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209 — Conversations to Have with Yourself with Detroit Pistons Team Therapist Dr. Corey Yeager

Amy Morin:

Welcome to *The Verywell Mind Podcast*! I'm Amy Morin, the editor-in-chief of Verywell Mind. I'm also a psychotherapist and a best-selling author of four books on mental strength. Every Monday, I introduce you to a mentally strong person whose story and mental strength tips can inspire you to think, feel, and do your best in life. And the fun part is we record the show from a sailboat in the Florida Keys! Don't forget to subscribe to the show on your favorite platform so you can get mental strength tips delivered to you every single week. Now let's dive into today's episode!

Do you ever think that you could benefit from learning more about yourself? Do you sometimes struggle to know who you really are? Do you think you could benefit from having more self-awareness? If you answered yes to any of those questions today's, episode is for you!

He's a licensed marriage and family therapist who serves as the psychotherapist for the Detroit Pistons. One of his passions is to facilitate meaningful dialogues surrounding the subject of race and racism. Dr. Yeager is also the author of a new book called *How am I Doing? 40 Conversations to Have with Yourself*. In it, he describes specific questions everyone should be asking themselves to gain confidence, learn more about how past traumas might impact them today, and to learn more about tolerating uncomfortable feelings. In today's episode, Dr. Yeager talks about some of those specific questions

from his book and how answering them today could help you create a better future for yourself. Make sure to stick around until the end of the episode for The Therapist's Take. It's the part of the show where I'll give you my take on Dr. Yeager's strategies for building mental strength. So here's Dr. Corey Yeager on the conversations you should have with yourself that can help you grow mentally stronger.

Amy Morin:

Dr. Corey Yeager, welcome to *The Verywell Mind Podcast!*

Corey Yeager:

Thank you so much, thanks for having me, I'm excited to be with you today.

Amy Morin:

Well, I'm excited to talk to somebody that's normally talking to the Detroit Pistons about all things related to mental health, this will be fun.

Corey Yeager:

Yes, this will be a blast. I absolutely love talking to the Pistons, but I love talking to folks that are interested in mental wellness as well.

Amy Morin:

Absolutely. Well, I got a copy of your book called *How am I Doing? 40 Conversations to Have with Yourself?* I'm a therapist, and I'm an author as well, and as soon as I saw this I thought, why didn't this book come out sooner? There's a lot of books out there about conversations you should have before you get married, conversations you should have with your son, conversations you should have with your daughter, and I looked there aren't any about the conversations you should have with yourself.

Corey Yeager:

That's right.

Amy Morin:

And this seems obvious now I, as a therapist, so many people come into my office, and they'll be like, "I'm here because I want to get to know myself better." And the fact that this resource didn't exist sooner. So thank you for writing it, how did you decide, okay, this is the book that the world needs right now?

Corey Yeager:

But just think about that, why would it be that we would have all these books discussing ways in which to engage others, and connect with others, and better understand others, but not a book that really is talking about, how do we understand ourselves? How do we connect with ourselves? How do we become curious with ourselves? And that's really the genesis of the book. So if I think about really what the spark was that began the book, it really came from me doing therapy, and these were questions that I was asking or being curious about with others. So it was engaging people, asking these certain questions, a ton of these questions, and then when the session would end I would then review the session in my mind and say, "Well, if I asked myself that, what would I say?" So I started to play with that, and hadn't even thought to turn it into a book.

But one of the things when I started my PhD program at the University of Minnesota, I had told myself and my wife, "I think I want to write a book." And this was at the beginning of the doctoral program. So kind of got into some deep thought, and kept hearing this same phrase come back to me, "Don't worry about writing the book, the book will find you when the time is ready." It kept coming to me. So all right, well I'm just going to leave it alone. So I went about my life, and then ended up doing a documentary with Prince Harry and Oprah Winfrey called *The Me You Can't See*, and *Out of Nowhere* these publishers called me saying, "Hey, we saw your piece on the documentary, and we think there's a book there." So the book found me, so that's kind of how it unfolded for me. But it really started with me being curious with others, and utilizing those same questions with myself.

Amy Morin:

I love that, because that's how I became an author too, is they called me and said, "Hey, we saw something you did and we think..." And I thought, yeah, the book found

me. But that's a good way to put it. How come you think we have done this for so long? We talk about the conversations you should have with your partner, and really about getting to know somebody else, but how come we never really thought about this before? How do you get to know yourself? Because that is something that so many people come into therapy saying, "I don't understand why I do these things, I don't understand my behavior sometimes." Or, "Why am I like this in this situation?" And that's really what it's all about, is learning more about yourself.

Corey Yeager:

Yeah, I think at a societal level we're taught to not focus on ourselves, almost from the inception of understanding we are taught to worry about, be concerned, support others, put yourself 15th on that list. Make sure that your kids are good, make sure that your wife or husband are good, make sure the people that you work with are good, check in on them, all of that. But nothing is taught to us about making sure that we're okay, and before you can even make sure that you're okay, you first have to know, so who the heck am I, and how did I come to be where I'm at? So this curiosity I think, at a societal level, it's not really elicited, it's not something that we engage with, that we even discuss. So I think it's a different vantage point than what we're used to, and it's kind of how it started I think.

Amy Morin:

So I want to dive into some of the questions, I picked out some of my favorites from the book that I think are really, really good questions that we should all be asking ourselves. But before I do, I want to go over something that you mentioned in the introduction, you talked a little bit about narrative therapy, why you do it that way, and the root of the problem. And you give this amazing example of the lawnmower and the dandelions, can you talk about that for a minute?

Corey Yeager:

Yeah. So I am at the core a narrative solution focused therapist, I love stories, I want to hear stories, I'm want to hear content laden stories. And from those content laden stories a pattern will always emerge, not what may emerge, it always will. If we listen to

those stories enough, there will be a pattern that emerges. I love patterns, I see the world as a pattern of stories, I see individuals when I engage with them as a story. So as that type of a therapist, as I began to do that work, I'm always thinking metaphorically, and one of the metaphors that stuck that I started using early on was this dandelion metaphor. And really what it is, what it's talking about in the book, is getting more deeply connected and understanding the root system, the root cause of issues. And that metaphor is, so if you are going to have a big party, and you look out on your lawn and it is full of dandelions, and everybody's coming in three or four hours, and you're like, "God, it looks horrible out there, look at all these dandelions."

So what are you going to do? You're going to mow. So somebody gets out and mows the lawn, the party starts, people come to your house and they say, "Oh my God, your yard looks so good." "Oh thanks, I appreciate that." But five days later, what's back? Dandelions are back, why? Because you didn't do anything to affect or impact the root system. So what this work is, narrative work, a little different than cognitive behavioral type work, because I seek to get more deeply connected to the roots and understand the root system, the struggle, the root of the struggle, as opposed to let's just cut it off at the top and we'll worry about it when it comes back. So that's really where that metaphor came from, it's from my therapeutic approach.

Amy Morin:

I like that. And I thought that was a wonderful visual to be able to say, "Yeah, and then the problem keeps cropping up, you got to figure out why before you can really change, I guess on the long term." We can all make changes for today, but if you really want to make a long-term change, sometimes you got to understand a little bit more about the why behind that behavior. So let's dive in and talk about some of my favorite questions from the book that you say we should ask ourselves, one of them is a fairly simple question, but I doubt we ask it very often, what makes you deeply happy?

Corey Yeager:

Yeah. So what you'll find out in the book, many of these questions are very, very simple, they're not complex. Now, that doesn't mean that the answer's easy, but the questions

are relatively simple. And I think life is kind of that way too, that it doesn't mean it's easy, but it's relatively simple if we take our time and kind of move through it. So what makes you deeply happy, was a question that I came to with a number of clients, because they were searching for happiness, and I would slow them down and say, "Hold on. So you want to change, you want more happiness, so describe what makes you deeply happy?" And people would always get stuck, "Well, I don't know." "But you just said three minutes ago that you want to be more happy, and I give you the opportunity to describe what makes you really happy and you don't know." So I think this is that concept of deeper understanding of self, what is happiness to me?

Because you can describe happiness for you, but that really has zero to do with me. And if I describe my happiness, that really doesn't have anything to do with you. And another thing that I've found, is working with families and couples sometimes that we're taught a bill of goods that tell us that our job is to make others happy, doesn't work that way. My wife, I love her to death, she can't make me happy. And I've come to understand my job is not to make her happy either, that she can have that happiness that she pushes forward, and I can be part of the facilitation of her happiness, but it's hers nonetheless. So having a better understanding of that, a deeper sense of that happiness, what it looks and feels like to me, how I will pursue that, what will happen once I get there? Is life done once I get to that level of happiness? Or do I reset myself, and regenerate, and have a new version? So that's really where that question came from.

Amy Morin:

And there's something about adding that word deeply that seems to change it, if you just said, "What makes you happy?" I think some people might say, "Oh, cheesecake, or seeing my friends." But something about when you say, "Deeply happy." It makes you kind of take a step back and think, well okay, what does it mean to be deeply happy?

Corey Yeager:

That's right, yes. And then again, that deeply adjective is in line with the book, of getting to the root system, getting more deep into... I kind of talked from the very beginning of

the book, is we're going to get out in the yard and get dirty and nasty in this conversation, and it's not going to be easy, and we're going to dig down and get deep to the root system. So when we talk about happy, I think you're right though, kind of easy the surface level answer, "What makes you happy?" "I like cheesecake, and I like this or that." I don't have to really think about that. But if the word deeply is just simply added to that, it puts pause on you, you got to be still for a second, say, "Let me be thoughtful about that."

Amy Morin:

Right. And so then what good does that do us to know, these are the things that make me deeply happy in life?

Corey Yeager:

Then I can go about pursuing those. If I better understand what it is that makes me deeply happy, then I can go about the pursuit of those things, and I can start to align myself in ways that I can then pursue them. I may not get to it today, but I'm now in alignment with what makes me deeply happy. As I seek to move towards that deeper version of happiness, first of all, I think we have to be aligned. It's like getting in a car and you're going somewhere, you're not going to necessarily get to that point on the map overnight, but you have to begin somewhere, and you have to be aligned with where you're going. And I think understanding that deep happiness, that alignment I think is really important.

Amy Morin:

I think so too. Another question that I loved is you asked, what makes you feel most alive?

Corey Yeager:

Yes. So for me, one of the things that makes me feel most alive is really being generous, giving of myself. I mean, therapy also makes me feel extremely alive, in the moment. In the book I write about conflict being something that... Which sounds weird, but I feel most alive when there's conflict around, which I know sounds odd. But I have

now come to an understanding of that, I didn't always know that about myself, that that made me feel alive. And if somebody would've come to me five years ago, 10 years ago, and said, "Hey, I bet conflict makes you feel really alive." I'd have said, "No, not really. Actually, who likes conflict?" But when I took the time to really kind of think more deeply about it, that conflict is what does really make me feel alive, and part of that is because I'm a therapist.

And if you're a therapist, you're going to sit in a room, there's going to be conflict. That people are going to come in conflict laden, there's going to be conflict in what you have to tell somebody that they may not want to hear. But it does make me feel alive when I can get that level of engagement, and conflict is one of those spaces. I think understanding what makes us tick, what makes us feel fresh and alive is extremely important, just like understanding our happiness. Again, the book is about understanding who the heck we are, who am I, and how in the heck did I get here? And then if I can start to answer those, then I start to try to answer, and now where am I going? I think all these questions are part of that recipe that is life.

Amy Morin:

I think so too. And in life it's so easy to just go through the motions, you get through every day, just like today is like yesterday and the next day, and you go on. And then you have those moments where you do feel completely alive, and you're just reminded of, this is amazing, this is exciting, this is fun, I love this. But sometimes we don't take stock of what those moments are, or pay attention to how to recognize what it is that makes us feel alive.

Corey Yeager:

Yeah. And I think that we more often than not don't pay attention, I don't think it's sometimes we don't, I think more often than not we don't pay attention to it, because there's no one that slowed things down for us to said, "Hey, make sure you're paying attention to these things." No one really teaches us that, and if we don't discover it on our own how will we find it? So I think this is the important piece, and as a therapist I love therapy, and I think people should engage in therapy, but I also believe that

therapy happens between two friends that there's no license that is between either of them, but it's therapeutic when they come together and have discussions, and talk with one another. That's therapy, I believe, especially coming from the African American community where we are taught you don't go to therapy, you don't tell people your stuff. But that means we're engaging with our friends.

What my dissertation work was about, is in the African American community we don't really seek therapy, but that doesn't mean we don't have struggles and problems. So then what are we doing with those struggles? Well, we're turning to friends, we're turning to our barbers at the barbershop to get this stuff out. So realizing the importance of that engagement, getting that stuff out. And what we also realized therapeutically is the job of a therapist is not to fix anyone's issue or change anyone, it's really just to be curious with you, and then you do whatever you want with that.

Amy Morin:

Exactly, we're not advice columnists, we don't tell you, "Go out and try this week." This is what you should do, or how to handle this problem, we ask a lot of questions to help you come up with a solution to your own problem. I don't know, you're the expert in your own life.

Corey Yeager:

That's a hundred percent right, yeah.

Amy Morin:

How about this one? I was super intrigued by this one, what can you do in 23 seconds?

Corey Yeager:

So this came from some work I was doing in the NBA, so I watched players, just observing, I'm always around and watching players. And I started seeing when players get fouled, and they're going to shoot free throws, there's some time in between the time the foul occurs and the time they shoot the free throw.

So I started watching just specifically for that timeframe, and it came out to be about 23 seconds. And the guys weren't doing anything, they were just kind of walking around. I'm like, "So they're not focused on anything." So I started talking to them about using that 23 seconds to slow your heart rate down, the chances that you make a free throw are higher if you are settled, calm, all those things. So then I started to transition that into... Like in our everyday life, those mundane moments are moments that we could probably really be utilizing in positive ways in our life. So that's where the concept of, what can you do in 23 seconds came from, is tuning into who we are, searching and recognizing those mundane moments that may not really mean anything to us on a day-to-day basis, and flipping that into spaces that we can utilize to better understand ourselves. So that's where that came from.

Amy Morin:

I love that idea. So what are some things that we could do in 23 seconds to make it a useful 23 seconds?

Corey Yeager:

So one of the things that I think is most important in that 23 seconds, mundane time, is focusing on our breathing. Everyone talks about this, "Oh, your breathing." But what we know is that if I have any propensity to have depressive thoughts, any propensity to have anxious thoughts, that if I focus on my breathing, it pulls me away from both of those, and it forces me into the current moment. Which is really what we want to do, because if I'm in the current moment, if I'm focus on my breathing, there's no space to be worried about what happened to me, there's no space to be worried about what's going to happen, is that I get to settle myself in that focused breathing space. So I think even though we may hear people talk about focus on your breathing and pay attention, if it doesn't seed deeply with people those are just words. So that is one thing that we can do on a consistent basis in those mundane times and spaces that can benefit us.

Amy Morin:

I like that idea. Time is really weird, sometimes it feels like 23 seconds is nothing, but if we were to have 23 seconds of silence it could feel like the longest 23 seconds of your

life. So if I had six minutes between two meetings, I might be like, "Well, there's six minutes, I don't really have time to do anything." So I could easily waste it just scrolling through something on my phone.

But I like to run every day, and I try to run a mile in six minutes, that's the longest six minutes of my entire day. And it seems like sometimes I could look down at my phone while I'm running and I think I have 30 seconds left, I can't run for 30 more seconds, that's a lifetime. But if I had 30 seconds during the day in between something, I'd be like, "I don't have time to do anything, 30 seconds isn't enough time." So if we just took advantage of those little slivers of time that we had, and said, "I'm going to do something with it." Even if it's just to focus on something as simple as breathing, or maybe you practice gratitude for two seconds, could make a huge difference over the course of a day, couldn't it?

Corey Yeager:

A hundred percent, it could make a huge difference. And the key is, do we have to fill in every second? No, we don't have to fill in every second. There's going to be moments of, I'm just going to scroll through my phone right now for two minutes, because that's what I want to do right now. But if we find a few of those moments, in which we say, "Hey, I'm going to be intentional about the next six minutes, or this next two minutes, and normally I wouldn't be." So you can feel much better about it when you say, "Normally I wouldn't be doing this, and be intentional, but I'm going to." Then all of a sudden we get a positive vibe, just from that, "I did something with that two minutes that I normally wouldn't. I like that, I might have to do that more often." So you don't have to fill in every moment, but some of them.

Amy Morin:

And that's a good point, because I don't think the goal in life should be to be as productive as possible every waking second of every day. And there's a lot of pressure to do that, how much did you get done today? But is that really the goal in the end, is to say, "I accomplished more than everybody else, or I accomplished this much stuff in one day." Maybe for some people it's important to accomplish a lot, but I don't know, at

the end of the life is that what you had hoped, is that you got everything on your to-do list done every single day of your life?

Corey Yeager:

And that's that competitive nature, the rugged individualism that we live by, and have taught from early on that I think is important. I wouldn't diminish that, but it may not be the leading guiding force that we want all the time. My wife said to me the other day, it was her birthday, I said, "Honey, I don't know what the heck to get you for your birthday." She said, "I have something." Because our sons are playing college football. And she said, "Well you're going to be traveling a lot, I want to fly to every game that our sons are playing in, and not have you say, Honey, do you have to go to every game?" And then I said, "Well okay, if that's what you want." She said, "Yeah, because guess what? At the end of my life I won't be upset that I spent time to go to my son's games." I'm like, "That's a hundred percent right."

You can't argue. If you think about it, at the end of my life, will I be upset that I spent time with myself or with others that I love and care about? If the answer is no, I wouldn't be upset at that, go about getting at it.

Amy Morin:

Oh, that's a good way to look at it, I like that. Another question that I love from your book was to ask yourself, am I the same person from space to space? So we know a lot of times we'll be known at work maybe as the hard worker, but in your friend's circle you might be known as the funny one. Or your family knows you a certain way, because maybe they haven't spent a lot of time with you since you were younger, but maybe that's not who you are in your professional life. And a lot of people come into my therapy office, I'm sure they have yours too, where they ask that sort of question, "I don't even know who I am." And then sometimes it comes to a head on social media, where somebody says, "Well, I have to post something on social media, but who am I on social media? Because I have people from all walks of life who might tune in and see what I'm saying."

Corey Yeager:

Yes. So I take this space to space question, or statement, or consideration as an opportunity to do a little psycho ed around internal family systems. Schwartz's work of IFS, that we have a family of individuals inside of us, but what we always should be seeking to understand is who is at the core of Corey? Who is at the core, and is that person, that individual, is it in control of when other parts of Corey shows up? Or is it just willy-nilly parts of Corey shows up when they want to, and he doesn't really have any control? This is really what that question is asking about, at the core of who you are, that is what should show up in every space.

So as a therapist, the core of who I am, the value systems that I understand about myself will show up, that's who I am. When I go to hang out with the Pistons, the core of me will show up. Now I'll unleash different pieces of it everywhere I go, but that core has to be the mainstay. That's really what the question is about, is I can't really tell you if I'm the same place to place if I'm not in tune with that core. I don't know, because I'm this over there, and this over here, and I don't really know who that core is. So that question is really about getting in tune with, who's the core of me? What are those elements that I say everywhere I go, "Those elements are going to show up." It's going to be a little different, but it's show up. So that's where that came from.

Amy Morin:

And it's okay for people to be a little bit different, you might speak to your grandmother slightly different than you do your college buddies. Or you talk to somebody that you know in your professional life, you might be a little different than you would if you would've gone to dinner with somebody from your personal life, right?

Corey Yeager:

That's right, a hundred percent, and that's okay. And actually not is that just okay, that's the way it should be, that I'm not going to be exactly the same person that you see in the therapy office as when I'm going out to dinner with my wife, because my wife will be very tired of it. And she always usually is like, "Can you please not be a therapist for the next two hours as we go to dinner? I don't want a therapist with me." So we need to be

able to shift that, I think that's critically important, but you can't really shift it if you don't have a hold of it and have a frame on it.

Amy Morin:

Because I hear a lot of people feel guilty about that, or they feel like, why am I like this? I should be the same in all situations. And we have these conversations often, when you show up for that job interview, you want to have one face on, and your best foot forward. Versus if you were to, again, show up with your friends to a barbecue on a Saturday, you're probably going to speak a little bit differently, you're going to act a little bit differently, dress differently.

Corey Yeager:

Yes. But that core should stay consistent throughout all of those spaces, I think that's to me the ultimate message in that question.

Amy Morin:

Right. As long as you know deep down who you are, and how you want to be in the world, you can answer that question. Then I think it becomes easier to say, "Okay, I'm going to be a little bit different in these different situations, because I'm going to do what's socially appropriate."

Corey Yeager:

I think that's right.

Amy Morin:

So how do you recommend people use your book? Do they answer one question a week, one a day? Do they just sit down and read it, skip around, what do you think's the best approach?

Corey Yeager:

I think that they can read it in whatever way is best fitting for them, it is a book that you can say, "I'm just going to open it up to a page and see what it tells me today." You

could start from the beginning and read through, you can use it almost as a little devotional. I think there's a ton of different ways, whatever calls you to that fashion, or that way of engaging it, I think is the best. So I would be one that would say, there's no right or wrong way to engage this book, it is the African proverb of, how do you eat an elephant? A bite at a time. Just take a bite, and you'll get through it. And it may take you a year to get through the book, it may take you a day to get through the book, neither one is right, neither one is wrong, they just are.

Amy Morin:

And how about asking ourselves these thought provoking questions? Do you feel like there's a right or a wrong way? Do we sit and think about it? Do you talk to somebody about it? Do you write down your answers? How do you really get to know yourself better?

Corey Yeager:

Well, I think there are a ton of different little exercises that you can play with throughout the book. But again, I don't think that there's one right or wrong way, for me, I read things like this book, and I'll sit with them individually. I'll say, "Okay, let me think through that first. What does that mean to me? Do I like that? Where do I stand with that?" And then once I come up with an idea, thought, about whatever I've read, I'll probably engage some folks in my life that I care about that know me, and I'll ask them, "So do you think I hate to win or I love to lose, which one? How do you see me?" So they can get me feedback, even though I already know what I feel the answer is, I want to get others feedback. So I think there's multiple ways in which you can engage the book, and and the understanding, whatever fits for you.

Amy Morin:

And I like that idea, bravely getting feedback from other people. Not always easy, but the way we see ourselves is often not the way other people see us. As a therapist, plenty of people coming into my office, and they'll say things like, "I'm a really honest person." And then their stories though don't line up with that idea, that I'm a really honest person. The way that we see ourselves in our stories, it's sometimes very

mismatched. And if you're brave enough to get feedback from somebody else who says, "Well, actually I see you in this light." It can shed a little bit more light onto perhaps how you're perceived by others.

Corey Yeager:

I will tell you, if someone came in my office and started off with saying, "I'm a very honest person." The very first thing I would think of is, you're probably not as honest as you're stating, because if you're really honest, you'll just know that, I don't have to tell you that. So if you lead with that, I'm going to say, "Okay, let's see how honest you are, we're going to find out here. Let's see if you're really honest or not." That's fun, I like that.

Amy Morin:

Right. And usually it starts out with a, "I'm a very honest person, but I had to cheat on my taxes last year." And it's usually the story of, "Here's the exception to the rule."

Corey Yeager:

Yes, here we go, we're going to give you both sides of this fence off the top. Yeah, that's good, it's funny, I like that.

Amy Morin:

So for somebody who says, "Okay, I just really want to get to know myself a little bit better." In addition to reading your book, what would be your one piece of advice?

Corey Yeager:

Get to know myself better, my one piece of advice would be take some time with yourself. One thing that we don't do a lot of is just taking time to be by ourselves in solitude. Being alone I think we just think as being lonely, but if I'm in solitude with myself, I'm going to get something out of this, I'm going to be curious with myself, I think that would be the one piece of advice. Take time to be with yourself, because you'll produce something. If you take time to be with yourself, and you start to be curious, you will produce questions and answers about yourself that you never had thought about.

So I think that would be the one piece of advice that I would give folks that want to get in tune or in touch with themselves, be alone, be by yourself, be in solitude with self.

Amy Morin:

I think so too. Without all the other outside influences of people telling you what to do, how to do it, or feeling like you have to please anybody, being by yourself you can learn a lot. Dr. Corey Yeager, thank you so much for being on The VeryWell Mind Podcast.

Corey Yeager:

Thanks for having me, it was a blast.

Amy Morin:

Welcome to The Therapist's Take! This is the part of the show where I'll give you my take on Dr. Yeager's strategies for developing self-awareness, and I'll share how you can apply them to your own life. Here are three of my favorite strategies that Dr. Yeager shared.

Number one: think about the root of the problem. Dr. Yeager likes metaphors and stories, and he is all about getting to the root of the problem. Not all therapists take that approach. Some of them prefer to help people change their behavior right now without spending a lot of time exploring the underlying reasons for their behavior. Some people prefer to go deeper, but other people just want to focus on the here and now. Let's say you struggle with confidence. One way to solve the problem could involve getting yourself out there and doing things that bolster your confidence today. You might also work on using more positive self-talk. Another approach though might be getting to the root of the problem which could involve exploring where your lack of self-confidence comes from. You might be able to trace it back to childhood.

You might see how certain incidents affected how you see yourself now and the choices that you made back then. Learning more about that could help you start to feel better. Dr. Yeager is a fan of looking at those underlying problems in the stories that we tell ourselves. So if you're finding that whatever you're attempting to do isn't working, you

might find it's helpful to dig a little deeper into the root of the problem. And a good way to do that might be by asking yourself some of the questions that Dr. Yeager suggests.

Number two: talk to your friends about deeper issues. You'll hear a lot of therapists say that friends aren't a substitute for a therapist. But Dr. Yeager makes it clear that talking to your friends can be quite therapeutic. You just have to be willing to talk about things on a different level than you might be used to.

You might find that you usually spend time catching up or talking about some fairly superficial things — as opposed to the real problems that you're having or the new things that you're uncovering about yourself. Having more meaningful conversations could do wonders for your mental health. It's something that we've talked about on the show many times before. How hard, though, it can be to open up if you're not used to doing it. But also how beneficial it can be. When you start acknowledging some of your struggles, other people might feel more comfortable getting real about their problems as well. And then you open the door to deeper connections with other people which could improve your psychological well-being. So you might start by talking about something you've learned about yourself based on one of Dr. Yeager's questions that you've answered. Or you might ask your friend one of the questions from the book and see how they'd answer. Or you might just open up about a struggle that you've been experiencing lately.

And number three: ask yourself meaningful questions. It's amazing how much time we spend thinking about things that won't really matter a week from now. Or sometimes we invest a lot of time into thinking about things that we have no control over. We tend to spend a lot less time thinking about the important things in our lives. And what could be more important than having a better understanding of yourself? Asking yourself some important questions can help you get to know yourself better. And what better way to discover what those questions are than to check out those that are recommended by a therapist? Get started by asking yourself a bit about what makes you happy now. Or what mistake have you learned the most from in your life? Spending a little time in solitude and having those conversations with yourself could go a long way toward helping you become the person you really want to be.

So those are three of Dr. Yeager's strategies that I highly recommend. Think about the root of the problem, talk to your friends about deeper issues, and ask yourself meaningful questions.

If you want to hear more about what Dr. Yeager has to say about self-awareness, check out his book, *How am I Doing? 40 Conversations to Have with Yourself*.

If you know someone who could benefit from learning about how to develop self-awareness, share this message with them, simply sharing a link to this episode could help someone feel better and grow stronger.

Do you want free access to my online course? It's called "10 Mental Strength Exercises That Will Help You Reach Your Greatest Potential." To get your free pass, all you have to do is leave us a review on Apple Podcasts or Spotify. Then, send us a screenshot of your review. Our email address is podcast@verywell.com. We'll reply with your all-access pass to the course.

Thank you for hanging out with me today, and for listening to *The Verywell Mind Podcast!* And as always, a big thank you to my show's producer (who is the only person I know who has the patience to read the owner's manual that can fix a washing machine), Nick Valentin.