
HE GREW UP WITHOUT A FATHER. BECOMING A SINGLE DAD TWICE FORCED HIM TO FACE HIMSELF.

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

single fatherhood, absent fathers, co-parenting, stepdad, emotional accountability, therapy for men, raising boys to men, male vulnerability, fatherhood identity, the dad project, men's mental health, trust in relationships, social media and fatherhood

SPEAKERS

Aaron Dale, Naroop Jhooti

Aaron 00:01

What do you think makes a good dad? I might say some conflicting stuff here. I think understanding the importance of the mum. To me, what makes a great dad is understanding the child comes first, not me, not my feelings, not my emotions. And that can mean sometimes that the mum may be in a better position to do something.

The child may have a better time with the mum doing this, or the child may have a better time with me. But understanding the child comes before me, that is what makes, to me, a good dad. Knowing that the mum is just as important as me, but we're both there for the child.

Naroop 00:39

Imagine being a single father: navigating life's challenges while nurturing the future. The Dad Project tells these stories of strength, sacrifice, and unbreakable bonds. In Season 1, we dive into the voices of single fathers of colour, capturing their victories and their struggles.

It's time to recognise their impact, break down the stigma, and celebrate the powerful truth of fatherhood. Join me, your host, Naroop, on this inspiring journey. Aaron, brother, thank you so much, man, for being part of this.

Naroop 01:28

I was actually recommended to you by a friend of mine. I'd seen your Instagram page, but when we came up with this idea for The Dad Project, it never quite clicked to speak to you about it. Then I went into your Instagram, I started seeing your videos and started seeing the message that you're putting out, obviously it's beautiful and it's positive.

I hit you up and I was like, 'Dude, I'd love for you to be part of this.' And I was really grateful when you responded and said you would, because obviously you've been doing so much work in this, and this project is new for us. We're trying to do some good work and spread some positive vibes out there. So I just want to say thanks for being involved, man.

Aaron 01:53

As soon as you reached out to me, it was a no-brainer, especially when we shared stories and I could feel your energy. I'm an energy person, so I could tell this was something you were passionate about. That was enough for me to say yes, one hundred percent.

Narooop 02:17

Tell me about your journey, man, about being a single dad. What I really want to know is those early days of when you became a single dad and how that made you feel. Those inner feelings and emotions.

Aaron 02:17

There are different parts to it. I was raised by just my mum. I grew up on an estate in Canning Town and it was me and my mum, but a bit deeper into the estate was my dad and his other family. My dad had a daughter with his partner, stepped out on his partner, and I'm the result of him stepping out. But we all kind of grew up in the same estate. So my dad was very, I was kind of like the child that you need to forget about.

Like he doesn't really exist. My dad would come and see me, but it was almost like you're sneaking around to see me. It was like a secret. We left the estate when I was about nine. I remember my dad came to see me when I was nine, he came, we went to KFC, got me chicken and chips, so I was content as it is. And he said to me, 'Sorry for my mistakes. It's going to be different this time. I'm going to make an effort.' I didn't see him again until I was sixteen.

Aaron 03:25

I met my eldest's mum when I was about twenty, twenty-one. We were only together for about a year. Unexpectedly she got pregnant, Amari was born, but the relationship was never really as it should be. We were both young, so it broke up early. And I remember my initial feeling was: I never wanted this, because I came from that. I always knew that even if I wasn't with the mothers of my children, I would never do what my dad did, which was not bring my kids together.

Narooop 04:06

So from a young age you were dealing with the lack of a male role model or male figure in your life. How did that make you feel, man, that sense of him kind of sneaking to see you? For you, that must have created a feeling of: am I not good enough? Why doesn't he want to spend time with me? How did that affect you?

Aaron 04:38

As a kid, you see through the eyes of a child, you're just used to your surroundings. I was just used to him not being there. As a man, when I reflect back, I realise certain things. Trust issues, I struggle if someone gives me their word and then goes back on it.

I probably react ten times worse than I should, because that's what my dad was doing: he was giving me promises and not keeping them. As a child I wasn't aware of the impact it was having, but it was having an impact, and that affected me later on in life.

Naroop 05:14

Now you've got one child you had with your girlfriend when you were twenty-one. You've got two children altogether, right?

Aaron 05:14

I've got two children. I've got Amari, who's going to be seventeen this year, and I've got Tyler, who's going to be eleven this year. I'm with neither of the mums.

Naroop 05:42

How was it with your second child? What was the feeling of knowing you were going to be a single dad again, not going to be with the mum? How did you handle that whole process?

Aaron 05:42

We were together for a lot longer, me and Tyler's mum were together for about four years, and again, unexpectedly, she fell pregnant. We broke up again. Similar pattern. So I reflected on myself: I'm like, okay, I'm the common denominator here. There are patterns of behaviour that maybe I'm not addressing.

And I remember that feeling of: okay, I've failed twice. What am I doing wrong? What am I not learning? My dad's got four children from two different relationships but he's with one of the women. In my head I was like, I'm worse than him. That really messed me up.

Naroop 06:21

What's your relationship like with your kids now?

Aaron 06:21

My relationship with my kids, to me, is amazing. What often happens is if you break up with the mothers of your children, you can start to question yourself and focus on what the woman's doing, is she going to be with someone else? I don't want anyone around my children. In my early days with Amari's mum, that's very much how I was.

I was insecure, very much focused on the woman rather than my role as a grown man. My role is to be a dad. So I put everything into my children rather than stressing about not being with them. Let me try and give them as much of me as I can.

Naroop 07:27

So Amari is seventeen, near enough an adult, so your role in his life is going to be very different now. Your younger child, Tyler, how do you get involved? How much time do you spend? What kind of stuff do you do? How do you make sure you're being the best single dad you can be?

Aaron 07:27

I've got a schedule with him. My schedule with him is every other weekend, but that's the least I'm going to see him, not the most. I think sometimes in co-parenting you have a schedule, and people stick to it as if that's the maximum. No, all that means is: this is when he's coming to Dad's. On the other weekend, he's now got a stepdad, so the stepdad's daughter comes to the house.

I understand that, you've got family time on one weekend and family time with me on another. But I collect him from school, we speak pretty much every day, he knows I'm there. This weekend it's not my scheduled time with him, but I've got stuff planned. My scheduled time will always be the least I'm going to see him, not the maximum.

Naroop 08:26

What's interesting about your story is that none of the other dads I've spoken to have a stepdad in the picture. I think that is something most dads will think about at some point, there's going to be another man involved. And you've got to know how to navigate this, especially if you've got a daughter. How did you manage that, man? How did you handle that initial period?

Aaron 08:57

With Amari's mum, I wanted to know everything, tell me who you're seeing, where you're going. It did me no good. It almost made her become more defensive and shut off completely. I think the best thing I did was trust Tyler's mum. There's so much power in that, understanding that she wants the best for Tyler, and I know she's not going to bring just anyone around him.

The moment I realised that no matter what she does, no matter what another man does, that will never change how I am, and if I focus on being the best I can be, that's all that matters. What we often do is we get so worried about what could happen that we take our eyes off the child. We're no longer as active, as energised, or as great a dad as we were, because we're focused on what's going on somewhere else. The moment I locked into my child, I didn't really care what was happening.

Naroop 10:28

I guess a lot of the time dads are holding on to memories they had with their ex, thinking: I don't want anyone else to come in and have what I had with her. But it's only natural. And I always think having an amicable, healthy relationship with the ex is important, because it's only the child that's going to get hurt.

Like Amit always says, when two elephants fight, it's the ground that gets the damage. That's what happens to the child. So I always say: not saying become best friends with your ex, but be amicable where you can. Get to a position where saying your ex's name doesn't make you angry or stressed. Learn to trust and believe, because then everyone is at peace. And to move forward, you need peace in your heart.

Aaron 10:57

Because if you're holding on to all that from the past, it's just like a big weight you're dragging with you. You're never going to run and thrive and fly and have this beautiful, abundant future that we all want. Because if we have that abundance mindset, our child's going to have it, and hopefully there'll be happiness all around.

And this is why I always say I think therapy is important for men, in some capacity. It doesn't mean you just sit with someone and release everything, there are different forms of therapy. But a lot of us as men aren't necessarily dealing with root issues. I heard this saying: we have to deal with the root, not the fruit. Sometimes we deal with something and think we've got rid of it, but it grows back because we haven't addressed the root.

Aaron 11:52

I went to therapy about two years ago. I had a number of sessions and I didn't realise how much of a weight off my shoulders that felt. Every one of us, the older we get, we're going through life with a backpack on. Something happens to you and I put a brick in that backpack, and you carry on. You just carry on, you deal with it.

By the time you get to thirty, thirty-five, you've got twenty bricks. That's a lot of weight. If you haven't at some point stopped to unload some of that, you're going to get weighed down. Therapy, for me, is allowing me to empty some of that and make the rest of the journey lighter.

Naroop 12:51

That's a beautiful analogy. Because I don't think a lot of the time we realise how much weight we've got going on in our mind, how much we're holding, and how those thoughts affect our body in a negative way. Like releasing stress chemicals. We're never meant to be in high-stress states constantly, but a lot of us live that way constantly, leading to inflammation and all the bad side effects.

It's meant to be fight or flight, you have that at one moment, it benefits you for a short period, then it goes. But we're living with it constantly because we can't let go of the pain and the trauma and the bricks we continue to carry.

Aaron 13:18

True. And I've found that the single men I've spoken to who feel the most healed and the most positive are also the most open, emotionally very open. I relate to them immediately, because I'm open. I'll immediately pick up when someone isn't open. I can be cool with you, but we're never going to get close, because I'm vibrating on a different frequency. I've realised that being closed and shut off benefits no one.

Naroop 13:46

Have you found in your experience that the men, the fathers, who have come out the other end have this more openness, they're more emotionally available, emotionally abundant and mature? Is that something you can relate to?

Aaron 14:13

I think a lot. That's the first time I've really had that shown to me, and I love that, it's made me look at things a bit differently. For me personally, the reason I'm so open is because I know it helps people. I've always said I want to use my platform, no matter how bad it makes me look, talking about my mistakes, to show men: look, I'm accountable for what happened. No one else. And I think that's the one thing I see with a lot of the men I come into contact with.

They're able to hold accountability. And that's where we can grow. If we're constantly saying it was her fault, it was his fault, it was their fault, we can't do anything with that. We're at the mercy of someone else's actions. The pattern I've seen is that a lot of the men in my circle are men that can hold themselves accountable.

Naroop 15:14

That's really powerful, man. I was recently speaking to somebody and telling them about my journey and how open I am about my life. I did have a couple of therapy sessions, but my therapy really came from speaking to other men, just chatting, being open about it. And sometimes all someone needs to do is listen, and it's enough. You've uploaded a brick. But this person said to me: your vulnerabilities will be your strengths.

And I think we've come from a time where men being vulnerable is seen as a sign of weakness. I'm not going to show you I was scared. I'm not going to show you that when I split up with my ex I cried for days. But guess what, that's not a weakness, that's a strength. And only by acknowledging that and being accountable for your actions are you ever going to be able to move forward.

Aaron 16:09

So I try to tell a lot of these dads, when I give them advice about being a single dad: be open and be vulnerable, and show who you are. One, because more people will be able to relate to you and give you help, because they know what you need. Two, you're going to feel lighter, because you've offloaded some of this. And three, you'll see a different reflection coming back.

Because now you're receiving love, people are helping you, you're feeling better about yourself. Usually it's just you battling the man in the mirror. You're looking at yourself and thinking: why are you unhappy? But you haven't opened up. When you see a different version of you reflected back, that's when you can start making that journey towards a better life.

And I always say every person should wake up and look at themselves in the mirror and be proud of that person, because that's the first person you're going to look at. If you start your day without being proud of yourself, where is the rest of the day going to go?

Narooop 16:59

That's so true. And love that person, not just be proud, because I think sometimes we connect pride with an achievement. I think just having love for yourself, and everything you've been through, the old version of you, the current version, the future version, having unconditional love, like: I've actually got you. That's powerful.

Aaron 17:27

And going back to what you said about being open, my whole platform, I'm aware that my children are going to look at it when they're older. I want them to see a man who was holding himself accountable, who was open. Because it will encourage them to do the same. And how can I expect my kids to come and talk to me if I don't have someone that I talk to? It just doesn't make sense. You lead by example.

Narooop 17:57

Exactly. So that leads us nicely onto your platform, Raising Boys to Men. Tell me a little bit about how it started, why you started it, and the kind of work you're doing. I love when someone can take their own lived experience and turn it into something that helps so many people.

Aaron 17:57

To be honest, it was so many different pages before it became this. I think it was a fitness page ages ago. Then I went on a friend's podcast and we were just having a conversation. It was the first podcast I'd been on, and I started talking, I felt like something came over me and said: talk about your dad. I don't know why, because I'd never done it before.

The conversation got directed that way and I was just open and honest. Then the podcast went out and I had quite a few people comment and ask questions. So I was like: okay. I did another video, and I say to you, this is the most organic thing ever. It wasn't my intention to create this. It was being open and honest, and seeing the feedback that I got. And from there: let me do this, let me do this. Within two, two and a half years, I'd gone from a thousand followers to a quarter of a million.

Naroop 19:40

It's unbelievable. When I saw you'd got a quarter of a million followers, I immediately knew: this guy's doing something right. Then I looked at the content and it's just so authentic and real. It wasn't like: let me get the best production and the best cameras and lighting. It was real, it felt like I was sat there with you and you were just chatting to me. That kind of honest, genuine content is what people want to see now. And you were probably ahead of the curve. You started it, and it came naturally. It wasn't a gimmick to get followers. It just felt natural to what you wanted to do.

Aaron 20:07

It felt natural. And then within that, I started having ideas: how can I help people? How can this conversation make someone else think? Have you always wanted to help people?

Naroop 20:07

Have you always wanted to help people?

Aaron 20:47

I've always wanted to help young people. I didn't really have a figure growing up, my mum had a partner for maybe a year when I was in Year Seven or Eight, but he was abusive. So the examples I had of men were: a father figure who wasn't involved, and another man who came into the house and was abusive. I had no real positive examples within the home. Obviously I had friends' fathers, my barber, people like that. But I just realised there are so many children probably going through the same thing. So it was this desire to help young people.

Naroop 21:20

What is one of the most common questions or concerns you get from men who DM you? Is there a pattern, something single dads are commonly facing?

Aaron 21:20

When it comes to fathers, the common thing often relates to another man being around their child. Their child's mum is seeing someone, and she wants to introduce him, and there's this worry about how that impacts the dad. When I speak to those men, I say: okay, say she does introduce someone, what does it change between you and your son or daughter?

Nothing. Say they get married, what does it change? Nothing. When I focus their mind on that, they realise: unless the woman is being difficult and preventing you from seeing your child, the only one in control of your relationship with your child is you. If you want to see your child and the door is open, go and see your child.

But we can become so defensive, so annoyed by the thought of maybe we wanted it a certain way and it's no longer that. We had a vision of how our family would look, it's broken down, and we struggle to let go. Now anything that comes our way, we're almost defensive against it, rather than accepting: this isn't the image I had, but it can still be a beautiful image. Let me do the best within this.

Naroop 23:04

That's amazing, man. My sister-in-law said something to me when I first became a single dad, she's spiritual, a yoga teacher, and she said: Naroop, let it go and let it flow. You can't control that. And if you do try to control it, you're probably going to get the police involved and it'll pull you further away. So if you can't control it, just let it go.

Aaron 23:33

There's so much in that. I believe in vibrating at a certain frequency. If you're trusting, you're vibrating a different frequency, which your partner can feel. You can walk into a room and know within two seconds if someone is off, you don't know what it is, but something's there. If you've got trust, you vibrate at a different frequency. And I always say: treat your partner how you would want them to treat you. I've lived by that the whole time.

If I want her to be cool with me when I'm with another woman, I've got to be cool with her when she's with another man. Otherwise it's not going to work. You lead by example and there's respect there. You've got to maintain that respect. I'm not saying it's easy, there are circumstances where people have been abusive, things which people might feel are unforgivable. But if you try to find a way to heal for the greater good of your family and your children, because you don't want it to keep going on for generations, I think that's what you have to do.

Naroop 24:55

When I saw your platform and saw the kind of work you're doing, I was further inspired to do good through this. I had an idea, but seeing what you were doing made me feel like I could do so much more. Obviously we're photographers and filmmakers, we love raising awareness for topics, and I've always wanted to help people. When you were young, did you think you'd be doing something like this? What did you think your life would look like, and what do you think a younger version of yourself would think of who you are now?

Aaron 25:22

When I was young, I had no real idea. I didn't have someone I looked to and thought: I love that, I want to be like that. I wasn't even aware of what you could be. I always say this, I asked my

children what they want to be when they grow up, and I remember: they probably don't know what they can be. They might think of football, or certain basic things we see. But do they know about being an accountant? A CEO? I had no idea what I wanted to be. I was quite lost. I've just always attempted things if I felt like I could do them. I would never have thought I'd be here even five years ago. But do you ever reflect and look back and think: if all those things hadn't happened, I wouldn't be doing this, and maybe this was always my calling?

This platform could not have existed if my relationships had worked out. If either of those relationships had worked out, it wouldn't have existed. And it was my last relationship, which ended just before the platform started to take off. I'll never speak publicly about that person, but that situation hurt me.

And I think that pain pushed me to create certain content, and the platform grew. I always say: if one door doesn't close, the other won't open. Some of us are trying to hold two doors open at once. The moment you let go of one, no matter how much I cared for that person, this would never have happened.

Naroop 27:41

I've asked every dad the same question, and you probably get asked this a lot too. If a dad came to you and said: 'Man, I've just split up with my ex. I'm a single dad now. I don't know how to deal with this, the pain of losing a partner, and now realising I'm not going to see my child as much. I've got anxiety. I've got depression. I'm struggling.' What do you say to a dad like that? What's your go-to advice in terms of giving them hope, coping mechanisms?

Aaron 28:14

I think the first and hardest part is acceptance. Depression lies in the past, anxiety lies in the future, what are we doing right now? When we're feeling anxious, angry, annoyed, frustrated, we can make reactional decisions in those moments that impact us further down the line. We have to be mindful of how we're reacting.

If someone does something to you and you react instantly, your whole life could change based on that reaction. So take time for yourself. Even if you're still living in the home and you know the relationship isn't working out, there's nothing wrong with taking a step back to compose yourself and get together before you make any decisions.

Maybe go to a friend's house, a family member's house. Collect yourself before you decide anything. And the generic things, I know some people don't like hearing it, but: make sure you're going to the gym, make sure you're eating, read something positive. What are you consuming? When you go on social media, is it having a negative impact? What are you watching on TV? What are you listening to?

Are the people in your circle negative or positive? Your diet isn't just food, it's your environment, the people around you, what you're consuming in any capacity. And even when things are going well, keep working on yourself. Sometimes we stop doing the things that benefited us because we're in a good place. Always make sure you're working on yourself.

Naroop 30:19

That's really good advice. And I always say similar things. Because when you ask some people how to deal with it, they might say: get your legal stuff in order, get a fair split of the money, speak to a good lawyer. For me, that stuff can happen, you might have to give more money than you want, but you can make that money back.

But if you disrespect yourself, or go down a road you can't come back from, that's done. If you damage your health beyond your baseline, there's no amount of money going to fix that. So I'm almost like: just get your affairs in order. You might have to pay an extra ten, fifteen grand, but you can make that back in your lifetime.

The time that you neglect yourself, the time you do something irreversible, or your kid sees something they'll never forget and will always associate with you, money's not going to change that.

Aaron 31:39

I doubled down in my gym work, my reading. I didn't drink for a long time. I knew that if I got drunk, I could lose my conscious state of thinking positively. I might send the wrong message, I might do something which isn't right. So I didn't, until I felt I was balanced. Those things are so important. And what gave me that clarity?

My dad had told me from a young age to read certain books, Napoleon Hill, Think and Grow Rich, positive mental attitude books. He was always my hero. My first mentor. And he said something so powerful when I told him about my situation. I said: Dad, I'm going to get a divorce. The first words he said were: Naroop, how you respond to this will define who you are as a man. That was it. No 'Oh don't worry, son.' Just: how you respond to this will define who you are as a man. That's all he had to say. I was like: okay, I've got to treat this like a man. And that doesn't mean getting angry. It means respect, calm, cool. If me and you can no longer be together, that's fine.

I'm still going to be proud of myself. Anyone that speaks to me, they're like: man, I don't know how you did it. But I just hold myself to high self-esteem. High self-worth. Not arrogance, I am who I am. I've got respect for myself, and I want to conduct myself in a way that is inspirational to others. I want my daughter to be able to look at me and think: that's a man right there. And she'll hold any man in her life to that standard, whether she realises it or not.

Naroop 33:36

And maybe I should give my dad a bit more credit. I always tell my parents: without you I couldn't do this. In Indian culture, extended family, I leaned on them. I was like: you guys have got to help me. And my mum and dad both said: we've got you, don't worry. You need that comfort. And obviously this project, The Dad Project, specifically about single dads of colour, is about breaking the stigma that if you're a single dad of colour, in some way you didn't put in enough or you did something wrong.

I remember when I told someone for the first time I was getting a divorce. They said: what did you do? It wasn't me. But that's the assumption. Have you faced that, just because you're a person of colour, people assume you're not a good dad, that you're neglectful, that you put yourself first?

Aaron 34:42

Not in my personal life, but on social media, putting myself out there the way I do, there are a lot of comments like: what did he do? He must have done this. There is so much negativity. And that used to consume me. I could see a hundred positive comments, and that one negative would be embedded in me.

I'd feel I had to change their view. I'd find myself writing out extensive messages trying to argue with someone who could just be a bot, they might not even exist. I had to become comfortable with knowing: I know what type of dad I am. My kids know what type of dad I am. What anyone else thinks is irrelevant. It might bruise my ego. I might not like the fact that people have a negative opinion of me. But it really doesn't change me.

Naroop 35:52

What do you think makes a good dad? Because certain people think: oh, I'm a good dad. What do you actually think makes a good father, to a daughter or a son?

Aaron 35:52

I might say some conflicting stuff here. I think understanding the importance of the mum. I know, I wasn't expecting that either. I think we don't have to dislike that person. We might not even speak to them. They may not be the best mother.

But understanding that that woman plays a massive role, whether it's going to have a negative or positive impact, ideally, you want to be a team. The most pointless thing I see in football is when players on the same team argue. I saw it the other day, Chelsea players arguing over who was going to take the penalty. You're on national TV, on the same team, arguing, rather than thinking: what's going to benefit the team?

And to me, what makes a great dad is understanding the child comes first. Not me, not my feelings, not my emotions. That can mean sometimes the mum may be in a better position to do something, or the child may have a better time with me. But understanding the child comes

before me, that is what makes a good dad. Knowing the mum is just as important as me, but we're both there for the child.

Naroop 37:38

And so many people struggle with that. That's probably the number one thing, this hold of resentment that can eat them up. Ten, fifteen years down the line they're still talking foul of the other parent, and the kid suffers because the kid loves them both. The person you dislike is loved by your child.

Aaron 38:06

What do you tell men who are in a new relationship, and their partner doesn't like that they're maintaining a healthy, amicable relationship with the mother of their child? There should always be boundaries in co-parenting relationships. But if your co-parenting relationship now needs to change because either one of you is with someone new, your relationship probably shouldn't have been like that in the first place.

You were probably a bit too close, a bit too comfortable. But if a partner comes in and tries to break what is a relatively respectable co-parenting relationship, I personally wouldn't want that person as a partner. It's all about boundaries.

Naroop 38:36

Do you think there's a lack of positive male role models for young men? I was reading this book that talks about how men have changed over the years. Pre-Industrial Revolution, boys would go to the farm or work the land with the dads, uncles, cousins, they'd have that male time. Then the Industrial Revolution happened, the dad started going out to work, the mother started raising the child a lot more.

And when the dad came back from work, he was tired. He never got that time to really bond or understand what it meant to be a man. According to this book, that has changed how men act, and sometimes men lack that positive role model, either because they haven't got a dad, or because the dad wasn't present enough to teach them what's important later in life. Do you feel that's the case?

Aaron 40:09

I don't think there's a lack of male role models. I think there's an increase in negative ones. Because all of our children, at a young age, are going to have access to social media. And I always say: even for women where there isn't a father around, you need to do your best to get your child in front of a positive male figure.

Because they're going to gravitate towards someone, a girl will, a guy will. They're going to gravitate towards some sort of male, whether that's Andrew Tate or some social media character. When I was growing up, the only people I looked up to, because my dad wasn't around, were TV

shows like My Wife and Kids, certain hip-hop stars, but they were all American-based. Now you can pick up your phone and there's someone in your area doing something, and you can say: I want to be like that. So we need to be careful who our children are gravitating towards. That's why we as men, as fathers, need to make sure we're the man our

children are looking to the man our children are speaking to and having certain conversations with, rather than it being someone else.

Naroop 41:26

So what on your platform, Raising Boys to Men, is the most popular content? What kind of messages or information tends to really hit?

Aaron 42:00

The most popular content is always to do with finances. Anything child-maintenance related. It's a taboo topic, people don't like talking about it. I was quite open: I had conversations with my eldest where I spoke to him about child maintenance. From his point of view, he wasn't aware of what goes on behind the scenes.

He didn't know I was giving his mum money every month that goes towards his upbringing. So I felt it was important to have those conversations. Anything to do with finances tends to go viral quite quickly. I guess it comes down to how you are as a man, because men do try to control as much as they can, and one thing they feel they can control is finances.

Naroop 43:09

That's interesting. For me, I look at the financial stuff and think: I've got to give the money, and I'm more about emotion, heart, peace of mind, state of mind. I just want peace, man. If I'm quibbling over an extra twenty pounds every month, how am I ever going to build the things I'm building?

Aaron 43:38

Your mindset isn't normal, it's a beautiful mindset, but it's not the standard. It's been amazing chatting to you today. I'm so glad we were able to have an open, honest conversation. It feels like, even though we've got cameras here, it doesn't feel like that. For me, I'm a big believer in fate. I'm a big believer in loving your path, that whatever has happened to you has to happen.

And the more you try to question things that have no solution, the more you get stuck. It's only about: okay, I'm here now. What am I going to do with this? Loving that this journey was all meant for you, as difficult as it was, you've probably come out stronger. I know I've come out stronger. I'm a totally different man from before. So listening to your journey and seeing you, honestly, it's a true inspiration. I think everyone should try to leave their mark on people in a positive way.

And one of the best ways to do it is just to be open, vulnerable, share, and teach. Because we're all teachers in life. I've learned something speaking to all the dads. And knowing that you don't know it all, I think that's a really humbling and beautiful position to be in.

Naroop 44:59

Thank you for coming down today, bro. We're going to take some portraits of you now, and be part of the project. But having you here, man, has been a real learning for me, and I think everyone's going to benefit from listening to this conversation.

Aaron 45:24

Thank you, brother. On behalf of every dad that's probably been here, thank you for putting this together. You're giving us a voice. And I know this is going to do well. Big yourself up.