

1 INSIGHT

with RICH LITVIN



Episode 2: I've spent my life playing Robin, looking for Batman

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Rich: Welcome to 1 Insight. My name is Rich Litvin. I grew up in London and I now live in LA. And this is a podcast for extraordinary top performers. You see, I've coached some of the most successful and talented people on the planet. I see what most people cannot see and I dare to say what most people wouldn't dare to say. What I know about success is that on the other side of it, it can actually be lonely. You can feel like more of an impostor the more successful you become. And when you're the most interesting person in the room, you're actually in the wrong room. I coach around insight. Life looks one way, something happens, the world looks different and your entire world changes. It can happen in an instant. This podcast is called 1 Insight because a single insight can change everything.

I've spent my life playing Robin, looking for Batman. Let me explain. What most people don't know about me is that I was a fearful child and I've been a fearful man, and I've often not felt worthy. But I spent much of my life covering it up by doing all I can to look confident on the outside while feeling deeply insecure on the inside. I've been driven for most of my life by a question, "Who are you? Who are you to be a leader? Who are you to be successful, to be powerful, to be respected? Who are you to make a lot of money to live a great life, to have an amazing relationship?" I've spent my life playing Robin, looking for Batman. I've sought out powerful leaders. I've assumed others were far more powerful than me. I relentlessly compare myself to others and feel less than. I've tried to emulate great leaders and lost myself in the process.

And then I secretly look for ways to pull those leaders off the very pedestal that I had put them on. I crave success, but each time I achieve my next level of success, I barely allow myself a moment of celebration before I begin judging myself for not doing things better or bigger or bolder. All I ever wanted was for my dad to be proud of me. I once got off a phone call to my dad and it was two hours later that it struck me that he'd been telling me how proud he was of me. And I wondered how many times over the years have I found a way to filter out what I've craved the most. I'm a people pleaser. I'm driven by a belief that if I only look good enough, then you'll like me. I'm afraid speaking truth to power.

I'm often afraid of speaking my truth to my partner, for fear that she'll leave me. I've done whatever it took to fit in, and I've lost me in the process. I was scared to father a boy, because what did I know about being a man? And I'm extremely good at putting other people's needs ahead of my own. I'm afraid to ask for what I really, really, really want. I care so much about what everyone else might think, there's often no space left for what I think. I hate to look silly or messy, or like I don't know. I find it hard to make friends. I can feel lonely in the middle of a crowd. I hide. I say, "I don't need help," when actually I'm craving support. I say, "I don't need help," because I don't know how to ask. And I pretend I don't need help because I imagine I'll be weak if I actually need it.

And you'll judge me if I actually accept it. I've been afraid to put my stake in the ground. I've been afraid to take a stand. I've been afraid, afraid to be me. Let me give you a timeline of fear. When I was six years old, I'd hide in the school toilet during lunch hour, because I was scared to tell the teachers that I hated school lunches. At 11 years old, I joined the Boy Scouts because it meant I didn't have to play soccer at school, and I was afraid of such a physical game. At 12 years old, in an all boys school, I auditioned for the school play. I loved drama, but I was mortified when the teacher cast me in the role of Titania, the queen of the fairies in William Shakespeare's play. I cried myself to sleep night after night for weeks, but I was terrified to say, no. I didn't know how to say no.

At 17, I was really good at having girl friends, but I had no clue how to have a girlfriend. I was scared to ask anyone on a date. At 21, my first real girlfriend cheated on me and I stayed with her because I was afraid to lose her. At 22, I was so afraid of losing my first job that I let myself be bullied by a woman who was just a year older than me. At 30, my teaching colleagues told me I was so ambitious they thought I loved promotions more than I loved the kids I taught. That was heartbreaking. At 37, when I was fired from a job I didn't even like, I cried and begged my boss not to let me go. I ran away from leadership for years because I was so humiliated by that experience. I'm still afraid. I'm afraid of not being liked, of running out of money, of dying before I see my kids grow up, of telling Monique what I really, really want, of aiming too high, of failing, of looking bad, of getting noticed.

Is fear your driver or your compass? There was a leader who I really admire, who thanked me once for sharing her work. I told her I was secretly afraid to share her material because I believed if people see how great she is, they won't want to learn from me. I was afraid I'd lose clients and lose business, but that's why I shared her work.

Six years ago, I was invited to travel to Liberia, to lead a group of coaches and to train a group of teachers. I knew immediately that I wanted to go because I've had a long-held passion for education, especially in Africa. I spent two years teaching in Africa when I was in my twenties, but I was afraid.

I was afraid of Ebola. I was afraid I might not see my little babies again. I was afraid of the unknown. And that is why I went. Seven years ago, Vishen Lakhiani asked me to partner with Mindvalley, one of the world's best personal growth companies. And I was afraid. I'd written a book for coaches about how to build a practice by invitation and referral only, no marketing needed. What would it mean about me if I partnered with Mindvalley and we marketed this message? What would people think of me? What if they judge me? What if they didn't like me? And that's why I said yes. I was also afraid because I'd never taught to a camera before. So I lied to Vishen. I said, "Yes, I'd be happy to. But I'm a coach, so I don't look at the camera. I'll look at my client over here."

It wasn't true. I was just terrified of looking at the camera, but I knew I had to say yes. Several years back, my mentor and coach at the time told me he couldn't participate in an event we were planning to run together. I was afraid. Could I do it alone? Who would come if it was just me leading? What the hell would I teach? What if no one showed up? And that's why I did it. On a regular basis, I put the members of 4PC, my community of world-class coaches, on the center of my stage. I shared their stories and their books, and I showcased their magic. It's scary for me to do this, I'm human. I'd much rather get the acknowledgements myself and give them to others. But that's why I do it. Look, I'm human. I do sometimes need help to catch that fear, when I'm in it, I'm often overwhelmed.

One morning in March of this year, Monique said to me she'd almost never see me acting so afraid. I was scared of COVID, of the lockdown, of the food shortages, of having to homeschool and run a business. And when Monique pointed out my fear, I lashed out. "I'm not afraid," I said to her. Took me about an hour before the truth dawned. I was waiting for someone to save me. So instead, I started to take action. I created an online group for coaches. I ran weekly support calls for all of my clients. I got super creative. I launched several new programs. What I didn't let myself do is to really feel my fears. My M.O. is to freeze or take care of others when I'm afraid. What I rarely do is really feel fears by breathing into them. It's literally scary to acknowledge that I'm scared.

Here's the thing, fear is a mask for desire. When a client asks me to help them get rid of a fear, I'm far more interested to find out what do they really, really want? You see, underneath fear is desire. It's what their fear is holding them back from. Fear is the voice of your ancestors whispering to you across the ages, "Don't do it. Stay safe. Don't take a risk. You might get hurt. You might die. Don't do it." For most of human history, speaking out, speaking your truth, creating something, put you at risk. If the tribe didn't like you, you might be thrown out of the tribe and you die. If someone didn't like you, they might fight you and then you die. Your ancestors, your system is designed to keep you safe.

The problem is, what seems safe is often the most dangerous because with safety comes stagnation. Without risk, there's no growth. Fear is a sign that you're dreaming big enough that there's something scary out there. Let me say that again. Fear is a sign that you are dreaming big enough that there's something scary out there. When something scares you, you've got two options. Number one, you can let fear drive you or stop you in your tracks. Or number two, you can have fear become your compass. Make fear become the clue that you're doing something worth doing.

Find out what scares you and lean in. I was scared to write this article, I was scared to share it right now on the podcast. I'm scared to speak my truth. But the truth is actually what high level leaders crave. My clients invest a lot of money in my truth-telling. The more successful, wealthy or well-known my clients are, the more they become surrounded by people who say yes to everything they ask and agree with everything they say. Successful, wealthy, well-known people do not want another yes person in their world. If you want to work with top performers at the highest levels of excellence, don't hide, don't hold back and for pity's sake, don't try to please them. Powerful coaches are willing to serve, not please, their clients. Clients are attracted to coaches who are honest and direct, even especially if it might jeopardize the relationship.

Powerful coaches are willing to ask dumb and obvious questions. They readily admit when they don't know and they're quick to celebrate their mistakes because they don't need to look good. Powerful coaches aren't concerned about preserving their sense of importance or social standing relative to a client, which is ironically why their clients trust and respect them more. Hide nothing, hold nothing back, serve, don't please, speak your truth. It's not comfortable. It's not easy. It's not always fun, although it can be. Often, I hate it. Often, it scares the hell out of me. And it's my path. I'm in. Are you?

For most of human history, it wasn't called coaching, it was called leadership. And it's what I love to do, to coach people, to lead people and to mess with people's thinking. If you'd like more of this, or if you'd like to learn more about our community of extraordinary top performers, go to richlitvin.com/1insight.