I've always assumed, and I've told the story about myself, going way back from before college to college and after, that I used anxiety as a fuel, pulling all nighters, and that this is how I got things done.

You, in fact, say that that's totally wrong. We have this misplaced kind of romanticism with the anxiety around work and that, in fact, it's adversely correlated with creativity, right?

JONATHAN: Yes, and there's pretty strong academic research. Part of what I was doing was not just to try and bring stories to the fore, but actually look at a lot of the stories and then go back and say, "Okay, what's the research? Where's the academic research that either proves or disproves it?"

What I discovered is just that, research shows the higher your anxiety levels ratchet up, the lower your creativity goes. Also, one of the key things for creativity in business is a type of problem solving called *insight-based problem solving*. So to solve problems, you can come up with innovative ideas in two ways, either *insight based* or *analytically based*.

Now analytical, would be, "Okay, I have a big idea," and if somebody said, "How did you get to that idea?," you could explain the steps, you could reverse them and back out and tell them how you got to it.

The insight-based solution is the one where you have this tremendous idea, but if someone said, "How did you get there?," you would have no idea. It's the thing that just comes to you. What we know and what the research actually shows is that creativity plummets as anxiety goes up.

But even more specifically, insight-based problem solving, which is the highest level of problem solving because it introduces new paradigms, also plummets as anxiety goes up.

TAHL: Now, isn't that all-damning of the contemporary workplace, in which we're getting pinged every six seconds with a new email in our inbox or a skype message? Where are the insights going to come from there?

JONATHAN: Exactly! What we discover is that a lot of the way that we work today is completely counter to the demand that we're putting on people. So, these days especially, we're in this time in our economic cycle where we know what got us *here*, ain't gonna get us *there*. So there's a huge demand for new ideas and huge pressure being put on people, saying, "You need to come up with bigger, better ideas." But it's being done in a way, very often, where people are incredibly fearful that if they don't do it, all sorts of terrible things are going to happen.

Like you said, we are constantly bombarded with distractions. It's kind of funny, I think these days there's a much bigger awareness that multitasking is probably not a badge of honor to wear. But just a couple years ago, if I was speaking in front of a room of 100 executives and I said, "Who's a great multitasker?" all hundred would want to raise their hands because they felt like that's a really big asset.

What we know now is that the brain doesn't work that way. We single task and we switch rapidly, sometimes hundreds or thousands of times throughout the day. So we create the perception of multitasking. The problem with that is every time we switch between a task there's a cognitive ramping time. Our brain takes anywhere from a few seconds to 15 or 20 minutes to get back up to speed. So we create a huge amount of inefficiency, use a huge amount of time, and that just ratchets up the pressure on us because now we have even less time to get done what we want to get done. So we have more anxiety, more fear, and we're trying to balance all these different things at once.

So yes, you put your finger on it. The work environment that we've created is, in large part, really stifling to innovation and the creative process.

TAHL: I saw some study about multitasking that compared the cognitive impairment of multitasking to people who are trying to do the same kind of work but after a large dose of marijuana.

JONATHAN: [Laughing] I think that's actually an English study, so it all makes sense.

TAHL: OK, so your first tactic in the book is certainty anchors. The second tactic you talk about, which is no surprise to any of us at myGreenlight, is something you call, "build your hive." What exactly does that mean?

JONATHAN: One of the biggest fears that we have in a) creating on a new level, and b) revealing it, is that we're going to be judged. Fear of being judged is a massive factor. In fact, there's a classic experiment called the Ellsberg

Paradox where he demonstrated that basically our brains are hardwired to run from making a decision, which will lead us closer to uncertainty.

But much more recently, that experiment was repeated in a way where they removed the expectation that people who would make decisions would have to reveal those decisions and be judged by other people. The bias away from uncertainty essentially vanished.

So what we know, is that our brains are actually hardwired to a certain extent to want to avoid uncertainty—but they're even more hardwired, there's a social context to it. They're even more hardwired to avoid making a decision in the face of imperfect information and being wrong and then being judged by their peers or their supervisors or anybody else around them. So, we're terrified.

But here's the problem with that: Judgment, when you break it down, is really a combination of two things. It's emotion and data. As people who are trying to grow and innovate and be creative, we are desperate for the data. Data is like manna from heaven for us because it accelerates our ability to do better things in the world.

But we don't know how to process the emotional side of data. So one of the things that's been really fascinating for me to observe has been what's going on in the tech world – this seed accelerator model. Most people know the big two examples, Y Combinator and TechStars. What they do is they bring in a dozen small founding teams who work in this super intense, sort of insane environment for a 12-week window of time. Every week in that environment, everybody is expected to come in and very likely have to completely pivot not just their platform or their product, but very likely their business model, sometimes multiple times in that 12-week window. Every week there's sort of this “coming to God” moment where every team has to step up and say, “This is what we're doing. This is what's working. This is what's not working,” and accept input from everyone else.

What they've done there is they've essentially created a dynamic where they've changed the normal reaction to judgment. Instead of being terrified of receiving judgment, they've created an environment where it normalizes the experience of getting this high-level feedback where it's high-transparency and everybody is going to be exposed to this and to also to give it.

In doing so, essentially you create a dynamic where people become much more open to the data side of judgment. Instead of shutting down and being terrified of being judged, they've created this hive environment

where people can create ideas and have the willingness to change and take risks that we rarely see outside of environments like that.

The bigger lesson is, how do we create elements of that within the context of what we do, whether it's in a large organization or in our own businesses?

TAHL: I was just about to go there. Because what's problematic about using Silicon Valley or technology as an examples is that the atmosphere and the environment are almost invariably completely different than what most people experience working at most jobs. So, to the last point that you made, how do you do that? How do you create hives in a corporate bureaucracy or an old guard company that you happen to be working in?

JONATHAN: So what we do is, we look to create discreet experiments. If I'm going into a large organization and saying, "Hey listen, we have data, we know this works and if we create these teams... we don't want to suspend judgment, but we change the environment, the psychology of how it's delivered and received," I would never expect somebody to say, "Okay, let's change the entire organization." The approach is "Okay, let's create the discreet experiment. So for the next 90 days, we're going to take team A and we're going to take team B. Team B is just going to work the way they always work. Team A, we're going to change the dynamic and we're going to create subtle changes in the way that they work. We're going to exalt experimentation. We're going to let them know that we want them to create ideas on a level they've never created before, and potentially radically change those ideas a number of times through the process, in an environment of absolutely zero judgment. There's going to be a high expectation. We're going to let everybody know that everybody on that team is all-in. There will be a weekly reveal. You have to come clean with everything that you're doing. The feedback that we're receiving, and this is a big thing, is in the name of not creating a zero-sum game where one person on the team wins and the assumption is then that everybody else has to lose. A friend of mine, John T. Unger, who is this crazy sculptor, calls it "the zillion-sum game," which is the assumption that everybody can win. That I win, somebody on the other side of the transaction wins, and parties who don't even know it exists have the opportunity to win."

So you change the psychology of what you're doing on that team, and you say, okay, we don't need complete buy-in, what we want to do is have a discreet experiment, and then we'll decide on the metrics in the beginning. That can be some sort of a "quality of solution" type of metric, or whatever the metric that's important to a particular organization or team, lets measure it and see if it's working or if it's not working.

To me, in any large organization, that's always the way you go about doing things. You give it a time limited window and a measurement metric and you say, "Worst case scenario, we'll come out the same, best case scenario, we'll come out far ahead, and then we can take that data and figure out what to do with it."

TAHL: Now, moving on to something else that interested me in your book. I'm one of these guys who's constantly looking, probably to my own detriment, for optimization—physically, cognitively, or what have you. And in a sense, that's what the whole section about meditation and exercise is talking about. Can you talk about some of those? This goes back to the Randy Komisar issue. Why is mindfulness important?

JONATHAN: Essentially, you can't create anything great without taking action and making decisions in the face of uncertainty. It just doesn't happen. The problem is, we experience uncertainty as massive discomfort and that shuts us down or moves us too quickly, because we can't handle the anxiety of the process.

So how can we make changes either in the work environment or the work flow? We've talked about some examples of personal practices we can bring into our daily lives that will, pretty profoundly, change the way we experience being in that state of uncertainty, so that we can be there long enough to allow much higher levels of ideas and solutions to percolate up—so that we can be okay there and not have it kill us, essentially.

I started looking at these practices, and what's fascinating is that two that came up are things that a lot of people know intuitively are incredibly important, but that they run from. One, because they're a little freaked out and two, because they just don't realize that it helps on the level of brain physiology.

So the first one is this thing called *intentional training*. Examples are meditation, mindfulness. If I were talking in an organization about this 30 years ago I would have been laughed out the door. Now, I'll go into a large organization and people are fascinated. The difference is that there is now a huge body of peer-reviewed, published research that shows that these processes have a really huge impact on two levels. One, practiced on a regular basis, they can dramatically lower anxiety, fear, depression, and frustration, and the flipside of that is that they elevate cognitive function, problem solving, and creativity. It's almost like the Holy Grail of interventions.

Most people first heard about meditation, or thought about it, from a spirituality standpoint. Then people thought about it from a health standpoint: "How do I reduce stress and get healthier?" Now what we're

realizing is that it is one of the most powerful professional interventions on the planet, because it completely changes the way that we experience high uncertainty situations, which are the situations we need to be embracing to create extraordinary innovations.

So that's one of the practices, and then you also brought up exercise. So again, a lot of people get started with exercise because of one or two reasons. One of three reasons, really. Either a) you just love a particular activity, you're drawn to it, you do it because you enjoy it; b) because you're trying to stay healthy and lose weight and prevent disease; or c) purely for cosmetic, appearance purposes.

So now what we know is that there's a fourth important reason for people to exercise, one with massive business impact. It has nearly identical benefits as the ones that I just laid out for meditation or intentional training.

So what happens is, if you develop a daily mindfulness practice *and* a daily exercise practice, those two combine to create about the most potent creativity, innovation, and performance force-multipliers on a professional level, on the planet. Actually, if you only take one thing from this conversation and my book, take the understanding of the research that now shows that if you bring these two things into your life—and don't bring them in simultaneously, by the way, because we don't adopt habits simultaneously, we have to do them sequentially—they are incredibly powerful on so many levels, not just personally but professionally.

TAHL: One of the questions that has come in from the audience is from someone who interacts with solopreneurs. He wants to know how to create the “hive environment” when dealing mostly with single-person operations.

JONATHAN: Great question! The funny thing is that the answer is a bit counterintuitive. You would think that that person is actually at a disadvantage. In fact, they're actually at an advantage because they don't have to fight an existing culture that isn't used to this approach.

No matter where you are in the world, you can tap technology to essentially find those people who are like-minded, who understand the culture and the philosophy of the hive. What I've seen a lot of people doing is literally going into social media and finding similar, like-minded business people in their neighborhoods, or maybe in similar businesses but because of the Internet, in noncompetitive areas, and creating groups where they say, “Okay, here's what we're here for, here are the rules and how it's going to unfold.” Then they lay out all the steps that have to be

there. “Can we get everybody to buy into this? If so, let’s start rocking and rolling.”

One example that I share in the book is there was this small, one-person, local furniture maker in a small town in Middle America. He couldn’t find anybody. He wanted to share ideas and get better and figure out cool new things and talk about tools and shapes and wood. So, he went on Twitter and started talking about this stuff, then developed a Twitter chat called Wood Chat (it’s the hash tag #WoodChat). It’s a weekly Twitter chat where now he’s got all of these woodworkers and craftsmen from around the world coming together once a week to form this sort of collaborative hive-type experience on Twitter. Then he brings them together on his blog, and I think he may now have even created his own sort of private mastermind program around that, I’m not really sure.

So it’s a great question, and the beautiful thing is that, these days, we can get a little bit creative and tap technology to create our own hives no matter where we are, even if we’re in the smallest of towns and the most single-oriented of businesses. So it’s tremendous opportunity to do this no matter where you are.

TAHL: That’s a tremendous example and completely doable by just about anyone, not just entrepreneurs. Essentially, creating a community of practice through Twitter.

I’m wondering... I’m interested in the tactic you call “own the storyline.” I’m researching an article myself now about the power of story to influence how we do just about everything, even influence the makeup of our neurochemistry. Talk about how you came to identify this as such an important issue and how it relates to us dealing with fear?

JONATHAN: It was a combination of my own experience with the things that I tell myself when I’m under high stress situations, and then a whole bunch of research. “Own the storyline” is this kind of fascinating merging of common experience and cognitive behavioral psychology.

There’s this thing in behavioral psychology called *cognitive reappraisal*, and it’s one of the most powerful tools in the arsenal of a therapist. Most people ask a single question, which is, “What if I fail?” Then they create a story around that question. That’s a pretty doom-and-gloom story and they start to cycle it over and over and it becomes paralyzing.

They instead need to create a scenario that breaks the cycle of the spin. That’s cognitive reappraisal. They need to take a step back, develop some objectivity, and say, “Okay, is this the only potential outcome? Or is this simply the outcome that I’m latching onto and spinning?”

Then they need to ask two other questions, which allows them to tell two other stories. One is, “What if I do nothing?”—which, when you get really honest with that question, is very often the much more horrifying answer. And instead of it being a paralyzing answer, it’s a mobilizing answer.

The second question is, “What if I succeed?” Then you tell a story around that. So then you’ve created a different storyline, that you can then keep returning to and embracing and sort of emboldening.

Like you said, we now know that there’s a lot of pretty fascinating research around this, that it’s not circumstances so much that determines the way we experience the world. It’s the filters and the stories that we tell ourselves about that circumstance. It’s why people who are in Bhutan come up as being the happiest people in the world, even though by Western standards, those people would be looked at as being poverty stricken and having nothing.

So “own the storyline” started out as this sort of an anecdotal thing about the stories we tell ourselves, and then I realized that it’s actually a tool from behavioral therapy that’s incredibly effective at allowing us to change the stories we tell in our head. The common word for this, by the way, is not cognitive reappraisal, it’s *reframing*. To reframe the story that we’re telling and to tell a different one, one that becomes a mobilizing story rather than a paralyzing one.

TAHL: You make an excellent point, I think, when you talk about these stories that themselves can get overwhelming. When you bring it down to the questions that are creeping up in your mind, and becoming aware of them and dealing with them right away. Because changing the answers to those questions, in essence, is the key to reframing those stories. That was the point that I kind of pulled from you. Is that right?

JONATHAN: Yes, absolutely. One of the keys is to start asking different questions, because that determines the answer.

TAHL: One of our members wants to know which research studies have you found that are most effective when it comes to proving your point to corporate leaders and trainers who may be a little bit resistant to some of the stuff that you’re talking about.

JONATHAN: Fortunately, now there’s a fairly decent-sized body of research. I cite a lot of it in the book, but there’s even more stuff that’s not in the book. There are a number of big researchers that touch on different areas of this who actually write for *Harvard Business Review*. Guys who are coming out of the positive psychology world like Shawn Aker and Barbara Fredrickson –

hardcore researchers, academics, vetted, they publish voraciously and speak voraciously, and they couch a lot of their research in the context of “Okay, this is what it means in a business world.”

TAHL: Could you share the experiment by Richard Weismann about disempowering the fear of judgment?

JONATHAN: This was incredible. So, Richard Weismann was doing experiments. He wanted to try and figure out whether there is some commonality among the lucky. Is there something that some people do that makes them luckier or less lucky than others?

So what he did is he got two groups of people together. One group self-identified as being very unlucky. The other group self-identified as being very lucky. He sat them all down and he said, “Okay, here’s a newspaper. I’m going to time you. I want you to go through the newspaper as quickly as possible and count every picture that you see in the newspaper.” The people who identified themselves as being unlucky took about two minutes on average, and they returned and said, “Okay, there are 43 pictures in the newspaper.”

The people, on average, who identified themselves as lucky took a few seconds and came back with the exact same number.

So you ask, “Well, how is this possible?” and here’s the reason why. On the inside front cover of that newspaper, half a page above the margin, in two inch block letters was a sentence that said, “There are 43 photos in this newspaper. Stop reading now.”

What he discovered was that the people who considered themselves lucky were far more open to not just keeping very constrained to the instructions and only the instructions, but seeing things beyond the very narrow blinders of what they were being told to do. Whereas, the people who considered themselves unlucky said, “Okay, I’m going to keep very linear” and they were sort of locked into this certain path, “this is what I’ve been tasked to do.”

The people who considered themselves lucky said, “Okay, I’m open to possibilities beyond the immediate instructions.” So what he found was that luck has a whole lot to do with remaining open to things that you didn’t expect to happen.

TAHL: That’s an amazing study because it’s an indictment of the whole culture of performance reviews and judgment as the only thing that really works.

JONATHAN: Also, it's interesting because we tend to measure performance based on okay, we're at point A and we want to get to point B. How quickly can we get to point B? Who's the person who gets there most efficiently?

What we don't look at is that one person may get to point B faster than anybody else, but because of the blinders, because of the refusal to acknowledge other possibilities or opportunities or adaptations along the way, that same person will very likely have missed out on 10 different things that would have brought him not to point B but to point C, had he been open to it.

So how do you measure that? We don't look at it that way. We're just trying to figure out okay, here is the stated goal, how do we get there? Rather than putting it out and saying, "We don't know exactly where this is going to end, but our goal is to create the best possible experiences and solutions and products for the people that we serve, and let's work like crazy to just keep doing that."

TAHL: We've spoken about certainty anchors and creating rituals around you that provide a kind of oasis of calm. We've talked about building your hive and we've talked about training your brain, meditation, exercise and owning the story. One of the areas where I got a little lost in your book was "seeing the forest" and doing the thing you can't not do. Can you explain that?

JONATHAN: As a general rule, people look at what they do for work on one of three levels: a job, a career, or a calling. There's some nice research around this. What we find is that if what you're doing in a given moment is either a job or a career, you are much more likely to not be wholeheartedly committed to the end, but rather being sort of moving along a process where it's more of an interest. So if the data shows you that, as you were going along, you were wrong, and it's not going to make you the money or do what you want to do, people will back away.

If you feel like what you're doing is a calling, it changes how you exist within what you do. You tend to become far more committed to that thing you do and very often far more willing to work, not for the money, not for the prize or for the power or for the ego, but because this is the thing that you can't not do. It changes the psychology of the process.

Working from a sense of calling allows people almost a sense of "this is what I'm here to do," so they're more comfortable going to that place and working not knowing how it's going to come out. They know deep down that regardless of how it ends, this is the thing that I have to be doing.

TAHL: That's fascinating and it puts something else you've said in another light for me. You've said you hate it when... or hate, hate's a strong word. But in the personal development world, all this talk of "life's purpose," you find sort of a terror.

JONATHAN: I do. I don't buy into it. I believe there is the occasional 6-year-old who hits the planet and knows, "I'm going to be a veterinarian." But for the vast majority of people, our purpose reveals itself over a period of many decades, and becomes a lot clearer looking *back* than it was looking forward.

"Purpose" becomes this huge, crippling thing because so many people in the personal development world say, "Well, step one is you've got to identify your life purpose, and then you can actually take action on it and know that you're doing the right things for the right reasons."

But most people can't do that. So I think a much more intelligent way to go about it is to say, "Okay, rather than dealing with this big, massive question that I very likely won't be able to answer in an intelligent way".... I mean think about it, most people who get married say, "This is the person I want to be with for the rest of my life, I'm 100 percent sure." And then we have a 50 percent divorce rate in this country. So, things change. Your life's purpose should be the thing that stays consistent for your whole life, if that is truly what it is. But people can't generally do that, so it becomes this action-stifling thing rather than a mobilizing thing.

So to me, a much more intelligent way to go about it is to say, "Okay, what are the qualities of working life that allow me to come alive? What's the type of culture that I come alive in? Who are the people that I love to be around to serve, to serve under, to serve with? What is the mission of the type of organization that really vibes with me? What are the specific types of tasks, activities and processes that allow me to become absorbed and enter that state of flow? What's the actual physical setting that allows me to really just come alive?"

When you break it down into these categories, it becomes much easier to look at the world of opportunities before you and say, "Okay, I see pieces of all these different things in these different possibilities," whether it's entrepreneurship or a career path or something else. It's a much more mobilizing tool, and, to me, a much more practical and effective tool.

What it does is it starts to get you doing work that's most aligned with the things in your life that allow you to come alive. Through doing that work, over a period of years and maybe decades, maybe a much bigger purpose will become revealed.

Approaching the process that way, to me, is a much more human, humane, and mobilizing way to do it.

TAHL: Jonathan, our time is up. I think this is terrific work. It has a practitioner's pragmatism given that you're a serial entrepreneur and that you yourself have experienced it all, but also a theoretical basis and research to back most of your tactics and insights. That is a rarity in this category. So I want to congratulate you on that and express my gratitude for taking the time to teach and share with us.

JONATHAN: Oh, it's been my absolute pleasure. I thank you so much for having me on.

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*For more information about Jonathan, visit www.JonathanFields.com and read his book, *Uncertainty: Turning Fear and Doubt into Fuel*. You can view a trailer for the book at www.theuncertaintybook.com.*