

**Shrink Rap Radio #261, April 8, 2011, Practical Life Philosophy  
David Van Nuys, Ph.D., aka “Dr. Dave” interviews Brian Johnson,  
Philosopher & CEO of en\*theos Enterprises  
(transcribed from [www.ShrinkRapRadio.com](http://www.ShrinkRapRadio.com) by Patricia Jacks)**

**Excerpt:** I decided to give myself a Ph.D. in how to live. I had long looked at positive psychology programs from Seligman, Sternberg, and these other guys I really admire to Ph.D. in philosophy or religious studies, but none of them really integrated all of the ideas I wanted to study, so I decided somewhat plightfully to give myself my own Ph.D. I would study old-school philosophy, spirituality, mysticism, modern-day positive psychology, self-development, creativity, health and nutrition, relationships and business, and all the things I think go into creating a really thriving life in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Then the idea was, “I can get a Master’s when I have read one hundred of the classic optimal living books and distilled them into six-page PDFs and 20 minute mp3s that I got paid to create. So there is an integration of following my heart and my passion with getting paid to do it.

**Introduction:** That was the voice of my guest, Brian Johnson, speaking about his passion for developing programs to inspire and enhance optimal living. Brian Johnson describes himself as the Philosopher and CEO of en\*theos Enterprises, where he has fun integrating his passion for practical philosophy with his passion for creating cool businesses that inspire and empower people to live their most authentically awesome lives. A few years ago, Brian decided to sell the business he was running and give himself a Ph.D. in Optimal Living. As you heard, he couldn’t find a program that integrated everything he wanted to study from Old-School Philosophy, positive psychology, spirituality, nutrition, health, fitness, creativity, business, and modern self-improvement, so he decided to create his own doctoral program. As you heard, he earned his Master’s by creating Philosopher’s Notes, where he shares more wisdom in less time by distilling the Big Ideas from his favorite Optimal Living Classics into fun, inspiring, and super-practical six-page PDFs, 20 minute mp3s, and ten minute PNTV episodes. His dissertation came in the form of a little book called A Philosopher’s Notes, where he distilled his favorite one-hundred Big Ideas on Optimal Living. In his past lives, Brian built and sold the social networking sites eteamz and Zaadz. He’s a proud law school dropout and a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of UCLA, where he studied psychology and business. Brian goes on to say that he enjoys spooning with his goddess when he is not reading, hiking, creating, or otherwise enjoying himself. Now here’s the interview.

**Dr. Dave:** Brian Johnson! Welcome to ShrinkRapRadio!

**Brian Johnson:** Thank you so much, Dave. I’m happy to be here.

**Dr. Dave:** I’m really happy to have this opportunity to meet with you and to discuss your work. I have to thank listener, Alexi Soma. Is it Alexi or Elexie? Do you know?

**Brian Johnson:** I don’t. I call him Alex.

**Dr. Dave:** That’s probably what I should do.

**Brian Johnson:** (laughs)

**Dr. Dave:** He urged me to have you on as a guest, and I have to confess ... I had not been aware of you before that suggestion. But I mentioned your name to one of my good friends who is very much into spirituality and self-improvement and he immediately lit up with recognition. “Oh yeah! He’s great! I know him!”

**Brian Johnson:** Wow! Awesome!

**Dr. Dave:** You call yourself a philosopher on your website and in your writing, but not necessarily in the academic sense, so maybe that’s a good place for us to start.

**Brian Johnson:** Great! Well, you know, I’m really having fun with the idea of rebranding what a philosopher is in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, and, for me, I go back to the Greek roots of the word Philo Sophia, which constitutes philosopher, of course. Philo is one of the three words the Greeks used for love and it signified friendship or admiration of philanthropists and all the words like that. The idea of just a lover of wisdom, someone who is passionate about understanding how to live ... I discovered that word and I fell in love with the idea. I absolutely loved wisdom and thought to myself that a philosopher would be a fun thing to do. That’s kind of where it came from and really having fun with it, more than anything else.

**Dr. Dave:** It really makes sense the way that you’re approaching it. Well, I’m curious to know about your evolution. Let’s start at the beginning, where you grew up and what your childhood years were like and all of that.

**Brian Johnson:** Well, I grew up in Southern California in Orange County in a very conservative Catholic family. I went to Catholic school for 12 years, my father worked in a grocery store and retired with union benefits. Neither of my parents went to college. It was a very conservative, blue-collar, Catholic family. From a young age, I kind of questioned some of the ideas that we talked about and that kind of evolved as I went to school at UCLA. I don’t know how much detail you want to go into. The younger parts ... do you want me to pause there and check in with you?

**Dr. Dave:** No, you’re doing great! What did you think you wanted to be when you grew up; say, in your teens?

**Brian Johnson:** You know, I didn’t spend a whole lot of time thinking about that. I think, as a kid, I had everything from a farmer to a baseball player ...

**Dr. Dave:** (laughs)

**Brian Johnson:** ... yeah, the typical kids’ stuff. I don’t remember having a clear sense. I was a smart kid and did well in school, but really shy and just part of that conservative family. My father was also an alcoholic and I played the “golden child” role in that family. So it was more

about just doing what needed to get done, following the rules really well, and questioning things, but not too significantly. You know, I had a good sense of that, and then I started to evolve once I went to UCLA. I thought I would be a doctor and then I realized I'm not into biology. I went more into human behavior and I really loved psychology. I did some research with a graduate of UCLA and realized at the time (I was working on Autism studies) there wasn't a whole lot going on in positive psychology, so I ended up getting a minor in business and got recruited into the leadership track of Arthur Anderson, which no longer exists, but at the time was one of the largest professional services firm. That felt like a comfortable place for me to go forward, not having a lot of mentorship within my family about what would make sense. The real impulse I had at that time was I wanted to study leadership and what makes good people great. What is it about these people who go out and make a difference in the world? What makes them tick? And contemplating staying and doing an honors thesis at UCLA, I wound up leaving and starting my career at Arthur Anderson, but that impulse to understand human behavior was there at that time and it took me a while to circle back to commit my life to studying it. But those are some of the hints that what I'm doing now existed at a younger point.

**Dr. Dave:** It's interesting that you had to turn to the world of business to find something that was more in line with the inspiration that you were seeking. I think because of the influence Maslow and other people who are at the roots of humanistic psychology, the world of business is always seeking the newest lever, and so the whole thing about organizational development proved to be fertile ground for a lot of the ideas about personal growth and so on.

**Brian Johnson:** Exactly! I graduated from UCLA in '96, just before the positive psychology movement really started moving forward. At the time, there was almost nothing. When I was looking around at what I could do, there was almost no hint of even the possibility of studying these things scientifically and when I was recruited by Arthur Anderson, I was sent to an international leadership thing and it was the first time I was turned on to the works of people like Stephen Covey and Warren Bennis. It was so exhilarating for me to realize I could actually shape my life. I can create something constructive and, at the time, I didn't know who Maslow was. It took at least another five years, maybe ten, before I even knew beyond some introductory psychology. So I think that's very true. It's exciting to see. I remember when I read Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Martin Seligman's paper. Do you know the primary journal?

**Dr. Dave:** There is a journal called The American Psychologist.

**Brian Johnson:** It may have been that. It was January 1, 2000. It was very significant. Seligman, I think, was the APA president. They basically said it's time we refocus on positive psychology. I read that after selling my first business and figuring out what I wanted to do. I remember reading that at a library at UCSD and I was so excited about the possibility of studying all of this great stuff. And again, getting it scientifically.

**Dr. Dave:** Speaking of your excitement, one of your hallmarks I've learned is your passion and enthusiasm. Were you born that way as your basic temperament would you say, or was that something that you really had to work at?

**Brian Johnson:** It's a gift. You don't want to say yes and yes.

**Dr. Dave:** (laughs)

**Brian Johnson:** I was the kind of kid who was really happy and all the coaches wanted to have on their teams. I was super passionate about doing well and giving my best from an unconscious perspective. It's one of my signature strengths. Go to Martin Seligman's Character Strengths, via tests, and hope and optimism is one of my top five. It's something that I work on diligently. The idea of hope and optimism and energy and enthusiasm are two of the character strengths that I identified with in that test, but I consciously cultivate on a day-by-day and week-by-week basis. As you know from my work and from the book, that optimism is the hallmark of health and it's something I spend a lot of time on in cultivating because I also have a tendency to go the other way. I've had a lot of challenges in my family and in my own life emotionally and I take that seriously. The vulnerability that I seem to have genetically keeps me on a straight and narrow path, keeping my thoughts straight.

**Dr. Dave:** Okay. Good for you! And yes and yes makes sense to me as a great answer. Now you did build two successful web portals that you were able to sell. Tell us about those. Eteamz and Zaadz. And Zaadz Daily Wisdom and Learning Out Loud, I discovered, while I was searching around.

**Brian Johnson:** I went to UCLA, studied psychology and business as we discussed, left work at Arthur Anderson ... I knew that wasn't for me ... and I wound up working in four service lines in less than a year and the joke is I probably hold the record for that. I was trained in three different service lines and worked in four, and then I went to law school up north in Berkley thinking that would be where I can get a stamp thing ... I'm a smart guy and I can go out and get my six figures a year and all that stuff. A blue collar kid wants to make sure they can do their best.

**Dr. Dave:** Yes.

**Brian Johnson:** I knew that that wasn't for me and I dropped out before the semester was over. At the time, the only thing I knew I wanted to do was burn my resume and coach a little league baseball team. I wound up doing that and moved back in with my mom at 23 and worked with the neighborhood kids' baseball team. I was an assistant coach for them. In the process of following that little glimpse of bliss (if you will) that I had, I came up with the idea to create eteamz, which was kind of like, in many ways, today's language of Facebook for little league baseball teams, asos soccer teams, and families involved in sports. At the time, there was nothing that made it easy for these teams and leagues to create websites and I had a little experience in technology with Arthur Anderson and saw that in a matter of time, every little league team in the world would be using this technology. So I cracked open my piggy bank with

a few thousand dollars in it and partnered with a tech genius and we created eteamz, which wound up being a lot of fun and learned a lot during the first dot com boom.

**Dr. Dave:** Great! And what was Zaadz?

**Brian Johnson:** I sold eteamz and I had enough to take a little bit of time to figure out what I wanted to do. I grew up and became a philosopher for the first time then and studied all this different stuff. I ran out of that money and I needed to figure out what I was going to do. Zaads was the integration of my passion for understanding life and studying philosophy, spirituality, and self-development with my passion for creating cool businesses, particularly technology-driven businesses. It was essentially my passion for that, as a philosopher with my passion as an entrepreneur, in building social media sites. Zaadz was essentially a Facebook-like site for people interested in changing the world. We had some great investors and some great people on that team to really connect people to other people who were passionate about making a difference.

**Dr. Dave:** Did that website get sold or acquired finally as well?

**Brian Johnson:** Yeah. So we sold that one to a company called Gaiam, which was a Nasdaq business and they integrated that into their platform. It was really fun and we learned a lot. It was a great process.

**Dr. Dave:** I saw, too, that for a while you got an infusion of money from the guy who is heading up Whole Foods, another business visionary-type person.

**Brian Johnson:** Yeah, he's a friend, a mentor of mine. Someone I have a great deal of respect for and I've learned a lot from. I've been blessed to have his rapport. He invested and that was one of the highlights of that venture, was meeting a lot of great people. I met a lot of the authors and teachers who I admire and got a chance to work with them. We had some extraordinary investors, as well.

**Dr. Dave:** To what extent were those businesses informed by your spiritual orientation?

**Brian Johnson:** I think the first business was formed by my passion ... kind of a very naïve, young, unformed passion for doing something fun. I figured it would be a great culture in our business and that was great, but I didn't know I had a lot of stability emotionally or entrepreneurially. I was 24 years old, raised five million dollars, and the market crashed. It was a great opportunity to learn a lot and that taught me the importance of having fundamentals and having practices in my life that keep me grounded and keep me stable and healthy. And then Zaadz was very much an attempt to integrate my own challenges integrating spirituality and capitalism in the form of business. We were driven by really high ideals, and, again, we're a little bit over-ambitious, if you will, in some of our plans, but we had good intentions and a good heart. Now I'm really excited! I'm 36 and I've been through those ventures and learned a little bit more. It's even more fun to bring in a lot of the virtue and the diligence and the patience and

the persistence and the long-range thinking that I didn't necessarily have as well-tuned in the first couple businesses.

**Dr. Dave:** Tell us about your website, which seems to be the major current focus, Philosopher's Notes. How did that come about?

**Brian Johnson:** Philosopher's Notes came about as I was running Zaadz. I got to the point where I had been doing that for three years and we had raised a few million dollars. We had learned a lot. We were also having challenges, meeting payrolls, and all those things were kind of going in. I was checking in and saying, "What is it that I really want to do?" I found myself reading a few different books and was struck by the idea of what is my real dharma and purpose? I questioned whether I was a true entrepreneur in that context and I realized that it wasn't for me. I decided to sell the business. Shortly after having that epiphany, within thirty days we had the deal done and the businesses transitioning and all that stuff. I decided to give myself a Ph.D. in how to live. I had long looked at positive psychology programs from Seligman, Sternberg, and these other guys I really admire to Ph.D. in philosophy or religious studies, but none of them really integrated all of the ideas I wanted to study, so I decided somewhat plighfully to give myself my own Ph.D. I would study old-school philosophy, spirituality, mysticism, modern-day positive psychology, self-development, creativity, health and nutrition, relationships, business and all the things I think go into creating a really thriving life in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and then the idea was, "I can get a Master's when I had read one hundred of the classic optimal living books and distilled them into six-page PDFs and 20 minute mp3s that I got paid to create. So there is an integration of following my heart and my passion with getting paid to do it, and demonstrating that you can do this kind of thing. That was the idea with the Master's ... one hundred notes that became The Philosopher's Notes and a profitable business sharing this wisdom. That's where PhilosophersNotes.com came from.

**Dr. Dave:** And I think you said you spent two years reading those hundred books and heavily annotating them.

**Brian Johnson:** Exactly! Basically, it was a two-year process which I procreated in a span of a Master's program, if you will. So the idea was from the old-school classics to the modern. How can I synthesize them into these six-page PDFs, pulling out what I call Big Ideas. So every book has about ten Big Ideas. I put them into this PDF in a little highlighter format, as you've seen, and tried to tie them to other teachers. I wanted to show that what Buddha said or what Marcus Aurelius said or what Nitra said is very similar to what positive psychologists are saying today. What all these teachers across cultures and times have said throughout the ages. That was the idea. And I also wanted to make it fun. I think that people have a really heavy idea when they think of a philosopher and what they think of philosophy. I wanted to have fun with it, yet ground it in really deep wisdom that's endured the ages and then ground it in the scientific truths that we know today. And most importantly, make it practical. So inspiring, fun, grounded, smart, and practical ... these ideas that you can take into your life right now. The idea is that in twenty minutes, I can share an idea with you from this book that can change your life.

**Dr. Dave:** One of your catch phrases is more wisdom in less time.

**Brian Johnson:** Yeah. Exactly.

**Dr. Dave:** And you pull it off, I have to say! You've already gone down this path a good way, but for people who haven't been to the Philosophers Notes site, give them a sense of what they'll find there.

**Brian Johnson:** At Philosopher'sNotes.com, you'll find a really simple website that overviews what I just described. You can sign up to get these One Hundred Notes and I'm working on a second volume right now. I also created, not only the PDFs and mp3s of all these books, but also many tv episodes ... ten minute little Youtube videos where I share the Big Ideas ... a few of them. Hopefully, they'll inspire you to live with more virtues. So that's the basic idea. Really, really simple. And it's been really fun to do, and, again, I've had a lot of fun meeting great people like you in the process.

**Dr. Dave:** Thank you! I'm impressed by your generosity. You have an interesting business model for the site. You come out very clearly saying that the cost is \$100.00 on the one hand, and on the other hand, you say anyone can declare themselves needing a scholarship and pay whatever they wish. What was your thinking behind that approach?

**Brian Johnson:** Great question! I appreciate your compliment and, on intention, one of my other strengths is kindness and generosity. Out of the top five, my strengths are hope and optimism, energy and enthusiasm, kindness and generosity, wisdom, and creativity. Those are actually six in the two tests I've taken, with another one being courage. My wife and I have been working on this together and she has her own projects, which are associated with our basic businesses that we have. But the idea was if we were going to create the ideal business, what would it look like? How would we want to interact with someone's business? For us, our business is as much of a ministry as it is anything else. We played around with the idea of being a non-profit and we really admired the idea that when you go to church, for example, no one is sitting at the front door saying it costs this much to come in today. Everyone is welcome! You chip in what you can chip in and it sustains itself that way. We chose not to go with the non-profit for many reasons, but we wanted to create a for-profit that embodied the ideals of a really, really cool conscious business where money wasn't the obstacle. Not only the people in the States who are having challenging times, but currency conversions literally make the consumption of this stuff cost-prohibitive for a lot of people around the world. I know that because a lot of them are emailing me, asking me this stuff, so we just wanted to come up with a fun, creative way to share this and trust that, in the end, doing the right thing is the right thing for a really successful business. As John Mackey says, good business is good business. We're enjoying the creative challenge of creating a business we're proud of and that does the right thing. For us, it's a digital product and it doesn't cost us anything more incrementally to share what we do digitally; therefore, it makes total sense to make it available for \$100.00. We have a pick-your-price model, as you alluded to. We have scholarships to be given away ... thousands of scholarships ... I'm not sure what the number is ... but it's approaching five thousand now. The scholarship applications that we give to people totally affirm what we're doing. People who are on Social Security and can barely get by on what they have and have suffered debilitating

illnesses to have lost their jobs and haven't been able to get a new one for a year. It just makes it so obvious that there are a lot of challenges out there and for us to be able to share in this way gives us a lot of meaning and purpose and just feels like the right thing to do. It's a long way to answer your question.

**Dr. Dave:** It makes sense to me that you said in a way it feels like a ministry because it does very much feel that way to me. I've sometimes felt that way about what I'm doing, as well. Even though it's extensively about psychology, it's always felt to me like there was some other deeper message; maybe not as explicitly articulated as you've been able to do. I really love the way you've articulated what you're doing! I'm curious! What is it that your wife is up to? You said she's got her own irons in the fire.

**Brian Johnson:** When we got married, we created a business called en\*theos Enterprises; en\*theos being two little Greek words we love, which form the basis of enthusiasm. En\*theos/enthusiasm means "God within". So for us, our commitment to our lives is to give our greatest strengths and greatest services to the world and to help people plug into the Divine within and to shine with a reigning enthusiasm. That's the kind of the ethos of our life and our business. Philosopher's Notes is one of our businesses and she's been working on something called Rock Your Goddess Life. Her idea is just as passionate about making philosophy fun and, in a lot of ways, sexy, playful, and a cool thing to do. She's doing the same with the idea of what it means to be a goddess in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and that's based on the mythology of Goddess. She would say all women have the divine feminine within them, and she's identified ten elements of Rocking Your Goddess Life: playfulness, confidence, health and fitness, sensuality, spirituality, and discovering your purpose, etc. So she's been working on a really cool program for that which she's been teaching, and we're now developing it and will be sharing it next month. That's her basic idea.

**Dr. Dave:** Is there a website that interested people could go to find out more about that?

**Brian Johnson:** Absolutely! We'll be launching the RockYourGoddessLife.com website soon, but now she does all of her blogging and stuff like that at MyGoddessLife.com. Her name is Alexandra.

**Dr. Dave:** How did you two meet?

**Brian Johnson:** It's a really funny story! When I had the business plan for Zaadz, one of the Big Ideas ... once again ... a social networking site like Facebook for conscious people ... one of the jokes was that at one point in the business, we would create a dating service where people could meet other conscious people. I jokingly said, "Where else is Brian going to find his wife?" That was in the business plan.

**Dr. Dave:** (laughs)

**Brian Johnson:** That was the primary reason why I would do it. As it turns out, a friend of hers said you have to check out this website, Zaadz! I think you would really enjoy it! And so she

checked it out. This was well before we knew each other, obviously. She went to the site and said this is a really cool site! I wonder who built it or who runs it, and she wound up finding her way to my profile and said I'm going to marry this guy. She loved the books (I have tears in my eyes when I say it). She just loved the books I had read and had this clear head. This was six months before we met. She moved from Chicago to L.A., wound up moving two blocks from me, unbeknownst to either one of us, and she was running a conference for eco businesses and thought Zaadz would be a great sponsor for the business. She told her partners we need to get Zaadz to sponsor us because: (A) They would be a good sponsor; and (B) I need to meet the CEO because I want to marry him!

**Dr. Dave:** (laughs)

**Brian Johnson:** To make a long story a little shorter, I wound up hearing about that from a woman who worked with me. She said she had found a woman who jokingly said she wanted to marry me. She described her to me and I said, "What! We could definitely make a first date happen!"

**Dr. Dave:** (laughs)

**Brian Johnson:** The first date happened and there was an extraordinary connection. Almost four years later, here we are.

**Dr. Dave:** Wow! That's great! A great story! The funny thing is it just occurred to me that somebody who has worked on consciousness as much as you have would certainly have some good synchronicities in this life ... some good synchronicities stories and that certainly is one. I'm sure there must be others.

**Brian Johnson:** Yeah, I've been blessed, and for me the thread that kind of underlies all of it is that idea of following our bliss and trusting our deepest selves in creating our most authentically awesome life. It's kind of the fun way we put it ... having the courage and the audacity to trust ourselves and to go for it. As we do that, there are hidden hands coming to help us in ways we couldn't have foreseen. That's definitely one of the ways. I'm blessed to see that more and more often. All of the great teachers, as you know, describe that again and again and again, so it's pretty neat to see that come to full vision.

**Dr. Dave:** Now you strike me as a yes-man in the best sense of the word. That is, someone who says yes to life and yes to new ideas. At the same time, I'm wondering if you ever find anything that's too far out for you?

**Brian Johnson:** Yeah, I do! How about the seeker?

**Dr. Dave:** I didn't want to bring that up, but it definitely sprang to mind.

**Brian Johnson:** Interestingly, one of the chapters in my book is Follow Your Bliss (& Your Grunt). The Choice of Campbell jokingly said that at one point he wished he had said follow

your grunt instead of follow your bliss, and for me, I have an openness and I'm very excited about exploring possibilities and that good stuff, but I'm also reasonably conservative. I love scientific validation and the idea of moving through rational thought, so how things like The Secret and The Law of Attraction are marketed are disappointing to me. Another thing I'm excited to do is to bridge that. Again, the philosophical truths with some of the scientific stuff with the fun of self-help ... Talben-Shahar ... do you know Talben-Shahar's work?

**Dr. Dave:** I do!

**Brian Johnson:** He's one of my favorites. He's just great! How he writes it is bridging the gap between self-development and psychology. The fun of self-help with the rigor of science. That's something that I'm passionate about, as well.

**Dr. Dave:** That's great! I'm really glad to hear that. What are some of the Big Ideas that have had the biggest impact on you? I've actually just finished reading a chapter in which you talk about Ten Big Ideas. I don't know if you can rattle them off the top of your head or not. Do you need any prompting?

**Brian Johnson:** Well, sure! So you're talking about the Ten Principles of Optimal Living that I articulate?

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah!

**Brian Johnson:** The idea was, as I mentioned with the Ph.D. in Optimal Living, I would get a Master's when I had distilled one hundred of these classics in Optimal Living, and then my dissertation project that I created was distilling the wisdom from these great teachers into a modern, fun, inspiring, practical 21<sup>st</sup> Century philosophy, which is what the book is intended to be. What I saw as I studied all these teachers was that their wisdom could fall into ten basic principles and, to me, it all started with optimism. All of the great teachers come back to optimism again and again and again and again. So that's the first principle. The fact is that if we can't get in control of the contents of our consciousness as Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi puts it, then we're in trouble and none of the other stuff matters. So the first principle was optimism and the second one is purpose ... just understanding what is it that is our highest calling and highest destiny. This is kind of an idea of Maslow's self-actualization, that we are here to express our unique capacities in a powerful way and to the extent that if we don't do that, we're not going to live with a deep sense of fulfillment. So, purpose is the second principle. The third one is self-awareness. It's difficult to know what our highest purpose is if we lack self-awareness. So that's the idea of "know thyself" in taking the time to contemplate and to do all of that work. So optimism, self-purpose, self-awareness, and then we get into more specific grounded stuff in the form of goals. All that's nice, but it's an abstract. How do we take it into the practical? It could be everything from losing extra pounds to running a triathlon or starting a family or writing a business plan or whatever it is ... what are the goals that drive us? Obviously, happy people have projects, they have goals, etc., and that doesn't matter unless we consistently take action. So the fifth principle is action, and I jokingly say "Guru Nike ... just do it!" If we don't know how to take action, it's just intellectual banter! The sixth principle that I've identified is energy.

You're going to have a hard time living at your highest potential and living optimally if you have a hard time getting out of bed. A lot of people are into all of the other stuff and into psychology and philosophy, etc., but they don't eat well and they don't exercise consistently. As Talben-Shahar says, not exercising is like taking a depressant. I certainly know that in my life, and I haven't missed a day of exercise since the beginning of the year ... that's one of my fundamental commitments. I'm passionate about nutrition, exercise, and all this good stuff. So, that energy would be the sixth principle. The seventh principle is wisdom, and wisdom, to me, encapsulates all the prior elements. The idea is, basically, to approach life as your classroom. Every opportunity gives us another opportunity to learn and to live with more integrity to our highest ideals. The eighth principle is courage. I love the root of the word courage, which comes from the Latin word for heart. So courage is the virtue that literally pumps blood to all of the other virtues, just as our heart pumps blood to our arms, legs, and organs. Courage is the virtue that vitalizes all the other virtues. The ninth principle is love ... the idea being that all that stuff is great, but if we don't have a sense of love for ourselves and for our family, community, etc., none of this really matters. And then the tenth and final principle is this: when I sketch this out on a whiteboard or a piece of paper, they kind of go in a sequence, and then I draw a circle around all of it, and the circle is in the center. That's en\*theos. So that's God Within. Joseph Campbell said that God is both the circumference and the center of the circle, so it's the idea that it's the center of everything and it's the infinite encompassing element. So the ultimate idea here is how do we connect to that divine within us? Those nine principles guide us there, and as we do that, we live with that radiant enthusiasm that only comes when we live in integrity with our highest values. So those are the basic ten principles: optimism, purpose, self-awareness, goals, action, energy, wisdom, courage, love, and en\*theos.

**Dr. Dave:** You definitely have earned your Ph.D.!

**Brian Johnson:** I appreciate that!

**Dr. Dave:** You just passed your orals!

**Brian Johnson:** That's fantastic!

**Dr. Dave:** We started off talking about enthusiasm ... your enthusiasm ... and one of the things you noted is that the word enthusiasm has its roots in entheos that you were just referring to ... that sense of God within. I seem to recall that we had an email exchange initially when we were first touching base with one another. Somehow, Whole Sync came up, and I think you said that had a positive influence on your development.

**Brian Johnson:** It has! And meditation, in general, and Whole Sync has been one of the products that both Alexandra and I have used. Two and a half years ago maybe, we decided that we were never going to miss a day of meditation again in our lives, and we have kept that streak going for two and a half years and don't intend to miss a day. And we started with Whole Sync! It was a great way for us to leverage their technology in helping us to drop out of beta and alpha, and, as you would say, down in the delta. So, yeah, Whole Sync has been a big part of our practice and it was for the first year and a half or two years, and now we're actually developing

our own stuff that you and I chatted about: the desura simware things that we've been using for the last six months or so.

**Dr. Dave:** I'll give you a chance to promote that if you would like to.

**Brian Johnson:** Sure! Well, the basic idea is we're really passionate about meditation and, from a general perspective, as Benson would describe it, the relaxation response. We experience extraordinary benefits in our lives, both physiologically and being able to get out of the fight-or-flight into our relaxed state, and we know scientifically, again, that you can literally change your genetic expression through 12 to 15 minutes of daily meditation over as little as eight weeks. You can change that significantly and that, to me, is such an amazing thing. So, we're excited about helping people make meditation a more consistent part of their lives and it's become the most frequently asked question we've had as we talk about our meditation practice. A lot of people ask us, "Well, how should I start my meditation practice?" We really haven't had a good place to send people and say this is where you should go. We've done transcendental meditation, we've done Whole Sync, we've done Jopasana, and they're all great, but we're excited to develop something that we hope is a little bit more approachable for a lot of people. The basic idea is Blissitations and we'll be launch Blissitations.com over the next two months or so. Using the binaural beats technology to help people go from the beta to the alpha in even a light theta state, and also doing a lot of guided meditation or, as we call them, guided blissitation work, in helping people develop different virtues from optimism, courage, health, love, gratitude, and all this stuff. That's the basic idea of what we're up to. I'm really excited about it and I plan to interview a lot of the reading teachers involved in meditation. Again, make it fun, make it approachable, and make it cool! It's something that people can do consistently.

**Dr. Dave:** Yes! And you sent me a link and I think you have something right now ... a capability to embed subliminal affirmations that people can send in for affirmations they would like embedded.

**Brian Johnson:** Exactly!

**Dr. Dave:** And that's there to help move their process along.

**Brian Johnson:** Exactly!

**Dr. Dave:** You had a couple of generic meditations there with the sound and I wasn't clear if those have some subliminal suggestions in them yet or not.

**Brian Johnson:** They don't. What we've done (and I appreciate the question) will make them more clear. We have what we call a daily mojo. So, again, keeping it light, use the daily mojo for 15 or 30 minutes. We have two different types of tracks with the soothing sounds of rain, flowing water, or ocean waves. With the binaural beats that help guide you into a meditated state, these simple ones don't have any subliminals at all, but we also offer the option for people to record their own affirmations, two to five minutes worth, that we then underlay on those tracks subliminally so that your conscious mind can't hear them, but your subconscious mind does pick

it up. People can meditate with that. I think a lot of people over-hype the potential benefits of subliminals and it doesn't have quite the scientific research that I'd like to see to know that it has the impact, but as we talked about in our emails, visual priming or the results of visual subliminals are stunning of what we're learning about at my alma matter, UCLA. It's amazing stuff! Now we're being conservative about what the potential effects of audible priming or audible subliminals could be. My hunch is there's a lot of potential there and I'm excited to see the science catch up with it. We meditate with our subliminal affirmations in our tracks every morning, which is something I'm excited about and we're excited to share. That will definitely be part of it.

**Dr. Dave:** Ok! I wonder if there are any final thoughts you would like to leave our listeners with. It seems like we've covered a lot of ground and maybe we're at a place where we should begin to wrap it up.

**Brian Johnson:** We have! I really appreciate the invitation and enjoyed our conversation very much.

**Dr. Dave:** Any last words that you would like to leave our audience with?

**Brian Johnson:** I feel like I shared a lot of words.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah, you did! What is it that Marshall McLuhan says? The message is the message.

**Brian Johnson:** (laughs)

**Dr. Dave:** You've definitely done that. So, Brian Johnson, thanks for being my guest on ShrinkRapRadio.

**Brian Johnson:** Thank you so much, Dr. Dave.