

Improv Is No Joke - Episode 46 - Greg Conderacci

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Peter Margaritis: Welcome to Improv is no Joke podcast, where it's all about becoming a more effective communicator by embracing the principles of improvisation. I'm your host Peter Margaritis, the self-proclaimed chief edutainment officer of my business, [The Accidental Accountant](#). My goal is to provide you with thought-provoking interviews with business leaders so you can become an effective improviser, which will lead to building stronger relationships with clients, customers, colleagues and even your family, so let's start the show.

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Peter: Welcome to episode 46 of Improv is no Joke podcast. Thank you very much for downloading this episode. Today's guest is Greg Conderacci. In part two of a three-part series on energy management. Greg is the author of [Getting Up!: Supercharging Your Energy](#) and an energy management expert because of two main reasons: first, he's an author on the subject; and, second, in 2015, he rode his bicycle across the United States in only 18 days, averaging 150 miles a day. Greg doesn't walk his talk – he rides his talk. If you haven't listened to our initial interview, it would be well worth it to download episode 35. Now in our interview I mentioned episode 1, and what I meant was the first episode of our three-part series AKA episode 35. Also, this is the first episode that's being released as a video and you can find it on my youtube channel. Go to youtube and search the accidental accountant. We start this episode with a recap of episode 35, where Greg discusses that, in the 21st century, it's less about time management and more about energy management. Our discussion focuses on one's physical and intellectual energy. In this episode, we continue the discussion of intellectual energy and move the discussion into emotional energy. First, intellectual energy, as Greg describes, requires focus, which is one of the principles of improvisation. One of his examples is the New England Patriot's miracle comeback when in Super Bowl 15. New England was trailing 28 to three with about 8 minutes left in the third quarter. As you know, the Patriots managed one of the greatest super bowl comebacks and won the game 34 to 28. As Greg explains, that required a tremendous amount of intellectual focus on the part of the entire team to make up a 25 point deficit in a quarter and a half. Part of our intellectual energy conversation takes a turn down the improv path with the discussion of "what story are you telling yourself in your head?" and Yes, And. Greg has some improv training, but his daughter Annie studied improv at Second City in Chicago. I'm sure you'll enjoy this part of the discussion. Then we ventured down the path of emotional energy, AKA emotional energy vampires, AKA our mothers... but in a good way! Actually, we are our own emotional energy vampires because we are exposed to so much negative energy, which does begin to seep into our heads. Greg gives us some great tips on how to manage those vampires. This episode, along with episode 35, are full of great stories told by Greg that help us make the emotional connection, and makes it easily relatable to his topic. If you have been listening to my podcast for a while, you know one of my goals with his

podcast is to help you begin to make changes in your work and personal lives so you can better connect with others and create meaningful relationships. Many people have said it takes 21 days to start a habit. According to Dr. John B Molitor, PhD. that is incorrect. John is a professor of psychiatry at Michigan State University, and the President of NSA Board of Directors. He said that the research shows that it takes 66 days to create a habit. So now we gotta put in some extra work to create that muscle memory. That's why I created the Yes, And challenge: to help keep these principles in front of you so you can build up your improvisational muscle. To sign up, please go to PeterMargaritis.com and scroll down to the Yes, And challenge call to action and click to register to begin building the productive habit of Yes, And and the principles of improvisation. And remember to show your experiences on twitter using the hashtag #yesandchallenge. If you're unsure of what the Yes, And challenge is all about, I discuss this in detail in episode 0. Go back and take a listen. Remember you can subscribe to my podcast on itunes, stitcher, and google play. If you'd like to purchase an autographed copy of my book *Improv is no Joke: Using Improvisation to Create Positive Results in Leadership and Life*, for \$14.99 with free shipping, please go to my website, PeterMargaritis.com, and you'll see the graphic on the homepage to purchase my book. Please allow 14 days for shipping. You can also follow me on social media. You can find me on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) or [Instagram](#). With that said, let's get to the interview with Greg Conderacci.

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Peter: Hey, welcome everybody. This is a part 2 of a three-parter with Greg Conderacci. This is also the first video podcast we're doing, and as you see Greg looks like he's ready to go out for a bike ride. He's he's all dressed up at his biking gear. Mr. Energy himself! Welcome Greg. I greatly appreciate you taking time to spend with me again on my podcast.

Greg Conderacci: Great to be here. Thank you Peter. Looking forward to it.

Peter: Our first episode has gone gangbusters. It has it's right now, for over two weeks, it's the episode that has the largest amount of downloads. We've had over 156 downloads in just two weeks, so that was a very powerful message that you gave us in episode one. If you could, let's start this episode by giving us a recap of episode one that we did, and then we'll just move right in. We'll pick up with the intellectual energy, and then make our way into the emotional energy.

Greg: Okay, sure will. Last time we talked about the difference between energy and time, and my bias that, in the 21st century, what really matters is energy much more than time. The 20th century was the century of time, but now because of the technology and because of the way we live and work... it's all stretched and weird, and many people keep looking for more time and then they discover, holy smokes, there's only 24 hours in a day. We can't get any more time. And so now there's a huge trend, I think globally, for people to think more about well... I can't get any more time, and I want to get more done, and I want to have more balance in my life, and I want to control my stress... maybe the secret is getting more energy, and really that was the focus of our discussion last time. Because you can't get more time, but you can get way more

energy. And then part of it is that there are four energy buckets deep inside of us, and they're all related, but there's the physical energy, intellectual energy, emotional energy, and spiritual energy. I tell people just think pies – P-I-E-S. Last time we spend a little bit of time talking about the physical energy, which to me is really the least interesting of them all, which people find surprising because they say “wait a minute Greg, you rode a bicycle all the way across the country in 18 days, 150 miles a day. That must take in a lot of energy,” and the answer is yes it did... and you'll notice that I'm an old guy. I was 66 when I did that a couple years ago, and people say “so how'd you do that?” Well, it's not just a matter of the physical energy. Yes, it takes some physical energy, but that's really kind of trivial. When I tell people just get enough rest, drink enough water and liquids, and you know... there are lots of books out there that'll tell you what you could eat shouldn't eat. My book is clearly not a diet. I don't have any prescriptions for what you should eat and how you should eat, because there's plenty out there. So much more powerful, and much more important, are the intellectual, emotional, and spiritual energy buckets. And, today, most of our focus is going to be about the intellectual and emotional energy, and we'll save the spiritual – which I think is the most important and the deepest bucket of them all – for the last conversation. But you should also know that, when I say spiritual, by the way, I do not necessarily mean religious. I mean we all have a spiritual component, and that affects all of us. But that's not what we're going to focus on today. We're going to focus on intellectual and the emotional pieces.

Peter: Great. I want to say that, just as anything, it takes a while to build a habit, and some days you fall off that habit, but I have been trying to take that information that you provided us in that first episode and I have more energy in the morning, and I'm trying to do more of my writing in the morning. I'm trying not to look at email and that other stuff until around lunchtime, and I am much more productive. I've found myself writing more and getting more stuff done during that timeframe, and I'm also taking some naps in the afternoon and it's getting easier now that my wife is full-time employed again... so it's much easier to take that afternoon nap. But I do find myself so much more refreshed. Most of the times it's like a 20 or 30 minutes, and sometimes I don't really sleep. I just stop, and give my body a rest, and then I'm able to go back at it... and I'm putting up your book right now for the video people. Buy this book. It's a really, really, really good read, and those times that you're sitting there going “oh what did Greg say?” You can find it in here. You can also find it in the podcast, but you can find it in here too. And we will refer to the book, especially one chapter that I found very interesting. I'm sure we'll talk about that here. But, yeah, lots of great stuff. I've seen a change just in myself and my productivity, and I've been preaching that it's not time management, it's energy management.

Greg: Right, yeah. I mean, as you discovered, often it's not so much a matter of time as it is a matter of timing, because at different times of the day we have more or less energy. So if you look at it from the standpoint of timing: when is my energy rich and when is my energy weak? You just can get more done when you have more energy. It just stands to reason. So what you've done, very wisely, is said hey look I'm gonna do my best when I have the most energy. It's a huge problem for us these days, because the technology is always there, it's always around us, and it's always distracting us. And sometimes it's great just to kick back and watch a

YouTube video or something like that. No problem. But if you're doing that, or in your case and in my case kind of answering email and being distracted by all that stuff, when your energy is at its peak... well then later on, all right, now I gotta buckle down and get to work, but you might have much less juice so everything takes longer. So those things that you mentioned are very powerful, and then of course when you're tired just take a nap. That's kind of what we're designed to do... and unplug, which I think is a really, really good idea. We don't necessarily have to go fast asleep, but unplug from all the noise that's around us, and then of course consequently all the noise in our head, and we do a lot better.

Peter: [laughs] Yeah, there's a lot of noise in my head.

[laughs]

Greg: Oh my.

Peter: So tell us about intellectual energy. Define that for me, because I'm trying to get intellectual energy. Does that mean just consuming more content, reading more books?

Greg: Well certainly that's part of it. The intellectual energy is the energy that a lot of us get paid to use. It's the energy that, when people think about thinking, as opposed to feeling, they're talking about intellectual energy. So if I give you a math problem to do in your head, if I say multiply 17×24 in your head, the reason that you have that look of agony you pain on your face is, at some level, you know... oh crap, that's going to take a lot of intellectual energy.

Peter: Right.

Greg: And it, in fact, does. And in the book, and in my courses, I talk about the Wonderlic test that they give all the college seniors who want to go on and play professional football, and it's a 50-question test. They have 25 minutes to answer it, and really super star quarterback is gonna get like half of them. And what it's measuring is your ability to bring the kind of intellectual energy and focus that really differentiates the good players from the great players. I mean, if anybody who saw the Super Bowl can see wow, when you look at that quarterback you see focus. You got some intellectual energy going there. Sure, physically good, but to be able to turn the Pats around and do what Brady did.

Peter: Right

Greg: Woah. A lot of intellectual focus. So that's really what intellectual energy is – it's the ability to focus. And you gave a good example at the beginning of the podcast when you said when I wake up in the morning and I'm fresh and I really want to tackle that stuff. Well you've got a lot of intellectual energy, and and that's really what you're bringing to bear. To write, think, to do your work, to work with clients... and often we think about, well, that's that's we get paid to do. You get paid to bring to bear your intellectual focus. Especially important in the 21st century. I

mean if you're working on an assembly line, it requires no intellectual focus at all. Just don't put your hand in the drill press.

[laughs]

Peter: right.

Greg: That's it. You can just be banging stuff out. You can be thinking about crab grass and the Orioles or whatever. It doesn't make any difference. But in the 21st century, the kind of energy that we value are people who can really understand problems, who can diagnose difficult situations, who can see the forest for the trees. Whatever trite phrase you want to put together. It says this person is really sharp. They're on the ball. They understand. They have insight. That's what intellectual energy is.

Peter: Okay I get it. You were talking about the Super Bowl, and the tremendous amount of focus that they were able to generate, to have a huge comeback, and the amount of intellectual energy that they had to expand. I was surprised they were really able to get up and even be in the parade the next day or two days later, because to do what they they did – with, obviously, some help with the Falcons, who lost a lot of energy, or intellectually they may have thought we've got the game and just kind of let off the gas a little bit – but just on a side note, I find it curious. Two years ago, when the Pats came back and beat Seattle, that February they had the most snow in history in Boston, and yesterday there was a blizzard that hit Boston and they had like up to 12 inches of snow.

Greg: wow.

Peter: Which proves God had money on the Falcons.

Greg: [laughs] Maybe. But you know you gave a great example right there. One of the key parts about intellectual energy, which is the story that you have in your head. So the story that the Falcons head during the first half is we got this. They're done. On the other hand, the Pats clearly had the story "We can win this. The game's not over. We can win this." And that makes a big difference, because we're all carrying stories in our head – thousands of them – and the big ones are health and relationships and family and work, and we all have an idea about that, and and part of it is are those stories that we're carrying around in our head... are they giving us energy or are they taking energy away. One of my favorite examples is Lon Haldeman. He's a good friend of mine, and Lon is like the ultra distance cyclist Mickey Mantle. He, at one time, held all the records for riding across the country. He was one of the founders of race across america. He held the record for riding all the way across the country, and riding all the way across the country and back, if you can believe that! As well as the record for tandem riding cross country, and on and on, and he is an amazing guy. And he told me that, after he finished one of those competitions, he would be intellectually exhausted for weeks. Physically not so bad. I mean he was in great shape. He recovered after maybe a few days to a weak, but

intellectually... because when you're doing something like that, that we requires that much physical and intellectual effort, you're always focused. He says I'm always thinking can I go faster? can I go slower? how much time to the next point? what do I need to do in this stretch? He says I'm always thinking, and so he literally conditioned his brain to tell him he could do this, and that's enormously powerful. So as someone who has ridden across the country myself, I can tell you that if you're out there on the bike, like in the middle of the plains, you can say "oh my god it is so hot and my butt is sore and these corn and wheat fields they just go on forever and ever and I'm never going to do it," and that's a story... and you know what, there's a lot of truth in that story, but it's not a high-energy story. Equally good, and equally true, is a story that says it's beautiful out here. I'm going across the country, I had no idea it was so vast... what a wonderful and amazing experience. I'll be able to tell my grandchildren about this, and the heat it really is hot, but boy it's good for my joints, and you know it's much better than if it was cold, and pretty soon I'll be in a nice hotel enjoying the air conditioning so it's not gonna be that bad, and look there's no traffic out here... and so all those things are also true! But that story gives you energy. That story gives you juice, and if you've got that story running in your head, instead of the other story running in your head, you're going to make it. The example that I use in the book, and frequently, is in 2006 I climbed Mount Kilimanjaro, with a group of really great guys. None of us professional mountain climbers, and I was privileged to be climbing with a guy who an eminent physician here in Baltimore. A really good guy, great climber, very good shape. And we're making the final assault on the peak, and when you do that what happens is, of course, you did up at one o'clock in the morning and it's pitch dark and you're already at 15,000 feet, so there's not a lot of oxygen, and it is cold as all get out, and the wind is blowing, and it's probably one of the most inhospitable places on earth. And you're sort of winding your way up the mountain and all you can see is sort of in your headlamp you can see the guy in front of you, and so we're working our way up and at about 16-17 thousand feet he turns to me and he says "Greg, I'm third spacing my water," and for those of us who are not mountain climbers, what that means is, instead of the water being in your stomach or in your bladder, which is where it belongs, it could be in your lungs or in your head, which is where it doesn't belong, and in either of those places it can kill you. The generic term is called mountain sickness, and what it means is that if it builds up in your lungs you can't breathe, and if it builds up in your head... you can imagine what happens there.

Peter: right

Greg: and so obviously this is a terrible story to have in your head as you're trying to climb a mountain, and if you believe that's true you're in real trouble. Fortunately, although I'm not a doctor, but I turned to him and I say well are you having trouble breathing? And he says no, and I say okay well do you have a headache? And he says no. Okay, now you've got the layman diagnosing the doctor, but both of those conditions are clear symptoms of mountain sickness, and if you don't got them you probably don't have the problem. So I asked him what made him think that he was in trouble, and he said well I haven't gone to the bathroom in a long time. And you would go pretty frequently if you were hydrating properly, but what he missed there is that Kilimanjaro is an Arctic desert. Even though the mountain is on the equator, it's at such an

altitude that it's enormously dry, because you're above the clouds, and so even breathing costs you a lot of moisture. So he's probably fine, he was just breathing out his liquid instead of other ways. So I turned to him and I said I think you're okay, and he agreed. I mean he just needed someone to change his story, and the two of us summited and he was fine and he's fine today and we still we still laugh about it, but the truth is there also is turning around and going down, which is the only cure if you have mountain sickness. It would have been enormously dangerous and difficult in the dark, which is where we were, so even though it's ridiculous for me to diagnose the doctor, the marketing guy in me said you really need to change your story. And changing that story gave him and me the energy to make it all the way to the top together, and it gave us obviously a great story to tell, but also an important lesson. What are the stories that are that are rattling around in your head, and are they helping you or are they hurting you, from an energy standpoint?

Peter: As you're describing this, and I wrote down the story that you have in your head, and a lot of time that story that we have in our head, we have somebody else in our head called our inner critic who's telling us all this stuff. "You shouldn't do that." And we all want that critic there, at times, because it's there to protect us. If I'm gonna go skydiving and I'm about to jump out of a plane and I don't have a parachute, I want my inner critic going "Pete, don't do this. Don't jump out, because skydiving without a parachute is a once-in-a-lifetime event."

Greg: [laughs] Right

Peter: but then, so now I'm gonna have a little fun, I equate all of this, and you even address it in my favorite chapter in your book, chapter 18 about MacGyver. It's improv! It's Yes, And versus Yes, But or No, Because. It's about yes and, and I guess I heard it this past week... I was at the White Castle leadership conference. I was doing the closing keynote, but the opening keynote was Marilyn Sherman, whose business is Front Row Leadership. She mentioned about the story in your head and how you craft that story, where instead of being up in the balcony you come down to the front row, and I think that and this really tied it in... what story are we telling us in order to achieve our goals? And that ties up with a physical energy and that intellectual energy, that Yes, And approach of getting through tough times.

Greg: mmhmm, yeah, absolutely. Well I think one of the points you're making, which is so critical, is the voice in your head is saying no, it's not saying Yes, And.

Peter: Right.

Greg: The voice in your head, which in my head sounds a lot like my mother.

Peter: Same here.

[laughs]

Greg: is there, as you say, to keep you safe. And that's why the first word that we learn is no. I mean, when you've got the car keys and you're three and you're going over to see if they fit in electrical outlet, your mother says no! So we learn no, it's the first word, and we learn it for our safety, but that's way different than Yes, And.

Peter: right

Greg: and I'm sure that, in the super bowl, there were a lot of – I call that voice the critical advisor – there were a lot of critical advisors screaming in the Patriot's heads: "no no you're not going to make it," and their ability to say Yes, And we are is, I think, what makes the difference. And so I think those two words – Yes, And – which I tell people is kind of the new designer But.

Peter: [laughs]

Greg: Say Yes, And instead of but – see how it works!

Peter: yeah

Greg: But with Yes And, I think it's an enormous tool, and it begins a lot of great stories, and that's where the power for intellectual energy is.

Peter: And you have some training in improv, and actually your daughter, as I learned in the book at two o'clock in the morning (I almost give you a phone call because I'm learning this from a book) studied improv at Second City in Chicago.

Greg: Yes. Well my daughter has been a rigorous student of improv. She's taken, I think, every course that Second City and Improv Olympics, and some of the other improv schools in the area, taught. She could teach it, and and she often finds herself teaching her dad too.

[laughs]

Greg: That ability to find the good piece, and I think one of the things that's powerful about improv is that you have the ability to make up a story, and often it's a true story. We just choose not to select the true story – stupid us!

Peter: yeah

Greg: And we select a negative story, for the reasons that you describe – the voice of the critical advisor – and that forecloses all the other options. And one of the key learnings of improv is that there are so many options out there, if you just say Yes, And instead of No. And that's a powerful intellectual energy tool.

Peter: And the ability to accept the risk and the failure, because you know that not everything is going to work out... but you still move forward. I mean, I still have that inner critic in my head. Yesterday it started yelling at me before my keynote, and I finally get some duct tape out right around his mouth. Just kept doing that, get that negative energy out and turn it into positive energy through Yes, And. And it it does work, but to your point, and I never heard it put this way, our go-to is no. Our go to in our head is no. It's been programmed. So it is my mother's fault! Mom, if you're listening to this, you should have said yes to me more often than no!

Greg: [laughs]

Peter: And I'm gonna make sure she downloads this one. But I can see that, and it takes work to create that habit, just as it takes work to create the habit of I'm going to get up in the morning and I want to tackle all my tough stuff, with the with the physical energy as you were talking about in episode one. It takes creating that habit to do that.

Greg: Yeah, I mean I have had the privilege of watching one of Annie's improv teachers, from second city, work with his four-year-old son, and he'll ask the boy so do you want some soup, and the son says no. The father says "what do we say?" and the little voices "okay, um, yes, and maybe later."

[laughs]

Peter: Smart kid.

Greg: That kid is going someplace. No doubt about it. [laughs] So I think it is exactly what you're talking about. And the trick in all this is not to lie to yourself. I mean some people think, well, you know, I want to make the story but it's going to be a lie. No no no no, because you're not going to believe that, but the beauty of improv is it makes up many many true stories, and that's an enormously powerful intellectual energy tool.

Peter: Right. As you said, it's got to be something believable in yourself. I don't care if everybody else doesn't believe me, but I have to believe it in order to make it work.

Greg: Right

Peter: So, in your book, you wrap up this whole intellectual energy piece with this MacGyver chapter and your discussion about improv, then you move into the emotional side.

Greg: Right. Yes.

Peter: So let's let's go open a casket and see if there's a vampire in there.

Greg: Yeah. Of all the stuff that I talked about, the most popular energy subject is this idea of emotional energy, and especially emotional vampires. The energy vampires are the people who can suck the oxygen right out of a room, out of a meeting, out of a career, out of a company, out of a marriage. You name it. And what I tell people is that these energy vampires are not bad people. They're good people, and in fact, reflecting on the discussion that you and I just had, probably two of our biggest energy vampires were our moms.

Peter: [laughs]

Greg: And obviously I love my mom. If she's listening, god bless you. We will talk and she'll say what are you doing today and I say well I'm going for 100 mile ride. She's like ah, why would you do that, you know it's so dangerous. You're going to be tired, at your age you shouldn't be doing this, and and all of that is well meaning. None of that is comes from a bad spot in her. But understand that that is an energy drainer, and what that does is it goes immediately to the emotions of, yeah, maybe I don't feel like it, or maybe it will be hot out there, or maybe there will be a lot of traffic, and I don't want to be alone, and all those all those kinds of stories. And those are all emotional drains. So what we're trying to do is we're trying to say we don't want to be an energy vampire for anybody else, and also not for ourselves. Full disclosure: I tell people I am my own biggest energy vampire. People say "what do you mean, Greg? You're pretty positive!" Yeah I know, but I spend more time with me than anybody else.

Peter: [laughs]

Greg: So little bits and pieces of negative energy, which are all around us all the time, they get in, and they accumulate, and you kind of have to shake the dust bin out of your head every once in awhile because you'll pick these up. And just as you say, Peter, that critical advisor voice is in there and it's not just spinning an intellectual story. It's spinning an emotional story, as well. And that's really what you have to watch out for – it's that emotional story, because often it's the emotional energy that drives the intellectual energy, because often... I mean, you had this experience because we all had. I know I had many a time, and that is we get a feeling and then we make up a story to justify the feeling. So, often, the emotional energy, positive or negative, comes first, and then comes the intellectual energy.

Peter: When you talk about emotional energy, I think it falls kind of in the same genre of "we make decisions based on emotions."

Greg: yes

Peter: So if I'm trying to sell you a TV, and I tell you all the facts and figures and everything related to that TV, you're not going to buy it. But if I said, by the way, Cal Ripken was in here the other day I bought this TV.

Greg: [laughs] There you go.

Peter: That emotion... you are more likely to act on that emotion. Same thing in delivering financial information. If you're just up there spewing facts and figures and data, then you're gonna start sounding like Ben Stein and Ferris Bueller's Day Off. But once you can put some emotion and a human factor to that, the likelihood that they're going to stay awake, the likelihood that they are going to pay attention, the likelihood that they're going to act on it increases dramatically. That takes it to the intellectual energy that said, hey, let's do this, versus just facts and figures and so on and so forth.

Greg: Yeah, I mean, Mother Teresa was probably one of the greatest salespeople of all time. Used to say you give me all the statistics you want, but you show me the face of one kid and I'm much more likely to get involved, to give, to support that. It's the type of thing that we are just not wired to be able to absorb, especially on the emotional level: the data. What we're wired is to absorb the experience and to have the feeling, and then to work outward to the data. That's huge, and that's exactly the way we work. So in a lot of places people talk about culture change and here are the 17 reasons why... culture is about emotion: how people feel and how they treat each other and how they act toward each other, and then you can make the logical argument.

Peter: Yeah, exactly, and to us, this just recently happened to me, and I think I shared this with you, and I put it in a blog posting on New Year's Day. We found out that my son was a type 1 diabetic, like myself, and I've got a close friend who, a couple months ago, he shared a story with me that they discovered daughter she was a type 1 diabetic. There's no diabetes in the family. They didn't know the signs, but I saw my son and he was clearly demonstrating some signs: excessive thirst, excessive urination. I took his blood sugar, took him to the emergency room, and he and I were talking and we both had this emotion of, you know, parents don't see these signs. What can we do? We want to carry that bandwagon to open eyes, and we came up with the idea of doing a TED talk, both of us, doing a TED talk to help take that emotion and turn it into intellectual energy to help raise awareness. And as you were describing it, that's exactly what he and I... and I interviewed him earlier in one of my podcasts. Jamie Richardson is the vice president shareholder and government relations at White Castle. I mean you can just see this emotion in both of us as we discovered that would be a way to get this message out there. But you know, I'm a type one but I got it at an older age, and I said why didn't I have this champion thought when I was diagnosed? And over the past 10 or 11 years, when it hit my son, that whole thing changed just like right on a dime.

Greg: Right, and I think that's really powerful and that there are many inflection points over the course of our life. How we bring intellectual and emotional energy is enormously powerful. Whether you get that diagnosis that you talk about or whether you're halfway up a mountain and you suddenly think, well, maybe there's another story. All of that stuff has to do very powerfully with emotions, and if you have the right kind of emotions... I mean you probably know better than I that there are many many successful people, successful athletes, superstars, and so on and so on who are type 1 diabetics. It doesn't have to be as debilitating as maybe it used to be

or some people think it is, but that emotional level... I'm sure your son's ability to roll with that and, in fact, treat it positively probably rubbed off from somebody else in his family. I don't know who. [laughs]

Peter: Probably the dog. [laughs] Yeah. Actually, he has done an outstanding job. Even the nurse, school and his doctors and they said he's adapted and accepted it because he's been watching it for 10 years.

Greg: Yeah, and so in a sense your example to him has been, really, a gift that's helping him through this, and that's a really powerful concept in terms of emotional energy. Because if we get a big dollop of emotional energy, it wipes out all our alternatives. We stop thinking, we stop seeing, and so your idea of why don't other people see this? Why don't we do something to help other people see this? I think that's a great idea because negative emotional energy starts to shut down all your other options. I mean the way we're wired, as soon as we get this big dollop of negative emotional energy we focus, and that's because of evolution. I mean there is a saber-toothed tiger. Alright, I foreclosed all other options. I don't notice the lily next to me or my buddy down the path – I look at the tiger. It's survival, but in the modern world, that often works against us. So we will need to push back against negative emotional energies.

Peter: So you were mentioning something about changing a corporate culture... say you work with some companies, can you give some examples on that, as you've worked with companies, to create that positive emotional energy in order to manage change?

Greg: Yeah, okay. Heh... This is kind of a strange example, but one of the things that I also do is I do a lot of volunteer work in the community, and I was working with, of all things, a bunch of people in a homeless shelter. And at this particular shelter, many of the employees themselves had been just recently homeless. I mean they've kind of decided to turn their life around and now they're working and they have a job and there are good role models for other people who can look over there and say oh look if you can do it maybe I can. So we did this whole thing on vampires, and the director, who is really an inspired lady, said "oh, wow, his is huge, because obviously many the homeless people come in with these huge vampires sitting on their shoulders, metaphorically speaking, or riding on their backs," and so she made up a bunch of vampire dolls. She has him all over the office, and if somebody says something that's negative she hands of a vampire doll.

Peter: [claps]

Greg: They're small enough that you can throw them around. It's the vampire dolls from Sesame Street. Remember, there was a vampire.

Peter: Yeah.

Greg: So that's an example of an effort to change that. I do a lot of work with organizations who are in a merger or acquisition position, because that often has a lot of negative connotations. I mean you're out there and we've done it our way for 25 years, and now we're going to have to do it their way, and I don't think their way is right. I think my way is right. Why? Because because because because... and so I do a lot of work with companies who are going through those type of changes. It's very difficult, and I've had the privilege (and I use that term loosely) of being part of a number of mergers and acquisitions myself, and often it's the emotional energy, not the intellectual energy. Because usually there's a good reason for the merger and we're all going to be better off and if we all pull together everything's going to be super.. But, no, I don't feel like it. That's when I tell them you have to be able to spot a vampire, and you have to do it fast. F.A.S.T. What do I mean by that? Well F stands for fear, because that's what being a vampire is all about. You're afraid, and you might be afraid of blowing your keynote or you might be afraid of going down the double mobile run or you might be afraid of something else, but you are afraid. And so people who are vampires are afraid. Now they can be afraid for themselves or they can be afraid for you, but the key thing to understand is that vampires begin with fear. That's what it's all about. Okay, then the next thing is A. What would a vampire avoid? Well, what they avoid is any kind of blame or responsibility, or sunlight, frankly. Nobody wants to be seen as a vampire. Nobody wants to be called a vampire. But if you know someone who is negative, often what they're doing at work and in organizations is they don't want to take the rap if it fails. They want to avoid responsibility. "I didn't do this. It wasn't my idea." We see that all the time. There are lots of people out there who think that they're gonna make their job better by making it smaller, so they avoid doing any kind of work that they might fail at. Your point about failure is huge here because they want to avoid failure at all costs, which of course I say well there's a great way to avoid never being in an automobile accident... never getting in a car. So there's the avoid. And then the next thing is S stands for what do they say? And it's all the negative words that you can imagine. Vampires say no a lot. And then the final thing, which is T, is what do they think? Well they think that whatever it is you want to do, or they need to do, can't be done. That's what they think, and what I like to say is one of the biggest reasons they think that is there's not enough time. And that's why vampires have to live forever. But you can imagine, if it's the last Super Bowl, the Pats were thinking "well, there's not enough time."

Peter: Right

Greg: It wasn't a matter of time. There was enough time. The lesson of that is also hey, you know what? They're never was an over time in a Super Bowl before, but now there is. And, often, one of the things that vampires tell themselves is there's not enough time when there really is, and one of the reasons they don't see think there's enough time is that their negative story is so draining away their energy that, at their current level of energy, there might not be.

Peter: Right.

Greg: But if you have energy, there might be plenty of time.

Peter: If you remember, during the playoffs, the Cowboys were playing the Green Bay Packers and the Cowboys came down and scored to put ahead, and they left 35 seconds on the clock. And then Green Bay came down and, ultimately, won that won that game. In the post game interview, they asked Aaron Rodgers a question: what did he think out when the Cowboys scored? And he said they left too much time on the clock. That 35 seconds. That's true. I mean, time this come into a lot of that thought process, like 35 seconds. Years ago, my father went to a UK basketball game. They were playing Kansas in Lexington. I guess they were getting blown out, and I was at home watching the game and, all of a sudden, he comes in the house. What are you doing? "Aw man, we were getting blown out." I said dad, they're they're just about to win this game, and he could not believe it. He could not believe it. He missed, probably at that time, probably one of the greatest comebacks ever... and he just said there's no way, there's not enough time for them to come back and win this game. There's always time if there's time on the clock.

Greg: Yeah, exactly. I think the lesson there, which is powerful, is that we tell ourselves there's not enough time. So we don't feel – that's the emotional piece – like there's enough time, so we tell ourselves a story – that's the intellectual piece – that it is hopeless, and then we give up. And, again, it's all about energy. It's not really about time. Now sometimes, obviously, it is. I mean if they only left two seconds on the clock, they wouldn't have been able to back. So it's not that time is irrelevant... it's just that we so often focus on the time when we should be focusing on the energy.

Peter: That's an excellent point, and that's probably gonna be one of my biggest takeaways because I know sometimes I say I just don't have enough time to do this... and I have to go wait a minute, you can find the time, you can make the time. Sometimes I keep thinking too much in the past. What else would you like to close with, as it relates to emotional energy?

Greg: Well, people say what do you do with a vampire? And I say, well, you pull out the stake.

Peter: I thought you must put the stake in.

Greg: Yeah, well we'll talk about that. We had something for F.A.S.T., and there's something for S.T.A.K.E. The first step is is really to speak energy. Oftentimes, in in the corporate world, if you just speak energy, instead of saying to someone "why are you slowing everything down here? what's the matter with you? why don't you get with the program?" you can say "do you realize that, when you made that negative comment at me, you drained off everybody's energy?"

Peter: Yeah.

Greg: Or did you realize that you didn't get the report in on time, or we just showed up 20 minutes late, and many people will say no I didn't I didn't realize that. And that's really a powerful idea. It's a kinder, gentler, different way of speaking to employees, and I think it makes a difference. The T is, well, let's take away the perverse incentives, and what do you mean by

that? If you have any kind of a compensation system or HR system that punishes people for making mistakes, for failing, then you've got a perverse incentive. Because, as you pointed out, not being afraid to fail is an important part of improv, and failure is the way we learn. So if you have perverse incentives, either somewhere in your company, the way it's organized, or the way people are rewarded or compensated, then you want to get rid of those. The A is all about acquiring bunnies, because there's the opposite of the energy vampires and that's the energy bunny. There are people who I ride with who I can ride all day and all night if I'm riding with him or her, and there are other people were oh my god just going around the block is painful.

Peter: [laughs]

Greg: So, really, what you want to do is you want to acquire energy bunnies. And then the K on STAKE is killing with kindness. Because, remember, being an energy vampire is all about fear. So, frequently, if you're good to somebody and they're not afraid, they stop being a vampire. What a surprise! So be kind, nice to people... essentially what I'm saying is return negative energy with positive energy. And that is magical. Finally, the E is, well, in the end, you kind of have to eliminate them. If they're in your life and there's no hope and you've tried all the other stuff, you kind of have to eliminate them. Well you might say "Greg, how are you going to eliminate your mother?" And the answer is I'm not, but there might be other ways. You don't have to necessarily shoot someone, you don't have to fire someone, but you could say look I'm going to just change the way I invest time and invest energy in this particular person. So I'm going to eliminate that person from from my company, from my life, from whatever, as much as possible. Often times, people are vampires just because they're a bad fit, and they get fired and both the company and they are better off. So part of it is the last step, and I stress it's the last step, is to eliminate the vampires... but at some point, if you don't, then well you got this little cancer running around in your company, and and that ain't gonna be good.

Peter: Exactly. You make a very strong point, and I'm going to tie this back to a previous podcast with Karen Young, where she talked about how we tend to hire fast and fire slow, and we've all made bad hires. We should reverse that, and during the hiring process we should really vet them. And even if we vetted them and they start working for us, it still might be a bad fit. Then we need to fire fast. Don't drag our feet... we've taken the steps necessary to see if we can correct that behavior. But if it's just not working, just address the issue, get the vampire out of the building, and let's keep moving forward. It's truly better for both, as you said, the company and the the employee itself.

Greg: Very much the case. Also, to follow up on that, if you interview with energy in mind, that would be a different interview than interviewing with the other stuff you might have in your head. So you know you might ask somebody, well, how do you spend your time? Well, okay, you're going to get a different answer if you say, well, how do you spend your energy?

Peter: [laughs]

Greg: You might find that different questions give you not only different answers, but better answers as well.

Peter: "Excuse me, what do you mean by energy? Aren't you supposed to ask me how I spend my time? What do you mean how do I spend my energy?" Well I think you just got your answer right there, because he can't answer the question.

Greg: Exactly.

Peter: Wow, and I think this whole thing with mergers and acquisitions... I do believe that you and I both share a client, in Norfolk, Virginia, who's going through a merger and acquisition. I don't know if you've been there already or you're going there, but that's a lot of what they're going through. You're bringing two different cultures, even though you're selling the same product line. But you're bringing two different cultures together into one, and yes you're right. There is a tremendous amount of emotion involved, and you see this all the time in mergers. You see it right now with the with the US Air and American Airlines merger, or the United and Continental merger. Mergers are a tough hurdle to get over because of so much emotion in that.

Greg: And often it is the emotion, and not the logic, that derails it. It's ego. it's all that kind of stuff. When everybody plays nice in the sandbox and there's a good energy all the way around, you have a world leader company.

Peter: Right. There was a Harvard Business Review article a couple years ago, and basically it said if you can take the emotion out of the conversation you'll get to a solution faster. As soon as you throw emotion into the conversation, it'll get derailed and it'll go sideways on you. And I equate that to the opening scene of the movie bridesmaids, when the two main characters (Vince Vaughn and Owen) are mediating a divorce, and the couple is just going at each other. I wanted to use that clip in some of my presentations but I think the language got a little salty there... but then I think Vince Vaughn said "At one time you loved each other, but then you got married," and that statement just took that emotion right out of the room and then they were able to come to some type of solution.

Greg: Exactly.

Peter: So that's cool, and this is great stuff. I mean, I did the first episode, now this episode, and we've got one more to go, which will be spiritual, which we will record here in a few weeks. And this will be coming out late April, as a lot of my audience is looking and going "oh that's what the sun looks like," as we've been buried in either corporate financial reporting or in taxes, but this will help you get past that and get ready for the the rest of the year. Greg, I cannot thank you enough. You inspire me and you give me a lot of energy. I wish I could ride my bike as far as you do. Actually, you inspire me so much that, prior to our first conversation, I mentioned how much I miss riding my bike in the winter because I don't like the cold, and you mention about the trainer piece for your bike. Well I got it, it's in there, and I've been riding my bike when

I'm home at least three or four times a week, for about an hour or so. Very inspirational. I'm looking forward to our next conversation, and thank you so very much. I've greatly appreciated your time.

Greg: Oh thank you too, Peter. It's been great.

[Music]

Peter: I'd like to thank Greg again, for taking time out of his schedule to give us his thoughts on energy management. The last episode of this three-part series will focus on spiritual energy. Greg writes in this book that spiritual energy is embedded in each person's mission – his or her life's purpose. This episode will be airing later this summer. If you'd like to buy a copy of Greg's book, [Getting Up!: Supercharging Your Energy](#), you can find it on Amazon. Well worth the investment! In episode 47, I interview Jody Padar, who is the radical CPA – and that's the title of her book that she published in 2015. We have a wonderful discussion about the future of the accounting profession and focus in on the future of public accounting. Remember, you can subscribe to my podcast on itunes, stitcher, and google play. If you'd like to purchase a personalized autographed copy of my book *Improv is no Joke: Using Improvisation to Create Positive Results in Leadership and Life*, for \$14.99 with free shipping, please go to my website, [PeterMargaritis.com](#), and you'll see the graphic on the homepage to purchase my book. Please allow 14 days for shipping. You can also follow me on social media. You can find me on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) or [Instagram](#). Thank you again for listening and remember to use the principles of improvisation to help tap into your intellectual and emotional energy.

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