



JIM HARSHAW JR.

Revealing Failure as the Path to Success

Success Through Failure Podcast

Action Plan Episode #299

Nir Eyal

[Nir Eyal](#) writes, consults, and teaches about the intersection of psychology, technology, and business. Nir previously taught as a Lecturer in Marketing at the Stanford Graduate School of Business and the Hasso Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford.

Nir co-founded and sold two tech companies in 2003 and was dubbed by The M.I.T. Technology Review as, "The Prophet of Habit-Forming Technology."

He is the author of two bestselling books, *Hooked: How to Build Habit-Forming Products* and *Indistractable: How to Control Your Attention and Choose Your Life*.

Indistractable received critical acclaim, being named one of the [Best Business and Leadership Books of the Year by Amazon](#) and one of the [Best Personal Development Books of the Year by Audible](#). [The Globe and Mail](#) called *Indistractable*, "the best business book of 2019."

In addition to blogging at [NirAndFar.com](#), Nir's writing has been featured in [The New York Times](#), [The Harvard Business Review](#), [Time Magazine](#), and [Psychology Today](#).

Nir is also an active investor in habit-forming technologies. Some of his past investments include Eventbrite (NYSE:EB), Anchor.fm (acquired by Spotify), Kahoot! (KAHOOT-ME.OL), Canva, Refresh.io (acquired by LinkedIn), Product Hunt, Marco Polo, Presence Learning, 7 Cups, Pana, Byte Foods, FocusMate, Shadow, Dynamicare, Wise App, and Cutback Coach.

Nir attended The Stanford Graduate School of Business and Emory University.

Top Quotes From This Episode

"Anything can be a distraction— even the work stuff— because distraction tricks us into prioritizing the urgent at the expense of the important. We do the easy stuff, the urgent stuff, when what we really need to do is the hard work that moves us forward in life."

"Anything could be a traction or distraction based on one word— intent."

"If all human behaviors are spurred by desire to escape discomfort, that must mean therefore that time management necessitates pain management."

"We need to be perpetually perturbed to get us to invent, to create. We have to be uncomfortable in order to prod us to do more."

"Being 'indistractable' does not mean you never get distracted. Being 'indistractable' means you strive to live with personal integrity."

Show Notes

This episode touches on the following key topics and ideas:

- **Habit-forming Technology (3:32):** Nir talks about habit-forming technology and how he mitigates the effects of technology.
- **Distraction vs Traction (4:04):** Distraction is "any action that pulls you farther away from what you plan to do, from your goals, and from becoming the kind of person you want to become."

The opposite of which is traction or "any action that pulls you towards what you said you were going to do, things you do with intent, and things that help move you closer to your values and help you become the kind of person you want to become."

- **Wake-up call! (8:40):** The first step into being "indistractable" is to take action. Stand up and say, "No more." "Do something!" You can start by checking out Nir's book "[Indistractable: How to Control Your Attention and Choose Your Life](#)"
- **Get hooked (11:23):** Nir on technology, particularly media, and how they're "monetizing your eyeballs"
- **Other kinds of distractions (14:29):** Social media is not the sole distraction we have to face. Anything can be a distraction; even a person who spends too much time in the office is distracted from being a part of their kids' lives, being a member of their community, or having any friends.

- **Avoiding pain (15:17):** Nir talks about how— neurologically speaking— everything we do is spurred by our desire to escape discomfort. *“The way the brain gets us to do things is by making us feel uncomfortable enough to get us to do something.”*
- **Two kinds of triggers (17:12):** External Triggers: this is what people tend to blame when we talk about distractions. These are notifications or anything from our outside environment.

Internal Triggers: An uncomfortable emotional state that we seek to escape from: boredom, loneliness, fatigue, uncertainty.

- **Is feeling bad, bad? (19:39):** The value of recognizing discomfort and using it as your “rocket fuel” to propel you towards traction.
- **Re-imagining the trigger (24:53):** Stop trying to escape from your discomfort. Work on how you’ll respond and take advantage of that discomfort.
- **Rubrics to use when uncomfortable internal triggers bubble up (30:28)**
 - **Step 1: Mastering the internal triggers:**
 - 3 Pillars to Mastering the internal triggers**
 - Re-imagine the trigger
 - Re-imagine the task itself
 - Re-imagine our temperament
 - Use the 10-minute rule or allow yourself to get distracted for 10 minutes.
 - **Step 2: Make time for traction (36:03):** Decide in advance how you want to spend your time.
 - **Step 3: Hack back internal triggers (37:01):** Reduce the time you spend on emails by up to 90% by understanding the deeper psychology around why we keep checking our emails.
 - **Step 4: Prevent distraction with pacts (37:20):** Erect a “firewall” to prevent you from getting distracted.
- **On failures (38:00):** Nir talks about his personal bout with distraction, which became his driving force to write “Indistractable.”

Tell me about a time when you failed. (41:16)

- Nir relives the ups and downs of attending the Stanford Business School and building his businesses. On living through his life mantra, “Consistency over intensity.”

List of Resources Mentioned in the Episode

["Hooked: How to Build Habit-Forming Products"](#)

["Indistractable: How to Control Your Attention and Choose Your Life"](#)

Want to talk to a personal performance coach?

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Other Episodes Referenced

[#231 A Performance Psychology Hack 40 Years in the Making: Dr. Steven Hayes Shares the Secret to High Performance and a Meaningful Life](#)

Guest Website and Social

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