

MASTERS by Winn Claybaugh, July 2021

Coach Micheal Burt: Whole Person Theory & Greatness Factories



Coach Micheal Burt is an author, speaker, and mentor who brings a unique blend of former championship basketball coach and “inner-engineering” methodology that helps people produce at a higher level in business and in life.

Interviewed by **Winn Claybaugh**, Coach Burt delivers simple yet powerful messages on how to become a “person of interest” and how to develop “prey-drive activation.” You’ll be charmed and inspired as you listen to these two leading mentors discuss their roles as leaders, coaches, and dads.

WC: Hi everybody, Winn Claybaugh here and welcome to this wonderful issue of MASTERS. And man, oh man, I am striking gold today. I continuously ask my wonderful circle of friends, and that’s a powerhouse circle of friends that I have, and so of course they’re going to introduce me to the best of the best. And the idea of being able to interview today Coach Micheal Burt, who I’m going to tell you about here in a little bit. I’m just thrilled, just so honored to have this opportunity because I got to see him in action a couple of weeks ago. So, I took a chance, I listened to my good friend Tim Storey, who said, “Winn, this is the right guy for exactly what you’re looking for.” I put Coach Micheal Burt in front of my entire leadership team within my organization—about 400 people were present that day—and just sat back and watched Coach work his magic and he absolutely did. So, just to tell you a little bit more about who he is, he is considered America’s coach, a unique blend of a former championship basketball coach combined with a deep methodology of inner-engineering people to produce at a higher rate in the business world. Of course, I’m reading that and I’m going to ask Coach to share his story how he got to where he is today. Coach now coaches thousands of leaders across the country with strong prey-drive tactics. He’s a published author, speaker, and mentor to many around the world. So, Coach, thank you so much for being here and being willing to share your incredible wisdom.

MB: Absolutely. I love this environment. I’m quickly becoming very fond of you, Winn. You’re an incredible person, you’ve got a great spirit and you bring a lot of positive energy to people, and that means a lot to me. Where I am in my life, dealing with as many people as I do, I look for people who give off the impression of increase and you’re definitely one of those people.

WC: Thank you. You know, I pride myself, not so much in having all the information because that’s a lot of work. Thinking that you have to be the smartest person in the room is exhausting and what I pride myself in is being a connector. So, I don’t necessarily have to have the information but I want to know who knows. I want to be able, if somebody calls me and contacts me, “I need this information, I need this mentor, I need this help,” I can think, *Wait a minute. I know exactly who you need to talk to. Oh, and by the way,*

the person that I'm going to refer you to, I've worked really, really hard to build a friendship and a trusting relationship with that person, so that they'll take my call. I remember a mentor once saying, "Nobody can give you the power of having your phone calls returned." And so I know the value of being able to make these connections. And boy, being able to get to know you over the last several months and connect with you on multiple levels has just been such a pleasure. So, once again, Coach, thank you so much for that.

MB: Sure. Absolutely.

WC: You're used to people just calling you Coach. Is that right?

MB: You know I've been called Coach since I was 15 years old. My high school coach called me Professor—my high school basketball coach—because he said, "You're so analytical, you're studying, you're constantly trying to dissect something." So, I found my voice very early in life, at 15, and have been literally coaching people for 28 years, going on 29 years now.

WC: But that comes with credibility because there are lots of people who take on that title. You can surf the Internet and there's thousands and thousands of life coaches. And when there's a speaker on stage, and they call themselves a leader and their whole presentation is about leadership, and then you find out that they don't have one employee. How can you really have credibility as a leader if you're really not practicing that on a daily basis? Maybe I'm being a little bit shortsighted but obviously you have credibility of being able to call yourself a coach. Can you share with us what that journey looked like?

MB: Yeah, at 15 years old I started coaching junior pro basketball because an elementary coach asked me to help him coach a junior pro basketball team and I fell in love with coaching. At 18, I became a head coach while in college, at a small elementary school. At 19, I was referred to and became an assistant coach at the second-largest high school in Tennessee, coaching women's basketball, and at 22 became the youngest head coach in Tennessee, at the second-largest high school. Simultaneously, I was very interested in self-help, personal development, and what I really was doing was building my own little greatness factory. And so I was studying Dr. Covey. I was bringing the whole-person theory—body, mind, heart, and spirit. I was teaching every player the seven habits of highly effective people, the principles of *Good to Great*, the five dysfunctions of teams. This was in the early 2000s and a lot of this stuff was unheard of, Winn, so, people didn't really understand what I was doing. But I was using sport to teach life and we started winning. And when I say winning, our players had lots of chemistry, high levels of trust, high buy-in, all the intangibles, and so people were constantly asking me, "What are you doing? What are you doing with those kids?" That's what I kept getting asked: "What are you doing with those kids?" I kept saying, "I'm growing the whole person. I'm teaching them this. We have our own success academy. We're really building a greatness factory." And it got so persistent that I said, "Man, I don't have time to explain this. I'm going to start writing books about it." So, I literally sat down at 25, I started writing the first of—I'm on book number 17 now—and

so I just started writing books about how—what I called inner-engineering the players and building a competitive intelligence in the players. And that would prompt businesspeople to buy my book, unbeknownst to me. I had no idea what I was doing in the business world at that time; I was a coach. And then businesspeople started to call me and they said, “Man, we got your book. Will you come motivate our people?” And it was Dell computers, State Farm insurance, national health care, some of the top real estate companies in the world. And so I would go in and speak for an hour on how I was inner-engineering people and building a competitive intelligence. Now, what company in the world doesn’t want to inner-engineer their people, drive out every ounce of potential they have, build a competitive intelligence and a competitive world? And so then they would say, “Will you come back and will you coach our people?” And I said, “No, I don’t have time to do that. I’m coaching kids, I love coaching kids.” I had not won a championship yet but the requests got stronger and the next thing you know I was in demand. It wasn’t intentional. I would just go speak and then they started to offer me a nice amount of money and they said, “Well, we really want you to coach our people. We’re willing to pay you X dollars.” And that really got my attention. But I stayed six more years, won a championship. The school would go on to win seven more championships. And then I retired to build a business coaching company and that was 13 years ago and we’ve since turned that into a multimillion-dollar company that coaches literally thousands of people around the world every single day.

WC: So, the first time that you get invited to, I think you said—was it Dell computers? Was that the first or was it State Farm?

MB: Yeah, there were a number of smaller engagements but the first big one I remember was Dell computers and this was back in the early 2000s. So, Dell was the dominant computer company at that time and they had a big office in Nashville and one of the managers said, “I want you to speak to all my managers about winning, about building people, about developing talent.” And this was kind of unheard of, Winn. I mean, we know in the ‘90s we had Tony Robbins, we had some coaches, but business coaching was not as prevalent as it is today. There’s 700,000 people in the United States that call themselves a coach today. The mean average income of those coaches is \$47,000 per year. So, the reason there’s so much saturation that you mentioned is that there’s a lot of people that call themselves a coach, that really have no demonstrating capacity of winning anything, building anything, and it’s kind of given the coaching profession a little bit of a bad name because there’s so many unqualified coaches in the world. And I was a real coach. I really won championships. I really built people. I really built a multimillion-dollar company. I’ve coached billion-dollar companies all the way down to what I would call little baby stars, startup companies. So, to me, I’m a real coach that coaches people every day and that’s kind of the separator for me.

WC: Anybody who knows me knows that I’m the most un-sports person on the planet. Even when I brought you into my network to spend time with my leadership group, people were kind of laughing at me—laughing with me behind the scenes. Like, “Oh my gosh, Winn’s hired a sports guy to come in and share information with us.” Maybe you were thinking the same thing: *I’m a sports guy and this big company is having me come in to share this information.* Was there a little bit of a disconnect or were you a bit confused

or curious to know, *How does my experience as a basketball coach for little kids translate into helping this mega, mega company?*

MB: What I quickly realized was that coaches in the sporting world have an intensity. They have a high prey drive. They are used to planning, executing, systematic approach to building people. They're used to taking different people from all walks of life, all socioeconomic backgrounds, and trying to get the most out of a person. And so, I actually quickly saw a correlation and I thought, *Man, the business world needs more intensity. They need a more systematic approach to recruiting and attracting people. They need a systematic approach to developing and coaching people. They need a systematic approach to retaining and optimizing people*, and that's really what great sports coaches do. If you look at the collegiate level, what they do is they recruit and attract talent. They coach and develop that talent. They retain and they optimize that talent, and that's no different than what Dell is trying to do or Paul Mitchell Schools are trying to do or State Farm insurance companies are trying to do. And so I actually had a huge advantage because of my mindset, but what really separated me was my deep study into personal development, which is primarily through Dr. Covey. From 18 to 25 I was studying some of the best people in the world. I was bringing business to sport in a new way. That was very unheard of in those days. And then I was taking sport to business. I always called it "from the locker room to the boardroom and from the boardroom to the locker room," and there was a tremendous crossover there that provided a great opening for me. This guy knows how to win. He knows how to inner-engineer people. He knows how to take talent—talented people that maybe lack something—and he knows how to activate something inside of them. So, I quickly figured out, Winn, this is a skill that I have developed that companies would pay a lot of money for. Because I could go in and help a company make 20 million more dollars or 50 million. Or a mortgage company would say, "I need to move from two to five billion dollars." And they would say, "You know, they're yours, Coach. What do you need to do with them?" In Silicon Valley you had Bill Campbell, who they called the trillion-dollar coach, that coached Steve Jobs, the guys from Google and they attributed his—you know, to the people he coached, those people created over a trillion dollars of value. And so when you think about that, the power of a coach in the business world is who's coaching you really matters. It really can make a significant difference in your life and in your outcomes.

WC: Well, I want to go back to your experience in coaching young kids, because you talk about growing the whole person and the greatness factory. Can you share with us some of those experiences or some of those stories about how you did that with that young audience? Because I'm sure that some of them came to you broken and probably previous coaches, all they focused on was their sports ability, their performance on the field. And you, again, coming to you probably broken—who knows what their family life was like. You then took them on and created what you're calling this greatness factory, which we're going to expand on more, to grow the whole person. Can you share with us some of those stories?

MB: Well, those players would come to me and they came to me from poor backgrounds, one parent, no parents. I had one player that came every morning to school in a taxicab.

You can imagine how embarrassing that was to show up in a taxicab at school. Sometimes they had no parents. And in those days 50% of my players, when they had cell phones, when I called them, it would show up as dad, D-A-D, dad's calling, because I literally became a surrogate parent to those. I taught them how to drive in the parking lot. I made sure they were fed. I made sure they had a roof over their head. I made sure they—I mean, really, I spent five and a half hours a day with those players for four years, so I became like a parent to them.

WC: Right.

MB: And people would come to me and say, "Well, you don't want that person. You don't want that girl; she's going to end up pregnant or in jail. She's going to end up in prison. She's a troublemaker." And I would say, "No, she has a tremendous amount of natural talent. What she is lacking is discipline, structure, accountability, focus. What she's really lacking is just a good coach and if she had a good coach, she could do something big in her life." And I would say, "I'm going to take that kid and I'm going to come back to you four years from today, after she's gone through my cycle, my coaching, our systems and processes, and I'm going to show you what that young lady could become." In my own house, my wife Natalie did drugs every day from 21 to 24. She had no direction, no guidance, no goals, no purpose. She grew up in a Christian home but they never pushed her. She didn't have the coaching I had. I had a tough, single mother. She had a good mother and good stability but they never pushed her. They never challenged her. She never played sports. She didn't have a discipline and so she came to middle Tennessee and got involved in drugs, had no direction, and her company, Verizon, paid for her to come to one of my workshops at 30 years old. I didn't know her from 21 to 24 and she came to my workshop. She read a book I wrote called, *This Ain't No Practice Life*, which is a good Southern title, and it really activated her prey drive. She is now writing her own books. She is now doing her own conferences. She is now coaching women. That's the same thing that was happening every day as a basketball coach. These kids would come to me with talent, pure raw ability. Little or no direction, guidance, belief, confidence. That's where the whole person came in. I went to work on their knowledge for the mind, their skills for the body, their prey drive or desire for the heart, and their confidence for the spirit. That is a whole person and that was really the Covey in me that changed my life from 18 to 25. I said, man, this is how to coach people. The whole person has to be coached, and I still use that model today at 44 years old.

WC: You talk about how you became their dad, you became that surrogate parent to them and they looked to you for that. I'm sure you're experiencing that in the business world as well. The boss, whether we like it or not, whether we realize it or not, whether we want to accept or not, sometimes our team members view the boss as a parental figure, for good or for bad. Can you share your thoughts on that?

MB: Well, people have not activated their prey drive: what I'm writing a book on right now, called *Flip the Switch*. And it's my seventeenth book and it's probably my most important work because I actually believe work can become the distribution channel for your talents. Nine out of 10 people do not know their talents. They do not know their

primary skill. They do not know how to package and sell that skill; therefore, many of them end up in occupations—that which occupies our time and for which we receive a paycheck—versus vocations, which comes from the Latin term voice or calling in life. It's very hard to find the right bus to be on in life when you don't know what your talents are, when you don't know what your skills are, so you just kind of do anything that can make money. And what happens is you wake up one day in life and say, "Man, what am I doing?" Sixty-seven percent of Americans say they're disengaged with their work: they're there physically but they're not there mentally. They're not there emotionally. They're not there spiritually. They're there but they're not there. So, I spend a lot of time helping people find their voice, find their talent, and then utilize that talent to monetize through helping other people, and that is a very strong thing I do for my employees, the people that work with me, the people I coach. Man, once you help a person find their talent and then show them how to use that talent in the world to help other people and be economically rewarded, you can really change a person's life.

WC: I have so many questions. I'm going to take us all over the map here. Give us your definition of prey drive, because you talk about prey-drive activation. Can you share that with us more?

MB: Prey drive is, in a human—this is my definition because there was no definition for humans. Prey drive is in animals. It is an animal's ability to see something, to pursue it, and to capture it. Well, I had a revelation during a workshop one day when a gentleman mentioned this, that humans have a prey drive but it is a person's ability to see something with the eyes or in the mind and have the persistence and intensity to pursue it. So, to write this book, I basically broke down the top 20 motivational theories. I deconstructed those theories and then I codified how I think you activate a person's instinct to see something and pursue it. And then I codified five components to activate, or five activators for people, and that's really the business I'm in is activating something inside of a person. That's why the whole-person theory is so critical, so that they can see something in the mind or with the eyes, optically, and have the persistence and intensity to actually see it through to its conclusion. That's a big part of what my work is about today.

WC: And people who are listening to this—again you don't have to be a boss or a leader as you would define, to take on this information. The fact that all of us are teachers, many of us are parents, many of us have people who look to us, whether we realize it or not. How much responsibility do we have to take this on? Because I know that some bosses are like, "That's not my job." You know, "They're supposed to come to work driven. They're supposed to come to work motivated. They're supposed to show up positive. That's not my job to teach them those things." In fact, I remember once coaching a business leader, saying, "You know, if you want people to show up to work on time, congratulate them when they do. Focus on what's working, not on what they're doing wrong." And that was the response back I got: "It's not my job. I'm not going to thank them for showing up to work on time. They should show up to work on time. Why do I have to thank them?" What's your response to all of that?

MB: Well, these are things that are not taught in school. I went to college for nine years to pursue three degrees. It's almost 350 hours of college credit. I was never taught how to activate my prey drive. I was never taught how to find my talent. My daughter goes to a private school. She's never been taught how to bounce back from adversity, how to handle conflict effectively, how to find her talents, how to activate this drive inside of her to do something big, how to expand her mindset. People are fairly ill-equipped through the education system to figure this out so then they go to a job and they're just underprepared. I've got a guy on my team right now who was my videographer but he had seven children and he came to me and he said, "I really need to make more money. I love being a videographer, I'm a creative." I said, "Well, we're going to have to teach you how to sell, how to articulate, how to build value, how to overcome objection, how to follow up." And that guy, once I activated his prey drive, is selling \$100,000 of coaching a month. Okay, that's 1.2 million a year. And what happened to him? He's 47 years old. Nobody had ever come into his life and said, "Man, you have so much talent and potential. You're so good with people. Let me show you how to do this." So, I actually think there's two ways to go about it. Yes, you could recruit people with high prey drive and they are out there, although there are no real assessments that tell you how much prey drive a person has, right? I'm certified in the DISC. I am building a prey drive assessment so companies can know how much prey drive a person has before they hire them but, really, there's no way to know. Will they get back up when they've been knocked down? Will they show up to work every day on time? Will they go the extra mile? Will they fight through adversity? Will they handle conflict effectively? See, the personality profile isn't going to tell us that. They tell us how to communicate with people. They tell us how to put people possibly in their strength selling if you use a Kolbe, or if you use a DISC, how to communicate effectively. So, I actually think the best business owners see their offices and agencies and schools as greatness factories that are manufacturing raw talent into something really, really special, kind of like a foundry. A foundry takes raw material and, through a process, turns it into something. So, in my greatness factories, we don't have conference rooms, we have dream foundries because it's about taking something from nothing and turning it into something.

WC: So, what sort of businesses could call themselves a greatness factory?

MB: I think any business could technically call themselves one. Now, I have a trademarked concept where I am physically building greatness factories or partnering with people to bring these concepts to their business. And it's so interesting because I was in Sacramento with one of your schools, and one of the biggest places we have interest right now for a greatness factory is in Sacramento. They already have the space. They already have the people. What they don't have is the know-how or the energy to turn these things into higher-level resources, right? To take lower-level resources and convert them to higher levels of productivity. So, I'm licensing this concept around the world to people who either already have office space and people or people that want to build these or want to create these around the country. The greatness factories have shared space, office permanent space, podcast studios, auditoriums, dream foundries, collaboration rooms, incubation places. They're hubs of energy where businesspeople

come to, to learn to grow and to connect with a very specific coaching and methodology to help you get a lot better.

WC: One of my very good mentors, years ago, said that she felt like every business needs to be a front for a church. When she said that, she wasn't talking about church as religion or a place for worship but a church is a place where people can go and they feel safe. They feel loved, they feel accepted. And it kind of sounds like along the lines of what you are talking about because I've also heard you say that you predict within five years, every manager, every business owner in America, will have to be a coach. They will have to focus on the idea that, *Wow, yeah, people come to me and they're performing, they're offering their services and their talents and I pay them to do that, I give them a paycheck.* But again, if all we're focused on is their performance while they're performing their job and we're not taking into consideration the whole person, we're not creating greatness factories, then they're showing up for one thing only and that is to receive a paycheck. We're not engaging their talents or their creativity or their passion. All we did was engage their time. They showed up, they got a paycheck, and now they're out of there.

MB: Well, I think most people show up physically in the body but they are not there in the mind, in the heart, in the spirit. And until you understand the whole person—see, when you really break the whole person down, think about a time in your life. What good is it to have knowledge with no skill? What good is it to have skill with no desire? What good is it to have desire with no confidence? See, the whole person accurately diagnoses and prescribes where I need to work with a person. So, even in the schools, if they're lacking in knowledge or skill or desire or confidence, that tells the person where to go to work. Right? A person with a broken heart disengages. A person with a broken spirit disengages. So, trying to teach a person something while they're going through a broken heart is very difficult. I could show up every day at work for years and be there physically but not be there with my heart, not care, not have any passion, not have any motivation, not have any prey drive. People do it every single day. They get up, they get dressed up. I say they paint up, spray up, pretty up, and they show up, but they're not there and they quit but they forgot to tell anybody [*laughs*].

WC: I like that. They quit but they're still there, right.

MB: That's right. I'm just the type of guy that, if you work with me, I've actually freed people up to chase their real passion in my company. If I think a person is on the wrong bus, not utilizing their talents, not in their sweet spot, I actually tell them that. Not in good conscience can I write the books that I do and you be going through the motions with my company. There is a bigger play for you, let me help you find your voice in life. Let me help you find the right distribution channel for that voice. Let me help you be successful but it's not here. You just can't, in my company, show up physically because it would go against everything I stand for.

WC: Wow. Well, I think most of us listening to this, we understand that concept of little kids going to school. You can't teach them math, you can't teach them reading, if they haven't had breakfast, if they haven't eaten. So, schools stepped in and said, "We need

to feed them. These are disadvantaged kids and we need to feed them before we can then hope to teach them anything.” And I guess that’s what’s coming to mind as you’re talking about this. How can we expect that our people are going to perform at their best if we’re not considering the whole person? I know that that confidence is a big, big topic for you. Can you elaborate on that?

MB: At 25 years old, I fell madly in love with a person I went to high school with and I was an athlete and she was just wild. She was just a wild child. Naturally, I was attracted to that and fell madly in love, thought I was going to get married, borrowed \$5,000 to buy an engagement ring and then put that ring in a lockbox in a bank. I planned out the engagement and before I planned on proposing to her, she broke up with me. I was miserable. I went through clinical depression. I was depressed for six months to a year while I was a head coach, while I had to be positive, while I was coaching kids, while I had to put on a front every day, and I could not make it second to second without being depressed. And during that period, although it was a tremendous breakdown for me, I began to study confidence and I began to realize what my real problem was and that was that I had basically disempowered my own self and I had given all of my power to another person, and all of my confidence was tied up in what she thought about me. And I began to study confidence: what is it? Which very few people do, by the way. How do you build it? What erodes it? How do you get it back once you’ve lost it? How do you protect it? How do you build almost an unbreakable confidence? And so I went on to write a book about that. So, I got through that depression, came out of it very strong, really accelerated in my life over the next four years, went on to write a book on confidence, and man, that is the one thing that affects everything. So, I wrote that book, probably 10 years ago but it’s becoming very popular again. That’s a trend I’m seeing. A lot of my books are becoming very popular that I wrote five, six, seven, ten years ago. People need confidence. Confidence is the memory of success. It is an internal knowing that you can create or manifest something. It is a distribution of a talent to the world and a positive feedback from the world in response to the talent. And so, I codify things, Winn. That’s one of the gifts I have. I can’t cook. I’m geographically illiterate. I can’t fix a car, [laughs] but, man, I can take a concept and deconstruct that concept, break it down, make it very simple and then deliver that concept in a way to people that inspires them to take an action in their life.

WC: Okay, that was a mouthful and I bought all of it. How would you break that down? Everything that you just said: how would you break that down? Is that step by step? Is that a theory?

MB: Yep.

WC: How do you go about that?

MB: I call that codification and where you are codifying a concept. So, I take a concept, you know, like I wrote the book *Person of Interest*. It’s how you become a person of interest, a person of influence, and I break that concept down and I deconstruct it to where it’s step by step, okay? If you come to me and said, “I want to be a person of interest in the world,” okay, step one, we go to work on these seven ingredients. Step two, we do

these things. Step three—and that's really what I've done with all of my books is ideas are simple but can be complex to people to execute. If I was going into a school, a Paul Mitchell School or a business, and you wanted me to teach confidence, I would start with what is confidence? What is the definition of confidence? I have four definitions. What builds confidence/ And I may give seven things that build it. What tears it down? What erodes this confidence? How do you protect this confidence? How do you get it back once you've lost it? So, what I do is I take complicated concepts and make those concepts very simple and then I try to deliver those concepts with a deep conviction so that those people will be inspired. That means to breathe life into those people to take an action or to think bigger.

WC: Wow. As we're recording this, it is Mental Health Month. Of course, this interview will be listened to later and over and over and over again for years. People will refer back to this information. How often do you feel like you need to go back and subscribe to your own philosophies and read your own information, especially with what we've all experienced in the last year, through quarantine and the social unrest that's happening on this planet right now? It's a very, very troubling time. How much have you had to personally—like what trips you up and what have you needed to do personally to overcome it and go to the next level?

MB: Well, my business model is predicated on being in front of people. Like that's what I love to do. I love to be live. I love to speak. I'm a coach and a coach needs a team. A coach needs an audience. A coach needs somebody to coach, so it was a big hit to us, both mentally and financially, when in March of last year all of my speaking engagements were cancelled. All of the big things I was supposed to do were cancelled because that's the way I drive leads. I get out, I speak, I get in front of people. It's really marketing for me and those people buy my coaching programs or sign me on to corporate agreements to coach their people and so it was really taxing emotionally. It was a strong emotional tax and my mindset is, man, it's going to be a fight but we're going to find a way to win. It all goes to zero at midnight. There comes a time when winter asks what we did all spring and summer, right? That's my mindset. It's a mindset of toughness so when those things happened I was really tested. That was a good thing, by the way. I developed different divisions of my company. I developed a publishing division to help people write books, and people had more down time to write books and that became very popular. I created a marketing division. I bought into a marketing company to help people drive leads and funnels. We opened an accounting division for people. So, I really started looking at ancillary ways to generate revenue. I'll buy and sell millions of dollars of real estate around the country and so what it really did is it forced me to think and to dig deeper and to ask a simple question: "What do people need?" And during that period, people needed positivity so I would go to companies during that period, Winn, and say, "Man, I will speak to your people for free if you just put me in front of your people." And they were like, "Oh my goodness, we need—everybody's at home, everybody's freaking out, everybody's mental state is bad." I was literally doing eight to ten hours a day of Zoom coaching session for companies. I was exhausted at the end of the day, and I don't use that word lightly. But it was just—man, I was just trying to provide enough energy for everybody. And the interesting thing is many of those companies went on to hire me to be their coach, after I did that. Some of

those companies had looked at me but not hired me. Then during the pandemic, I did it for free to show them what it could be like, then many of them ended up hiring me. The cool thing was we had the biggest month I've ever had in my coaching career during the middle of the pandemic in October of 2020, which was just remarkable. And that was a direct result of just the sheer push that I made and the mental toughness that I had developed in coaching: to just keep fighting through, man. Just keep trying to find a way to win, to keep showing up, to keep multiplying my efforts. I'm a big believer that there's a gradient relationship between health and wealth, and wealth being vitality, ability to pursue your dreams, ability to get up every day and pursue your potential. There's a symbiotic relationship between that, mental health, physical wealth, spiritual health, emotional health. And a lot of my coaching is coaching that whole person, which is different than a lot of people's coaching, right? They're teaching technique or sales tactic or leadership tactic. It all, to me, goes back to coaching the whole person. If I can activate the whole person then we're going to do something big.

WC: I like that you have shared the personal struggle that you went through and then what that journey looked like: that you needed to educate yourself, market more, equip yourself with information that not only helped you but then you turned around and helped other people with that. People listening to this right now are thinking, *Well, of course he had to do this, this was his livelihood. He writes books on motivation, he does seminars on motivation, so of course he is the one who had to redefine himself and reinvent himself in order to maintain his livelihood but that's not my job, that's not how I'm paid. I work at an insurance company or I work at a fast-food restaurant and so it's not my job and therefore I don't need this information.* I just want to challenge all the listeners—as I said earlier, I'm a connector—just challenge all the listeners, be that connector, be that safe place that people can go to. I know you work at that one job there and they don't really pay you to know this information and you've struggled but have you gained anything through the pandemic? And be that person. Like, I've been challenging people to quit saying that 2020 was the worst year ever because then we give power to that. Quit saying that it was the—can't wait for that year to be over, thank goodness it's over. No, quit saying that. Avoid saying that because how about if we draw on 2020 as some major, major, incredible life lessons that are going to serve us for the rest of our lives?

MB: Yeah, I think if you can ever understand that adversity is a natural part of life. Adversity is a departure away from the ideal scene. It is an unwanted outcome, right? That's all it is. You had an idea of how it was going to go, it didn't go the way you thought it was, now the question becomes, between that stimulus and your response, how do you handle that stimulus? I've studied human nature at a very deep level, conflict at a very deep level, to understand people and how to change their perspective on things. I have a mindset that, *Hey man, it's going to be a fight. It's going to take longer than we thought, it's going to cost more than we imagined.* So, I go into things with proper expectations and I work the systems that I teach every day. I don't get too high and I don't get too low and a big part of my teachings, Winn, is how to use negative emotions. How do you use disappointment, anger, fear, jealousy? How do you use these emotions as positive? How do you use fear? Fear is a negative emotion that is created by a belief that something can harm me in the future. That's what the dictionary says. I

actually believe fear is a positive emotion that is absolutely necessary to activate one's prey drive. I have tried to remove fear of rejection, fear of embarrassment, fear of failure, just from my mind that there is no fear of rejection. There is no such thing as rejection. Some will, some won't, so what, right? Some people will like it. I asked Tim Storey once, did he think I had a face for TV and he said, "I think you got a face for movies, Coach." I was glad that he didn't say I had a face for radio. [laughs]

WC: [Laughs]

MB: But I didn't get a TV show once; I was up for a TV show. You know, a TV show where you come in and turn a business around, and they didn't like my Southern accent and they didn't think I was tall enough and I said, "Man, I don't know how to make myself taller and the Southern accent is who I am. I live in Tennessee, it's part of who I am." And that's not rejection. They just wanted somebody who was tall and didn't have a Southern accent. It's okay. There'll be somebody who wants a little, short pit bull like me—

WC: [Laughs]

MB: —that has a Southern accent.

WC: I do, I do. I'm—

MB: Yeah.

WC: —bringing you on.

MB: That's what I'm saying. So, I'm only looking for the people that are looking for me and I've tried to deal with and do the heavy work to deal with some of the things that kind of tackle people and knock them down. And a lot of it has to do with how they use and respond to emotions.

WC: This is such good information. Even as a dad, I have a nine-year-old daughter and some of the little-girl drama already happening in third grade, the little-girl drama of trying to get along and navigate through relationships, and I think, *Well, this will pass*. Am I giving her the right information? Am I just keeping her safe and knowing that she can come home and talk to us and be open and honest? Are we giving her the right advice? Then you turn on the *Real Housewives* and you think, *Oh my gosh, they're still doing it*.

MB: [Laughs]

WC: [Laughs] It's still going on and now they have money and power and beauty and a huge, huge stage and platform and they're still sending out those horrible messages that I'm trying to help my daughter overcome in third grade.

MB: Well, I have an interesting story about that. I have a daughter that will be nine in just a few months, so I can identify. [She hasn't done a DISC but I know she's a very high D.

She's very driven, very dominant, very focused. She's the exact opposite of my wife, so they butt heads a lot and here I am, the coach and the expert. I've coached girls basketball for a decade so I treat it like that but she has a hard time controlling her emotions, so when she gets upset she gets emotional. When she gets emotional she acts from emotion versus rationale. I know that because I've coached. It's harder for my wife to understand it but I get it and so I go home one day and I'm like, *Alright, I'm going to hire a coach for my daughter on nothing but emotional intelligence.* I go online, I go into my home office, I Google "number one coach for kids on emotional toughness and intelligence." And to my surprise, Winn, it was me! *[laughs]*

WC: *[Laughs]*

MB: It said, "Coach Micheal Burt," and I'm thinking, *We are in such trouble here because if I'm the number-one guy and I'm trying to hire somebody to coach my kid, man, what am I going to do here?* It also told me there was a business opportunity there, but nonetheless, we've kind of got a sports psychologist that I used that is a female that I'm considering working with my daughter, because she does have talent and drive but she does have a hard time controlling her emotion. And I think sometimes from another person—that's why I say the kids need a great coach, a great role model, a great mentor. I was that for those kids that I coached so I kept those kids in line, I helped them when somebody called them bad names, I taught them how to handle conflict but not every coach cares enough to do those things so there's just as many bad coaches, if not more bad coaches, than good coaches.

WC: Right. When you spoke with my group a while ago, one of the things that just resonated with them—and I heard a lot of feedback on it, which you've also mentioned during this interview—is this idea of a greatness factory. Can you expand on that because that was just—oh, a greatness factory, that just makes so much sense.

MB: This concept originated when I was a basketball coach and the parents would drop their kids off to me. They were so excited and they would say, "Coach, my daughter has a lot of—" typically talent or potential. Okay, that's what they would say. "She has a lot of potential but she needs something." And they would go through a list of things she needed. Confidence was the number-one thing. Discipline, motivation, focus, accountability. And I would say back to the parents, "You're in good hands. Thank you for bringing your daughter here because we believe we have a little greatness factory here and we are manufacturing their greatness." And I would say, "In four years from today, I'm going to send your daughter back to you and she will be confident enough to run for president of the United States. She will be able to do anything. She will know how to have good manners, how to look people in the eye, how to say "yes sir" and "no sir," how to bounce back from adversity. She'll know the seven habits of highly effective people. Like I will train her." Think of it like almost like the military trains people. They go to the military and they've got some knowledge and some skill and some desire and some confidence and then they walk out of there fully trained because they were coached every day. Many years later, Winn, I started coaching adults. I did a lot of corporate contracts initially. Big companies would hire me, almost like a hired gun to come in and maximize talent, improve profits, get results. And then individuals began to

come to me and say, “Man, how do I get coached by you? I don’t own a big company; I own a small company. I’ve got three people. Where can I go to get coached by you?” I said, “You know what? I’m going to build a training facility. I’m going to call it the greatness factory,” and that’s really where the vision originated. So, now that concept is a true physical structure that people go to in these different cities. I had the vision in 2017 of calling it that. I designed it. We started to build it in one city. I decided that Nashville was the best city for it. So, I found the space I wanted, designed the place, spent a fortune on designing these things for maximum collaboration, for just coolness and unique structures that people would want to come to every day. But the real play for me, Winn, is the licensing of these, of taking of space. It would be like me taking a space in Sacramento and turning that space into a greatness factory, where there’s training, coaching, shared space, private space. You know, it’s really literally like a little factory that people go to where they’re getting coached in different areas but there’s intentional collaboration. It’s really bringing a mindset and a skillset and an energy to a space. I actually think that, ultimately, companies will hire us to make their companies into greatness factories, on how they train their people, how they take raw talent and manufacture that talent.

WC: I love that. That conversation that you would have with a parent as they dropped off their kid, that what we have here is a greatness factory. I’m picturing, my gosh, if my third-grade teacher for my daughter’s class, and she didn’t really say this but she certainly has been this type of a teacher for my daughter, thankfully, but had she had that conversation, “Thank you for trusting me to drop off your daughter here every day for this school year, because she’s going to learn confidence and motivation, how to handle adversity. She’s going to learn about collaboration and desire.” For anybody listening to this where somebody comes to work for you and, “Yes, you’re going to get a paycheck here but let me tell you, what we are also doing here, it’s a pizza parlor but we’re also a greatness factory and what you’re going to learn is confidence, motivation, how to handle adversity, the importance of collaboration, and the strength of desire.” Oh my gosh if all of us were able to be that resource for people. And again, quit thinking that you have to be the boss to have this type of power. For you to take this on and create this—in fact, maybe Coach, maybe that’s my question. People who are not the boss, in fact they might even be working for somebody who’s a bit of a jerk, who acts the opposite of what you’re sharing, what’s your advice to that team member working in a job, working for a company, on how they can be that go-to person and how they can turn the culture around within the organization?

MB: I think we can become islands of excellence in a sea of mediocrity.

WC: Ooh, say that again.

MB: I think we can become islands of excellence in seas of mediocrity.

WC: Fabulous.

MB: When I was a basketball coach, as a teacher, as a high school teacher, there's a lot of apathy. There's a lot of burned out teachers. They would say a teacher would be great if it wasn't for the kids [*laughs*] and —

WC: [*Laughs*] There you go.

MB: —so not everybody had prey drive. They actually were very negative. So I wasn't in charge of the biology department or the math department or the English department. I was in charge of the basketball department, of my department, and I made my department world class. I focused on my circle of control and it was so attractive. One of the best and worst compliments I ever got is at a faculty meeting—this got me in so much trouble with all the other teachers because they hated it because the principal said this. But one of the principals stood up and said, "If every teacher would run their department and run their classroom like Coach Burt runs his basketball program, we would have a world-class school." And although it was a great compliment, I wished he didn't say it to all the other teachers because they took offense to that. But the truth was, I built this island of excellence and it didn't matter to me if the English department was average or the math department was average. That was their department. My department was mine and I focused on what I could control. And I've been in work environments where there's negative bosses, negative cultures. All you can focus on is you, your effort, your focus, your contribution. And at the end of the day you can go home and say, "Man, I built a little island of excellence here."

WC: That is incredible. Such great advice. "My boss is a jerk, we all know he's a jerk, but hey we can be that island of excellence." That's just perfect.

MB: Mm hm.

WC: So, we have to start to wrap this up. I can't believe it because I have so many questions. I wanted to talk to you about how to find your voice, how to build toughness. I love this person of interest, so I'm just going to invite our listeners to check out all of the resources and the books that you have to learn more about you. But to start to wrap things up here, Coach, talk to me as though I am the boss and you have some one-on-one time with me. What would that advice be, especially again considering everything that we've been through? And I'm getting those phone calls and I know that you are as well. This is a scary time for a lot of people even though mandates, as we're recording this, mandates in some states are saying you don't have to wear a mask now and it's, so to speak, opening back up but there are people who are still living with that fear, which we get. They're scared to leave their homes. We've been quarantined and they don't want to come out of that. So, talk to me as though I am the boss with power and control and influence. What's your advice to me?

MB: Well, I would say, "You are a person of interest and people of interest, they dress up, they show up, they grow up, and they deliver. Your positive energy's got to be greater than any negative energy you face today. I have coached people through recessions, through terrible times, through breakdowns, through breakthroughs. And people are looking to you." People are looking to me to lead my organization and when we don't

step up and lead and let them know we're going to show up every day; this is who we are. I like being the hardest-working person in my organization. I think my people would tell you that what I tell them to do, I'm doing it every day. I'm in the game with them. I'm in there coaching my people every day because I coach a lot of companies where people are disconnected from the leaders and I understand it. As you scale something, there's layers of management, but at the end of the day, typically the leader is a power source. And that word *power* means "a means or source for supplying energy," okay? You are a means or source for supplying energy. So, many times I tell the leader, man, they need to be connected to the power source, they need to have exposure to you. And so a lot of times I actually counsel the main leader to reengage, to reengage with the group in some way and when I do, I typically see a bump in productivity. I see a bump in engagement. I see a bump in a lot of things because the leader is the leader for a reason, man. They're a person of interest. They have a high degree of knowledge, a high degree of skill, a high degree of prey drive, a high degree of confidence, and people need that. And as we disconnect from that power source, people feel lost, confused. And confusion is a randomness in motion. It's a problem that appears to have no solution to it. So, the leader brings direction. The leader brings a dominant focus. The leader brings an energy. The leader sets the tone and that's really what people need to be doing right now. They need to be leading. People are silently begging to be led.

WC: Wow!

MB: And that's what people need.

WC: That is great advice because how many bosses and leaders—because it's scary for them, too. They've taken a financial hit, possibly, through Covid. They're scared, too, and maybe they've lost loved ones, too. And so now is not the time, though, to disappear. Now is not the time to be in your bunker, so to speak, waiting for all of this to pass. You're right, we have to be out there. We have to be visible and touchable and engaged with our people and taking responsibility for that energy. Oh, I need to own the energy that I bring into every space that I walk in. Great advice. So, now talk to me as though I'm a parent, okay? And you know I am. I have a nine-year-old girl. You as well, you have a little boy, too, correct?

MB: I do, I have a one-year-old. He's one year old today. We celebrated this morning—

WC: Ahh!

MB: —at 8 a.m.

WC: Oh wow! That's the best. So, talk to me as a parent because I've watched parents. Again, I don't want to keep on referring back to the quarantine but we're blessed and so, yeah, we were able to, with one little girl, help her through being the teacher every day with distance learning. I know single parents with five kids that they were trying to get through while working a job, as well. Talk to me as though I'm a parent. What do I need

to know and feel right now from you so that I have that confidence that I need, that I can step into that role and just be the best that I can be as a parent?

MB: When parents dropped their kids off to me at 14 and they told me that their daughter had potential, but she just needed a few things, I would say, "I've got to ask you a question and it's going to be a tough question, but I've gotta ask you." And they would say, "Sure, you could ask me anything." And I would say, "Is your daughter watching you reach your potential?"

WC: Mmm.

MB: And they would get quiet and they'd go, "Gosh, no, Coach. I've kind of given up on my dreams and I've let myself go some." I said, "Man, the greatest gift you can give your kids, sometimes, outside of your time and attention, which is what they desperately crave—" I know that's what my kids need of me: time and attention—"is they need to see you pursuing. They need to see you doing. They need to see you chasing your dreams. They need to see you modeling that behavior." Because they're watching and they're watching and they're listening and they're watching your language and they're watching how you handle conflict and they're watching how you handle—right? When times get tough, man, how do you handle it? That's what they're watching." And so I think one of the greatest things we can give our children outside of that time and attention is we can give them an example of this is how you find your talent. I'm really big on my kids finding their talent, placing them with the right coaches, putting them in environments, making sure they're being challenged, trying to help them cultivate a discipline about them that I think they will need later in life. And I think they need to see me every day and say, "Man, my dad exposed me to people from all over the world. He took me around the world. I lived an incredible life but there was very high expectation and responsibility that I really become a productive citizen in the world that was well equipped to use my talent to help other people."

WC: Wow! Without realizing I think you helped me make a decision today because to be a room parent for my daughter's fourth grade class, the application for that is coming up next week and I've been debating, do I want to do that? Because I was the room parent for pre-K, kindergarten, first grade, second grade, and it's a lot of work.

MB: Mm hm.

WC: And I'm running a company at the same time and I kept on saying, "Well, I do that because I want my daughter to know that I'm always, always going to be present. I'm always going to show up." But I was debating whether or not I would do that again this year or for the next year and I think you just helped me make that decision. Yeah, I need to do it. They may not choose me, but I need to apply. I need to do that.

MB: [Laughs] Well, sometimes the word *decide* means to kill something off and *make a decision* means to cut something away. I think we're trying to take my kids with me more. They're here with me at this retreat I'm doing. That's a big part of our life and so we're doing more distance learning. The kids go with us. My wife goes with me because

that's part of my occupation. Part of my vocation is traveling around the world and helping people so we're kind of trying to take the whole family with us where we go and it's been challenging at times because I'm used to just being out there as a road warrior on my own. But it's been fun, too. It's been fun to go home at night and play with my kids and that kind of thing.

WC: Good for you. Well, Coach, do you have a final message for our listeners?

MB: I think my message is my core message in life. Everybody needs a coach in life. I really believe that a good coach can change a person's life. I believe who's coaching you really matters. I believe that you have unlimited potential inside of you but that potential must be activated and typically activated by something external from you, by a true professional who really knows how to get the most out of a person. So, I would encourage you, wherever you are in life, somebody needs to be coaching you to help you activate that prey drive in you and activate that potential, which is kinetic energy that is stored inside of you until activated. And so that's my life's message, at the end of the day.

WC: Wow, I can add nothing to that. Well, Coach, again I can't thank you enough. I will absolutely share information through my social media, through my MASTERS Podcast website on how people can contact you directly, but go ahead and tell us really quickly the best way for them to learn more about you.

MB: Anywhere on social media, just search Coach Micheal Burt. I put a tremendous amount of videos on YouTube for people to get to know me. I do daily videos on my Facebook, Instagram. I do boot camps around the world, all kinds of things. If you just go to coachburt.com you can see the live events I do that are open to the public. I'm doing an event right now in Watercolor, Florida. So, I'm down in Florida quite a bit. At my house in Florida, I do private retreats there. I do it at a big lodge in Tennessee, big 8,000-square-foot beautiful lodge in Tennessee that I bring people into. And then I obviously coach companies around the world and people around the world. So, coachburt.com.

WC: Thank you so much and just unbelievable information. I'm so, so grateful, again, our dear friend Tim Storey for making this introduction and he was exactly right. You had just entered my life at the perfect time. Everything happens for a reason and this introduction absolutely happened for a reason. So, thank you so much.

MB: Absolutely and you're right. Tim Storey, told me once, he said, "Coach, you have an apostolic gift." And I said, "Thank you, sounds great, now what does it mean?" *[Laughs]*

WC: *[Laughs]* What does it mean?

MB: It means you have the ability to reach inside of a person and pull something out. Pull their potential out while simultaneously inspiring them to want to do that for other people. So, I attract a lot of people who want to coach, speak, and he said, "You have that gift, man." And I'm like, "Man, thanks for helping me uncover that." So, he's a dear, dear friend of mine.

WC: Beautiful. Thanks, Coach.

MB: Thank you so much for having me, man. This has been incredible.

WC: Yes, it has. Thanks.