Corey Andrew Powell (00:00)

Hello everyone and welcome to another episode of Motivational Mondays. Today we have a very inspiring guest with us, Dr. Ran Anbar. And Dr. Anbar is a board certified pediatric pulmonologist and the founder of CenterPoint Medicine where he helps children and teens unlock their full potential through counseling and hypnosis. He's also the author of Changing Children's Lives with Hypnosis.

A Journey to the Center and a regular contributor to Psychology Today online, which I read very often. And Dr. Anbar is passionate about making mental health care more accessible, especially helping young people managing stress and improving their sleep, building healthier, happier lives all around. So we're thrilled to have him here today on the show. Please welcome Dr. Anbar. Hello.

Dr. Ran Anbar (00:46)

Thank you so much for having me. Hello.

Corey Andrew Powell (00:48)

Yes, sir, it's my pleasure. And we were talking a little bit before we began recording, and I mentioned to you that it seems like it's a really difficult time more than past generations perhaps for today's teens to sort of cope on a day-to-day basis. Is that a perspective that you share?

Dr. Ran Anbar (01:08)

Absolutely. I'll tell you the reason I think is because of social media and the internet. It's caused so many difficulties. Let me just name a couple of them. First, people spend a lot of time looking at social media and texting and this takes time away from other things that might be healthier for them. Secondly, they spend all day and night texting and socializing, so this disrupts their sleep.

Lack of sleep leads to things like anxiety and depression, lack of motivation. And thirdly, they see on social media things that aren't necessarily real, so they'll see the best of other people's lives and they say, what's wrong with my life? And the last thing social media does is it spreads the news very well. Sometimes it's misnews, but it's news. So for example, if there's a school shooting somewhere, everybody hears it everywhere and it seems like in your face.

I researched school shootings as an example a while back, and there were school shootings back in the 70s and 80s, but nobody ever heard about it. Unless you watched the evening news, you didn't know about it. Now kids are faced with it, and so their anxiety rises, understandably.

Corey Andrew Powell (02:18)

Yeah, what I'll say that even not just kids in that case, because everything you just mentioned, I think I check all those boxes too. You know, I'm far from my teenage years. But yes, my partner will tell me I spend way too much time on the phone, on the internet, arguing with people over political perspectives, you know, who I'll never meet probably. And of course, comparing myself to things I see.

online and wondering why don't I have those things without realizing and remembering that so much of that is manipulation and false. Correct. Yeah, it can really like kind of lead you down a path of trying to chase something that's not even real.

Dr. Ran Anbar (03:00)

Right, but as an adult you already have an identity, you know who you are. As a teen you're trying to figure out who you are and you do that by looking at others and then it gets very confusing.

Corey Andrew Powell (03:09)

And we've been seeing there's like a, think HBO did a really wonderful film where they took like 10 unknown people and just all through like fraudulence and like they rented yachts and they put them on airplanes to like the Maldives and like they faked these personas of these people who had no personas really at all. And like by the end of a month they had like millions of followers and it was all fake, you know? So yeah, so everyone listening, please keep that in mind that what you see on social media is not always.

the real deal. But can you share what first inspired you though, doctor, to specialize in the pediatric pulmonology area and hypnosis therapy?

Dr. Ran Anbar (03:46)

Well, two different answers. Pulmonology, when I was a teenager myself, I volunteered at Children's Hospital of Stanford and befriended a young man with cystic fibrosis, which is a disease you're born with. In the old days, it would chew up your lungs and people would die in their late teens. And now thanks to new therapies, people living into their 60s and 70s, which is very exciting to see. But I went into pulmonary medicine to help people with cystic fibrosis. That was my main drive.

And then after practicing pulmonology for a good 15 years, I ran into a young man with bad food allergies and asthma. And he told me when he smelled cheeseburgers, he developed asthma attacks, which is a rather strange complaint. I thought to myself, maybe a milk molecule is going through the air and attacking him. But that, by the way, is not true. I asked him if he could imagine eating a cheeseburger.

which he could not do in real life. He closed his eyes and within seconds he had a terrible, trouble breathing. And I thought, Oh no, he's going to have anaphylaxis, going to have a terrible allergic reaction. So I told him to stop it. And he did. And I said, you're kidding me. And he said, no, no, I couldn't breathe. That was my asthma. I said, Whoa, if you can think you were into illness, can you think way out? And the answer is yes. And he actually worked with me for a good year. We practiced all sorts of hypnotic things because what he did

was a form of hypnosis. He uses his imagination to affect himself. That's what hypnosis is. And I learned more about it. And it worked so well, I started teaching other kids with lung problems, like coughing or shortness of breath. And then I expanded my practice to all of pediatrics, so kids with stomach aches or headaches or bread wetting or anxiety or depression. And it was so much fun to help kids help themselves that a decade ago,

When I left my job at the university in upstate New York, I opened up a private practice and this is what I do full time as I teach kids how to use hypnosis to help themselves.

Corey Andrew Powell (05:55)

Okay, so I have to tell you, that was fascinating to hear, but I'm thinking like, you know, there's a balance, right, of when there's an actual physical thing happening and when it's just maybe something that's like a mental thing to overcome. how do you make that distinction between the two?

Dr. Ran Anbar (06:14)

Very good question. So first of all, you want to work with a health professional who knows what they're doing. So you don't want to just go try hypnosis for everything with somebody who doesn't know how to treat your condition without hypnosis. However, let me tell you this. Every person with a chronic health issue, and that's 60 % of Americans, by the way, every person can benefit from learning how to regulate their emotions, how to do hypnosis. Why?

because psychology is always involved. The mind and body are not separate. So even if you have an illness like cancer or chronic inflammatory bowel disease or rheumatoid arthritis, these are real physical illnesses. There's a psychological component because you you might be anxious because you have the illness. So you might be depressed or you might give up on your life. Those are all psychological and your psychology then makes your symptoms worse.

or better. So when you learn how to do hypnosis, you learn how to change your symptoms. And sometimes it's dramatic. And what's even weirder is that sometimes a physical illness starts symptoms. The physical illness goes away, but the symptoms can remain for years. Irritable Bell Syndrome is an example of that. I took care of a young man who had stomach problems for 13 years from the age of three to the age of 16. And he'd

sprinted through the rigmarole. He did multiple tests, multiple medications. His life was a mess. He couldn't even get to school in the morning because he was having bowel problems. He couldn't go to after school sports because he had to go home and use the restroom. Three weeks after he learned to do self-regulation with hypnosis. And by the way, my new book, The Life Guide for Teens, has lots of tools, self-regulation tools. Even if you don't do hypnosis, you can regulate yourself.

Three weeks after doing that, his symptoms were 95 % better. He could resume a normal life. And I know it worked for the next 25 years because I checked with him when I published his story on changing children's lives with hypnosis. I wanted to ask his permission. He said yes, and he's still well.

Corey Andrew Powell (08:26)

Well, that's fascinating too, because I think what you're proposing is a mind shift on how we think of hypnosis. Because quite honestly, when we hear the word, we think of some guy with a metronome or a locket swinging back and forth and spiralized like some Vincent Price movie, all the little bizarre things we think about.

But you're not actually not like saying it's a cure necessarily, but you are saying it's almost like a, it's a coping mechanism for managing your emotions as you called it, which then sort of works in conjunction with if you have an actual physical illness, just regulating how you're processing it, how you're handling it.

Dr. Ran Anbar (09:12)

Correct. again, to clarify about hypnosis, it's not mind control, it's not sleep, it's something you do for yourself and it's not unusual. We all do hypnosis all the time. If we've gone three miles down the road and said, have I gotten here? Yeah. Have you ever been in a boring lecture and started daydreaming? That's hypnosis. So hypnosis is a normal state of mind, but when you're in that state of mind, you're more receptive to suggestions.

Corey Andrew Powell (09:27)

Yeah, yes.

Dr. Ran Anbar (09:41)

from yourself or from others. I tell the kids, hypnosis is using your imagination to help yourself. Now, you're right that people have misconceptions about hypnosis. And with my first book, not enough people read it. I've had over a couple of thousand readers, but I think one of the things that prevented more people from looking at it is the word hypnosis. So my second book, The Life Guide for Teens, I don't mention hypnosis on the cover, although we do talk about it to some degree in the book.

because what I want teens to understand is that they have the power to help themselves. They don't have to wait for somebody else to help them. And this is not just with disease. If you're an athlete and you want to become a better athlete, or if you're a student and want to become a better student, you have the power inside you to excel at those fields. And I'll tell you this, Corey, every top athlete uses hypnosis, whether they call it hypnosis or not. They use their mind.

Every top athlete, Michael Phelps, the swimmer, says he's rehearsed swimming hundreds of times in his mind so he knows exactly what to do when he goes out swimming. Michael Jordan used hypnosis. Phil Jackson, the legendary coach of the Bulls and the Lakers, he taught mindfulness and hypnosis to his players. And the reason every top athlete uses this, if they did not use their mind this way, they would not be top athletes. That's what makes them excel. Now, Steph Curry is not the biggest or strongest basketball player out there, but he is the best

3-point shooter the NBA has ever seen, it's because of his mind.

Corey Andrew Powell (11:15)

Yeah, I had to say I interviewed a few Olympic athletes on the show. One of my favorites from when I was a child and was a big fan was Greg Louganis. And you're right, he didn't talk about hypnosis, but a lot of what you just mentioned when he told me about how he began like at two years old, this sort of focused vision on what he even looks like when he's in the air rotating into certain flips and all that. It's programmed and he focuses on it like a laser beam.

And it's almost like another state of mind for him where he's like, didn't come to the Olympics to get the silver. I've been focused on that gold medal since I was a child. So that's what I came to get. Interesting. And I think we can apply that then obviously to other aspects of life. We're not all going to be star athletes, but you're saying we can apply that to perhaps academia. If you want to be a better, maybe husband or wife, or I mean, I guess every aspect of life.

You can apply this.

Dr. Ran Anbar (12:16)

Correct. And it's not a matter of being a star athlete, it's being the best you can be. And people can be better than they believe. In fact, belief is so important. If you believe you can improve, you do. If you believe you can't, if you believe this is it, that becomes your reality. One of the things I talk about in the Life Guide for Teens is how we talk to ourselves. For example, if you say, can't do something, your brain hears it, okay, you can't do it. If you say, want to do it,

Your brain says, OK, how am going to get you there? This is not a new topic, by the way. Henry Ford, the automobile manufacturer, he said 100 years ago, whether you think you can or think you can't, you're right.

Corey Andrew Powell (13:00)

Yeah, that's great. Yeah.

Dr. Ran Anbar (13:01)

believe

is what you say. in fact, Buddha, 2,700 years ago, he said, what we think is what we become. So true. And you can do this starting today.

Corey Andrew Powell (13:13)

I hear that very often, like people, decide that they are living for other people, their parents or their people at church or whomever, right? The most negative voices are the ones that are in our heads, but they're not always our own. Wouldn't you say?

Dr. Ran Anbar (13:28)

That is correct and so important point you made. One of the things I talk about in the very first chapter of the life guide with teens is we need to be careful of the words we use for ourselves and as parents we have to be careful about the words we use with our children. So if a parent might get really angry at their child and said you're never going to amount to much, you're lazy, you're a loser, the child takes that and incorporates it. So that's one thing. The other good thing to understand is that the child can block this. I teach kids how to block negative input.

So when a coach says to them, you're a terrible player, the child learns to block it by saying to themselves, I can be better. I want to be better. I'm a good player. I'm a good teammate. And by saying that, they prevent the negative effect of somebody's poor input.

Corey Andrew Powell (14:17)

And since we're on that topic again, obviously of young people, you did mention early on that sleep is an issue. People think that older people are more the ones who need sleep, but young people are also sleep deprived, I would guess is the term. So what are some ways other than putting down social media, what are some other ways that teens can improve their quality of sleep?

Dr. Ran Anbar (14:40)

First of all, gotta convince them it's important and it's so important because teens can get away with not sleeping much and just be tired all the time. But when you're tired all the time, you're not thinking straight. You're not doing as well in school. You're more likely to get anxious. You're more likely to get tired and not be able to problem solve. So you might be more at risk of using a drug as a way of dealing with things. And when you sleep is when you grow. That's when people get taller. When you sleep is when your immune system

regenerates itself, so you're less prone to get infections. One of my patients said, when you sleep, it's like when the school janitor comes at the of the day and cleans out the school. That's what happens when you sleep. The janitor comes in and cleans your brain. Sleep is so important for teens. Now, teens need more sleep than adults because they're growing. So a teen might need between eight and 10 hours of sleep at night. And how do know if you're sleeping enough? In the mornings, are you awake?

Do you feel awake or you're tired? You have to be dragged out of bed. If you need to be dragged out of bed, you're not sleeping enough. So you can actually figure out how much sleep you need by that way. Or you can, you find out if on weekends you're sleeping until mid till noon. when on weekdays you wake up at six to get to school, you can sort of figure out how much total time of sleep you get in a week, adding up what you sleep on weekdays and weekends and divided by seven. That's that way you'll know how many hours you need to sleep every night. Now,

Besides putting on social media, things to help sleep include having a regular schedule. When you go to bed at 10 o'clock on weeknights and 2 o'clock in the morning on weekends, your body gets confused. So you want to sleep the same way each day. You want to use your bed just for sleep, not for homework or talking on the phone. You want your body to associate bed with sleep. You want to avoid caffeinated beverages.

You want to avoid exercising late at night if possible. You want to be outside in the daytime because exposure to sun sets your hormone cycle well. So by the time you get at tonight time, your hormones are ready to help you fall asleep. Those are some of the other methods that don't involve hypnosis per se, but you can use hypnosis to fall asleep by imagining yourself falling asleep or imagine drinking a sleeping potion, or you could

Imagine a dial that you can control. If you turn it one way, you get drowsy. If you turn it the other way, you become awake. So those are some imaginary things you could do to help yourself fall asleep as well.

Corey Andrew Powell (17:19)

One of the most difficult things too, of being a young person, as we all probably have experienced many of us, relationships in general, whether they be romantic or friendships or whatever. But when it comes to, guess, sort of like the, I would say romantic relationships, like their first one, navigating that, that's a very difficult time. So how can you think teenagers recognize when it's sort of like a healthy situation or they should remove themselves from it?

Dr. Ran Anbar (17:47)

So first of all, you want to be ready to have a romantic relationship. And to be ready, number one is you want to have an identity of yourself. You want to have an idea of what you like and what you want as opposed to follow the crowd. So a lot of teens, they feel pressured to get into a relationship because they see their friends getting into the relationship. That's not a good reason. So fear of missing out is a bad reason to get into relationship. But if you're mature,

and you feel like you want to share your life with someone and you feel like you want to help somebody else or be a friend to somebody else in a romantic way, that's a good sign that you're ready for relationship. Don't go into a relationship because you want something, you feel lonely and you think it'll fill your needs. Your relationship is not about taking, a good relationship is not about taking from somebody else, but it's wanting to give to the other person. So that's a couple of clues. So you want to be ready. And we talk about this at length.

in my book. And then once you're ready, there are red flags that you might want to watch out for. First of all, you and your partner, you should be able to talk openly to them about what's important to you in life. So if one of you is into smoking and loud music and the other one is not, that's probably not going to go well together. Don't change important things for yourself because of the relationship. That only creates problems because

If it's important and you put it, suppress it, it's going to come out as a problem later on. Make sure you and your partner agree on what the of the relationship is. Is this just, you're going to get together for a few months and be friends or one of you wants to be lifelong companions of each other and the other is not ready. If you're not on the same page, don't move forward into relationship. sexuality comes into this as well.

A good relationship, sexuality is not the leading thing for it. It comes along with it once you've known somebody really well. Having sexual interactions before both people are really ready just leads to heartache and more complications. a good way of getting a good relationship is to be friends first and then move into, I really want to be with that person most of the time.

And that's clue that it's a good relationship.

Corey Andrew Powell (20:16)

Yeah, that's great advice. speaking of advice in general, it's just kind of an interesting perspective when you talk about like the teen to teen perspective, if you will. You know, your book includes sort of like insights, firsthand insights from teens, by teens, for teens, from teens to other teens in that regard. In my mind, advice from someone who doesn't know anything more than you is not necessarily

the most beneficial advice. So why do you think teen to teen perspective is important versus teen to someone who's older and more learned? Learn it as my grandmother would say in life.

Dr. Ran Anbar (21:01)

Well, I think we all need to be humbled. I know a lot of stuff. I've talked to 8,000 teens over the years, not just teens, but also young adults. But I'm not a teen. I haven't been one for a years. I didn't grow up with internet. I didn't grow up with the social pressures these teens are under. the teens give a perspective that I might not have. So I think asking teens for their input and the selections that I put into the book

I thought added to what I was saying or sometimes in ways I hadn't even considered. So a book is never complete. I can work another 10 years, for example, add your hypnosis suggestion for insomnia. But I think when I present information, I want to give it as broad a base as possible involving the teens was really important. I will also tell you this book, The Life Guide for Teens was teen tested.

Every chapter was probably read by 20 of my patients, my teen patients. So I got feedback, does this make sense? It doesn't make sense. So I think it's the work of many people I acknowledge, like over 50 teens in the book, well created. Another feature of the book is a section for parents. So each chapter is structured with information about whatever we're talking about, be it anxiety or sleep or relationships. Then there's

five to 10 tools that you can start using today to help with that issue. Then there's a teen to teen section you mentioned, and then there's a page for parents, which I mean to print to teens to read as well so they'll know what the parents are being taught. But for example, one of the big messages to parents is let your child navigate their own life. It's not your job to rescue them. And failure or not succeeding is an important part of growing up.

There's some I'd heard of a new term recently, you know, the helicopter parent term That's the parent is micromanage as your child and tells them what to do. And then there's a bulldozer parent That's the parent who clears the path before the child even gets there. There's no obstacles How horrible because if the child doesn't face obstacles, they have no idea how to deal with obstacles right? There was many challenges. So as a parent, I teach parents, please let your teen make their own decisions

And if they have to make mistakes, let them make mistakes. Be there to support them when you're asked to help. And the only time a parent should intervene, in my opinion, especially with later teens, is if it's a life or death situation. Then they have to say, no, this isn't right. But sort of that, they don't want to study, they want to get Fs. You can tell them why that's not a good idea, but let them live that life.

Corey Andrew Powell (23:48)

Yeah, that's great advice. And I love that, you know, the idea about letting parents sort of like, well, encouraging parents take a step back, I think a couple of generations ago, not even generations ago, I'll say the, well, maybe if we go to, and this is not to bash in any way to bash Gen Z. But I did notice that there is this sort of like, different kind of kid that grows up in the everybody gets a trophy society.

participation trophy just for showing up. And I really have to say, I've spoken out against that philosophy. I appreciate what that intended to do, but in real life, don't get a participation trophy for showing up. Life is unfair. And if you start kids off with this idea that they're gonna be rewarded just for showing up, it's a real false premise. It's just, and I don't know, I think that does more of a disservice than help a child. So what's your thought on that?

Dr. Ran Anbar (24:43)

I fully agree because life, you only have trophies and we know that employers are really complaining that young employees are not good because they expect to be coddled, expect to be helped, expect to be told what to do and expect to really be micromanaged. And that's not what the real world is like. The real world is you need a teenager or an employee who is a self-starter, who believes in themselves.

was willing to go the extra mile. That's the ideal employee and many teens, Gen Z teens or whatever generation we're talking about aren't prepared to do that.

Corey Andrew Powell (25:23)

Yeah, I have a good friend who's a taekwondo coach and he started teaching young kids and He said like the second week he did it Like like 10 parents showed up and they said, know, the the crash mat is too Thin when my kid is being flipped over or whatever the situation and so like the next week he had to put like a stack of like 10 mats and he just told the parents what I'm gonna do this for you, but

of your kid landing on a hard mat is as close as it will be to the ground if your kid is ever in an actual confrontation in the street. But sure, we'll put your kid on this like 25 foot padded mat because it'll make you feel safer, but that's not real life. So I want people to really understand what we're saying here. We're not being, I guess, tough guys, but we're just saying like life is tough. You have to be sort of conditioned for it, for the longevity of success.

Dr. Ran Anbar (26:18)

I'm going to tell a story. When I was 13 years old in gym class, it was a rule that you weren't allowed to cross a line after gym to go to your next class until the bell rang. So one day came and the bell was about to ring in three seconds. I saw a friend, I crossed the line. Gym teacher caught me and said, that was really bad. You broke the rule. You have to run laps at lunchtime. I said, I don't think, I think that's too much. He said, we'll pick up litter at lunchtime. No, that's not right. said, um,

You know, it wasn't that big of a deal. I went home and told my father what I had done. So what do think he said? He said, you are really wrong to disrespect your teacher. How dare you? He wrote a letter of apology, which he made me take to the teacher to give him the next day, which was quite embarrassing. teacher said, don't do that again. And I didn't. And actually from then on, I got straight A's in gym for the next four years. My attitude changed.

Imagine how it would work today. Oh, what a nasty teacher you have. We should write you the school board and the child would be empowered to do bad things. We need to go back to telling, know, if you're a student, you need to respect your teachers, respect your elders. We need to come back to that.

Corey Andrew Powell (27:35)

Well said sir and I do agree and like I said, and I like you you stress the point We're not really even sort of like targeting any generation at this point We're just saying if that is the parenting style you have, you know You might want to reconsider it no matter what generation you're in, know kids should be raised with more accountability So that's the moral of the story I've got two more questions for you here today. Yes. Yes. Yes. Well one is finding the meaning in life that whole you know, very sort of

I guess gray area, if you will. So how does having a sense of purpose improve mental health? And what advice do you have for teens who trying to figure that out in their young lives?

Dr. Ran Anbar (28:16)

Great question. So sense of purpose is so critical to having good life because it puts things in perspective. So for a teenager, if I have a purpose, and we'll talk about how to develop a purpose in a moment, then when I come to a hardship, I'm going to work through this because I have a purpose. I need to get through this hardship to get to my purpose. If life is purposeless, why should I even fight the purpose? Why should I even fight the

the challenge because there's no meaning to it. At the end of life, by the way, or when you're older, sense of purpose is so important. People who don't have a sense of purpose die young or younger. So many people, they retire and then they die because they have no purpose anymore. So I'm talking to your older listeners. Purpose is important. Now you're correct. Teenagers, they're just trying to figure themselves out. And what am I supposed to do? And you can't answer that straight off.

This is something you develop over life. But what a teen can do is, first of all, maybe find some spirituality in their life. And I want to talk briefly about that. And if they feel spiritual, if they feel like there's something greater to life than what we're seeing in front of us, then you can think to yourself, well, there is a purpose. I just have to find it. And it's not even one purpose. It's a purpose. So a purpose teens can practice right away is

Acting kind to one another be helpful to other people that's a purpose and that's something people and not a teens get into at a young age Go work at a soup kitchen. Give a homeless person some money Help somebody shovel snow if you live in that part of the of the of the country So that's sense of purpose. I mentioned spirituality. So let me just talk a little bit about that Spirituality does not mean religion if you if you're religious cool that you can find

God or whoever your religious leader is. But if you're not religious, you can find still spirituality by going out in nature, looking at awesome things that nature has created, or look at amazing painting that was drawn in fine detail, or go to an amazing museum. That's a way of getting spiritual. I also teach kids, and I talk about this in my book, how to talk to their own subconscious. And the subconscious

that's the part of your mind you're not always aware of, tends to be wiser and smarter than you. So by accessing that part of yourself, you realize, hey, there's part of me that kind of gets at things I don't quite get. Part of me knows it. And that's a very spiritual experience. And then you realize, hmm, there is more to life.

Corey Andrew Powell (31:02)

That's wonderful. Well, that's wonderful. And listen, we'll just advise everyone out there, you know, if you have a passion in life you want, especially young people, hey, keep going. So just keep going and try it out. Now I do, Doctor, want to clarify your book. So your first book, as you mentioned, was that your first book, Changing Children's Lives with Hypnosis? Okay. And that was called Changing Children's Lives with Hypnosis, A Journey to the Center. But then your current book is...

Dr. Ran Anbar (31:20)

crew it.

The Life Guide for Teens. It has a longer title, but it's hard for me to keep in mind, so stick with that.

Corey Andrew Powell (31:30)

Lifeguide for teens,

Yes, yes, well, we'll make sure that there are links to both books there so that people can check them out because it's really wonderful information. And I just want to say thank you so much today, Dr. Ran Anmar for being here today. Anbar, I'm sorry, excuse me for being here today with us. And you are just a plethora of knowledge, not just for teens, but for all of us to live better and do better. Board certified pediatric pulmonologist and the founder of CenterPoint Medicine and author. Thanks so much for being here today on Motivational Mondays.

Dr. Ran Anbar (32:05)

My pleasure, thank you for having me.