

## Transcript for Aaron Walker | View from the Top (Episode 631)

Full show notes found here: <https://theartofcharm.com/631/>

AARON: This is not a trial run. I mean when the bail goes, it's over and I want to live life to the fullest and I want to do it proactively and not reactively.

JORDAN: Welcome to The Art of Charm. I'm Jordan Harbinger and I'm here with producer Jason DeFillippo. On this episode we'll be talking to my friend Aaron Walker, an author, a very successful entrepreneur -- in a regular brick and mortar business of all things -- and now coaching other people to do the same. Aaron has been on the show a few years back and this episode just was fire. People loved it and it's a little bit of a different speed for us.

There's a lot of inspirational stuff here so of course I hold him to task -- in true AoC fashion -- to get some real practicals out. Aaron grew up with nothing but had some significant mindset shifts that changed his own results. Today we'll uncover why we should fear missing opportunity more than we should actually fear failure. We'll discuss the importance of living proactively instead of reactively and what that means and how we can do that specifically, and we'll also learn about how a personal tragedy led to an entirely new way of thinking for Aaron -- one that we can adopt for ourselves. Jason, what did you think of this one?

JASON: I love Aaron. He's just such a great guy and has such great stories and I learned a lot in this one, actually. I'm going to go out and start building my mastermind group.

JORDAN: All right, let's do that. Let's hear from Aaron Walker.

Aaron, welcome back to the show, man. Glad to have you back here. It's been -- I don't know -- a couple years, probably?

AARON: Yeah it has. Thanks Jordan, I appreciate you having me on. What a great show.

JORDAN: There's been a few folks that have probably just listened to the episode with you but for the other 130 thousand or so of us, I think it might help to recap your origin story a little bit.

AARON: Yeah, just for context I'll go back real quick -- started out early in a family that didn't have anything. My dad never made any money so we were very poor. Got a job at 13, fell in love with a business at 18, met a couple of guys that had a lot of money -- they owned the 21st largest insurance agency in the country at the time. I partnered up with guys, we went into business, we formed a third partnership, I had to give away two thirds of the business because I didn't have any money -- it was very successful. I got married a year after I opened the business -- two weeks out of high school. I look back now and think, "My goodness, I'm celebrating 37 years of marriage, and I'm looking at it as a long time ago. But it was very successful, we poured all the money back into the business, I paid a 10 year loan back in 36 months --

JORDAN: Geez.

AARON: -- and we replicated that four times. So we had four stores in Nashville -- I'm 27 years old at the time. A Fortune 500 company comes to Nashville and says, "Hey we want to buy your store." We go through three months of negotiation -- 90 days later I wake up on a Monday morning and I'm done -- 27. So I go from 18 to 27. That's the American dream, right? That's what I thought until --

JORDAN: Sure.

AARON: -- I gained 50 pounds in 18 months and my wife woke me up one day from a nap and she said, "I didn't sign up for this." I mean, like, what are you doing?

JORDAN: Get off the couch, fatty.

AARON: Yeah, that's what she says. She's like, "You gained 50 pounds and you're doing nothing. You're in my hair. You need to get a job or go back to work," so I did. I went back to the company I started with and bought it and I spent the next 10 building it four times the size it was. So now I'm 41 by this time and I was headed to the office -- had a very tragic automobile accident that really was the paradigm shift of my life without a question. I unfortunately ran an over and killed a pedestrian.

JORDAN: Oh, my gosh.

AARON: My life came to a screeching halt that day and I won't take you through all the gory details but I took five years off. I didn't do anything. Right, you don't kill a pedestrian and get over it. You just kind of have to learn that God's grace covers that and he did. Five years later, Robin goes, "Okay," she says, "It's time to go back to work because you're getting fat again. You're getting really lazy." I go in the construction business. We build small commercial and high end residential for the next seven or eight years and we take that company to number one in middle Tennessee three consecutive years. I turned 50 and my mastermind partners -- for a couple of decades now -- has been Dave Ramsey and Dan Miller, Ken Abraham, Jeff Moseley -- some of those names may or may not mean anything to anybody. But they say, "What are you going to do now?" and I say, "I'm done. I'm going to the Caribbean and I'm going to hang out." Dan Miller said, "You won't last 90 days."

JORDAN: Yeah.

AARON: "You've tried to retire three times." So anyway, he said, "Start coaching." So, to make a long story short, I picked up a couple of guys, started doing some podcast interviews -- now I have national and international clients, we have eight mastermind groups that I facilitate weekly, we have a community -- I'm helping ordinary men become extraordinary in every area of their life. That's me in 38 years.

JORDAN: So, let's back you up a little bit. Why did these guys originally partner with you? You didn't have any money, you were kind of a country bumpkin I guess -- from the sound of it -- back in the day.

AARON: Careful, Jordan. Wait a minute. No, I'm just kidding you, I know.

JORDAN: What did they see? I mean, why did they want to partner with you?

AARON: Well here's the thing. So, I realized at 15 years old what I wanted to do. I went to summer school and night school for 18 months. I had enough credits to graduate the beginning of my junior year in high school so I didn't have to go my junior and senior year. That really impressed these guys. They said, "Anybody with that kind of work ethic that would get up, go to work, go to school, come home, go to night school, get up, and do it again for 18 months must have a crazy track record for work, right? He must be insane." And they said, "I like that," one thing -- the other thing is I approached them. They said, "It took a lot of courage for a guy 18 years old to approach us." They checked on me in the community and they found out I was a pretty decent guy and they rolled the dice. They said, "We're going to try it."

So they said, "We've got the money to give you but we're going to go to the bank and borrow the money," and I said, "Hold on, time out. I've never borrowed any money." I go home and talk to my mom about it and my mom said, "Well you ain't got nothing to lose. I mean why would you not want to sign on a loan?" I go back to the guys and I say, "I'm in. Sign me up because I got nothing," you know? And they started laughing and they said, "We just want you to have skin in the game. We want you to be on the note," and I said, "Well I'll show these guys," so I started pouring the money back into the money. I delayed gratification. I said, "You know what? I can't screw this up." When Robin and I get married -- two weeks after she graduated from high school we got married and I said, "Robin we cannot screw this up. You come from a poorer family than I do," and I said, "We may never get this chance again so we're going to double down and we're

going to give it all we've got," and we did. Instead of increasing our lifestyle, we poured all the money onto the note. There's \$150,000.

Now, you know, in 1980 that was a lot of money. It was like, "Man, this is like a lot and we cannot mess it up," and we didn't. So we paid it off in three years and these guys found out that -- not to boast -- but they made a good choice because I do have a strong work ethic. And then we did that three more times and Fortune 500 bought us out. I ended up buying these guys out at the end anyway.

JORDAN: They must have been pretty surprised when you're the one who bought them out, right?

AARON: Well they were and it was kind of ironic. I bought one of them out, stayed partners with one of them -- one of the guys we gave a couple of the stores to because he was older and I don't blame him. He wanted to take all the money out of the company and he did, which rightfully so -- when I was his age I'd want to take it out too. But see, I'm a young guy -- I'm in my twenties -- I want to put all the money back into the company so we can grow it. And that's one of the lessons learned is like -- you know, you've got to delay gratification, you've got to live today like no one else so later you can live like no one else. And that's paid really big dividends for me over the course of my career.

JORDAN: What's the deal here because we hear a lot of research and science and anecdotal evidence about, "If you come from a poor family, you grew up with no money, you're going to have a hard time keeping money, you're going to have a hard time being around money," -- you hear about lottery winners and things like that. I don't know what the stats are. It's something like after two years 87 percent of lottery winners are broke again and it's like how is that possible? You hear it with athletes, especially athletes that come from no money. They're blowing all their money like crazy.

How come you were able to come from some sort of log cabin situation, you end up being quite successful, delaying gratification, reinvesting in the business -- basically doing everything that nobody ever does when they grow up poor. Ow did you learn that? You didn't see it on TV, your dad didn't teach you, your mom didn't teach you -- where did you start figuring this stuff out and implementing it? Because you were 18 -- where did the influence come from?

AARON:

Yeah. First of all, my family was entrepreneurial. My grandfather, my uncles -- they all owned businesses, you know? And I've not worked for anybody since I was 18. So, I'm 57 now. So, you know, we're all entrepreneurs. My dad wasn't a good businessman. He wanted to hunt and fish, he didn't care anything about making money -- he loved people but he didn't want to make money. I watched him one day -- I kind of ran from something not to something and it's the exact opposite of what you're supposed to do. But I watched my dad sweep snow off of a roof to reroof the house to have money so that we could eat. I don't want to do that. I don't want to have to do that. My mom would put canned goods in the pantry and she would nail a board over the pantry during the summer so the winter we would have food and I'm like, "I don't want to live that way."

And it lit a fire in me to have the grit and determination and perseverance to go forward. My mom had a saying. My mom was a huge influence in my life. She would never allow us to say can't. She would say, "You might not be able to do something but you're at least going to try," and she had this little saying that I've adopted as my life mantra. It's, "Can't couldn't do it but could did it all," and as a result of her pushing me like she did to try things, I grew in self esteem because I was successful because I was afraid of failure right -- early on -- but when my mom would push me, I would see that I could do it. So I adopted that mindset early, Jordan. It wasn't intentional at the time.

I look back and I see it now but quite honestly it instilled in me this work ethic, this grit, this determination -- and I didn't listen

to naysayers. They would say, "You can't do that," and I'm like, "I'm going to show you I can do it." It allowed me to kind of be an inch wide and a mile deep. I want to focus intently. I don't want to do everything but whatever I do, I want to do it really, really well. And that kind of determination and that kind of focus -- as it can apply to any business and any person in life -- see, people can tell you what you want them to say or you can choose what you choose to believe and I chose to believe I could do it and that comment "Can't couldn't do it," resonated in my life and I just said, "I'm going to make this work, whatever it takes."

And I'm going to tell you Jordan, it wasn't easy. Being here now, listening to the story, it sounds pretty easy but there was nights where I worked all night. And I would wash up in the sink the next day, change clothes and shave, and I'd be open for business. And I'd go out at night distributing flyers and I'd go up and knock on doors and I would make phone calls relentlessly. And quite honestly, that's the reason for some of our success today because I don't believe in stopping. I believe you can do it if you want to do it. You can find a way. I'm always looking for a way to make it happen, not excuses why it won't work. And so, we're very careful who we surround ourselves with and I've just developed that intentionality and I surround myself with people than can rather than can't.

JORDAN: It seems like if Gary Vaynerchuk were born in Tennessee a few decades prior to -- I guess -- his then he would end up being a little bit more like this, right? Because it sounds like very much a hustle story -- washing up in the sink. It actually doesn't sound easy. I know you said it sounds easy but it doesn't sound easy.

AARON: I'm saying it sounds easy now because I don't tell all the details, right? But the details were it was tough. I mean, it was hard and there were times where I struggled and it was like, "Hey, failing is not an option." And I even say today, "I don't even believe in failure. I believe you either succeed or you learn." And I say, "Fear missing an opportunity more than you fear failure," and

that's the way I have -- I had the mindset of, "I don't want to lay in bed at night and think, 'Would it have worked?' Could this have happened?" That would kill me! I would be like, "I've got to find out. Even if it doesn't work, even if it doesn't end up the way I want -- I've got to try." Because if I don't try -- you know -- and you don't ask, the answer is always no. And so my mentality is, "Go for it," right? If you're hearing my voice today and you're on the fence -- yes! Go for it. Don't put your family in jeopardy, don't put it all on red, don't roll the dice but a percentage of what you've got -- man, go for it. Because where there is no great investment, there is no great gain. And I want to tell you -- you've got to take some risks in life. Otherwise you're going to lay in bed at night and you're going to go, "Man, would it have worked?"

JORDAN: Do you think some people are more cut out to take this kind of risk? I mean it seems like your dad didn't really want to deal with that. Do you think he regretted it or do you think he just wasn't interested in it because he wasn't wired that way?

AARON: Yeah my dad was afraid to fail. He was a very prideful person and he was afraid to fail. And that's the reason I lead these mastermind groups today is I say let the veil down, right? A lot of people won't do that. A lot of people say, "Hey I'm going to keep you at arm's length, I'm not going to share things where I struggle, I'm not going to share with you that I don't know what I'm talking about," -- see I ask a lot of questions. I'm like, "Hey I don't know how do that. Show me." See, I don't allow my pride or my ego to get in the way. Because strength starts at the base. You've got to let the veil down. You've got to be transparent. You've got to be vulnerable.

That's why I've been in mastermind groups for 20 years. Without those guys I don't know where I would be. These guys have different lenses, they have different filters -- so you only have one life experience. You can only see things one way. No matter how hard you try, you've only got one filter and one life experience by which to determine. But when you surround yourself with people that don't have anything to gain or lose --



non-biased people -- they have different life experiences, they have different filters, they can say, "Mm, you know what? I've done that before and life teaches me this," or, "I've done that before and it sounds good in the textbook but in reality this is the way." And you get this general consensus of the multitudes because you put smart people room -- now the IQ level goes to genius because you've got multiple people in the room that can help you. But people don't want to subject themselves to that kind of scrutiny because they want their buddy to think, "I know what's going on."

The truth of the matter is you can't know what's going on in every arena and so I surround myself and keep myself surrounded with people on a daily basis so that I can maybe look foolish or silly in that group but it protects me from looking silly and foolish out in the world. And I believe in asking a lot of questions, getting a lot of opinions, and a lot of advices. Robin and I were going to do a deal not long ago and it was a big deal. It was a big business deal. We were convinced it was the thing to do. She said, "What about your guys?" and I said, "I haven't talked to them yet." So, I go and talk to them. Eight of the ten men told me not to do it and I'm like, "You've got to be kidding me." And they said, "No, and here's why." Each one of them had a valid reason. I didn't know to know that. I go back home with my tail tucked between my legs and I said, "Robin we're not going to do it and here's why." She said, "Man, thank goodness that you asked these guys because we would have had no way to know those things."

So what I'm saying is, guys you've got to have people around you. You know the enemy to excellence is isolation. You've got to have people around you that have a different vantage point, different filters that can help you make your decisions.

JORDAN:

I agree with this. It's actually really tough to maintain that. Jen, my wife, does a lot of that. Jason -- producer Jason will do that in certain arenas. My business partners, of course, AJ and Johnny -- they'll do this and it's a bummer sometimes because you get so excited about something and you get so interested in

it and those people have to make a tough decision too where they go, "Do I want to protect the ego here? Does Jordan really need to be right on this one or are the consequences so much that we've got to say something?" You end up with this kind of interesting balance that they've got to run around you and eventually, you know, you get answers that might save your bacon sometimes. So, when we're around those people we also have to make sure that we're not punishing them for giving us their honest opinion. I think it's really easy to do that.

AARON: You've got to ask for it. You know, Ryan Holiday wrote a great book, *Ego is the Enemy*. You need to read that book if you haven't -- the people that are listening to this. Because, it talks about your ego can be a real problem and see you've got to learn to divest yourself of that ego, right? You've got to give credit to other people. You know I talked to the founder president of Yum Brands -- they have 40,000 restaurants -- and I asked him -- I said, "How in the world, David, did you take that restaurant to 40,000 restaurants," and he said, "Because I gave the credit to the help." In his office he's got pictures floor to ceiling of all the help and he said, "They get the credit and I make sure they get the credit." See, he doesn't have an ego. He's the fifth highest compensated CEO in America. This guy is amazing and the way he's developed his business is not with ego but it's giving credit to those that helped him get there and the sooner we understand that, the sooner we get to that point -- it's just success is absolutely, exponentially greater because now you've formed a relationship with people that have become your team and you're not solo. And so, you've got to get rid of the ego.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

JORDAN: It's hard enough to get rid of the ego and it's really hard to ask people to continually poke it. It's like, "Hey I want you to continually tell me when I'm doing something you think is a bad idea," and it sucks in the moment. And it sucks for both parties because you know, Jason will say, "I don't really like the question you just asked. You just did that thing where you ask and then you answered your own question," and I'm like, you

know -- there's one part of me that's like, "Shut it," and then there's another part of me that's like, "Well, you're doing your job, you know?"

AARON:

Well here's the thing though, you weren't asking a question. You were making a statement with a question. You weren't asking a question. I have a list of questions that I ask people on a regular basis -- there's these 10 questions. They're like, "Are you sure you want me to answer this?" Absolutely because other people see you differently than you see yourself. And see when you get a general consensus of the multitudes, maybe you need to pay attention to what they're saying. And that is the reason that I have been in these mastermind groups for so long -- they're trusted advisors. Now you can't go do this with people that don't know you well. They don't have a reference. They don't have any context of history. They don't have any idea of your family situation.

But when you surround yourself -- and listen, two decades I've been meeting with these guys. They have context, they know and they'll say, "Aaron, every 36 months you do this or that." See they know the way I'm wired. I'm a High D, not that you couldn't have guessed that on the DiSC profile. But they're like, "Here's what you've got to surround yourself with, here's what you've got to do. You're a creator developer, you're not a maintainer manager and you're getting into a maintaining state now. We've got to reinvent your business or you've got to open another one or you've got to create something else because no amount of money is going to keep you there without the challenge." And so, see you start learning who you are and the people that are around you go, "Uh, hold on. Time out."

Dan Miller told me -- he said, "You've tried this twice before. We know from your history that's not going to work so I want to know, what are you going to do from 50 years old forward." So he called me out. He wouldn't have had permission to do that had he not spent a lot of time with me. James Rowe called me on a Saturday morning one year -- never talked to each other on Saturdays. I was in a dark spot. And I don't know Jordan, if

you've ever been in a dark spot -- you're in a ditch, you can't get out. It's like man, no matter what you do you cannot talk yourself out of this. He calls me and he says, "Aaron I've got a word for you." "What is it?" He said, "You're worrying the hell out of everybody in our group," and I start laughing. Well he didn't laugh and I said, "James, what are you saying?" He goes, "I'm saying man, we're sick and tired of hearing this. It is time to pull up your boots. The bible says take the chains from your neck and move on. It's time today to move on." He said, "I'll see you bro, I've got to go," and hung up.

Jordan I was so mad I wanted to bite a nail in two and then I thought, "You know what? This guy has invested 10 years in my life and he has permission to say that." Next Wednesday morning I go up to him -- he thinks I'm going to hit him -- and I hug him. And I said, "Man, you've helped me make one of the toughest decisions in my life. Thank you." See if you don't have people around you on a regular basis like that, who's going to breathe into your life? Who's going to tell you those hard things? And I'm just telling you man, that's what I learned. To take me to another level, ask a lot of questions, surround yourself with competent people, and it helps you make great decisions.

JORDAN: You mentioned fearing missing an opportunity more than you fear failure but how do we set that up? How do we create that mindset other than just repeating this mantra? Because it's really easy to say you know, "I fear missing an opportunity more than I fear failure," but then when we're faced with failure, that might not really be true.

AARON: Yeah it's a mindset shift. Carol Dweck wrote Mindset which is a great book and it talks about in there -- you either have a growth or a fixed mindset. One or the other. I want to be around people with growth mindsets. The fixed mindset says, "It's just the way it is. It's the way I was made. There's nothing I can do about it," and I'm like that may be true for our personality and we can't alter our personality but we can change our behavior. And so I just elect to -- hey, I'm not an artist but you give me

counsel, you get me a great tutor, you give me a few hours, and I can draw an apple for you. Right? It's the mindset of, "I can do it," and it is a shift. And the way that I've been able to do that over my life is, is you're either a giver or a taker. I want to be the giver. I don't want to be the taker.

Adam Grant's book titled that -- Givers or Takers -- tells us in that book that if we will focus outward more than inward, your whole life will change. You will then develop not only a sense of success but significance and I didn't understand that early on and it took the automobile accident to get me to see that because I had been very successful financially from 18 to 27. I was very, very successful from 27 to 40 and then I looked back and thought, "What would my legacy have been had I been the one that was killed that day -- August 1st, 2001? My legacy would have been poor kid from Nashville, Tennessee makes some money retires at 27," and nobody cares. And I started thinking about what's missing in my life.

Well what was missing in my life was significance. See, I needed to be able to invest in Jordan Harbinger, I needed to help you take your life to the next level, and the more I do that and focus outward, the more successful I am and significant. And I didn't get that. I just didn't get it because it was all about me. Another house, had a place on the beach, we had a place in the mountains, had a big house in Nashville -- I had all this stuff but nobody cared. What people care about is how you make them feel, what people care about is how knowing you made an impact and a difference in their life. They don't care what you have, they don't care that you fail, they don't care that you succeeded, what they care about is the impact and difference that you made in their life and once the light went on, I'm like, "You know what? I don't need to be afraid anymore." I can look outward and say, "I'm going to do the very best I can to help you succeed."

Here's what's funny, with that mindset I've been twice as successful financially, simultaneously being significant because I spend about 20 percent of my time trying to help

other people. It eliminates the fear because when all you think about is you and your success you stay in a constant state of fear. So, when you start thinking about others it helps eradicate that.

JORDAN: We had Carol Dweck on the show a while ago. We'll link that episode in the show notes and her stuff is brilliant. Obviously the book *Mindset* is quite brilliant -- fixed versus the growth mindset. How do you then reconcile, "All right, I'm looking for opportunities, I'm looking outside myself," and things like that. What if we feel like our current level of success isn't enough? Why would we focus outward if we feel like we're not already where we want to be ourselves?

AARON: Yeah so what you're saying is, is that nothing else really matters but your success and that's not true.

JORDAN: At that point in your life, right? If you're starting out and you're thinking like, "Well I haven't really built myself up yet -- my business yet." Because you're coming from the sort of perspective of, "All right, I've got all this great stuff, I've got a great business, I've got it all -- I'm really killing it. Oh, now I'm obsessed with my own success," but there are folks listening right now who are like, "Look man, I don't even have the job that I want. I work for The Man, my side hustle is not making any money, I'm in a relationship I'm not super happy about, I live in my parent's basement," or whatever. I mean maybe it's not that bad for them. How are they going to focus outward? What do we tell those people? Are we telling them the same thing?

AARON: Absolutely 100 percent even more so. Let me just tell you why. When we're intently focused on ourselves, nobody else -- quite honestly -- want to be around you or help you. But when you are absolutely insistent on spending a certain amount of your time -- now listen, don't hear me wrong here. Don't hear me wrong what I'm saying. I'm not saying, "Sell all you've got, give it to the poor, go to Africa on the mission." That's not what I'm saying. Because broke people can't help people financially. I want you to make a lot of money. I can train you and teach you and help

you. I can show you. I want to make a lot of money. There's nothing wrong -- I don't want money to own me though, right? It's not my God, I don't want it to be the central focus of what I'm doing.

You see, Jordan, relationships are the number one asset. A hundred percent. As I told you earlier, my dad never made over \$15,000 a year in his life and at his funeral in 2006, it took an hour and a half to get through the line. The line was to the parking lot for six and a half hours. Every person that came there said, "Let me tell you what your dad did for me. Let me tell you how your dad inspired me. Let me tell you how your dad encouraged me." Not one person in six and a half hours said, "Your dad had a nice anything." They weren't interested in his stuff. Yet we spend 90 percent of our time trying to get more stuff and it just doesn't make sense. Listen, I've had all the stuff. It doesn't scratch the itch like you think. What matters is relationships. What matters is a guy that will walk with you for two decades. What matters is a guy that will call you out because he cares for you.

And if you'll understand that early -- I don't care how much money you've got. It doesn't matter what kind of job you've got. If you'll turn your focus outward and you'll say, "You know what? I'm not going to think about myself 24/7," and you start focusing on your colleagues and peers and your family and other members in your community -- when I was in the construction industry, there were 10 top builders. They were the elite builders in Nashville, Tennessee. We were one of them. We formed an alliance and you're like, "What?" We were competitors and we formed the Master Custom Builder Counsel and we came together. I was an officer in this and we came together and we said, "We're going to start sharing ideas, best practices -- we're going to start sharing subcontractors, vendors, resources, ideas, marketing strategies," and your audience is listening going, "What in the world is this whacked out guy saying?"

And let me tell you what happened. As a result of that, the person supplying all the goods and materials to build a house wanted to get before us and we would say, "Okay, what kind of discount are you going to offer for all 10 builders?" They would start competing and buying for our business with discounts. Then we would do Parade of Homes and we would give money to charity. We would get more customers coming through. We would start sharing contractors and GCs and subcontractors and vendors when the other guy wasn't busy and it filled that void in the niche. Ten builders, the last year I was in construction we did \$115 million in business. All of our businesses increased. All of them. Because we worked together.

See, we were looking outward. We were trying to help the guys. People would come to me and want me to build them a house and I'd say, "I can't right now but this guy, Bob Shaw, is amazing. Go to him." And he's like, "He's your competitor." I'd say, "He's my friend and he's a great guy. If I wasn't in construction, he would build my new house." You see and people what to hold their cards close to their vest. We share everything. We have people come in our mastermind and say, "I want to learn what you're doing. I want to have eight mastermind groups." Come on in man, I'll teach you everything I know about it. I've been doing it for years, been participating for 20 years -- I had a guy call me the other day and he said, "I want to duplicate what you're doing but I'm afraid you won't let me in your group." I said, "Man I'll sit down and show you. I'll teach you."

We've got to show our cards. We've got to help people. Here's the reason -- people want to be around people like that. You're the light. You're the guy that brings the light to the room and the energy. But when you hold your cards close to the vest, don't share, don't tell, don't show -- nobody wants to be around you. But when you show and help in any industry, this industry, it doesn't matter what industry you're in -- people want to be around you. What comes as a result of that -- you sell more widgets, you sell your services, other people want to be around



you. But it's so hard to get out of our minds to think about other people.

Jordan, I sit all the time and do endorsements for people that don't ask. I do LinkedIn endorsements before they ask. I'll call them and check on them. And you're like, "Why do you do that?" Because people matter. Never profit over people. It's always people first, it's always relationships first -- and as a result of that now we have national and international clients, 8 masterminds, we have a community, people all over the world because we're sharing. We're giving resources. It is difficult but once you have this mindset of helping the people the fear dissipates.

JORDAN: It seems like it's a little bit too good to be true. It's almost like, "If you build it, they will come," but I also understand that this meshes really well with the Art of Charm concept which is ABG. Instead of ABC -- Always Be Closing-- it's ABG: Always Be Generous or Always Be Giving. And it has to do with helping other people with no expectation of anything in return. In fact, simply because that tends to come back to you even if you only get help -- nine times out of ten people ignore you and never help you again, you do tend to build a pretty abundant setup when you're constantly trying, in a scaled way, to help other folks. It actually is a huge relief to not be focused on yourself the entire time, especially if you feel like you're stuck. You can work on your own problems at the same time as helping others and it stops you from becoming obsessed about what you don't have and what you have not achieved yet. Does that make sense?

AARON: It makes 100 percent sense. It's clear as crystal. Here's the thing you've got to do. Everybody that's listening here too, there's two things you need to decide for yourself. First of all, what do you want? See most people don't know what they want. Most people want bigger, better, shinier, faster -- just give me more. Robin and I live very intentional, very proactive not reactive. I know exactly what I want to make and I know what I want to do, where I want to go -- I know money I want to give away. I live

intentionally. The second two things that you need to know -- sorry, there's three things -- is, what is success to you? How will you know when you win? For me it was choosing my own schedule. I love having financial freedom. I like not having to worry about the electric bill. I don't make any apologies about that. I love to make money, I just don't want it owning me. I want to have an engaging family, meaningful relationships, a clear conscious -- take care of yourself.

You know, you and I were talking about a picture of me where I lost 30 pounds. You said, "But dude, you look younger now," you know, "than you did then." Well that's because I try to take care of myself. I want to learn to be content today but not complacent. Man, I want the pedal to the medal. I want to grow and go always but I want to learn to be content where I'm at today, have a clear sense of direction, you know? I love to dream. I want to have clear goals. I'm a person of faith, I'm a Christian so trusting in a higher power is really important to me and I want to really dive into that and understand that.

I want to have meaning and purpose but at the end of the day, Jordan, when I die -- my two girls and my wife lay me down, I want them to say, "Hey there goes a man that lived and had a legacy of wisdom." See, for me that's success. But the bigger piece is the significance. Meeting the needs of other people, right? It's like, "Man, I didn't even think about that." Well yeah, there's other people out there you can help with. I think sometimes, "Whose life can I change?" Right? What can I do today to help change the trajectory of that guy's life? Learning to fully engage people. You ever been to a restaurant, Jordan, with somebody and they're looking at everybody in the restaurant but you? Anything, any distraction -- the best thing you could do significance for somebody is pay attention to them.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

JORDAN: Well sure, I mean I used to live in L.A. I think everybody does that at every restaurant everywhere. People do that at the grocery store in Los Angeles.

AARON: It's nuts. I tell people, "Stop waiting your turn to talk and fully engage people -- helping people that can't repay you." But at the end of the day, I want to have the foresight to invest long term in relationships so that I could potentially impact generations to come. And then you will have lived a very successful life and significantly. I just think there's a huge piece, Jordan, that people are missing today when they're not focusing outward. And I say this all the time when people talk to me. I say -- I'm really focused on it as a result of the accident. You know, it's like it really rocked my world, you know? It's one good thing that did come out of that. And what I have discovered -- I'm much more successful financially than ever before, now. And at the same time I'm focused on other people -- helping them radically change their lives.

JORDAN: You mentioned in our conversations before the show that you are big on living proactively and not reactively and that's kind of a clever trope and everything but what does that actually mean? How do we do this and why is it important?

AARON: Well I think it's hugely important, otherwise when will you know if you've won, right? You're just going to go out there every day and make a bunch of money and then build a lifestyle based on that and it may not even be the thing you want. Like we built a big house and we had all that stuff and all that but then became a slave to it. I want to be at my grandkids ballgames, right? And so, Robin and I elected -- six years ago -- to sell the house. We sold all the real estate that we owned -- almost. We kept some. The better stuff we kept. But we said, "You know what? We don't want to be slaves to just having stuff." And so, I said, "If it causes me stress we're getting rid of it," and we did.

Now I get to spend three or four nights a week at the ballpark with my grandkids or at the gym watching basketball and we

do that intentionally. We intentionally got rid of stuff that was causing us stress because you've either got to insure it, wash it, clean it, depreciate it, you know? There's so many things. Stuff owns you. Every time you buy something -- whether you even pay cash or not for it -- it takes a certain amount of your time.

Well we proactively sat down, made a list, and said, "This is what we want to do." We do that now. We sit in our sunroom and we go, "What does this next year look like? Where do we want to go? What do we want to do to the house? What trips do we want to take?" We're about to go to Israel for two weeks and I said, "We could do that or we could do this but we're not going to do both." I mean could we technically? Probably. But it's not good stewardship. So we sit down and we say, "This is what we're going to do. Here's when we're going to do it." We do kind of a wish list or a bucket list. These are the things that I want to accomplish, these are the dates I'd like to get it done by -- and we live proactively. I even wrote a document called "What do I want," and specific questions on there.

One of my favorite questions that's on the document and I get a lot of conversation about is -- tomorrow morning, Jordan, if you woke up and there were no financial or geographic limitations, what would you do? Most people can't answer that question. They don't know. They're just going to work every single day, doing something to get enough money to pay the mortgage or the note on something that maybe they shouldn't have bought to begin with. Then they spend the next 30 years paying for something, doing the job that they don't enjoy.

What if you really intentionally started thinking through, "Hey is that best for me? Does this align with my core values? Does this really get me where I want to go long term? You start answering those difficult questions, you'll change your spending habits, you'll change the way you perceive things. Not only that but relationships and we choose that way also. We're very intentional about the people we spend the most time with because you are the average of the five people you spend the most time with, so I want to be very deliberate.

Jordan we've only got one go through. This is not a trial run. I mean when the bell goes, it's over. And I want to live life to the fullest and I want to do it proactively and not reactively.

JORDAN: I think a lot of people -- they think, "Look, I'm going to make the money first and then I will figure out what other values I want because I've got to be secure first. I've got to build this up first." It sounds like what you're saying is, "Actually you need to decide what you're going to do with the resources that you're bringing in because you could just as easily make \$10 million, buy a bunch of stuff or even just invest it in a certain way that doesn't make sense and then you realize, 'Wow, I could have probably lived with a lot less stress or done a lot of things differently a lot earlier.'" But, I think a lot of people what to built and then cut, trim, whatever later on. And you're saying plan better and you won't have to do that and it'll be an easier path, correct?

AARON: Well here's -- exactly. A hundred percent. It's like, we've got a very modest house back in the woods. I could afford whatever kind of house I wanted in Nashville, Tennessee. I don't say that boastful. But, it's not what I want. This is what I want. And we live back in the woods. There's 600 acres that surround our place and I love it. I love it out there. Could I buy a bigger, nicer -- well sure I could but that's not what I want. See, what we do oftentimes is we make decisions based on what other people think you should do. And I tell people, "Quit shoulding on me."

You know, it's my life. It's mine and Robin's. We're going to do and live our life, right the way we want to live our life. And oftentimes we buy things that we don't even want. We have that prestige, right? We have the -- you know what I'm saying? It's like you don't have to prove things to people because the truth is, you're not important enough, they're not talking about you anyway. And that's what holds everybody back. "They're sitting around the dinner table talking about my failures and success." No they're not! No more than you are. But, it holds us back. "If

we do this and it doesn't work out then the neighbors are going to talk about us."

No they're not. I promise you. Nobody listening to this is that important. I'm not going to spend my whole night eating dinner talking about Jordan's successes or failures. We're just not going to do that but it entraps us. We're slaves to what other people are thinking -- that we think they're thinking. But I'm just telling you, from 38 years of experience and business and 37 years of marriage, that is not happening. You need to plan your life deliberately, intentionally and do the things that bring you joy and happiness.

JORDAN: Where do we start? Because it's hard to get accountability with people that you've known for a long time if maybe you don't know anybody else who can give you accountability. It's kind of like chicken and egg problem here, right? Where do we begin with this stuff?

AARON: Yeah, I play the long game, Jordan, on everything I do. It doesn't matter what I'm doing. In any business, I play the long game. Most people want gratification and results in a microwave society. It's like, "Give me the results Friday or next month," or, "If it doesn't succeed," you know, "in three months, I'm out of here. And I do these Facebook lives, I do blogs -- I've written hundreds of blogs and you've got to keep going. Same way with the relationships, same way with the accountability -- you've got to invest slowly and it takes time. It may take a year or two. You're like, "A year or two? Are you serious." Yes, it may.

But man, when you do get that person that you can trust implicitly, that you can share, that you can let that veil down I was talking about, it is so gratifying to be able to sit down with no airs, right? With no pretenses, with no guard up -- you're just Jordan Harbinger. I'm Aaron Walker -- whatever. To sit down and go, "Man, I'm afraid. I'm scared. I don't know. Help me. Help me understand this. Point out my weaknesses," right? It is so gratifying to have that. Very few people have that because they're not willing to invest the time, energy, and effort to get it.

They're not going to come looking for you, you've got to go looking for them. And you've got to say, "Hey, this is kind of what's on my mind. Are you interested in even talking about this? Do your core values line up with mine? Do your interests line up with mine?" You build that relationship over time.

I've got the same three guys I meet with every Friday morning for accountability now for over a decade. I've had three groups over the past 35 years I've been meeting with on a regular -- weekly. We do this weekly because I've got to have people in my life that will tell me the truth. And see, when you have those persons that I was talking about -- that don't have to gain or lose -- you can't do it with a family member, you can't do it with a business partner. If they're biased in any way, they have something to gain or lose, you're probably not going to get a direct clear answer but you've got to subject yourself to that, you've got to ask for that scrutiny. See, I ask for it. I'm like, "Where do you see me doing this?"

My wife told me -- Jordan, you wouldn't have had me as a guest in my twenties. I was arrogant, I was cocky, it was like, "Dude, look what I've done from 18 to 27. I mean, I've got the golden egg, you know? I mean I've got it all. It was like," -- and my wife, one day she goes, "You know what? People don't like you," and I thought, "What?" She goes --

JORDAN: Vain.

AARON: -- "You're pretty arrogant," right, "You're pretty cocky."

JORDAN: Yikes.

AARON: "You'd better be careful." And I had some things in my life that humbled me. You know, some bad choices that I made that humbled me. My dad used to tell me as a kid, "Son when you're climbing ladder, you'd better be nice to the people you come by because if that ladder breaks, you're going to pass the same ones coming back down," and that's really stuck with me over the years and I want to treat everybody the same. I don't want to

treat anybody differently because of their tangible possessions or their position. You never know when you're going to cross that person again. And to play it safe, treat everybody with honor and with dignity and with respect and it's amazing what comes back to you.

JORDAN: So if we wanted to start with the accountability and start with the mastermind type of situation, is it more important to start with friends and people that know us or is it more important to start with people who are also business minded instead? Because I think a lot of people have to make that choice in the beginning. They either sign up for something that is business focused or they look inside their existing circle which only consists of their close friends and family and then they look for accountability there. Or is it a mixture?

AARON: No, it's neither in my opinion. So, here's what you need to do. And I've learned this over the years and it's taken years and years for me to learn this. I would have given a different answer to that question 20 years ago. You've got to get with people, first of all, that have the same core values that you do. People that have high character, they're honest, people of integrity, first of all, right? You would think that's a given but it's not necessarily. So those things have to be understood. The second thing is, you've got to be kind of aligned with people. If you're an entrepreneur you need to kind of get around other entrepreneurs and you need to find some people kind of in the socioeconomic position as you. Let me tell you why.

That sounds a little haughty but it's not and let me tell you why. When Robin and I talk about going to certain places -- I mentioned earlier we're going to go to Israel -- if I'm meeting with somebody that makes X dollars and they're doing good to take off for the weekend, they're not going to understand me talking about going to Israel for two weeks. Or if I'm talking about making a transition in my position or I'm looking for a transitional period to go through to, you know, convey my business to someone else and they're working for The Man for \$12 an hour, they're not going to understand that.



Or, if you're looking to make charitable contributions or donations and you're talking about giving this much money, they're not going to understand that. So you can create a real uncomfortable environment. So you need to be sure that you're running with people in that group that understand your difficulties. They change. Not that you're any better than them, it's just that they haven't been there and they don't understand it.

So I would start, personally, with the level of accountability in somebody that is in your area, whether it's at work, whether it's from your local church or your community, people that are in Vistage with you or whatever they're in, I would just keep an eye out for people that align with the same way. Start out slow. I told you, I'm in it for the long game. I'm going to go for months and months and months maybe having breakfast. Slowly work your way until you find out that Jordan is the real deal.

Once I'm convinced Jordan is the real deal, I'm like, "Hey man, I'd love to make this a long term relationship and maybe a couple of guys can come along with us and we can do life genuine, authentic -- we can let our veil down, we can be honest with each other so that we can help take you there." It takes a lot of energy and effort to do what I'm talking about, Jordan. You can't do that with everybody and it just takes time. But I'm telling you, the value that it gives is immeasurable and it has proven to be true in my life for three plus decades now. You can't do that with everybody but you can do it with a few.

JORDAN: Aaron, thank you so much. Is there anything else that I have not asked you that you want to make sure you deliver to the AoC family here?

AARON: Don't let your fears hold you back. Keep a mindset of you can do things. Live life adventuresome, you know? Go out there and go for it, you know? I don't want to be the status quo. I brought a C home on my report card when I was a kid once and my mom goes, "You can't do this," and I said, "Why?," and she said, "You

just can't do that." I said, "Well listen, it's average," and she said, "Yeah, that's just as close to the bottom as it is to the top and you've got the ability to excel and I expect that out of you. You can do it and you're going to be cheating yourself if you don't." That's what I want to tell your listeners. You guys out there today, you don't have to do it. You don't have to conform to the average, you can excel, you can go forward -- be willing to delay gratification for longer periods of time and I promise you the dividends that you'll have in later years will absolutely be worth the risk. So go out there today, live an adventuresome life, and enjoy yourself.

JORDAN: Aaron, thank you so much.

AARON: Thanks, Jordan.

JORDAN: Great big thank you to Aaron Walker. The book title is [View from the Top](#). Of course that will be linked up in the show notes for this episode. And if you enjoyed this one don't forget to thank Aaron on Twitter. That will also be linked in the show notes, just as it always is. Tweet at me your number one takeaway if you would. I would love to hear from you. I'm @theartofcharm on Twitter. Remember, you can tap the album art in the podcast player to see the show notes for this episode. We link to those directly on your phone. If you're using Spotify that's not the case but, you know, the show notes are on the website at [theartofcharm.com](http://theartofcharm.com). I also want to encourage you to join us in the AoC challenge. That's at [theartofcharm.com/challenge](http://theartofcharm.com/challenge) or text the word 'charmed' to 33444. That's C-H-A-R-M-E-D to 33444.

The challenge is about improving your networking skills, your connection skills so you can inspire those around you to form your own mastermind group or develop a personal and professional relationship with you -- speaking of accountability. And it's free. There's a lot of people that don't seem to know that. It's free, it's unisex, it's a great way to start the ball rolling, get some forward momentum as well. And we'll also email you our fundamentals Toolbox that I mentioned

earlier on the show, which includes some great practical stuff, ready to apply, right out of the box, on reading body language, having charismatic nonverbal communication, the science of attraction, negotiation techniques, networking and influence strategies, persuasion tactics, and everything else that we teach here at The Art of Charm. It will make you a better networker, a better connector, and a better thinker. That's [theartofcharm.com/challenge](http://theartofcharm.com/challenge) or text the word 'charmed,' C-H-A-R-M-E-D to 33444.

For full show notes for this and all previous episodes, head on over to [theartofcharm.com/podcast](http://theartofcharm.com/podcast). This episode of AoC was produced by Jason DeFillippo. Jason Sanderson is our audio engineer and editor, show notes on the website are by Robert Fogarty, theme music by Little People, transcriptions by [TranscriptionOutsourcing.net](http://TranscriptionOutsourcing.net) -- I'm your host Jordan Harbinger. Go ahead, tell your friends because the greatest compliment you can give us is a referral to someone else, either in person or shared on the Web. Word of mouth is everything. So, share the show with your friends and your enemies. Stay charming and leave everything and everyone better than you found them.



