

# THE JORDAN HARBINGER SHOW

## Worksheet for Shane Snow | How to Work Together Without Falling Apart (Episode 51)

As the old adage goes: "If you want something done right, do it yourself." But what if working with others isn't really the problem -- what if the way we've been doing teamwork has been wrong all along?

[Dream Teams: Working Together Without Falling Apart](#) author Shane Snow joins us for [episode 51](#) to discuss why good teamwork isn't always intuitive and what we can do to work well with others for our best results.

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## The Case Against Brainstorming in Groups

When we don't know how to leverage teamwork properly, we really might be better off trying to accomplish something alone. As Shane once heard a professor say, "As surely as cigarettes lead to cancer, brainstorming in groups leads to not as good ideas." There are studies that show we tend to contribute less when we are together compared to when we're alone -- but some members will skew to a higher level of contribution while others will skew to the lowest, and still others will find it difficult to get their point across to a large group, rendering their contribution stifled in spite of attempted connection.

**When contributing to a group effort, how do you tend to skew? How might you better ensure your voice is heard or your weight is pulled?**

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## Fear of Contribution

"The cliché of 'two heads are better than one' just isn't true," says Shane, "unless those heads are different. And unless those heads are fully bringing their different ways of thinking to the table -- that's the only way that two heads can be better than one."

As a throwback to our tribal days -- when the threat of being thrown out of the group for doing or saying something stupid held some very real and dire consequences -- we will often hold back our contribution or contribute only in subtle ways when we often have so much more to give.

**In a group situation, have you noticed that you do this? What might you do to contribute from a place of problem solving rather than fear?**

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## Developing Cognitive Flexibility

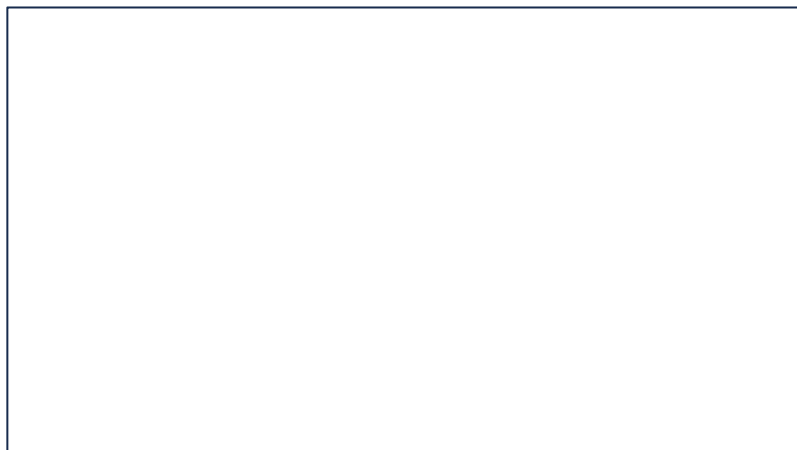
If we can step back and let go of our evolutionary human tendency to fear ejection from a group, Shane says we can develop cognitive flexibility to become better problem solvers not only on our own, but in a way that helps rather than hinders our role in a group.

Shane says the easiest way to do this is to work with -- or learn from -- people who are extremely different from us and to actively be curious about what they do. But asking ourselves questions that kick us out of our normal way of looking at or solving a problem is another way to flex our cognition and kick start our creativity. Creativity is not simply creating something from nothing. Creativity is about making connections between things in our brains that have not been connected before. If we are really well read or learn a lot of things across a lot of different industries, or learn from a lot of different people, we accumulate a bank of knowledge that helps us connect a lot of dots.

**In what ways do you find yourself connecting these dots? What sources can you identify to help you connect them in unique ways?**

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## Avoiding Cognitive Entrenchment

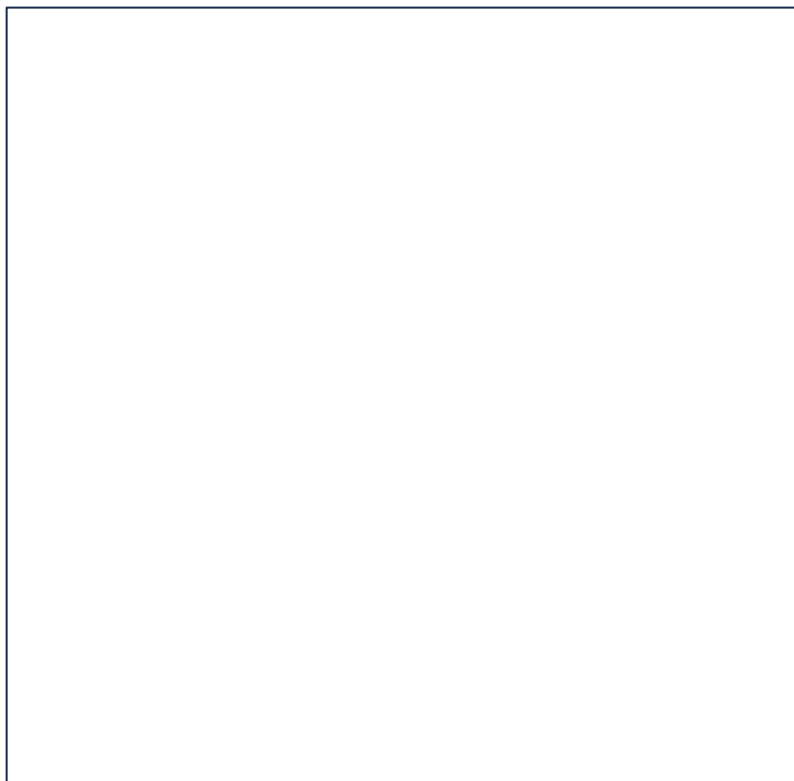
Cognitive entrenchment is the opposite of cognitive flexibility. It happens when we succeed at something and no longer consider other ways to attack a problem -- even though it might result in a better, more efficient solution.

One of Shane's favorite ways of trying to break away from cognitive entrenchment is by considering how someone from one field might approach a solution or answer a question related to a completely different field. For instance, how might a ballerina build a better shower? How would a librarian landscape a yard?

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**Consider a recent challenge you've faced in your line of work. Did you handle it in a way that connects disparate dots and suggests you're cognitively flexible, or did you solve it in the same way you have in the past -- suggesting you might be cognitively entrenched? Try to imagine how someone in another field might take on this challenge.**

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to write their response to the prompt above.

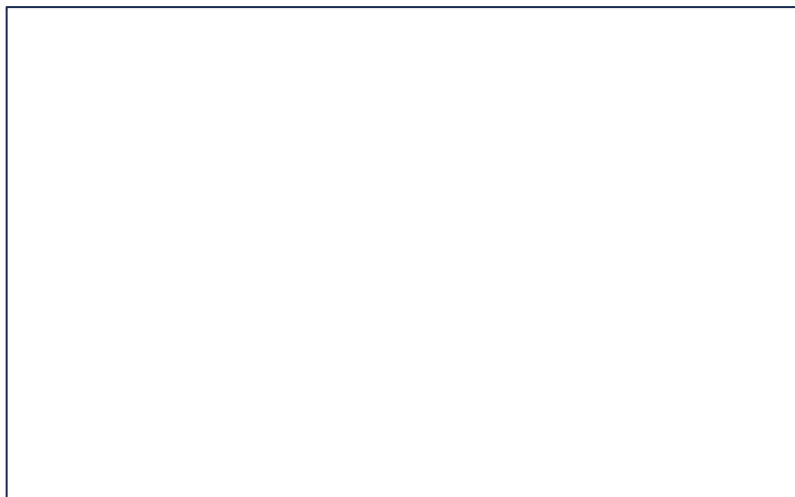
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## Learning New Skills

Jordan mentions that coaching has been most effective for him when he's trying to learn a new skill. The next best way is by reading books about everything -- which provides him with that bank of disparate knowledge that helps him connect dots quickly.

**Have you ever hired a [coach](#) or immersed yourself in [books](#) to learn a new skill? Have you found yourself connecting the dots from this newly learned skill set to seemingly unrelated information?**



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## Is Television Good for Us?

Recent neuroscience suggests that if we watch about two to eight hours of fictional television per week, we tend to rank higher for keeping an open mind. The theory is that we are learning about and making connections with people who are not like us; as we empathize with these characters, our brains produce oxytocin, a neurotransmitter associated with empathy.

**Think of a fictional story -- from a movie or television series -- that has had an impact on you. Was it about someone who is like you? Not like you? What emotions did the story cause you to feel? How might you use stories to help others gain a better understanding of what you're trying to convey when there may be differences between you?**



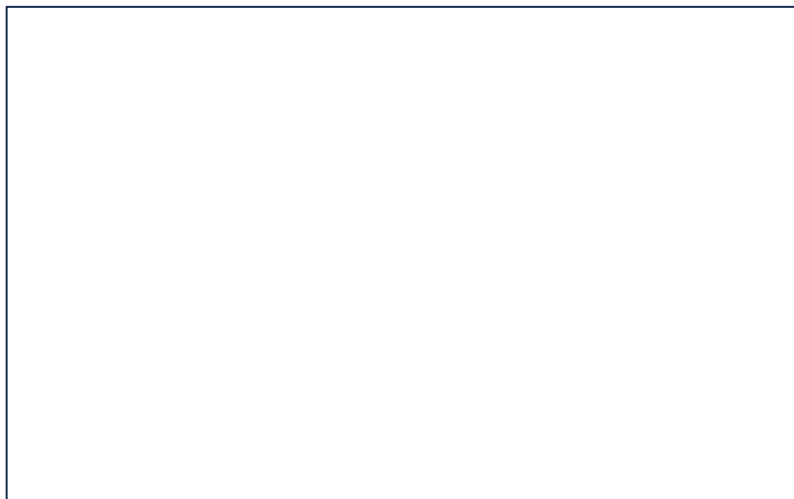
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## Cognitive Friction

Research suggests it's not how well we get along with people within a group that spurs progress, but how well we oppose and fight with people in the group -- in the right way. Really productive teams don't shy away from conflict.

**When you encounter conflict in your life, do you find that you embrace it, or do you turn from it? The next time you are faced with conflict, particularly in a group, what deliberate action will you take to achieve the most productive outcome?**



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## Intellectual Humility

Are you able to have a debate with someone over an issue without it becoming personal and shutting down? Shane and his father don't agree on politics, but they understand how to have healthy discourse by way of intellectual humility -- what Shane considers the missing virtue that can change everything about the way we interact and work.

It includes having respect for other people's viewpoints, not being intellectually overconfident, separating ego from intellect, and being able to revise one's own viewpoints even when it's tough to do so.

**Make sure to [take Shane's Intellectual Humility/Open-Mindedness assessment here](#), and check out his [Lateral Thinking workbook for developing cognitive flexibility here](#).**

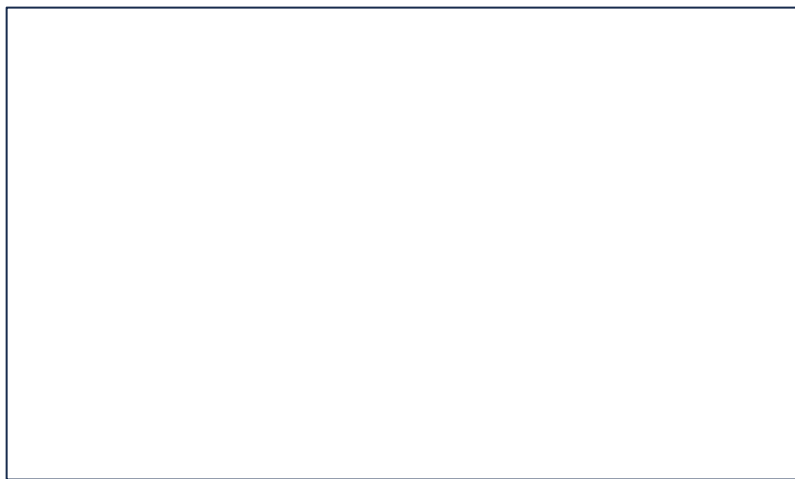
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## **Ben Franklin Could Be Wrong, But...**

Benjamin Franklin had a higher intellect than many of his contemporaries, but he also tried to observe intellectual humility. When he was about to express a strong opinion or debate someone, he would open the conversation with, "I could be wrong, but here's what I think."

**Would you feel more comfortable about challenging someone who addressed you in this way in a group situation? Why or why not? Can you think of ways you might use it to be less intimidating if you have a habit of coming on too strong to would-be opponents?**



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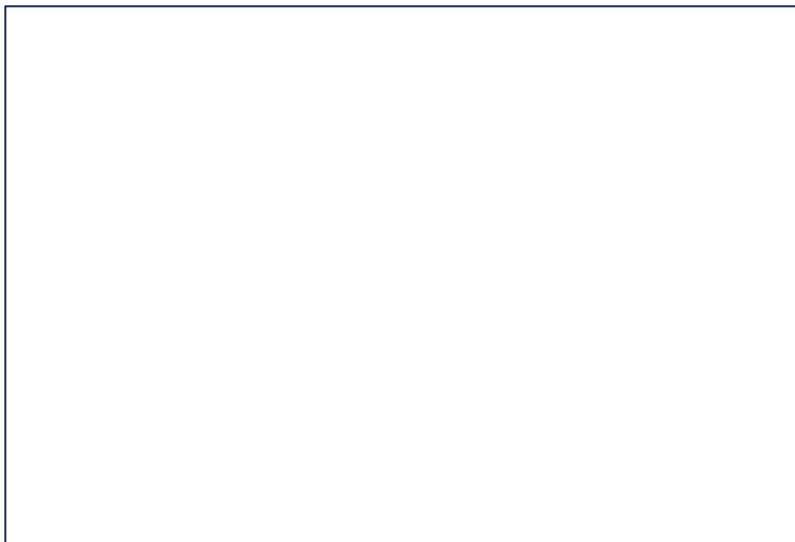
## Others Help Us When We Can't Help Ourselves

It is often easy to talk about things much more than it is to experience them in your own life. Shane shares a bit of vulnerability when he was a high point in his career with his business, had a book launch, and was rubbing shoulders with some VIPs at an event. However, when he left the event late into the night, he realized that he didn't even have a place to stay, and essentially hit a breaking point. He wanted to avoid people and handle it on his own. It all came back around when he realized that it was the help of others, collectively greater than himself, that really helped him out of this dark time in his life and put him back together. In the end, he realized that the most difficult things we can experience are best overcome with the help of others.

**When you have felt a bit lost or alone, did you feel like you could take it on by yourself? How did you get through it? Maybe you're experiencing this right now but have yet to express to those who know you what you're going through. In what ways could you see that those around you could collectively help you with challenges you may be facing?**

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## Brainstorming That Works

In a group setting (as we discussed above), most brainstorming sessions don't really work all that well. So Shane recommends doing it on your own (and if you're worried about being kicked out of your group of one, you may have some other issues to address).

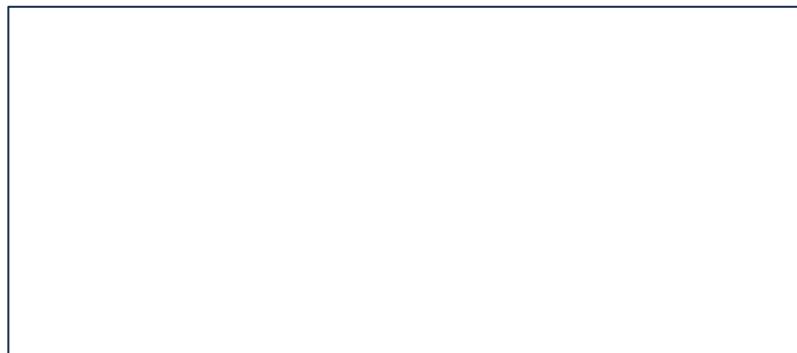
Head someplace with a heightened sense of distraction, like a coffee shop. Shane reasons that if your brain has small points of distraction, it will make connections better.

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Then, Shane says to come up with an insane idea or two. Ridiculous ideas that would never work together, you won't use, because they are too crazy -- like a heavy metal coffee shop that serves knives instead of beer. What this will do is set a boundary of where this brainstorming session can go and anything that is just shy of that, Shane says, is now something you could actually consider because you've already thought of the worst.

**Give it a try! Next time you need to generate some solid ideas, think of an environment you can put yourself into with a heightened level of distraction. Now, go there and have your brainstorming session. Did it work? Did you come up with some wild and crazy ideas first, and then some realistic ideas that you can legitimately consider?**



*Full show notes and resources for this episode [can be found here](#).*

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## About



Join Jordan Harbinger (critically acclaimed host, formerly of The Art of Charm) as we get deep into the untapped wisdom of the world's top performers -- from legendary musicians to intelligence operatives, iconoclastic writers to visionary change-makers.

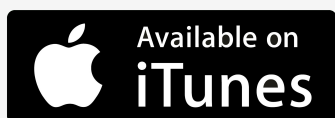
We deconstruct the playbooks of the most successful people on earth -- and learn new strategies, perspectives, and insights you can't find anywhere else. Then, take these insights into your own life and live what you listen.

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