

Cec Busby [00:00:04]:

Hi, everybody. I'm Cec Busby, editor of Flying Solo. Welcome to our weekly podcast where we step inside the minds and lives of soloists and small business owners. Now, if you're a small business owner, then chances are there have been times when you've put your own health and well being into the too hard basket. But today's guest, Dr. Bret Lilly, believes it doesn't have to be that way. By Rediscovering the Athlete Within, Dr. Brett says you can rekindle your love for movement and find your mojo to live a happier, healthier life. He joins us today to share some science backed strategies from his new book, rediscover Your Athlete Within that will get you moving and grooving once more. Bret, thank you so much for joining me on the show today. Welcome.

Dr Brett Lillie [00:00:53]:

Thank you very much for having me.

Cec Busby [00:00:55]:

Excellent, excellent. So may I ask, where did your interest in fitness and well being first come from?

Dr Brett Lillie [00:01:03]:

I think more as a kid I grew up on the side of the bush, and so for me, running around, jumping, climbing trees, and just generally being so active was a part of who I was from a very young age, just from growing up beside the bush. So I guess that was part of me. And then as I grew up, I was interested in anything that was to do with a ball. But more of it really began when I was going through university and I started hanging out with a couple of friends that were very interested in triathlons. That was where more performance and training started to make a lot more sense and became more of a part of who I am.

Cec Busby [00:01:38]:

So was a career in health and well being in that kind of space, was that always on the cards? Is that what you wanted to do as you were a kid?

Dr Brett Lillie [00:01:46]:

No, I started off doing a science degree, doing zoology, so in my head I was destined to study dugongs and dolphins for the rest of my life. But at the age of 21, I had a friend whose father started seeing this chiropractor and was also seeing a lot of athletes at the time. And the process of helping someone actually take better care of their body in a natural way and training and rehab around, that just made sense to who I was at that time. And it was very quickly that my career or my studies changed to that of the masters of chiropractic.

Cec Busby [00:02:26]:

So bye bye, dolphins and dugongs. Hello.

Dr Brett Lillie [00:02:29]:

Bye bye.

Cec Busby [00:02:32]:

Do you miss that nature side or are you still because you're out and about in nature? You live in Tasmania now, don't you?

Dr Brett Lillie [00:02:40]:

I'm very much in nature, living on the side of the bush again and again. I'm running and living up and down a mountainside. So it's all kind of, I guess, gone full circle at the moment.

Cec Busby [00:02:53]:

It's interesting, isn't it, how we often go back to our roots? It's kind of fascinating.

Dr Brett Lillie [00:03:00]:

It is very fascinating. And that's actually a part of the book in Rediscovery is really rediscovering your own version of what an athlete actually is begins with a rediscovery process of almost going back to your own roots and finding those magical moments where you were just

lit up. And that's where the clues are to the type of athlete that you have within sight of you.

Cec Busby [00:03:24]:

Yes. So tell me a bit about the book Rediscover the Athlete Within. What made you decide to put pen to paper after all this time?

Dr Brett Lillie [00:03:32]:

Pen to paper was part of my own experiences. I had a motorbike injury when I was in my 20s, going through divorces. I've been through cancer, so I've been through, I guess, some of my own hardships, which has been a learning curve. But also, too, I ran a clinic which was very more chronic, pain orientated, especially that's the direction and the concept of an athlete more came from the people that used to come and see me. People would come in with a complaint, but often it's a very complicated story, and a lot of us have these stories. And it wasn't so much working just with their complaint of what they entered with, but also working with a story behind that person. We all carry that story. And that's kind of really where the idea of an athlete actually is. We all have an athlete within sight of us, and it's a matter of bringing that out to the surface again. Rediscovering that yeah.

Cec Busby [00:04:29]:

So that's an interesting concept. Could you explain a little more for our listeners what you mean about that? Because you kind of touched on it, about remembering those magic moments from when you're a kid. Is that part of the journey rediscovering the past to move forward?

Dr Brett Lillie [00:04:45]:

Absolutely. I mean, life is busy, life is chaos, it's jam-packed. And often we put ourselves to the bottom of that list, even though we get told all the time, we've got to exercise, we've got to take care of our good condition, of our body, our well being, our mind, our mindset. Otherwise we end up with disease, we end up old, or we carry all these excuses, I'm too old, I'm too tired, I can't do that anymore, when really the question is, is that true? And so there's a ten step process we take people through in the book that begins with Rediscovering. Who you

were as an athlete and who you can be now is creating a better version or the best version of who you can be. And that's really not age dependent. You can do that at any age. And that's some of the stories that I've learned through writing this book, some of the stories that I've had through the clinic, as well as watching people reignite passions and enjoy a much better life, much better quality of life, a life of meaning. But the book goes through other steps, looking at our why route, which is exactly what you were touching on, looking at mindset, which is a big part of life. We all understand mindset from an athlete. Often for an athlete, it's a mindset that's probably the only difference between winning and losing. But it really comes down to what your mindset is. And then setting yourself a target of who you can be in the future. That's your goal setting or what we call as your promise. And then we start to move into steps on energy. How do we develop more energy, which is really what we call a dashboard, where we get an energy profile developed. Then we move into performance at different age groups, different types of athletes need different ways to train, to perform. And then the book sort of wraps up with who you become, so it becomes a lot more about meaningfulness and celebrating our wins and the type of person you want to live life as.

Cec Busby [00:06:48]:

What if I was someone and I don't ever think of myself as an athlete, or I maybe never as a child thought of myself as an athlete. How do I just tap into that athlete within in those circumstances, even going.

Dr Brett Lillie [00:07:05]:

Through a clinic of chronic pain, there's many people I've met who sit there and say, I never really did athletes growing up. But we all started off as kids, we all started off going to parks, plane chasings, kicking balls, running around. So we all have an activity background. So I think one of the things that really we point out quite early on in the book is really what your definition of an athlete is. Most of us get kind of caught in the idea that we all have to be elite, we have to be Olympic, we have to train all these hours a week to be able to be this incredible athlete, when that's really not what the book's about. The book's about bringing activity into your life and living more of an active lifestyle, which is a guided by the research. We should be living a lot more active lifestyle to have a better well being. But also finding what your version is, is your

own definition. I mean, it could be at the age of 50, 60, going back and doing ballet and doing adult ballet. It could be in the garden, it could be hiking. There's endless possibilities of what your athlete actually might be. So I love that challenge, saying I don't have an athletic background, what do I do? That's easy. That's just starting off right at the beginning and say, well, let's peel it right back. It's there in your past.

Cec Busby [00:08:28]:

How much of it is also about having fun? Does like, injecting some fun into that process also help in terms of getting people to embark on the journey and realize their goals?

Dr Brett Lillie [00:08:39]:

Absolutely. I mean, it's not going to happen if you're not having fun. We use the word joy quite a lot. I want to see you light up. And so you're really starting to talk more about the heart, almost making your heart sing. What makes your heart young? Our youngest kids in our house are six year old twins. So for them, putting Harry Styles on first thing in the morning and dancing around the house is, for them, fun. And that's them being very athletic first thing in the morning. It's a very noisy household.

Cec Busby [00:09:14]:

Sounds like a fun household.

Dr Brett Lillie [00:09:16]:

Absolutely.

Cec Busby [00:09:17]:

So what about our business owners and sole traders that are listening? Quite a lot of them are feeling a lot of pressure at the moment. A lot of stress, probably considerable amount of burnout. How can tapping into this mindset of an athlete assist with them for their well being amidst those demands?

Dr Brett Lillie [00:09:38]:

In many ways, and that's a very big topic, we're really designed to think on our feet so often when we get caught up in our conditions, the stress, the mayhem of running a business, especially if it's a small business as well or different levels, being active is a big part of it. The more active we are, the more we work. The signal systems, our bodies, hormone systems, our nerve systems, we build out immune systems and make them stronger. So there's a lot of physiological advantages of just being active. Active doesn't mean I'm running marathons. Active could be as simple as going out for a walk around the block. And especially when we get quite stressed, and particularly in fight flight, going up out for a walk can be a great way to kind of release and burn off some of that hormone build up in our system and also relax, find a way to calm ourselves. Could be just throwing a ball. But there's also too very much psychological aspect of that as well, emotionally. So when we move more often, we connect more often, we move more with other people, we go for a walk and have a conversation, we go for a hike, we go for a picnic. And in those situations that we talk about the village concept, we start to connect more with people, we start to talk more. That could be with role models or that could just be connecting with like minded people in that sort of business scenario where we can swap ideas, help each other. And from an emotional point of view, that's almost a critical part of it these days as well, is almost we use the word mindset, but it's just not letting your head get away from yourself and getting lost in fight flight, but keep coming back to the passion of why you started that business and why that really is important for you. That overarching question. We can kind of get lost in the day to day conditions.

Cec Busby [00:11:36]:

Can heading out for a walk, doing some physical activity, does that also not just help with your physical well being, but does it also kind of build the resilience muscle as well, just walking.

Dr Brett Lillie [00:11:52]:

And living in an active lifestyle? Yeah, absolutely. I mean, you're working towards creating rituals. So resilience begins with a mindset, and then the mindset starts to grow. As we start to apply that, we start to implement that, and that's where we start to develop rituals until it

becomes a part of our lifestyle. So that's really where something as simple as walking is activity. I mean, the idea of doing 10,000 steps a day gives people something to aim towards and achieve and feel good about themselves. It's like, Well, I've done my 10,000 steps today. Excellent. Let's celebrate.

Cec Busby [00:12:29]:

If they can't make it to 10,000 initially, it's set a smaller goal and keep building on it.

Dr Brett Lillie [00:12:35]:

That's the point of an athlete. An athlete, you start from where you're at, see what level. I mean, you might be having injuries, you may have different conditions that are slowing you down. But rediscovering your athlete within is finding your version of what an athlete is. So 10,000 steps is a guide for the majority of the population, but it's really about finding what your level is. Walking may not be your thing. Let's find something else that really lights you up.

Cec Busby [00:13:05]:

You mentioned earlier thinking on your feet, like moving and thinking on your feet. Do you think that movement is also, I don't know, a key factor in helping you unlock productivity?

Dr Brett Lillie [00:13:16]:

Absolutely. There's a lot of research on movement and creativity as well. But we've all had the experience where you're sitting there and it's like, I don't know the answer. I can't work this out. I'm not sure. And you think you get up and you go to the toilet or you get up and walk outside, and suddenly as soon as you walk out the door, snap, bang, there's the answer. It comes straight to you. You've got up and started moving. Our ancestors thought on their feet, which is really where that concept that we're writing about comes from. And so the more we are on our feet, the more we start to really work our movement habits with our thinking habits. So you stuck on an idea, get up and go move. If you're trying to be creative or having a meeting, standing up and moving around, even in the research, they get people to put their arms

up in the air and shake them around for 30 seconds, then sit down. And doing something as simple as that improves and unlocks creativity, which productivity is all about innovation and being able to be creative, to think greater than where you are at the moment.

Cec Busby [00:14:26]:

Some business owners, they might feel a bit guilty about taking a break and getting physical during the day, but what you're saying is actually it can help stimulate the creative process. It can get them more productive. It can fire up the Snapsies so that they can maybe problem solve a lot better.

Dr Brett Lillie [00:14:48]:

Yeah, but even in this day and age. I mean, we've had COVID we're a lot more used to working at home, flexible hours. So the way business looks at individual workers now has changed how we measure it's not just like the factory work. You clock in, you do your hours, you clock out. It's all about productivity is a bigger part of it now. So you shouldn't feel guilty about getting up and going and having a walk around. That's the health message, that's the well being message, the mindfulness. That is a very important and growing aspect in the workplace.

Cec Busby [00:15:25]:

So what are some suggestions you might have for some specific sort of activity that you could do? Because a lot of people these days do spend a long time at their desks and I imagine as a chiropractor you see the impact of that. What are some things that they could just do? Little short exercises that might take some of that pressure off the wear and tear on their body as well?

Dr Brett Lillie [00:15:48]:

Well, I mean, the greatest thing you can do, which we were laughing about the other day, is getting someone to buy a dog. You buy a dog, suddenly your rituals have changed and you have to increase your activity levels. You've got to walk that dog. But even in the workplace, I mean, there's inconsequential movement. If you go out, going to a meeting, go a different way, take the scenic route, take it, walk an extra



block, park your car a little bit further away. There's a lot of little things you can kind of add in to increase the amount of activity you do every day. It doesn't have to be 30 minutes chunks or an hour chunk. It could be the way you get out of a chair changes rather than just getting out of the chair, you might stand up and do a stretch, imitate a cat for a little bit, but then you might also then put in breaks. So if you're going to get up and make a cup of tea or something, do something round that cup of tea as well. Maybe we have in our clinic balls. So if people are sitting around, they're passing balls and sitting in their chair and things like that as well. But also when we go into workplaces, how are meetings conducted? Changes as well? We start stop meetings in different ways. We get people moving around using having to use a marker and a whiteboard. It's really about just getting up and being more active rather than just staying in the one place the whole time.

Cec Busby [00:17:13]:

Now, let's go back to your book a little and some of those steps that you were talking about. Obviously that going back to your past understanding what motivates you in terms of your why why you're wanting to do this. What about goal setting? Is that a big part of it?

Dr Brett Lillie [00:17:32]:

Goal setting is a massive part of it. So the importance of goal setting is to make changes so you can get out of the conditions of the environment or where you're living, the people you're hanging around with. So your goal setting is making a promise, but your promise has to be stronger than something like a New Year's Eve resolution. So many of us sit there and say, look, I've got to stop drinking less, or I've got to go move more, or My wardrobe is getting a little too small for me now I've got to go buy new pants. I'm going to start losing weight. But your goal setting has to be something that's going to be big enough and ugly enough, that's going to pull you out of where you are at the moment and also compel you to want to really make that change. Change isn't easy, and so that's kind of where we concentrate. One aspect, or the middle chunk of the book, is really about how do you make change? So we need energy to make change. You've got to be able to get more energy in your body you can't just lull into. It's not just going to happen. And that's where your why comes in. Why do you really want to do this? Why is it so important to you? And that could be just asking the

question as simple as, but why do you want this? Why? But why? And then long term, Too is celebrating making it more meaningful so that when you get those steps, goal setting is really not even really about getting the goal. It's more about making the transitions on the way, because really, in goal setting, too, before you reach a goal, that's when you want to be setting the next goal and the next goal so that you kind of keep yourself moving forward. But I think a lot of it is doing it your own pace. We have a concept called slow burn, which is finding what your pace is. Not everyone has to run at life at a really hard fast pace. It's finding out what your pace is like, the way you think, the way you feel about things, and keeping it incremental. They don't have to be. I love people that run marathons. It's something that I love doing myself, is running through trails and terrain. But it doesn't mean that everyone has to run marathons. That's really the significance of finding what your own version is, and that's what you want to celebrate, is it's really enjoying a more active lifestyle.

Cec Busby [00:19:56]:

So what was your big why? Because you mentioned you'd been through some hardships. You'd had accidents, illness, personal hardships. What's your big why?

Dr Brett Lillie [00:20:08]:

One of my biggest whys really is a drawer card. Particularly I went through cancer, and that really changed my world completely. And in many ways, I feel I'm living my second life following that. Every day is a gift. But for me, that big why really comes back to family connections. My children are a big part of my why. And every day that's what I wake up with. And seeing my children, I get up early way before they do. That's my time in the morning to go train meditate. But waking up to a sleeping household just makes me feel warm and gooey and tingly and makes it all worth it. And so that's a big part of it. Even where we run workshops, that's something which we talk to people about is your why is where you're going to feel those moments that make you really tingle, it's all worth it.

Cec Busby [00:21:09]:

And that's one of your little mini wins, I imagine, is that you're around to celebrate those moments.

Dr Brett Lillie [00:21:14]:

Absolutely. And this Christmas will be a decade cancer free.

Cec Busby [00:21:19]:

Yeah. That's awesome. So what do you do to boost your energy?

Dr Brett Lillie [00:21:23]:

It's a great question. It's many topics. I do breath work myself. Personally, I do breath work. The way I eat is a big part of that. Not just what I eat, but also when I eat. There's a lot of research around nighttime, fasting and things which I also practice. But I also do a lot of stability work on myself as well to keep my frame strong and supple. I cardiovascular, so I run enjoying that. I lift weights, especially as we get older. Keeping our muscle strength is a key part to longevity. But also too, I have children that keep me sharp and on the ball, wanting to kick balls play every day is almost a gym with them as well. But in the book we look at energy from a dashboard point of view and we go through five main dials on your dashboard. We look at breath work, we look at nutrition, we look at cardiovascular as part of that. We look at sleep. Sleep is a crucial part to your energy levels and resetting yourself so you wake up feeling refreshed. And we also look at the timing of when you do things, which is circadian rhythms as a part of that. And of course being a chiropractor movement, moving is also a big part of that dial. So if you're not moving, you're going to not have the energy you want. So we work on looking at in workshops is people working on those dials and where they need to tweak which dial. It's not every dial needs to be a ten out of ten, but it's finding out where you are at the moment and what's going to work best to increase your energy levels to help you make the changes you want.

Cec Busby [00:23:04]:

And what about mindfulness? So you mentioned breath work and meditation that in the morning you do that kind of stuff before the family

is up. Is there anything else specifically that you think is a good practice to help people that are wanting to work on their mental focus?

Dr Brett Lillie [00:23:26]:

Meditation is something that's out there, but breath work is a big part of it, part of what you're talking about is the stress. We get worked up, that fight flight feeling as well. Breath work is almost one of the fastest ways to pull yourself out of that fight flight and shift that hormone system, that neural, that nervous or brain reaction to what's happening around you. But for some people, breath work, meditation isn't really their thing. That's kind of really where we talk about maybe just going for a walk and not a fast walk. You're not trying to do a time, you just might want to go for a walk for ten minutes, 20 minutes. And we have a concept in the book called the Biological gym, where you're getting off that hard, flat, straight concrete, but also shifting the body into having to walk around tree roots, following a pathway, moving in nature where it's a little bit quieter, away from that noise of cars and the bustle hustle of our towns and cities. When you start to move in nature, our body starts to move and shift into a different gear. And to me, that's mindfulness and put.

Cec Busby [00:24:39]:

Your phone away, for goodness sake, and.

Dr Brett Lillie [00:24:42]:

Put your phone away.

Cec Busby [00:24:43]:

How many times I'm out walking the dog and people are just walking past me on their phone.

Dr Brett Lillie [00:24:51]:

It is habitual. I have a six year old son who pulls his phone out of his pocket and is looking at it. He doesn't even realize that he's so habitual on it as well. So take it out of your pocket and put it in your bag.

Cec Busby [00:25:03]:

It's crazy. You're not even present, you're walking around crazy. So we're almost out of time. What would be some final sort of advice you would have for our listeners if they're wanting to embrace that athlete within? Rediscover the athlete.

Dr Brett Lillie [00:25:24]:

I think one of the big points really about the book as well is that we all have an athlete within and it's really just a matter of looking at what your definition of an athlete is and starting to really work out what your own version is. And this is really what we touch on and work through in workshops is initially that rediscovery process. Your past is a great teacher. There are many times where you've been lit up in the past and most of the times where you've really enjoyed life, you've been active, could be a holiday, could be a picnic. And really what you're doing at the end of it is not only you're taking better care of your body, but you're bringing more meaning into your life, more connection. So I think the book starts off from what we kind of see as rediscover your athlete within, so we become more active, but also really it's finding what makes you tick, what does life mean to you? And that's really where you start to find out the person you're becoming and activity is part of that person.

Cec Busby [00:26:28]:

Great advice, bret, thank you so much for joining me today. It's been a pleasure having a chat with you.

Dr Brett Lillie [00:26:34]:

Thanks for having me, CES.

Cec Busby [00:26:36]:

You're probably going to head off into the Tasmanian wilderness for a bushwalk after this. I'll be back at my desk, but I'll get out at lunchtime, walk by the water. All right? Thank you so much, Bret.

Dr Brett Lillie [00:26:51]:

Thank you.