

Welcome everyone. I'm so excited to have you here tonight. I'm Nora Shabazi. I am the founder of EBLI, Evidence-Based Literacy Instruction, which is a system of teacher training and student instruction to effectively and efficiently help learners of every age and every ability level reach their highest potential in reading, writing, and spelling.

And tonight's webinar is going to be a little bit of a different format than what I typically do. There isn't going to be any PowerPoint.

It's going to be more of an interview, and we have an amazing guest tonight, David Chalk.

Those of you who have seen the Truth About Reading teaser, Shannon will put that-- Shannon's going to be helping us out tonight with questions in the chat, as well as putting links in there for you, which we'll also share with the recording. But if you've seen the teaser, you have seen David, because he was so courageous and so vulnerable to agree to have all of his instruction taped with his learning to read and to spell and to write.

So, that is tremendously impressive.

And if you haven't seen it, be sure that you do that.

So, David is here tonight, and he is going to share his story with the goal of having

everyone who's here be able to really see the world from himself as a five-year-old, as a 10-year-old, as a teenager, as an adult, and what it's like to be immersed in a literate world, but not be literate yourself, and learning to read at 62 years old.

So again, more courage and vulnerability to share with you.

Now David's story is really very unusual, and atypical maybe.

Though I've taught cardiovascular surgeons and all kinds of successful, brilliant people like him that could not read or were struggling readers or subliterate. And I'm going to read a bio about David that I actually pulled off the internet that tells you some of the things that he did in his life up until the point, obviously, when he learned to read just back in May. So Dr. David Chalk.

As a serial entrepreneur, David has launched more than 20 companies in various fields: technology, education, construction, marketing, distribution, cybersecurity, smart homes, book publishing, business turnaround, manufacturing, and retail.

David is recognized as one of the world's most gifted minds.

He is responsible for having created the first open-line national radio show on the Chorus Radio Network for computer

education. In the mid-'90s, David turned around a \$150 million US retailer, Ballard Computer, from bankruptcy. Also in the mid-'90s, he substituted on speaking tours for Microsoft when Bill Gates was not available.

So by all of our-- anyone in society would say David is tremendously successful.

And again, he's going to tell that story some.

What we're going to do tonight is we're not going to talk about his learning to read or what we did with the instruction, that type of thing.

We actually, David and I, are going to be at the Plain Talk Literacy Conference in New Orleans in February, and Shannon will share the link with you

to that,

in case you may be able to or are interested in going to that absolutely amazing conference. So that's really not the point of today.

Today's point or tonight's point is for David to share his story to help you kind of walk along in his shoes so that

you can get an idea of what it feels like

when a child moves through and moves on through grades

and hasn't

been taught to read yet.

Also, before I turn it over to you David, I would like to ask all of you that are here, if you'll please share in the chat

where you're from, what brings you here, a little bit about yourself.

And as you go, you can either raise your hand with the raise your hand thing or you-- the virtual one, or you can put your questions in the chat and we will be sure to ask David those questions along the way and especially at the end that you are wondering about.

Okay? So David, are you ready to roll?

Thank you everyone for having me here.

It always feels strange when people want to hear my story, a life that I wanted out of. I can truly see that

possibly by getting a look through my eyes

at how I saw the world and how I see the world could

help

save the lives of many other people.

What I'm going to talk about tonight isn't a presentation.

I'm simply talking.

And with that, it will allow you to ask questions.

Maybe Nora, if some questions do come through,

and I'll-

Shannon will be doing that too. She's covering the questions.

Okay. There we go. Yep.

She'll be here. I'll be watching her also.

Shannon is a wonderful person. She spent time with me when I was working with

Nora. And

I just need to take a breath for a minute because this goes very deep.

I know you know what I did

in the past by hearing the biography that

Nora read about me,

but that's only one side of the coin.

There's another side,

and that side is my education and my life through the early
years of school.

The fact that I could be successful, I will explain how I did it

and how other people could do it,

but I only wish for people that that side of the coin that we call

success and money and wealth, of which, yes, I

did. I made millions of dollars in my 20s.

You don't have really anything unless you have both sides, which is the ability to
read.

And

I think that all people deserve both sides

of the coin to have it all, and that's why I agreed to do the

documentary

and why I agreed to be here tonight and also to be down in New Orleans.

So from

the first day of school,

if we're going to go back that far,

prior to me going into school, I remember life so well.

I was happy, fun-loving, telling jokes,

sort of

the person that all my relatives loved to be around, and my brother and my cousins. And I had the most positive outlook on life.

I started walking when I was, I think, eight or nine months old and speaking

just over a year. I was way ahead of my time on so many things.

And

to me, the world was just an amazing opportunity.

I learnt so much. By the time I was in

kindergarten and grade one, I knew so much about the world.

I just absorbed it like a sponge, and I was looking forward to school.

And I remember the very first day in grade one, because there wasn't really kindergarten where I was, and my mom walked me to the school and walked into the classroom.

And I remember looking up around the room at all these characters of animals and people, I guess D**k and Jane and A, B, C, D, E, F, G, all along the wall.

I have a vision in my head so clear of that because that was my world, these images and these letters.

And I remember because I was the last one in, the teacher asked me a couple questions right away about the alphabet and reading,

and

I froze

because

I didn't realize I couldn't read. But when they pointed to certain things, I didn't really understand it. And that was day one.

Twelve years later, on my graduation, I was called into the counselor's office

and told,

and

these are pretty well the exact words, "David,

people like you,"

remember, this is in the late '70s, so probably not as harsh anymore,

"people like you need to know something before they leave school,

that you will have very little opportunity in life,

and quite frankly,

people like you end up in jail or dead on the street."

I was mortified.

I had no idea why I was being told this, because through my

whole

schooling,

I tried probably harder than any kid in my grade.

Because from grade one on, my mother had

made an amazing agreement with me.

There was something I wanted more than anything.

In the '70s, it was a Stingray bike

with a banana seat and J bars.

And after the first couple reports came out and I got Ds and C

minuses and a few Fs,

my mom realized that learning was challenging, and she never ridiculed me

or

got down on me for it because she could see me trying to do my work and

trying to study and trying to get ahead.

So she put the goal that if you get a C, it

started C plus then it got back down to C, "If you ever get a C, we'll buy you that

bike." And at that time, that was like getting a Rolls Royce.

So I tell you that because it's important for you to understand that in

no way during school was I a disruptor, a problem maker.

I was a child who wanted to learn more than anything.

I wanted to be an aerospace engineer, an architect, or an airline

pilot. I don't know how I knew that so young, but I love design.

I love thinking outside of the box.

And

that wasn't what happened to me.

Within the first couple of years,

I was labeled, and

the only way I can say it is that this person sitting here

talking to you right now,

the real me

is the result of choices that people made

about what my life would be without giving me any opportunity

to speak for myself, without asking me ever did

I care or did I want to learn.

Because by the second or third grade, the way it worked,

we had a chair in the corner, the dunce corner,

and I was put there quite often.

We had a dumb row, and I was at the back of the dumb row.

There was two boards,

one for reading and one for spelling.

And there was a girl, her name was Debbie Linton. She was at the top.

Second one was John Swan. I could list all the names.

They're burned into my brain of all the children.

And at the very bottom was David Chalk,

the failure of the class because he can't read and he can't

spell.

One day,

in order to break me out of this

lack of willing to learn,

the teacher picked on me and handed me the Bible

and told me to go to the front of the class and read it.

I wish I could've died.

So

I went up there,

and I opened it.

Of all the books to read when you

aren't literate, the Bible. The halves, the thous, and the

therefores, and words that I couldn't even comprehend.

So I started reading the first sentence

at about one word a minute

trying to--

I couldn't sound words out because I didn't understand it.

I either knew the word or I didn't. So

some of them seemed like other words that I knew, so I would say it, and

all of a sudden the class started laughing, and all I remember

is laying in a pool of my own pee on the

floor after I fainted,

and the teacher over top of me telling me to get up,

and all the children laughing at me, and the teacher saying, "Get

up. You're going to the office."

And I remember one of the girls said, "We shouldn't be laughing at David."

And the teacher said, "No, it's okay. It's okay.

This will show him how silly it is to act like this

and not do what he's told to do and not read when he's told to read."

And I went to the office, and I got the strap.

Came back to the class

after standing in the hallway for an hour outside the door, put in the
corner with my back to the class.

They'd pretty well given up on me by grade three or grade four.

It never got any better.

I never gave up trying.

That bicycle, up until grade seven,
was the object of my desire.

I never got it.

And it wasn't my parents didn't want to give it to me.

I know my mom wanted to buy it for me. And I had a good childhood.

My mom was so caring and loving to me.

But

I didn't realize the English language is a code,
and I was taught from the day I walked in the classroom those
letters A, B, C, D, E, F, G, and the cat, the dog,
the elephant. That was reading and spelling.

It may sound crazy to you,
but it was only when I met

Nora that I found out there's 44 sounds, I believe, in the English language.

And when she first worked with me
and pointed to a letter,

I would say the letter of the alphabet,
and she would say, "No, what is the sound that makes?" And I'd go,
whether it was a D,
and I'd say D again, and she would, "No, /d/."
I go, "Oh,
that's interesting." I had no comprehension of
breaking words down into segments and not taking
them from memory, because everything I did was memorization.
So as I started to go through high school,
I actually read the dictionary to improve my
vocabulary and memorized words. I have
a fairly substantial vocabulary.
I can articulate what I want to say.
I've been a public speaker, a keynote speaker, and I can fool the
world
because I had to put up a front
that rather than have me read, if I projected my
voice and spoke out,
that people wouldn't ask me to read because I could always speak.
But going through high school,
I actually stopped speaking. I
became, I think, forget the word that Nora called it, but it
was a,

I became mute.

Elective mute, yeah.

Elective mute,

because

that was one way I could guarantee that I

wouldn't have to read

or go to the front of the class. I spoke at home, but not much.

I became very quiet.

I started to see all my dreams go out the window, even though right up through

high school, I took the hardest courses.

I took physics, mathematics, biology, chemistry,

literature. Oh my god. I don't know how I

sat through that. French.

Every possible thing to try and get my brain to start,

because I'd been told the whole time this is my problem.

"You don't want to learn." And I just thought, "Wow, life is sure hard because I

think what I'm doing is trying to learn, but I guess I'm just dumb."

In grade nine-- Sometimes I'm jumping around a little bit because this is very

emotional for me. In grade nine--

In grade eight, sorry,

I was told that I was going to be put in special reading, thinking, "Wow,

this is going to be great. It's going to really help me."

There was a

janitor's closet at the end of the hall,
and it had a box of orange and green and blue cards in it, I remember, and they
said, "Go through those
and
start reading them." So every day in the afternoon in grade eight, they'd put me in
this closet, and I had to look at these words which I didn't understand
or comprehend
because I spent all my brain trying to recall
names and words that there was no room for comprehension in anything,
and that's why I was failing.

Grade nine, they decided that putting me in the room wasn't going to do it.

In my particular school, it's not politically correct, I'll have to figure out how
to say it if I repeat this again, we had a
school that catered to, at the time, what were called mentally
r*****d children.

Many of these children could hardly speak.

Most couldn't talk. I wasn't speaking at the time, obviously
not reading, and I was transferred to this mentally
r*****d area of our school.

And from morning until afternoon,
that's how I was treated.

And I can't tell you what happened then.

If I thought life was bad before that, the anxiety,

the self-esteem, the bullying,

the abuse

The complete psychological damage I faced by the

kids that were outside in the hallway when I walked out of that
classroom each time.

I think a lot of kids quit school, but there was something in
me that my mom had taught me very early on to get out of the way of
myself.

She knew I wasn't

mentally r*****d.

She'd seen how creative I was when I was young.

She'd seen that I would come home crying, humiliated,
begging not to go to school, even though I still wanted that bike.

But she taught me to get out of my own way.

And what she meant was

that for most of us,

when life doesn't go the way we plan, we self-destruct.

If you have the courage not to self-destruct through
school,

when you graduate,

and I would say if. When you graduate,

you will see that the world is an amazing place full

of opportunities, and I believe you are going to do great things.

But then the next day, I would have to go back to that classroom and be bullied and humiliated.

As I said, on graduation,

that was what was told to me by my counselor.

I did go to grad and I did graduate because they decided to put me through, I think because they didn't want to leave me back behind in the school.

But in one of my classrooms, I was 17, and I remember

sitting at the back with me in the classroom was a

21-year-old man, from what I saw him to be,

Brian.

He had a beard, blonde hair.

He looked like, there's a rock star called Chad Kroger.

I remember him looking like that. And he was still in grade 12 at

21.

And he was probably the only other one in that class.

They didn't bully or humiliate him because he could've beaten the crap out of them.

But I think it had happened when he was younger, and he had given up, and they had given up on him.

At my graduation, I was unceremoniously dubbed the least likely to succeed in life.

If it wasn't already bad enough,

I remember just before

the end of school,

I found school didn't prepare me for anything in life.

There was a professional day where you could go to...

Professional people would come in, like architects,

engineers,

airline pilots. You get to pick three out of 20, and I picked

architect, engineer, and airline pilot.

And then there was--

No, there was a lot more, but

I was so wanting to succeed

that

I knew I couldn't be an airline pilot because I didn't want to talk anymore.

But I thought I'd go to it anyway.

And architect, well, I could draw and I could create, and I thought I

could be an architect without even going to school. Maybe I could do it that way.

I wanted to be an engineer to design rockets and spaceships.

But I knew I could never do it. I was now

believing that I was dumb, anxiety raging through my

body.

And we know anxiety is part of the fight or flight

autonomic system of the human being, which

pumps hormones into us of cortisol and

adrenaline, which has us shake and panic and lose our

breath.

So, in those latter years,

I was as nervous as all hell, thinking I was going to get beaten up.

And like they say, if you look like you're scared, that's when

people pick on you. I was mugged three times shortly

after high school,

probably because I gave off an air of worry and fear.

But I decided to do something.

And my mom said that the world is not hard to

survive in,

even if school wasn't a process

that you could handle.

"Why don't you do the things you want to do?" And I said,

"Become an airline pilot, become an architect or an engineer?" And she said,

"Yeah."

So, the very next day, I went out to the airport

in Vancouver, where I live,

and I took a test flight

on an airplane. And

because us labeled kids have different attributes, I

have spatial awareness, which is very good

and is probably the reason architect, engineer, pilot.

And I'd seen some movies on flying airplanes and

didn't even have VHS. These were reel-to-reel movies.

But I'd watch some in the libraries passing time, and I saw how you fly a plane and what you do, and it was a little Cessna.

So I said, "Is it okay if I take it off?" And he looked at me, and he goes, "Are you a pilot?" I go, "No." I go, "But I think I can do it."

And he goes, "Okay, I'm going to keep my hands nearby."

And

I hear the control tower talking to me, and I just wing it, and I go, "Okay, I'm ready to take off." Not quite the right language.

And I go out onto the runway and I take off, and right behind me comes a 747 landing.

And the

trainer with me, he's almost panicking, and I said, "It's okay, it's okay." And I'm flying the plane,

and I fly it for probably half an hour, and he tells me things I can do.

And he says, "I'm going to show you how you die in a plane." It's called a flat spin.

That means when the plane starts to go down, we all react and we pull back, which makes the plane go tighter and tighter into the ground, and that's why they never come out. What you have to do in it," and I said, "I know.

You have to push forward, right?" I said, "I saw it in a video." He goes, "You don't know how to fly." And I said, "No." I said, "Let me try it."

So we pull back on the plane, and it climbs up until it stalls, and it

noses down into the ground, and it's spiraling into the ground faster and faster and faster. He goes, "You going to take it out?" And I said, "Yep." And I pushed forward on the control and came out.

And he goes, "Go back to the airport." He was scared crapless.

We approached the airport. I said, "You okay if I land the plane?" I didn't say it that way. I was scared because I didn't have any confidence.

But what I did know

is that inside of me, I was able to do things.

And I actually landed the plane.

And he said, "In all my years of training people, I've never seen anything like this."

I said, "Well, I want to sign up."

I wrote the exam

on something that I was passionate about, and I didn't have someone teaching me, and I could see it because it was all science, and I could see and understand it. I got 100% on the exam.

I was absolutely boggled because even though I couldn't read the questions properly, I could understand what it was because I just had this feeling about flying.

I went on to become an airline pilot, but with my labeled mind being dyslexic.

I tell you these things because it has to cover off a little bit about what Nora

read about me.

And my mom said I didn't like flying. I was bored.

She said, "Well, why don't you try university?"

I said, "I can't

because I can't read the problems and the questions." She says, "Why don't you just try it anyway?"

So I went to the University of British Columbia, which is one of the largest in Canada,

and I wrote the entrance exam.

I probably should've been taken out on a stretcher.

I was so distraught, shaken.

I think I was probably sick for a couple of days after I did it.

And I said, "Well, I'm never doing that again.

I'm going to figure out what I'm going to do with my life, but I can't go to school."

About three months later, I got a letter in the mail

from the Dean of Engineering of UBC

telling me that I was given a full scholarship

because

I had solved a mathematics and physics problem that had never been solved in the entire history of the university.

And it took three months to tell me this

because they had to send my solution to

Stanford University and have the professors look at it to see if I had actually solved it, and I had.

Don't ask me how,

but there weren't any words. I got to solve it by drawing.

I got to solve it by thinking. I got to solve it with pictures and spatial orientation of 3D objects.

And I said, "Thank you, but no thanks,"

because there would be no help. I knew that I would fail every subject, and I would be humiliated.

And I told my mom, and she said, "David,

you can see already

that you had choices made for you about education, but you had no chance to do anything you wanted to do.

I have faith in you that you can do anything you want."

So I said, "I'm going to go into business."

And computers were just starting at that point.

And so I started figuring out how computers work, and I started building them and selling them.

And in that time, my 25th high school reunion comes up,

and it was an amalgamation of many grades coming together.

There were hundreds and hundreds of people there.

And I went,

and because I had become quite well-known, I had created a

television production company. I had my own TV show.

I was going to do a TV show with Martha Stewart.

I created a radio company and many, many other things.

I didn't do it because I needed to. It was just a natural progression for me,

so a lot of people knew me. And as I'm walking in,

nearly everyone would say, "Oh my God, you graduated with us?"

And as I went further and further in, people were going, "Oh my God, that's David

Choch. We went to school with him." And then the grades higher and lower than

me. And

near the end, that unceremonious thing of selecting me

as the least likely kid to

succeed, well, this wasn't a

school-mandated function. This was an

amalgamation of students that put it together because they were going to tear the

school down so they could break the

rules of the education system. And I was

awarded the most successful person to ever graduate from

that school in its 150-year history.

Did it make me feel good?

Nope.

Not at all. I was actually embarrassed

because the anxiety was raging in me.

Humiliation, self-worth. Now I had

imposter syndrome,

that everything I had done was fraudulent.

Not criminally fraudulent, but

I don't know how to read.

I can't spell, and I can hardly write. How could this be true?

There's something wrong with the world.

That I go into elementary school the most positive kid in the

world, and within one day I'm humiliated,

and I go through 12 years of hell, bullied, beaten up,

laughed at, ridiculed, to come out the other side

And create multimillion dollar companies to be

honored at the very school that destroyed me,

it couldn't change the past.

And that's what people do not understand.

That

my humiliation

for my whole life

is only overshadowed by one thing,

my internal rage for the education system.

Because there are administrators, and there are companies, and there are people,

and there are lobbyists all saying how people should be

taught. Except I'm the product of that.

I had my life destroyed, and no money can

ever make up for it.

What I wish

is that they would allow people like me

to address

the people

that decide on how children are going to be educated and how they're going to be labeled.

And remove the lobbyists, and remove the money,

remove the power, remove the egos, and for once

think about the children.

Because I went through life subliterate until 62 when I met

Nora.

I struggled in everything.

So many things that I don't even want to talk about it.

I started a company because I couldn't fill out a job application.

I didn't date for a long time

because I was worried that

I would have to read things like love notes,

get well cards, birthday cards.

It's ironic that about a week ago,

I went through a box in my closet that has lived there through various

moving

for

40 years

from the very first girlfriend I ever had.

In this box were probably 200 letters and cards and
notes and things that were stuck on my wall and under my
pillow and in my car.

And as I'm reading them,

I'd never read them before.

She would give them to me

and I would open it,

birthday card, and I would look and I would see the picture if it's
someone smiling or it's goofy or it's funny or it's serious, and I would
react based on that.

And usually her and everyone in my life after that would say, "Did you read it?"

Sometimes I closed it too quickly.

"Oh, no, I'm a quick reader."

But they were all in that box, and I went through them
and I felt terrible for that girl.

That all of that passion and energy and
love she put into those notes and I had never read them.
I have suffered in hell.

When people see my success and they read my resume,
and they think, "How can it be that
you're illiterate or subliterature?" Well, it's exactly what my

mom told me, "Get out of your own way, and life isn't hard."

The sad thing is for all the people that reading the way you're

taught works,

is that they're never driven like I was to succeed.

You see, the success I had, anyone could do if they had the

passion and the accountability and the focus that I had from trying

to make it through school. And don't think for one minute, "Oh, okay, maybe it's

good that he didn't learn to read because then he got passion and focus and he

became a millionaire." That's crap.

My life was hell.

One point I lost everything because I couldn't read contracts properly.

I went bankrupt.

You can win and you can lose, but the losing is much more painful,

and it had to do with the fact that I couldn't read.

To really let you know how serious it is,

I told you that self-esteem, anxiety,

depression,

horrific depression,

sometimes lasting for years,

took its toll on me two years ago.

It was about 9:00 at night. I was walking from the bathroom to my bedroom

and I collapsed on the floor.

I woke up about 20 minutes later because I happened to know it was

9:00 at the time.

And my phone was there, and I dialed 911.

Had no idea what was going on, and they take me to the hospital.

And

they said, "David,

people like you..." It was almost like, "What am I going to be told now?"

"... don't live through this. Your colon ruptured,

and you are completely sepsis, and you are as good as dead.

How you woke up from what happened, it never happens.

When you get a rupture like that and you drop to the floor, you die.

It wasn't your time to go."

So they operated on me,

and they weren't sure if I was going to make it at first.

I was in the hospital for a month and a half without food or

water.

I lost over 50 pounds,

and I was told

that it was one of the worst situations they had seen.

The only thing I can say is that when I was 13, my mom got cancer,

and it was terminal.

And she had a very optimistic outlook on life.

We were born in England and came to Canada,

and my father used to call us the dustbin man.

And dustbin in England is garbage, garbage collectors.

And he would call us simple

and stupid and dumb,

and my mother would protect us. But all through that, my brother has
the same thing.

All through that,

she would stay positive and optimistic.

And when she got diagnosed with cancer, and we were told it was terminal,
it happened very quickly. It was complete cancer all through her body.

And I remember going to the hospital and being told that she
will die,

and they

wanted to read her her last rites early

so that we didn't have to come back to the hospital.

I sat on the bed

with her.

I said,

"I'm not going to die

because I want to live."

And you can do that, because we

control

our lives and our bodies.

I was 13.

And as I told you, if you get out of your own way
and don't feel sorry for yourself,
you can do anything.

I don't know why I'm crying.

Because I was told by the doctors I had witnessed a miracle.

My mom didn't die.

She was riddled with cancer.

She lived 45 more years.

The one thing I've had all my life,
even though it's been hell,
is a positive outlook.

Even when I went through bankruptcy.

And I always said

that when I have children,

I will do anything to live,

and if anything bad ever happens to me,

I will fight it.

And I had two children.

And I didn't know that was happening, but somehow inside of me,
my brain
didn't want me to die.

And that's

how I had all the success in my life that you would call

success in a financial thing world.

Because it's not hard to succeed

when it's mind over matter.

What is hard to exceed

is an education system

that is known to be a failure,

is destined to destroy children.

I remember when I became very wealthy and I had large properties, and I would hire laborers to do things, and I would look at their resumes.

I couldn't read them, but I would just look.

I'd look at the odd thing and see all the spelling mistakes and the typos and go,

"Okay, you're hired."

I hired people in my company that failed high school.

I hired people in my company without post-secondary

education. And I went on to get, in Canada,

a nomination for the highest award in business, which is the Governor General's Award of Canada.

All of this from a person who is subliterare and cannot read.

And as I will continue to remind you, it's two sides of the same coin.

Except most children that are labeled never see the other

side, the success side. And it's only because I fought so

hard in school, and I didn't fight the people that were fighting me and

bullying me and putting me in the corner.

Because I didn't let it get to me, I got to see the other side of the coin.

And that flying and that engineering possibility and creating

multimillion-dollar companies

and

doing projects with Bill Gates, I tell you

that any child that is labeled could do that.

The ones that act out and start to become the problems in the classroom is because

they weren't taught like me to get out of their own way.

That's the only thing I had.

And you get to see the result.

Can you imagine this world

if all children

didn't go through life with a label?

Granted, there is a thing called dyslexia and

ADHD and autism and Asperger's, and I'm on

the spectrum with all of that.

But if there was a way of learning to read from kindergarten

and grade one and grade two,

that would have taught me how to segment reading and taught me a

code, not A, B, C, D, E, F, G

I don't know the life that was stolen from me.

Everything I have done

is a tip of the iceberg of what was possible.

Because while I was doing everything, I hated myself.

I hated the fact I couldn't read the information.

I hated the fact that the entire computer industry, I had to self-teach myself everything. I've only ever read probably five books in my entire life. I've never read contracts. I can't read them.

I pretend I do. Birthday cards, letters, as I told you, love letters, the internet.

I pretend I read everything, and I didn't.

But because I knew, and I found out, the world didn't hold you back once you got out of school, you could make it without reading, and that is sick

because everyone should be able to read.

And if they could,

the unlabeled children

would have wonderful lives,

and the labeled children might be the new leaders of the world

because they do possess certain gifts.

I know that.

I may never have got to experience them

if my life wasn't a living hell.

But it's interesting that Nora started it by reading my

successes, and one of the things she said,

"Dr.

David Chalk."

I never use it. She found it on the internet, one of the ones I probably

couldn't delete,

because I'm mortified that I was given a doctorate

degree in technology

because I discovered a technology against cybercrime

that can change the entire world,

and they said that anyone

that could do that

is magnitude beyond any program or

thesis or

doctorate degree that could be taken.

I was humiliated inside once again

because I didn't feel worthy. The one thing is,

my mom was there before she died.

And I remember the look on her face,

the smile,

nodding.

That I had survived a frigging hell of school,

had no choice, destroyed my life.

Listened to the one thing she said, "Get out of your way, and you will have

anything you want," and I did it.

And there I was, getting a doctorate degree from the very institution that destroyed me.

So I don't ever use it.

So I say to you,

stop this madness.

Most of the people out there like me will never speak up.

They will never do what I did on that documentary video.

And I'm hoping that it helps people, because when the people in my world and the business people I know

see what I look like, an adult that can't

read,

well, I'm prepared to deal with it.

And I did it

because that's how painful this is.

I was prepared to do a documentary that may end up on Netflix

and further humiliate myself

so that the education system

can see what I learned through Nora

to read in a very short amount of time could be done.

I never learned to read and I couldn't read, and I can now at 62.

And if the education system

would get out of their own way,
then we could change the world
one child at a time.

Thank you for listening.

David, can I ask you two questions
that they asked over here?

One of them is,
what made you decide
to learn to read? I can't find it.

Shannon, do you know where that question is?

Yep. Let me get it for you.

Thank you.

There are so many comments,

David, that I could... Okay. What made you reach out in
belief that you could learn how to read recently?

From Mary Ann.

I didn't.

It happened to me again because I had gotten out of my way one time
earlier in my life. Many years ago, there was a woman.

Her name at the time was Fran Thompson.

She's on here, David.

Fran?

Fran. Yeah.

Oh my God, she changed my life.

I owe all of this to her.

She was doing a documentary for her labeled children,

and she had heard that I was labeled.

They were young, I was an adult in business.

And she interviewed me, and she saw that I was gaining success,

but I couldn't read.

When the documentary was put together, it won awards, and I highly recommend,

I can't remember the name of it, I'm sorry.

And maybe, Fran, you could put it in, because I think everyone should watch that

documentary. It went on to win an international award

for one of the top documentaries in education.

But about

A year ago,

after my life had fallen apart with the stomach operation and everything, and

I had survived, and I was trying to think,

"What could I do in my life now?" And I thought, "Maybe I need to deal with

the fact that I can't read." And I tried to find this woman called Fran

Thompson,

and there was no way, until one day I phoned one

dyslexia-related association somewhere,

and the guy goes, "I know that person's name.

Give me a couple of days, and I will find her for you."

And she did.

And Fran came back into my life,

and she sat down with me

and said, "David,

I'm not an educator, but I will show you some of the basics of reading if you want to learn." And I couldn't print or write.

My writing was...

Actually, a person told me yesterday,

my God, they go,

"I can't believe how well you write.

It's absolutely beautiful writing."

Now, that's the first time in my life I have ever heard that, and that was thanks to Fran because she showed me how to write, and I practiced every day, and I still practice every day.

And she told me

that she knew a fellow,

John Corcoran.

One of the five books I read in my life,

"Teacher Who Couldn't Read," and I read it many years ago.

And she said, "I know John,

and I think you should talk to him." And she set up a meeting with me to talk with him. We talked on the phone, and he realized, I think, that my life paralleled his. And if you haven't read his book, you should. He has two.

His is quite different because for John,
he was a big, strong kid. I was a scrawny, weak kid, so he could defend
himself and protect himself, and he went the other way.
And he could fight for himself, so he wasn't harassed and tormented the
way I was, but he didn't learn to read.
He went on to university, made his way and became a teacher,
and finally admitted he couldn't read. And the story's absolutely amazing.
And when I talked to John, it was like talking
to the Pope if you're religious. This was the man that had me
realize that I'm not the only one in the world many years
before. And he said he knew a woman
in Michigan,
and it's the middle of COVID, and there's no travel, but if you can find a way to
get there,
she will teach you to read. So I talked to Fran, and
she said, "By the way, they're doing a documentary on reading and this
program.
Would you be willing to be in it?"
And it wasn't that I
would or wouldn't be in it because inside of me, I knew that
I'd come to this realization that if I'm going to learn to read, I have to tell the
world about it. And lo and behold, the very thing that I'm
introduced to is a person who can teach me to read.

Norah, coming from the most famous person in the world who couldn't read,
introduced to me by the person in my life that let me understand dyslexia.

And it all comes around to me making it there during the middle of
COVID.

I got there.

I was tested.

It was terrible in my mind.

And I went through the program with her,
and our project was to read part of John's book, which was
amazing.

And I started reading the book out loud to her,
and I almost cried
because something happened.

I said to her,

"Is this what reading is?"

Because I'm actually knowing what I'm reading.

Everything I ever read in my life was recalling words,
like chunks. I had no capacity to understand the
order. I read one sentence five times before I would even know what it meant, and
then I just kind of guessed. And on that day, in reading with Norah, for
the first time in my life,

I was reading a book,

John's book, and I understood it

as if it was a movie. And I said,

"If this is reading, it's absolutely amazing.

I have never experienced it."

That was very cool too, because before he said, "I have no idea why anybody would like to read. Why would they like to read?

I don't get it."

No. I couldn't understand it because all the girls loved to read, so I knew that they would never like me.

That's part of the reason it was very difficult for me early on because

Debbie Lento was at the top of the list, and it went John Swan, and then about nine girls,

and then me at the bottom all the time.

I got out of my own way.

There's a question here, David. Can you hear me?

Somebody said something about my mic. Can you hear me okay?

Okay.

How do you plan to use your new superpower of read-- oh, can I show you guys something real quick now that I'm...

Also, what David really said is like, "Yes, I want to read, but I really want to spell because I can't stand, I have all these emails I need to write, and I misspell everything, and I don't try to spell and I use the text stuff." So on his last day,

I said, "I'm going to go back and grab some coffee, and I want you to write to me

what is it from your experience of us." And every minute of his instruction was filmed, by the way, by the documentary crew or by David's own stuff that he brought. But I keep this on my desk. This is what he wrote to me. First thing he's ever really written. Can I read it to you guys?

Sure.

Is that okay, David, if I read it? Okay.

"Dear Norah, a profound experience like nothing I've encountered before has occurred over the prior six..." Well, days.

"I'm actually at a loss for words as I write this down.

The emotion I am feeling has gripped me far more than I would have ever believed possible. I am elated with the outcome and look forward with excitement to the future, knowing possibility has surfaced within me to a point of jubilation. Thank you from my core, David." Isn't that awesome?

So this, I don't know if I can slack it or whatever, but nobody's erased any of it, so it's still

I keep it.

Hey, Norm

My emails and texts are one and two words long.

I write longer now, but my entire life, that was it.

John, did you have a question?

Oh, John. Hi.

John Parker, by the way.

I wanted to say something

after listening to it, and I've been watching the faces of teachers

who obviously care,

and they're here to listen to this story.

And I have had an opportunity

to tell my story and

do

a lot of healing and forgiving. And I know

David's heart,

and he might have ruffled some feathers today because he was so

courageous and trustworthy

today to tell you

how he felt.

And

one of the things that as I recovered and

shared, I learned to read at the age of 48 and shared my story

with the world. And one of the things that I think that really

is a true statement, I see it in David, I

came up with it because I felt it myself, that adults

that can't read, we're suspended in our childhood

emotionally, psychologically, spiritually, intellectually,

and academically, certainly. And I think one of the things

when I was interviewed by Oprah, she asked me what the difference was,
and being able to read and
not being able to read. And I said, and I don't know where it came from, but it
came from a place in me, and I said, "It filled a big
hole in my soul."

And I think
that's what reading
can do, and that's what it's done for David and I.
Filled a big hole
in our souls and all
those men and women that are locked up in prisons with
those holes in their souls because they can't read and
write. And I think we've underestimated
the emotional impact that this
has and carries through our whole life.
And we know there's little boys and girls
like David and I in school right now,
and this is an old story that's still repeating itself.

And
I just know
you
have good hearts and good wills here as you listen to this
story. And I just

greatly appreciate David for telling it and telling it in
its rawest form and
the many times as he says it and keeps talking about it, he's going to
smooth out the edges there because one of the things that I
did was I can remember speaking because people
ask me why I was so angry.

I really do forgive myself. I
finally forgive myself for my sins and my crimes and my
trespasses against the literate world, as I called people.

I lived in another world. I was a native alien.

I lived outside of this world.

And

I'm

really proud of you, Dave.

Thank you, John.

And we have more work, and one of the things I want to
see David do,

David and I are fellow travelers, and we told each other our stories.

I didn't hear what you heard. This is the first time I heard
that whole version. And-

I don't tell it to many people, believe me.

Yeah. And I

think

I want to

laugh more with David. I want it to get to the place where we

can laugh more. And

we are survivors. We're all survivors.

And you good teachers are also. We're here to learn,

and

thank you for being here for David.

Yeah.

David, there's a question here I'm going to ask you.

I know it's been a long time ago. This is from Lisa, who's in Malaysia, actually.

Did you ever

find the little girl who

stood up for you in grade school or encounter the teacher?

Were they at your reunion, either of them?

Mm-hmm. Both of them.

Really?

Yeah.

How'd that go?

The little girl, I thanked her,

and

it wasn't the teacher. It was the counselor.

I gave him a get out of jail free card.

Mm.

I didn't say anything. I just looked, and I wondered how many
lives he destroyed.

I was fortunate that I escaped
what he did to me, thinking probably in his best interest
that scaring me straight, maybe.

But he didn't know me,
and I think as a counselor, he should've taken that time.

I didn't have bad teachers.

I had a few.

The human condition has people across a
wide spectrum. Of course, there are going to be teachers that even
abuse children, and we've seen it, and that's horrific.

But the teachers,
90% of them tried to help me,
even the ones that put me in the room. They were told I had to go in the room.

The ones that put me into that class were told I had to be put in the class.

I got pneumonia when I was in grade three, and I was away
from school for two months. Should've failed. But I had a teacher, Mrs.

James,
that came to my house every day after school

And gave me the homework to my mom, and she would tell me what they did,
and I passed grade three.

And that was when the Brown D**k and Jane reader was there,

and I remember doing it at home while I had pneumonia, because that's how committed I was not to fail a grade.

I won't say the little girl's name, but

the person who did that to me, his name was Mr. Heatherington.

Shannon, do we have any other questions that I have missed?

Just that one about the superpower that you started to-

Oh, yes

... ask and then he never

Yeah, how are you going to use your superpower? That's right.

Sorry, then I interrupted and had to show off your writing, so yes.

Right. That's a good question.

It's a relative thing.

Compared to what?

Superpower

compared to a fellow person who can't read?

Yeah, it's pretty amazing.

But I would give it to that person

if they could have the opportunity to experience what I experienced when I learned to read.

Can you speak to your anxiety too, David?

The difference in your anxiety once you could read and spell

and that, because that was really dramatic, and I know that we dealt a lot

with that. So if you would speak to that, I think that would be helpful.

That's a good question.

I didn't tell you, I was in 30 years of therapy.

Thirty years,

and I've had many over the years, and they helped me through some terrible situations in my life.

But

no anxiety.

I'll tell you how far away it is from anxiety.

The bankruptcy occurred 10 years ago, and I pretty well gave up on life until Fran came along and got me on this path, and in December

31st of 2020, in the middle of COVID, I made a list for 2021

that this was now going to be the year that I came back.

And I set some very substantial goals,

like starting new companies. I started two.

Hadn't done one in 10 years.

And I would say by December 31st,

2021,

I will have accomplished everything I put on that list.

That's what's possible.

That's amazing.

The craziness

that

David and I have experienced is that the only

cure for this craziness is literacy.

So teach us how to read, teach us all how to read, and we

won't be so crazy.

And we won't have so many crazy people

out there. It's a traumatic thing, and it's a

train load of stuff. But you know what?

You guys are going to deliver the cure.

The cure for illiteracy and subliteracy

is literacy. Reading and writing and spelling.

That's what the cure is, and that's what's the exciting, timely

part of our documentary now. If we've done anything

correct in the last 25 years is the research.

We have the research now. We have the evidence.

We know how to teach little boys and little

girls like David and I how to read. And I'll be

quiet, but I got to say hello to Fran.

And she's a dear friend of mine, too.

We go back a while, and she's got a beautiful

heart.

Mm-hmm.

Yeah. Thanks, Fran, for making all this possible.

Shannon, we have one more question shared.

"I'm very interested in tutoring subliterate adults in both a business and as a volunteer for those who can't afford.

I want to know how can I get subliterate adult students?

How do I get adult students to find me? Or how do I find them?

Maybe that sounds like a funny question, but I'm genuinely curious."

How does she find people to help? That's a great question, actually.

I know.

It's amazing. Yep. And I'm going to give a really bold answer to it.

That until

we start to see changes in the education system that get reported on changing the way we teach people to read, and possibly this woman knows how to do it, but people like us do not come out of hiding.

John did, I did, and maybe one or two others will.

But our life has been bad enough already.

The last thing we want is the feeling that we're going to be laughed at by someone else.

So we don't do it.

I commend the woman for wanting to do this, and through social media, through friends, through basically flushing people out, it might be possible.

But I'm hoping, even though I'm not part of the documentary, I'm in the documentary, that when this documentary comes out next year, people will have the courage to rise up and seek help.

And then it will be a wonderful time for her to enjoy teaching those people.

But you can't always get to there from here.

There's a path, and it's opening up thanks to John and Nora and other people involved in that documentary, and I'm proud to be part of it.

But until we have a life-changing event, an epiphany, people like me are not going to look for this unless we are guided there by someone like Fran or John.

And that doesn't happen for many people.

David, that has been my experience.

I've taught many adults, but almost all of them have come to us from other people who They don't think that they're capable of learning to read, so why set myself up for another failure?

But these other people who also thought, like you, that you weren't capable of learning to read, and then you learned to read, it's that word of mouth piece, but the PTSD is too severe for adults, for them to allow themselves to be

vulnerable enough to put themselves out there when they don't know
if maybe this will or maybe this won't, or maybe it'll take years and years and
years, and it'll be more like a little bit of help or it won't.

And

I always say, and John and I have had this conversation probably 1,000 times, I
would imagine, that if we do not look at, for
adults, and I'd say 25 and older, if we don't look at the
emotional trauma that these adults have
experienced and address that in the reading instruction,
because what happens is, "I can't read.

I'm not able to read. I'm too dumb to read. I'm broken.

Something's wrong with my brain," whatever it may be, and then they actually learn
to read, that in itself is a jolt. And

I know you can relate to that, too. It's like, wait a minute.

This really can happen. So what does that mean for my life now?

What if my wife does all the bills and all of this? How does that change?

Do I have to get a different job?

I think that the emotional trauma and that not being
addressed, if that's not addressed with adult literacy instruction,
then look at David, you and I, how much of our time we
dealt with that emotional trauma along the way
and the releasing of that. It's
monumental, and I think that any adult literacy

focus to really be effective really has to have that arm of it, too. And also, you have to show unequivocally that what you're going to do is going to be different than what has already been done.

Yes, and not to interrupt you, Nora, but it's so important is if they already tried to teach me once to read, and it was absolutely impossible, and I felt humiliated, why would I go put myself through that again?

And that's why I said there has to be an epiphany.

People have to see some results, and then they will come forward.

And just one other thing that Nora said that I didn't even touch on, the PTSD.

That's what the 30 years

of therapy were for

because I was rated as someone that had been to war.

In fact, one of the companies I started was to help people

with PTSD by using compression

therapy,

a special vest you can wear that compresses you like a mother's hug,

because a mother's hug is known to take you out of fight or flight.

The amygdala gland stops releasing cortisol and adrenaline

and puts out oxytocin when you are hugged, and that's why when we are

in distress, we say, "I need a hug." We don't even know why we need it, but we

need it. So I created a company that puts young children or people with PTSD or labeled children that are under stress of cortisol at ease by giving them a permanent hug.

That's awesome. And I see here, will this be access to the recording?

Everyone who, all of you here and everybody else, the hundreds of other people who signed up for this

webinar, will get the link to the recording, and it will also be on our ebli.com webinar page forever.

So you go on there, and anybody who wants to see this can sign up there.

You can share it with everybody. We hope that you will share it with everybody all over the place.

I can deal with it.

Yes, and the documentary, I know Shannon has put some links if you're interested in the documentary and learning more about that. TheTruthAboutReading.com.

It's still under production.

It is

going to be finished in the fall of 2022,

and we're very excited about that.

We're still working on fundraising so that we can get to all of the people who we hope to be interviewing. We're about a third to maybe a little bit more than that through interviewing all of the people. So that is still under

production. And David and I are very excited about going to Plain Talk in New Orleans. Plain Talk is like this premier literacy conference, and we're just really honored to be able to go and share about his experience there.

So people come there also from all over the world.

So

we are all very intent, John and David and me and everybody involved in this documentary.

I see Julie's on here, has been interviewed, and Shannon was in it with a student. It's not about any, and not about EBLI or any specific program whatsoever.

It's about

reading instruction that's based on what the research says you need to do to teach anybody to read to their highest potential, and how do we expand that out so it's happening in colleges, so that it's happening in schools, so it's happening in kindergarten and first and second grade, so that we don't have the Davids and Johns at 48 and 62,

because if they could learn how to read at 48 and 62, they could've learned how to read at five and six years old. So it's their instruction that they didn't get was why they couldn't read, not because they couldn't learn to read. So that's really important, too.

So this documentary, we all have tremendously high hopes for, to really change the

whole landscape of

and accelerate this path toward high-level literacy for all.

And we know that it's going to happen, too.

Every day is a surprise party because the unfolding of it is very exciting and interesting. But we have tremendous faith, and we know it's going as it should be, and it's going to be phenomenal.

So anything else you would like to say, David?

Thank you for listening.

Thank you for sharing. All right. Thank you all for joining us and for listening. And again, David, I love you.

Thank you for sharing your story.

Thank you, Nora, and everyone, and all the other people that are in that documentary. As I said, it's not about me.

I'm just somebody who was willing to show what can happen and how much better life can be.