



Episode 25: New Year, New Mindset

January 17, 2023

(Music playing)

Mindy Henderson: Welcome to The Quest Podcast, proudly presented by the Muscular Dystrophy Association as part of The Quest family of content. I'm your host, Mindy Henderson. Together we are here to bring thoughtful conversation to the neuromuscular disease community and beyond, about issues affecting those with neuromuscular disease and other disabilities, and those who love them. We are here for you, to educate and inform, to demystify, to inspire, and to entertain. We are here shining a light on all that makes you you, whether you're one of us, love someone who is, or are on another journey altogether, thanks for joining now. Let's get started.

All right, everybody, thank you so much for joining today. We are excited to start the new year talking about new mindsets. And on this first episode of 2023, we not only have, I'm so excited, a live audience with us for the first time, but we are sitting down with the Jose Flores. Jose, also known as the mindset disruptor, lives with spinal muscular atrophy. He is a professional speaker and the number one bestselling author of, *Don't Let Your Struggle Become Your Standard*. Jose speaks all over the world, sharing his experience of growing up with a physical disability and how you can use the power of your mind to overcome anything that life throws your way. Jose, thank you so much for being with us.

Jose Flores: Thank you so much for having me, Mindy. I'm excited to hang out with you and the audience.

Mindy Henderson: Awesome. So I have to confess, I am a big goal setting nerd, and I absolutely love talking about goals and mindset and how we can all sort of kick off the new year right. So let's start with the basics, I know I talked about you in the intro,

but would you just tell us a little bit more about yourself and about life with SMA, when you were diagnosed and how it affects your daily life?

Jose Flores: Yeah, sure. So I was born and raised in the Bronx, New York, and I had a great childhood. And when I was around three years old, my mom, my family noticed that I had a little limp to my walk, to the way I walked. And everybody was like, "Oh, look, he walks a little tough guy." And everyone thought it was cute until it wasn't cute anymore, and they found out that it wasn't going away. So she took me to the doctor, they ran some tests, they wound up doing a muscle biopsy on me at the age of three, and that's how they determined that I had SMA. And so at that time, good news is I'm 45 years old, so I'm still here kicking life's butt.

Mindy Henderson: Spring chicken.

Jose Flores: But the doctors told my family that by the age of 15, I'd end up in a wheelchair, they weren't even expecting me to live past my teenage years. So getting that type of news back then was kind of tough for the family. I was a kid, so I really didn't know what was going on, but the family, that affected the family. And the good thing is that SMA didn't really start to show its ugly little head until later on in life for me, because I'm type 3, I have three copies, and it wasn't really until high school when I started feeling a major shifting in my body's ability to move the way I was accustomed to moving. And so prior to that, like I said, I had a great childhood, I was able to walk and run and ride bike and do all the things that physically able young boys can do.

And then in high school, that's when it kicked in, and then that's when reality hit for me because I knew that I had SMA, but I never really thought about it. No one really ever kind of paid too much attention to it because it wasn't really relevant at the moment, until it started to become relevant. And so that's when I was like, "Man, what the heck is going on with my body? Why is this becoming harder? Why is this becoming more difficult? Why am I losing this ability? Why am I losing that ability?" And why's, the question why, why is this happening to me? What did I do to deserve this? And got going down that rabbit hole, and I did that for several years, I was having that type of mindset. So in high school it became really tough because that's where you're trying to figure out life, figure out who you are, who you want to become, what you want to do in life.

And for me, I didn't have any future vision of college or a career because the doctor said that by the age of 19 ... so I'm just in survival mode. I'm just trying to survive, I'm trying to make it to 19, and now I actually feel everything that the doctors were warning us about early on. And I'm in this place in life where I'm like, I'm very scared, I'm a little depressed because I'm losing abilities that I had and I no longer have, and we're just trying all trying to figure this out, what's going on. And there really wasn't that much information either back then. So that's why I'm so glad that I'm a part of the community, the MDA community, the SMA community, because I feel like there's so much hope for this younger generation now, with all of the breakthroughs that have been happening, because for me, and maybe you might resonate with this also, but for us, I feel

like we had to figure out our own ways to keep hope alive and stay motivated because there wasn't any quote, unquote, "good news" for us back then.

And so that's how I have been able to evolve and become the mindset disrupter, by going through all of those challenges, by losing certain mobility functions and different functionalities. And I always like to say that all those years I felt like I was losing in life, losing my ability, losing my strength, losing my passions and my goals and my dreams. It's weird to say this, but I was getting stronger mentally. So as I was losing everything else that was around me, my mind kept on getting stronger and stronger. And it's the weirdest thing because people ask me how, and it's just because I guess being born and raised in the Bronx, New York, maybe that has a little bit to do with it, but we're like lions. They call it the concrete jungle. And I've always had this drive inside of me and this passion inside of me to never give up.

Even before I started feeling SMA moving around in my body, in my mind, I think I was born with this inmate feeling of you can't give up in life, no matter where you were born. I was born around projects, poverty, drug abuse, violence, alcoholism, and something in my mind always said, this isn't the life that you have to adapt to. There's more to life out there. And it sounds weird, but I teach this when I do my coaching, when I'm speaking, because where I grew up, there weren't any millionaires. I don't even think that anybody in my neighborhood was making six figures, to be honest with you. So I didn't have a vision of what the possibilities were for life, because we can't pick the family we're born into, we can't pick the region or area we're born into. We just have to work through it and figure out what we want to do as we get older.

So as I got older, I started having that desire that many people have, of wanting more out of life. And so that's when my journey to becoming the mindset disrupter really kicked in, was it started in high school when I started feeling SMA. And I have a really cool story about my graduation that I wrote about in my best selling book, but just really quick, if you don't mind me sharing that.

Mindy Henderson: Yeah, please, go right ahead.

Jose Flores: So when I graduated high school, we graduated on the football field, and I moved from the Bronx to Upstate New York because my mom didn't want me going to high school in the Bronx. Can't imagine what that was probably like. So I grew up, I went to high school in Upstate New York, and it was in the mountains, so we had to walk down this really steep hill to get to the football field.

So the whole morning, I'm excited, graduation day, super excited, butterflies going crazy in my stomach. And I'm thinking like, oh God, because at that point in my life, Mindy, my leg used to start giving out at me at random moments. So I would just fall at random places, at random times, and I had no control over it. And so I'm thinking to myself, oh God, please don't let my leg give out on me today. Let not today be the day that my leg gives out in front of all these people.

So I'm excited, but I'm afraid, I'm really cautious. So I'm going down the hill, taking it really easy, step by step, and I'm like, "Woo." Because any little rock or pebble that I step on and I lose my balance and it lights out for me, I'm going down.

So I make it to the bottom and I'm like, "Yes. Oh my gosh, I made it. Thank you, God, I made it." So I'm super excited. And you know how they start calling the names of the people and you walk across the stage and you shake the principal's hand. So when they're calling the name, they call my name, I start walking towards the stage, guess what happened?

Mindy Henderson: Oh, no. Did you fall?

Jose Flores: My leg gave out on me and I fell on the floor.

Mindy Henderson: Oh my gosh.

Jose Flores: And I'm telling you, Mindy, it was like a movie, you hear just everybody go ... and it went dead silent. And I'm on the floor and I'm looking around, everything is moving in slow motion, and I'm like, "This cannot be happening to me." I'm so glad that cell phones weren't out back then, because that would've probably went viral.

Mindy Henderson: Oh no.

Jose Flores: Yeah. So anyway, on the floor, and again, this is, again, I'm just kind of sharing this with all of you because I'm showing you how I've been able to develop the mindset that I have. So as I'm on the floor, I'm literally having two conversations in my head. One conversation is saying, just fake like you're hurt and you're injured so that the EMT can come and get you up out of here. And you don't have to deal with anybody asking you questions, you don't have to deal with anybody laughing or looking or pointing or saying, "Hey, that's the guy that fell," and you can just get your diploma when you get home. And so I'm pondering that conversation, but then there's another conversation that I'm having that's saying, are you kidding me, Jose? You've worked so hard for this, you're at the finish line and you're going to give up right now?

Mindy Henderson: Oh, I like that voice.

Jose Flores: Yeah, you better get your behind back up, you better go across that stage, get what you worked hard for, what you earned and what you deserve, get your diploma and cross that finish line. And all of this time, I'm on the floor thinking about this. And so I look up to my friend behind me and he is like, "You ready to get up?" He kind of knew me, he was like, "I know you're not just going to sit there and let this happen to you." So he helps me get up to my feet, I walk across the stage, shake my principal's hand, grabbed that diploma, and I threw both my hands up in the sky. And that was such a profound moment for me because number one, that's the last time I remember being able to hold both my arms up above my head on my own.

And number two, it was like the best day and the worst day of my life almost, but it was so liberating because that was the day that I decided to fight back against SMA, against the adversity, I should say, and the challenges and continue to chase my dreams. And I didn't know that, but they say hindsight is 20/20, but that was the moment right there, that was a defining moment for me that said that no matter how many times you fall, we always hear that cliché, it's not how many times you fall, but for me, and maybe for you, I was literally falling. So it's not how many times you fall, but it's about how many times you get back up, and that was the first time I got up, and I've been getting up ever since, Mindy.

Mindy Henderson: Man, I don't know what to say. That's such a great story. And I know that those were actual events, but it's such a great metaphor for life, and you speak it beautifully and you tell the story beautifully. And you're right, it's not about the fall, it's about the getting up and the things that we struggle with in life, I think create sort of an extreme resilience in us that just makes us powerful beyond our imagination. So what a great story, thank you so much for sharing that. And man, there's so much to unpack in what you said, just your story of the diagnosis and the idea that, I don't know if we have any doctors listening, but the idea of what the doctors told you. And my story is similar, I also live with SMA, and I was diagnosed at 15 months. I have type 2, and so I've lived my whole life from a wheelchair, and the doctors actually told my parents that I wouldn't live to be three.

And doctors have, I mean, they were working with the information they had at the time, of course, but doctors have such an interesting ability to either give hope or take hope away. You know what I mean? And it's astounding to me that you grew up living your life thinking that you had this expiration date, for lack of a better term, and so you didn't maybe dream the way that you might have. You didn't set goals the way that you might have because of the limits that you thought that you were going to have on your life. And I think it's amazing that not only have you gone on to prove everybody wrong, but doing what you do and existing to encourage other people in your profession is amazing. So tell me more about the journey to get into this line of work. When did you start dipping your toe in the speaking pond or deciding that maybe you wanted to write? How did that all come to be?

Jose Flores: Yeah, that's a great question because just like you mentioned Mindy, because of that news that I got at a young age, I didn't attack life and go after my dreams and my goals as I probably would've liked to, because of the "expiration date," quote, unquote, that we talked about. But for me, because of the condition that I had, and I never had a mentor or a coach in my life, even growing up, I never had that in my life. The influences that I had, again, being born and raised in the Bronx, New York, you can imagine the influences that were around me weren't the greatest. So I always felt like I lived a mediocre life, the average Joe life, and it just blows my mind how many people are content living like that. And I used to be one of those people, so I don't say that in judgment, but I say that because I used to be that type of person also, and I'm not any longer.

And the same way I'm not, the people that are listening and watching me don't have to be either. And it just takes for you to make that one decision, that's all it takes. It doesn't take this massive amount of work. It doesn't take a massive amount of connections. It doesn't take a massive amount of influence. It just takes for you to make one decision that says, I want more for my life, I'm tired of living average, and I'm going to do whatever I need to do to move the needle forward, even if it's just a little bit. And I made that decision, and ever since then I've been rocking and rolling. But for me, I got into corporate America because I think in my mind, that was all I was good at, I was going to be good at doing.

There wasn't any physical work involved, just give me a keyboard, just give me a headset and a phone and a computer and let me do my thing. Because again, being from New York, we're known to have the gift of gab, so I can talk on the phone really good, put me on the phone with some people and let me just do my thing. So I worked in corporate America for 20 years.

Mindy Henderson: Okay, me too. Our stories are getting more and more similar.

Jose Flores: Yeah. I've worked in corporate America for 20 years, that's where I met my beautiful wife. We'll probably talk about her in a little bit also. But I worked corporate America 20 years. And so in 2018, the job that I was working for and gave them seven years of my life, they wound up laying me and 16 other people off that year. And it was due to budget constraints. And so I wasn't really surprised. I mean, I was surprised, but I wasn't afraid because at that point I had already written my book. I was already speaking and getting paid on a small scale, but it wasn't equivalent to my corporate salary. So my goal was to resign at the end of 2020 because I was pretty much wanted to double-dip a little bit, to save up enough to go on my own. But God had other plans because in January of 2018, I had spoken for this school district out of Mississippi, they brought me in. And that was the first time that I made \$15,000 in two days.

So I'm like, "This is incredible." And I'm looking at my wife, and I'm like, "Babe, this is possible. It's happening to us and we just got to keep figuring it out and keep working it and keep making it happen." Because I'm a firm believer that the vision works as long as you work the vision. And so my wife and I were like, "Wow, this is crazy." So I'm still working my corporate job at the time, but when I came back from that event, that same week I came back, my job laid me off. And so I'm like thinking, man, this is crazy. But I was like, hey, I was faced with another decision to make, I can either go back and apply and look for another job and get one very easily because obviously I have the experience, or I can spread my wings and believe in my abilities and give this entrepreneurial thing a shot.

And here I am, five years later, this month I'm going to be celebrating my fifth year anniversary of being full-time self-employed as an entrepreneur and doing my thing. And it's been the best experience ever. And I'm just so glad because again, it's one of those things, Mindy, where when you're not given the hope and the encouragement and the motivation and the inspiration to keep hope

alive, then you continue to function in this state of mediocrity and the state of being average and the state of complacency, and you get comfortable being uncomfortable. And we hear a lot of times people say, "You need to get comfortable being uncomfortable." And a lot of times people will say that metaphorically, but for people like you and I who are in wheelchairs, but we can still feel everything, I'm always like, "Please tell me more about how uncomfortable you are. Tell me more."

And so I say that jokingly, but the reality is that we are so blessed to be able to live, literally live what the world talks about, getting comfortable, being uncomfortable, and all of those different type of metaphors and the ones I mentioned earlier. And so we get to actually live that. So we are the message that we bring to the world, it's not like we saw it in a movie or we saw it, we're actually living it. So we get to not only live it, but we get to share it in real time with everyone we come in contact with. And we get to show them like, "Hey, listen, this condition doesn't define who we are. It doesn't define who I am." And that's one of the decisions I had to make because I was always worried about the I can't in my life, I can't walk, I can't run, I can't do this, I can't do that, I can't do that. That was overwhelming.

And so I was like, "Okay, well Jose, we already know what you can't do. What can you do? Let's talk about that. Let's talk about what you can do." And so I said, "I still have a powerful mind and I still have a powerful voice. Okay, well, how can you utilize those two things and combine them and still become successful and still become profitable and still make an impact and still have make impact and income at the same time?" And so just literally, one day I was at my job at corporate America on a lunch break, and I just started YouTube-ing being motivational speakers.

And at that point in my life, even before I got laid off, Mindy, as I said, I was already speaking, I had already written my book, I was making a little bit of money, but I wasn't getting fulfilled anymore with doing corporate America work. I've worked in every department you can possibly think of, and I worked my way up all the way to managerial positions, but it wasn't fulfilling for me anymore. It was like I was in the rat race, doing the same thing every day, every year, year after year after year after year, and with the three to 5% raise and that's it. And in my mind, I'm like, I'm worth so much more than 3%.

And so I just had to figure out a way to create my own economy. And so as I was Googling motivational speaking, I just got sucked into that world and went down this rabbit hole of motivation and inspiration, that every fiber of my being was consumed by it. And I was like, "This is what I want to do. This is what fires me up. This is what I want to wake up and do every single morning. And if I can get paid for it on top of that, man, this is like the icing on the cake. It's like the cherry on top." And so I just continued to work the vision, Mindy, and here I am today, everything you mentioned, writing books, traveling the world. My mentor is one of the greatest motivational speakers to walk the planet. Les Brown, he wrote the-

Mindy Henderson: Les Brown, he's amazing.

Jose Flores: Yeah. He wrote the forward to my book. I got laid off in 2018, 2019, I went on tour with Les, and that changed my whole life right there, that encounter with Les changed my life. And today we worked together. I just spoke at an event with him last month in November, early November, I'm sorry, two months ago, early November. And I can't believe we're 2023 already. Traveling the world with the greats, because I'm a firm believer that if you want to be great, you got to follow the people who have been great and are doing what you want to do and that are the greatest at doing what it is that you want to do. And so if you want to be the best, you got to learn from the best. And so I'm just grateful that I can call Les Brown, my friend, my coach, my mentor. He's helped me along my journey tremendously.

Mindy Henderson: That's amazing. I feel like I just want you in my ear all the time. Can you just live inside my head? I mean, so many incredible things come out of your mouth. And what I'm thinking is just listening to your journey and this idea that success looks different to everybody, right?

Jose Flores: That's right.

Mindy Henderson: And so many people like yourself grow up without the right kind of role models and things, the right kind of influences in their life to pave the way or to set the example of what they might want to go on to do. And I think that you are a great example of someone who didn't have that. You didn't have the role models, and yet you still found a way. And one thing that I like to say all the time is I really encourage people to try to see the possibilities instead of the limitations, because the possibilities are there. And I think that you're living, breathing proof of that. You've just got to look for the glimmers of hope and the glimmers of the possibility of what could be, and then you go after it like your life depends on it. So your story is absolutely amazing.

I've got like 8,000 other questions that I want to ask you, but as a person who lives with a disability, talk to me about some of the additional layers that individuals come up against in terms of having and maintaining a healthy mindset when living in today's world. And I say this all the time too, people with disabilities live in a world that's not built for them. And so living in today's world, what's your advice for combating the challenges and maintaining a healthy mindset when you do have that additional layer of challenge or adversity?

Jose Flores: Yeah, absolutely. Again, that's another great question because the reality is, Mindy, is that we do have extra layers that we have to go through within the MD community, and isn't easy, it's difficult, and one condition is not the same as another condition. And what I found out, even within the SMA community, you can have the same diagnosis and the outcome can be completely different. I've met people who have SMA type 3 with three copies just like I do, and it's a totally different experience. Totally different. And so that was mind blowing for

me also. But the thing, Mindy, is that's why I'm such a big proponent of mindset because I believe that everything starts and ends in the mind. I also believe that when the mind decides, everything else follows. And so when you make up your mind, it does something to your subconscious mind because when you make up your mind, it's your conscious mind.

So I love talking about this stuff. Right now, you and I are working off of our conscious mind, the present right now mind, but our subconscious mind is what holds everything else, it soaks everything else in, even the unspoken message that we're talking about, our subconscious mind is processing all types of information, all types of stories, all type of different circumstances and situations. And so that's why we have to be careful what we say and what we think and what we believe, because again, our minds are such a powerful thing. I think that we don't give our minds the credit that it deserves because it's such a powerful tool. It's our most highest asset and resource that we have as humans, is our minds, everything's created from the mind, ideas, creativity, our thoughts, our belief systems, the stories that we tell ourselves. All of that is developed in the mind.

And so when you have the ability to have an awareness of that, and you have the ability to tap in and take captive and control of your mind, and not let your mind go crazy with all these crazy thoughts, and you say, "No, this is what I believe, this is what I want, this is who I am, this is what I'm going after." And you start to speak against the other negative story that may be trying to attach itself to you. And so staying motivated is just literally, just some of the things that I do, I know we talk about this a lot, but I like to give practical stuff because you hear a lot of people, speakers, they say a lot of fluffy things that sound good, but it's like I never see anyone in the audience raising their hand and saying, "How did you do that? How did you do that? How can I do that? How can you help me do that?"

And so I'm always asking those type of questions like, okay, you made a million bucks. How'd you do it? Oh, you woke up happy? How'd you do it? I mean, I want to know that because hearing all of the end part of the story is great, but how did you get to that part?

Mindy Henderson: Yeah, there's a lot of time from beginning to end.

Jose Flores: Oh, a ton. So for me, I've learned how to develop an attitude of gratitude, right?

Mindy Henderson: Oh, yes.

Jose Flores: We hear it all the time, and sometimes it sounds even like it doesn't even make sense. But for me, when I wake up, before I even open my eyes, I'm still in bed, I'm awake, but my eyes are closed, and I'm just thankful, I'm grateful. I'm like, "Thank God that you woke me up today, because there's millions of other people that didn't or don't have the opportunity to open their eyes like I am right at this very moment." And it sounds crazy, but just starting to do things like that, how no matter how minute they might sound, it does something again, to

your subconscious mind. It releases endorphins and serotonin, you start to feel good. When you're grateful, you're putting yourself in a position of gratitude, like, thank God, and I have what I have.

So I wake up and I'm like, "Hey, I can still see. I can still hear. I can still talk. I can still think. I may not be able to move, but look at all the other things I just mentioned that I'm able to do." Right?

Mindy Henderson: So true.

Jose Flores: When you start to weigh it, it kind of makes a difference.

Mindy Henderson: It's true. And I am a huge proponent of gratitude, by the way. And I agree with you that these actions that you take, like the one that you just described about waking up every morning and making that your first thing that you do, those things become habits. And the more you do it, the more second nature it becomes. And before you know it, you're living your life as a grateful, happy person. And sometimes it sounds a little cheesy to say out loud, but I'm a huge believer in it, and it's been a huge force in my own life. The other thing that's coming to mind for me as you're talking is that where gratitude is concerned, I like to tell people that there can be multiple realities that exist at the same time in our worlds, that are all equally true. And even if there's something really hard or really dark going on, there are other things that exist that are just as real in our lives that are good.

Jose Flores: Absolutely.

Mindy Henderson: Even if it's just a cup of coffee waiting for you in the kitchen, I personally get really excited about a cup of coffee, but it's so true, and I'm glad that you went there. Let's switch gears just a tiny bit. As a professional speaker and motivator, you educate and inspire individuals and businesses to strengthen their mindset and their leadership skills. So what are some of the skills and perspectives that you teach that would be helpful to anyone listening who wants to be more of a leader in their personal or professional life?

Jose Flores: So what I like to do is I like to tell people, think about where you are right now and think about where you would like to be in the future. If you're not where you want to be, think about where you are right now, think about where you want to be in the future, and then think about what are some of the things you can do to get there. And again, a lot of times people will think that it takes a tremendous amount of work. And I'm not saying that it doesn't, because of making your dreams and your goals become a reality, it does take work. But a lot of times people think they have to put this massive amount of work because they have these massive dreams and these massive goals, and there's nothing wrong with that. But my point is that moving every day, just 1% is better than not moving at all. So if that needle is moving just 1%, in one year, you've moved 365%, right?

Mindy Henderson: Ooh, that's good.

Jose Flores: Yeah. And so you're getting closer and closer, and then it takes time. It takes time to develop these habits. It takes time to develop these routines. It takes time to develop yourself personally, personal development, business development. That's why it's called development, you have to develop yourself, and that just doesn't happen overnight, it's a development process. Sometimes it happens a little quicker in certain areas, and sometimes it takes a little longer in certain areas. But the key to understand is that ... and the process of going through the process, you are developing yourself. And so I just like to tell people just to think about it, just think logically. I don't have a college degree, I have a high school diploma, but I have a lot of common sense. So before school was even created, humans lived off of common sense.

Mindy Henderson: Some of them did.

Jose Flores: Some of them did. And so I like to tell people, it's not rocket science. Just think about, and it's simple, life doesn't have to be difficult most of the time, a lot of times we make it difficult. And so for people like us, people will look at us and say, "Yeah, well, their life is difficult." And it is, I'm not taking anything away from that, we do live difficult lives because of the cards that we were dealt in life, but that doesn't mean that we can't take those cards and play the heck out of them. Right?

Mindy Henderson: Amen. Oh, that's so good. And tell me if you agree with this, because I also think, you talk about people making things harder for themselves, and I do believe that with your mind and the way that you look at the world, you can make things much, much harder or much, much easier, depending on how you choose to look at them. But I think also when it comes to goals, and I love what you said about visualizing where you want to go, what you want to be, what you want to do, and I think people get stuck in the architecture of how do I get there? And I think they get stuck in making a plan, when in fact, you just need to take a step and then the next step will reveal itself. Does that resonate? Do you agree with that?

Jose Flores: I agree with that 1000%, Mindy. And for example, one of the questions I get asked a lot about being an author is what was the most difficult part about writing your book? And I always tell people, it was just getting started. Just getting started. Because you already have the stories in your mind, you've lived the experiences, you're the one who went through those moments. And so it's not a matter of writing it out because you already know it, it's just a matter of getting started. So we procrastinate a lot, and it applies to life in general, no matter where you want to go, you talked about people getting stuck, whether it's losing weight and going to the gym, or whether it's starting a business, or whether it's being a better husband, being a better father, being a better friend, being a better family member, being a better colleague, it all starts from within.

So what can I do to become a better version of myself? What can I do to become a better version of myself? And so when you start to look internally instead of externally, you'll start to learn more about who you are as a person.

And then you'll start to learn and be more aware of where you may fall short, and how you can tighten up in those areas and brushing up in those areas. So for example, my wife and I, we've been married for 15 years this year.

Mindy Henderson: Oh, nice.

Jose Flores: Yeah, we've been together for over 20, but we have an amazing communication with each other. So when I'm falling short, she'll tell me, "Hey, you're slacking in this area. I need this for me." And I'm like, "Okay." And instead of me being defensive and being like, "Well, you're not doing this for me," I'm like, "Okay." I listen to what she's saying, I internalize it, I meditate on it, and I process it, and then I try to do whatever I can to do to fix it.

Mindy Henderson: That's powerful, because feedback is so important because we live in our minds, in our daily lives, we get consumed by things, and it's hard to see how the rest of the world sees us. And I think personally, that feedback is one of the greatest gifts a person can give, but it can be tough to take, because if you need some feedback, that innately means that you're doing something, well, I'll say less good than maybe you could be doing it. But yeah, I think that that's great. And just giving yourself time to process it and sit with it, and maybe try not to react right away. Because you're right, sometimes those knee-jerk reactions get in the way and get in our way of actually doing something good with that feedback.

Jose Flores: Absolutely.

Mindy Henderson: So let's talk about the new year, and you hear people talk about New Year's resolutions this time of year. You do a lot of speaking on personal and professional goals in general. How do you feel about New Year's resolutions and what's your recommendation for how to start this year right, if you have goals that you want to accomplish this year? And is a goal, the same as a resolution? Let's get really deep.

Jose Flores: Hey, listen, I'm a fan of whatever's going to work best for you, even if it's just helping you get started right now, go with it. That's what I'm about. Whether it's a goal or a resolution, or you want to say some affirmations, whatever you think is going to work best for you to make it happen, then go that route, give it a try. If it doesn't work, then pivot and shift and do try something else. But I'm all about just getting started, that's how I've been able to become successful is because I just go after it. I may not know what I'm doing, but I'll do it anyway, and I'll learn through the process.

And so a lot of time, and this is another thing too, for maybe some of your entrepreneurs that are listening, or maybe people who want to become entrepreneurs, listen, being an entrepreneur is super difficult. It's very hard because basically, what you're doing is you're creating an economy for yourself. You have to figure out ways to add value in the marketplace and enough value to where people are going to pay you for it. And so it's difficult because you are going to have to wear many hats. So when I first started, I was the CEO, I was the CMO, I was a marketer, I was the ...

Mindy Henderson: Customer service.

Jose Flores: I was the customer service, I was the receptionist, I was the mail guy, I was the get the lunch guy. I'm like everything. And it's overwhelming and it gets tired, you work a lot of hours. But as you continue to learn, you go through the process, you're learning, you're figuring things out. I've learned that it's okay to delegate. I've become a great delegator and delegate what you're not good at doing, or what you're weak at doing, to people who are strong at doing what you're weak at doing. That makes it a win-win for everybody. You get to hire somebody or get the help from somebody who's great in this area, and you get to spend that time that you would've had to spend in that area now focusing on your area of genius and keep your ship sailing forward, right?

Mindy Henderson: So good. So good.

Jose Flores: Depending on what you're good at doing. Yeah, absolutely.

Mindy Henderson: And also, I think that people get hung up on failure too. And if they fail at something or what they perceive as failing, I should maybe say, then I think a lot of times the tendency is to quit, just to throw in the towel. And if something happened today that feels like a failure to you, tomorrow's another day and two hours from now is another moment that you could try again or try something different. And I think that there's actually a lot to be learned in what we perceive as failures in life.

Jose Flores: Yeah. That's important, and I'm glad you mentioned that because I heard somebody say one time that if ... everybody's going to fail, that's inevitable, we're all going to fail. But if we do fail, we need to fail forward. Fail forward. And so it's almost like, going back to the resolutions thing, everybody in the new year, gym memberships go high because everyone wants to either get healthier, lose weight, or get stronger. People say they're going to quit smoking, quit drinking, or just get rid of all the bad habits. And the thing is that they say that January, I think it's what, 17th or 18th, is national give up on your resolutions day.

Mindy Henderson: Oh no, that makes my heart sad.

Jose Flores: Yeah. There's a thing, that's actually a thing. I think it's like three weeks after the new year, they call it national give up on your resolutions day, because that's when people quit. And there's a statistic behind it, I don't know if they took it from gym memberships or however they tracked that statistic, I don't remember what it was, it was an article I read a while ago, but it's actually a thing, and it's a sad thing, as you mentioned. And the thing is that the goal never changes, Mindy, the goal never changes. The plan may change, the methodology to obtain that goal may change, but the goal never changes. So if you have a goal to go to the gym, or your goal is to lose 20 pounds, maybe it's not going to the gym, maybe you're not ready for the gym right now, but maybe it's watching what you eat, maybe it's counting your calories, counting your macros and your micros, and so it's a whole bunch of different things.

So the plan, I want to encourage you guys, the plan can change, but the goal should never change. If you have a goal, if you have a dream, if you have something you want to obtain or you want to go after, make sure that you don't give up. Because that's the problem with most people, Mindy, is that when they don't see the result in the timeframe that they think they should see it in, they quit. And everyone says that, I've been around a lot of successful people, Mindy, like I was telling you, when I was living in the Bronx, New York, I don't even think we knew anybody who was making six figures. But today, I'm actually friends with two billionaires and several millionaires.

Mindy Henderson: Give them my phone number.

Jose Flores: I've been blessed to be around some very, very successful individuals. And you'll see that they are human just like we are, the only difference that separates us is that they were consistent, they weren't afraid to fail and learn and get back up and wipe the dirt off and keep moving forward, and they just made better decisions. And the only way you can do that is by getting around the right people, the people that you need to get around. Maybe the people you're around now is your old crew that has been holding you back, so maybe it's time to find a new group of people to hang around with or be a part of, and just start stretching yourself. It's okay to be uncomfortable getting out of your comfort zone, that's the only way you grow is by stretching. Mindy, I've been going to, I've been on a RISD, I don't know if we're going to talk about any of this stuff, but I've been on a RISD since March of this year, of last year.

I started physical therapy last year, and my therapists were like, because I was just going in, all I wanted to do was stretch, stretch, stretch, stretch, stretch, stretch. And stretching is a exercise, by the way, guys, if you didn't know that, stretching is an exercise. And so my therapist were like, "Well, why don't we do some of this and why don't we ..." and I'm like, "Yeah, no, that's cool, but I need to stretch." I'm like, "I've been in a wheelchair for 23 years, I think that I don't need to be trying to lift the weight. I think I need to stretch my back out. I need to stretch my legs, my arms, get my mobility back, my flexibility back, my range of motion back, let's work on some of those things." And so stretching is such a key, very underappreciated function that we all take for granted.

And let me tell you this, ever since I started therapy, even my therapists don't even stretch. And then everybody that I've met, not met, but everybody that I've come in contact with, and that topic comes up, I ask them, "By the way, do you stretch?" Let me tell you, Mindy, 99.9% of the people that I've asked since March of last year if they stretch, have said no. Which is the most basic thing you can do for your body to keep the elasticity going, the mobility, the range of motion, and everybody's guilty of it. And so I've been promoting stretching to everybody. And so I say that as a metaphor, stretch yourself this year. Stretch yourself this year, and you'll be surprised what happens. Because since I've been stretching, Mindy, I've been in the wheelchair for 23 years, and so my goal last year was to be able to stand up in what they call an easy stand machine that stands me up, for 23 minutes.

And I did that. I stood up for 23 minutes, one minute for every year that I was in a wheelchair. And that was in the beginning. That was about a month after I started, two months after I started stretching, I stood up for 23 minutes. Then I said, "I'm going to do 30 minutes, then I'm going to do 45 minutes." And then my ultimate goal for last year was to be able to stand in that machine for one hour before the end of the year and two weeks before December 31st, I stood in that machine for one hour. And it wasn't because I was doing weights, it wasn't because I was doing ... it was because I was stretching, consistently and constantly.

Mindy Henderson: I've got goosebumps. That's incredible. Congratulations.

Jose Flores: Thank you.

Mindy Henderson: That's worthy of a little bit of applause. So I hate to say it, we are running out of time. I want to ask you about your book real quick, and then I want to open it up to audience Q&Q. So just real quick, your book is called, Don't Let Your Struggle Become Your Standard. Tell us a little bit about your book and what people can expect to get from it.

Jose Flores: Well, first of all, the book is incredible. And I'm not just saying that because I wrote it, but it was my first book and actually, it was my first physical copy book, it was my second written book because I wrote an ebook prior to that. But I wrote the book because, and I put my whole blood, sweat and tears into that, literally, I was working corporate America at the time, so I was literally writing the book every weekend. I gave up my weekend for, I think it was six to eight months, every weekend, I was just writing the book for hours and hours and hours and hours. And so I wrote the book, Mindy, and I titled it, it took me some time, but I titled, Don't Let Your Struggle Become Your Standard, because I started realizing that there were so many people that were struggling, and they were allowing their struggles to become their standard.

They were allowing their circumstance, their situation, their adversity, their challenges to become their standard. And they started to become comfortable accepting that as their reality and getting complacent living there. And so I said, "You know what? I got to do something to help these people out and let them know that they don't have to settle." Because a lot of times we settle for what life throws at us, and I've never been a settler. I like to say I'm like a nomad, I'm always on the move. The reality is, because I know that we live on a planet that's full of abundance, that's full of resources, that's full of unlimited opportunities and possibilities, and why can't I go after every single one of them that I want?

And so when you can develop your mindset to that level of awareness, it changes the game for you, because now you're not looking at life through the old lens that you were looking at before. You're looking at it through a new lens of opportunity and possibility. So it's exciting, it's exhilarating. You're like, "Oh my gosh, there's so much abundance out there. Which way should I go?"

Mindy Henderson: Yeah. Nice.

Jose Flores: So I wrote the book because I wanted to let people know like, hey, listen, we're all going to struggle. Whether you're in a wheelchair or you're not, you're going to struggle through life. Life is full of struggles. Life is full of challenges. Life is full of adversities. But the thing is that we don't have to park there and settle there, we can go over the speed bump, we can go over the pothole, we can climb over the wall, or we can bust right through it. And so I like to just share with people that it's okay to understand that we're going to struggle, but it's also okay to understand that you don't have to let that struggle become your reality. It doesn't have to become your permanent residence, in other words.

And so I wrote the book, there's 10 chapters and they're powerful chapters, and I like to think that they're, and I've gotten feedback too, but they're chapters that are realistic. Because one of the things I get as a speaker from people is that, "Jose, you're so authentic, you're so transparent, you're so real, and you're so vulnerable, and I love that about you." And so with that book, that's exactly what I want it to be. I wanted to be real, authentic, transparent, and vulnerable. And what I also did, which was really cool, if you guys get the book, it is the physical book, it doesn't come in the audio book, because I have an audio book as well, it's on Audible or audio platforms. But at the end of every chapter, I have a built-in QR code where when you scan it with your phone or your tablet or mobile device, there's a one to two-minute video that pops up, of me motivating you towards action based off of the chapter that you just read.

Mindy Henderson: So good.

Jose Flores: I thought that was a cool, additional added value. I actually thought I was the first person to come up with that idea, and somebody bursted my bubble, and it was like, "No, that's already out, and it was in a couple of magazines and stuff." So I was like, "Ah."

Mindy Henderson: Doesn't matter, it's still powerful.

Jose Flores: But hey, and you don't see that in a lot of books. So I thought that was a cool-added value. So not only do you get to read the story, read the book, read the stories, and take the journey with me, but you actually get to see me on video personally speaking to you based off of the chapter that you've just read.

Mindy Henderson: Love it. Well, we're going to put a link to the book in the show notes so that everybody can find it. But I want to open it up, I've been pummeling you with questions, I think we should open it up to the audience and let some other people ask some questions. So it looks like we've got one hand raised. We're going to get to as many questions as we can, and we're going to start with Mary. So let's take Mary off mute and let her ask her question.

Mary (audience): Hi, thank you so much. It's been wonderful listening to this conversation, and I can't wait to get your book.

Jose Flores: Thank you.

Mary: And use the QR code because I feel like that video will definitely motivate me. I wanted to know, with the busy pace of everything going on in the world and everything that gets thrown at us, how do you stay focused on your goals and ignore the rest of the noise? What do you say to yourself in your head that stops you from going down a bad rabbit hole?

Jose Flores: Yeah, so that's a great question, Mary, and thank you for asking that. What I would say is that I have this thing, I have a workshop that I do that's called mind management, and so I have an acronym for the word mind, but the M stands for manager thoughts. So in the busy world that we all live in and the fast pace that we all live in and we're constantly getting bombarded with information, we have to be able to do a few things. So number one, we have to heighten our sense of awareness. We have to be aware of where we are, what we're doing, what we want to get accomplished. So having that level of awareness of what needs to get done and what's happening around us. Number two is also you have to be able to filter all of that information.

So that means that, so how do you get rid of the distractions? And I'm going to be honest with you, I used to be one of those people. Let me clarify that. I used to be one of those people who was very easily distracted. I get a text message, I'm like, "Oh, who's that?" I get an email and I'm like, "Who's that?" The phone's ringing, I'm like, "Who's that?" So what I started doing was I just started using the functionality of my iPhone and putting on the work mode and the do not disturb mode. And even at night, I have it on the sleep mode at seven o'clock, I have it on sleep mode or from 7:00 to 7:00, it's on sleep mode, and my wife and my children are the only ones who are able to break through that barrier. Everyone else I don't see until the next day.

And so it is just setting those parameters for yourself that's going to help you excel with staying focused and executing whatever it is that you're trying to execute, and building those parameters and being intentional about building those and being real with yourself. So I know I used to be very easily distracted, and sometimes I still am, but I've built those parameters around those distractions so that I can stay more laser focused on what it is that I'm trying to get done and accomplished.

Mindy Henderson: That's great. Thank you for the question, Mary. Let's see, I think Rebecca's got a question.

Rebecca (audience): Hi. I've really enjoyed everything that you have been sharing, Jose. I love all of your advice.

Jose Flores: Thank you.

Rebecca: I was wondering, how do you stay motivated in a day-to-day, practical way, when you're just having a day that you don't feel like you have all of your

regular energy to go out there and do everything that you want to do, how do you get yourself kind of pumped back up?

Jose Flores: That's a great question. I love that because even Les Brown, the master motivator, he calls me the motivator to the motivators because I motivate him all the time. But I'm human, so I do have my days where sometimes I'm not feeling 100%. And so I just make sure, again, it goes back to the awareness, I just make sure why am I feeling this way? What's causing me to feel this way. Maybe it's a legit reason, maybe it's not a legit reason. Maybe I'm just in my feelings and I just want to have a pity party that day. And again, that's okay. But the key is to have an awareness of what it is, what the root cause is, and then making sure that whatever it is is just a moment in your life, that that moment doesn't become days, and then those days turns into weeks and those weeks turn into months and those months turn into years, and next thing you know, you're in this state of being that you do not want to be in.

So understanding where that is, and where that's coming from, and what that is, is going to help you to snap out of it. So one of the things that I've been able to do is snap out of it fairly quickly because I've had that higher level of awareness. Now I'm able to know, okay, well I'm feeling like this because this isn't working out in my favor or because I didn't close this deal or because this opportunity didn't happen for me. And so yeah, I might be in my feelings for a few moments, but then I'm like, "Okay, well you know what? That's just one opportunity out of a billion more opportunities. Let me not waste any more time soaking at the loss of this opportunity and let me get back on my feet and back on my grind and go after the opportunities that are still out there for me." And so kind of just shifting your thinking, I like to say, get rid of the stinking thinking and shift your thinking and just get back on track to what you know need to be doing.

Mindy Henderson: Ugh, I am so putting you on speed dial right now because you're so good. Thank you for the question, Rebecca.

Jose Flores: Thank you.

Mindy Henderson: I think we have time for one more question. Let's take Amy's question, and then unfortunately we're going to have to wrap it up.

Jose Flores: Oh man.

Mindy Henderson: I know. Amy, what's your question for Jose?

Jose Flores: Looks like Amy's-

Mindy Henderson: Looks like Mary's got another one. Let's go back to Mary and Amy, we'll come back to you.

Mary: Well, thanks for letting me ask another one. I just [inaudible 00:55:30] to say, is there something that when you do feel like you're in a negative place, to sort of snap yourself out of it? Is there something you say to yourself? Because

sometimes you can really get lost in that worry spiral in your head of things that are important and you need to worry about, whether it's your kids or finances or planning ahead. And you want to be aware and stay in the present moment, but at the same time, there are certain things you have to worry about and be responsible for. So is there something you say to yourself to sort of stop your mind from going into that spiral?

Jose Flores:

Yes, there is actually, and that's a great question. One of the things that I say is I won't stop until I win. And that's actually, if you look on my social media or my website, you'll see that, and it's also the name of my podcast because I have a podcast as well that's called, I Won't Stop Until I Win, with Jose Flores. But I always say, I won't stop until I win, and that's one of the things that I even do at every single one of my speaking gigs or events, is at the end, I always have everyone stand up and to have them shout with me very loud, I won't give up, I won't in and I won't stop until I win. And I have them say it three times really, really, really loud, to immediately change their state of being, because something powerful happens when you shock your state of being.

So you can be in one state of being, let's say it's a negative state of being, and then all of a sudden just shout at the top of your lungs, "I'm not going to let this win. I won't stop until I win." And just saying that a few times over and over is going to immediately change your state of being and it's going to shift your focus now from a negative to a positive. Tony Robbins does that, he's really big into that, he calls him incantations. I'd just like to say, just say whatever powerful word it is that's going to help change your state of being and it works. It works for me and it works for the whole room that I'm firing up, at the moment when I'm having them all shout it with me.

Mindy Henderson:

That's really good. That's really good. Thank you for that other question, Mary, that was a really good one, and that's going to help me a lot, I think. Let's go back to Amy real quick and then we'll wrap up. Okay, so Amy's question is, she says, "Hi Jose, how do you deal with comparison and not letting those thoughts take over? I so appreciate this conversation and have learned so much from it. Thank you."

Jose Flores:

That's another great question. Man, you guys are asking some amazing questions. And that's a real thing, comparison is a very real thing. And I used to struggle with that when I was younger, when I was a lot younger in my teenage years, I used to struggle comparing myself with other people, as a growing boy, and everybody else is growing and I'm not growing like they are, then comparing myself. But the reality is that it's even, in my opinion, worse now with social media because now you have access to see everybody's life all over social media and see everything they're doing. And everybody always tends to post all the cool things they're doing and all the money they're making and all the places they're going. And the reality is that when you are comfortable in your own skin, none of that stuff matters. And what happens is that the only reason we compare ourselves to other people is because we're dealing with insecurity. We're dealing with insecurity.

Now, wherever that root of insecurity came from, that's where we have to go back to, to be able to deal with that and heal from that and to be able to grow from that and move on from that. But I used to be the type that I had low self-esteem because my body was underdeveloped and I and my body didn't look like a normal young man's body. My arms were super skinny, my legs were super skinny, so I would be afraid to take off my shirt at the pool or at the beach and things like that. And there's some other examples as well that I used to be afraid of doing because of me comparing myself to other people and what I should look like and how I should be and how I should be perceived.

But I really got to a point in life, and again, this goes back to what we spoke about earlier, about going through the process and developing ourselves and going through the developmental process, is that when you start to understand that you were born beautifully and wonderfully made, that you are unique, that you are peculiar, that you are one of a kind, that you were made on purpose and for a purpose. When you start to understand these concepts, it really changes your outlook on life, it really changes the way you think, the way you look at life, the way you look at things, the way you look at other people and the way you look at yourself. And so when you start to understand that you are one of a kind, like there's nobody on this planet that's a better Jose than me, there's no better Mindy out there than her, there's no better Amy out there than Amy and Rebecca and Mary, there's only one of us.

And so it goes back to, I even named my company, the name of my company is called Indispensable Now. So just real quick, indispensable by definition means very important, absolutely necessary, and non replaceable. Those are three things that I definitely didn't feel when I was growing up. And I don't say that to ... when you talk about that in the corporate world, they'll say like, "Oh, no one is indispensable. Everybody is replaceable." And that's true. But the thing is that the person themselves are not replaceable. No one is replaceable. Everyone is indispensable because you can replace a title or a position, but you can't replace a person. So even though they may get a new person, maybe Mindy was in a position, they got rid of Mindy and now Rebecca's in the position, but guess what, Rebecca's not Mindy, only Mindy can be Mindy.

And when you understand that, it changes the game for you because now you're no longer comparing yourself with anybody else because you're secure, you're confident and you're courageous in who you are and your own skills, abilities and talent. And you can go out there and you can crush life and attack life on another type of level that you're not accustomed to. And you do it with bravery, you do it with courage, and you do it with humility because you know that you are beautifully and wonderfully made.

Mindy Henderson:

Dang it, I can't think of a better note to end on than that one. Thank you, Jose so much. Amy, thank you for that last question. And Jose, you are remarkable. I am at a loss for words. You have fired us up. And I know that if anyone else feels the same way that I do, that's been listening to this, I am ready to go and crush 2023. So Jose, thank you so much for taking the time to be with us today, for

sharing all of your wisdom. And everybody, I think we all need to go get Jose's book and have a book club. So we're going to put that information out there. Thank you to everybody who joined in the audience.

Jose Flores: Can I just say one more thing?

Mindy Henderson: Absolutely.

Jose Flores: And the spirit of a new year, and I've been ... Amy says, "Getting your book ASAP," that's awesome, thank you. In the spirit of it being a new year and with God blessing me to be a blessing to others and paying it forward and giving it back, I just want to give everybody a free gift. Whether you're watching live or you catch it on the replay, maybe you could drop the link into the comments, but it's literally no strings attached, it's a free gift. Just go to freegift.joseinspires.com and you can download a free MP3, motivational MP3 that I did on the power of showing up. So since you all showed up for this podcast and you continue to show up, I want to encourage you to continue showing up for yourself and for life because powerful things happen when you show up. And so that's just like my little free gift from me to you, late Christmas gift, early New Year gift.

And I just want to say thank you so much for having me, Mindy. It's been a pleasure and an honor, and I appreciate you guys so much. And follow me on social media too @joseinspires as well.

Mindy Henderson: There you go. So thank you for that, Jose. We're going to put a link to that gift in the show notes as well. And just again, Jose and everybody in the audience, thank you for being here. If you are in the audience, we're going to shoot you a note when the podcast is live, and we would love it if you would share it on your social media. If you had a good time and learned something today, we'd love for you to share the experience and encourage other people to join us on future podcasts. All right, well, thanks again and we will talk to you soon.

Thank you for listening. For more information about the guests you heard from today, go check them out at mda.org/podcast. And to learn more about the Muscular Dystrophy Association, the services we provide, how you can get involved, and to subscribe to Quest Magazine or to Quest Newsletter, please go to mda.org/quest. If you enjoyed this episode, we'd be grateful if you'd leave a review, go ahead and hit that subscribe button so we can keep bringing you great content and maybe share it with a friend or two. Thanks everyone. Until next time, go be the light we all need in this world.