



Achieve Your Goals Podcast #147 - Is the AVID morning ritual better than the SAVERS? (Interview with Mike Merriam)

Nick: Welcome to the Achieve Your Goals podcast. You're listening to the podcast guaranteed to take your life to the next level faster than you ever thought possible. In each episode, you'll learn from someone who has achieved extraordinary goals that most haven't. He's the author of the number one bestselling book, *The Miracle Morning*. A Hall of Fame business achiever, international keynote speaker, ultra-marathon runner and the founder of Best Year Ever coaching. Here is Hal Elrod.

Hal Elrod: All right. All right. All right, welcome to the Achieve Your Goals podcast. This is your host and your friend Hal Elrod, formerly Yo Pal Hal, that was mom's nickname that she gave me. Today I'm excited for this interview. Sometimes I bring on guests and they're not necessarily thought leaders, they're just people that have achieved amazing goals. The difference in that is that people that have achieved amazing goals, sometimes being able to articulate how you did that, right? Like how do they do that or even more so what are the actionable lessons and strategies that I can extract from what allowed me to achieve these amazing goals that are then simple for anyone listening to achieve, right?

That's not necessarily easy to do but when you're interviewing someone that is a thought leader, someone who is, you know, whether they've written a book or they're a speaker. They've essentially, they've distilled their experience and their knowledge in a way that is simple for other people to internalize and for other people to implement, right? That helps anyone that's on the receiving end of the knowledge to really get value, get a higher level of value from it because you can take action on what you hear.

Anyway, the reason I'm sharing all that is who I'm going to bring on the call today, the podcast. Mike Merriam, he is what I would consider a thought leader. I always do preparation with my guests before we jump on the podcast and so I'm clear on what they're going to talk about and that way I'm in the know. If I have any thoughts or suggestions or questions I can ask those. I'm excited for today's interview because you're going to get a very distinct, distinct strategies and set of questions today and a morning ritual. I mean, you're going to get some very concrete ideas that you can walk away with, that you can implement immediately to start to see results in your life, business whatever you apply this to.

Here we go, here's the formal intro for Mr. Mike Merriam. He is a husband, he is a father, and he's an author. He's a bio hacker and a life enthusiastic. Mike's work is focused on showing people how to stop living in the unhappy, unfulfilled and disengaged majority by taking the time to understand and answer six fundamental questions. However, that's not where the work ends, in fact it's really where it begins. Mike's work has

been featured on many podcasts including Business Revolution and entrepreneur On Fire. It is best represented in his new book, Closer Than You Think, which I just pre-ordered on Amazon the other day. Closer Than You Think and the Tagline is six fundamental questions to ignite your personal evolution. It is my great honor and pleasure to introduce to you Mike Merriam. Mike, how are you doing buddy?

Mike: Hey Hal, I'm doing great, man. Thanks for that intro. It's funny because I didn't know where you were going with that and I didn't know if I was going to be the thought leader or the-

Hal Elrod: The guy that-

Mike: Or the guy that may or may not have accomplished a goal at some point, but that's really cool.

Hal Elrod: Oh, that's funny. Actually dude, you have always been impressive but you took it up a notch. We were at the mastermind recently and when you asked to interview Jon Berghoff and I was in the back of the room, I was like, "Mike's bad ass." Dude, you were impressive, man. That was really really cool.

Mike: Yeah, that was a real highlight, man. I was really appreciative too. You and Jon and everybody there gave me the opportunity to do that. That was a blast and it was great.

Hal Elrod: You definitely knocked it out the park and earned another opportunity. If you ask me, if you ever ... How can I? It was your initiative to ask that, if you ever come to ask, "How can I do anything? I'm going to say yes, I'm just good to go.

Mike: Well, for the rest of the interview, I'm going to be mentally checked out thinking about what I can ask you for.

Hal Elrod: Nice, all right, good. That's fair. All right, so there's three areas that I want to focus on today. First is, I'm going to ask you the question that I always ask my guests about that first defining goal that you achieved that gave you the evidence and the confidence that you could achieve bigger and better goals. We're going to talk about your morning ritual and then we're going to go into the six fundamental questions to ignite your personal evolution. Let's start with that first defining goal, Mike. What was that for you?

Mike: Yes. It's really interesting, it goes back to my mediocre past. I always say I lived a very mediocre life until one day when everything changed. I guess if I went back and really considered what was something I did during that mediocre period of my young adulthood where where one of my strengths really shined through and I accomplished a goal that changed my trajectory or at least the way that I thought about myself and what I was capable of, I'd have to go back to when I was in high school. I was a terrible student. It wasn't because I

couldn't do the work, it was just because I really didn't put in the effort or the energy.

I graduated near the bottom of my class and I went to a two year community college afterwards and really was the same story. Took three years to get through it and just basically had like a D average and really should have been doing something else. I decided after I'd graduated from community college to move to the New York City area to apply to university down there. Of course, right away my application was denied. I didn't have the grades to get in and I wasn't about to take no for an answer. I actually got the Dean of the school I was applying to on the phone and I got him to agree to meet with me face to face. I drove down there and I met with him for three hours and went from a hard no to a probationary acceptance and got into the school. Essentially talked my way into a major university after being denied multiple times.

That's when I realized that, you know what? I've got some communication skills here and the ability to affect people in a way that I need to put to work for me in the future. That was really the first time that I ever saw that strength in me and I've relied on that ever since.

Hal Elrod:

We could end the interview now. I mean, that's one of the greatest, that story is one of the greatest lessons that any of us can learn. Which is not taking no for an answer. That you create your own reality, not just internally but externally, right? I mean, you owned that. That's awesome, man. I didn't know that, so very cool.

Mike: Absolutely.

Hal Elrod: All right, cool. Also you didn't know I was going to ask you that until like three minutes ago, so that was really good.

Mike: Well, I forgot about it. I'm glad you reminded me, I'm going to tell everybody about that.

Hal Elrod: Yeah, that's got to be in anything. In the speaking, in the book, all of it. Cool.

Mike: First bullet point on the resume.

Hal Elrod: Yeah, that's right. All right, let's talk about your morning ritual. What I love is that you have your own acronym. This is the Avid, A-V-I-D morning ritual. It's funny because your name is Mike Merriam, and so I was joking. I always see, like on Skype right now I've got MM showing up, and I was thinking Miracle Morning. I thought, "Oh, for sure, Mike does the miracle morning, it's his initials." Now, you've got your own ritual and you've been doing it before you ever, before I ever wrote the book. Talk about this, what is this avid morning ritual?

Mike: Yeah, absolutely. Avid actually was something I created while I was doing Miracle Morning, so I believe-

Hal Elrod: Okay. All right, all right, I'll take it. I wanted your book, right? Okay, good.

Mike: Yeah, you're the originator, man. I read your book long before I met you and I came into your world and it was, and truly, you know this is not me just lifting you up because I'm on your show. I really mean this. It was literally the most practical life changing book for me that I've ever read. I started doing miracle morning right away and everything that my life has become since then came out of the ideas, the concepts and the growth that I achieved during those miracle mornings. Of course, when you love something so much what do you do? You change it and throw it away and move on to something new, right?

In creating my work, Hal, let me ask you a question first. You've been to seminars a million times, you've seen speakers, you've gone through tremendous personal growth, how many times do you find yourself going to something, getting really motivated and then losing that motivation over time?

Hal Elrod: Sure, all the time.

Mike: Right, it's the most common problem in personal growth.

Hal Elrod: Sure.

Mike: I was trying to find a way to solve that. My work is predicated on that old Henry David Thoreau quote that, "We've all heard the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation." I postulate in my book that they're closer than they think. These people who live these quietly desperate lives are closer than they think to revolutionize in their lives. Really going through that personal growth is one thing but maintaining the change is the hard thing. That's why I developed avid. If you look up the word avid in the dictionary, the definition is characterized by enthusiasm and vigorous pursuit. This word that so clearly and beautifully describes how we should all attack the life, the status quo, and build the life of our dreams, it makes the perfect acronym for the daily practice of doing so.

It stands for anchor, visualize, intentional action and debrief. It's a modification of the miracle morning. Essentially in the morning, anchoring in the language, the growth triggering language of your internal dialogue and your external language and the emotions that you want to feel that day, and the reactions that you're going to have that day. Anticipating those. Visualizing, it's the same visualizations as the miracle morning. Visualizing yourself as the best version or the desired version of yourself.

Then going through the day acting intentionally, asking yourself throughout the day, "Is what I'm doing driving me

closer or further away from my goal or from my radical vision for the future?" Then finally at night, the debrief. The D in avid stands for debrief. That's essentially the journaling part of the miracle morning and where you're going to sit down with your journal and answer some basic questions about what are you grateful for today. What went well, what didn't go well and how could you have effected it? Most importantly, how have you changed it all today, how have your values, your strengths, your priorities or your vision for your future changed at all today? Then, what are you intending to anchor and visualize again for tomorrow?

Hal Elrod: Achieve Your Goals podcast listeners, I told you it was going to be a midi structured call today or podcast. Mike, dude, I love that, man. Powerful. Anchor, anchor in the language and the emotion that you need to optimize your day. Visualize, visualize yourself at your best as you go throughout your day. This is really just the Avid morning ritual. It's an all day ritual, right? I mean, it sounds like it starts in the morning but it carries throughout the day, and then the debrief is at the end of the day, yeah?

Mike: Yeah. I've got an addictive personality so Miracle Morning wasn't enough, I had to carry it down throughout the whole day.

Hal Elrod: Yeah, you said you're one upper, I'm just kidding. I love it. Visualize, intentional action, the way that I interpreted that in making those value added decisions in how you spend your time or invest your time as you go throughout your day. Making sure they're getting you moving in the direction that

you want to go. Then the debrief at the end of the day, the journaling at the end and those questions that you shared, man. I love that ritual. Hey, is that in the book? Is that in, I suppose it is.

Mike: Yeah, it is. Yeah. The book covers really the six fundamental questions and that sparks the change, but to maintain the change, it's the using the Avid process every day to maintain that change and keep you moving towards those goals.

Hal Elrod: I love that. Love that. Because the six question is essentially something that you could answer in one sitting. Which hopefully our listeners will be doing that. The Avid process is how to carry it forward. All right, I know this is in your book but I'd love it if you're open to sharing them. What are the six fundamental questions to ignite your personal evolution?

Mike: Yeah, absolutely. The questions, I'll say the questions are very broad questions. Beneath those questions is a subset, a multiple layering of additional questions.

Hal Elrod: Okay.

Mike: It's something that takes some time to really authentically understand an answer and go through the process, but it's something that you can get started on immediately in one sitting. It could carry on for long periods of time and grow and

evolve and adapt with you. The six questions essentially are, what are your core values-

Hal Elrod: Wait, I'm going to cut you off real quick.

Mike: Okay.

Hal Elrod: Before you, and I should have set this up better, but before you share the questions, what's the end game here? Like if somebody's listening, "Great, yeah, quality questions, yada, yada, yada. Okay, you're going to ask questions ... " What's the end game? Why are these questions, why are they so important? why should somebody schedule an hour in the next forty eight hours, or thirty minutes or whatever you recommend? Why should they schedule time to answer these questions? What's in it for them?

Mike: Well, anybody who's not entirely happy and fulfilled in life. Who wants more, who feels that they are capable of more than you're achieving but doesn't know how to bridge that divide. Doesn't know where to start but knows they either want and or are capable of more, these questions will help you figure out who you are, what's important to you and then how to go get it. I'll say that I think the reason why people ... I don't want to say that personal development programs don't work, because they do. People tend to not make them work for themselves. I think the major reason behind that is that they don't build a foundation that's personal to them to grow off of and they don't have a framework that's personal to them to grow within.

That's what these questions really do, is they personalize the framework and the foundation and the framework for you to grow in so that you as an individual are becoming what you want to be. What's important to you and not following a prescribed methodology that may work for somebody else, but not really incorporate that well or align that well into your life.

Hal Elrod: Okay, awesome. Let's, you probably already knew this, but as you go through the questions I'd love to go one by one and then free to give us examples of what the answers might look like, or maybe you share your own answers to these questions. I don't know, but I'd love for our listeners to just have a really concrete, "Okay, here's the question, here's why it's important and here's an example of what the answers could look like," so they've got something to go off of.

Mike: Absolutely. I think we can do that.

Hal Elrod: Okay.

Mike: The first question is, what are your core values and why? When I say why, this is really a step that goes deep. It's a process known as the five wise, which I'm pretty sure you're familiar with. It's an iterative process that essentially asked the question why up to five times or however many times it takes to get down to the root belief in something. I'll give you an example

of this. I was sitting on a rooftop in San Diego back in March, after one of your events actually.

Hal Elrod: That sounds like me, I think I was on a rooftop in San Diego in March, yeah.

Mike: I believe you were. I was talking to a, I think he's a mutual friend, Josh Trent.

Hal Elrod: Yeah, sure.

Mike: Josh, it was the first time I had met Josh. He had asked me about some of these and then he said, "Hey man, walk me through these five whys with my values." I said, "All right Josh, tell me what one of your values is." He said, "Expression." I asked him, "Why?" He says, "Because by expressing myself I can avoid the inevitable pain that I'll feel by not expressing myself." I ask him why it's important to avoid feeling that pain. I forget what he says but we get to the question, we get to why number four, and he literally says, "Because it's the meaning of life." I'm like, "Whoa, did you see what just happened here?" We went from expression being a value of yours because it helped you avoid pain to expression being a value of yours because it's the meaning of life. Now, how much more weight does your expression of value carry for you in your decision making process as you go through your life.

With question one, what are your core values? You five why each one of those values to get down to the real weighted answer of why is this value truly important to me. Expression is a good example of that. Question number two is, what are your unique strengths? Your unique strengths are personal to you. They're the things that you've been complimented on, the things that you enjoy doing because you are competent, the things that you tend to always have success with. In addition to you know the strengths that are unique to yourself, it's important to also recognize the strengths that are emerging in you. That are there that you don't always see as a great strength of yours, but when you're called upon you can pull them up and put them to use.

Hal Elrod: Can communication be for you, for example, when you realize that in that interaction with the dean or whomever it was that you were talking your way into letting you, giving you a chance to get into that college, that university? Was that when you identified, for example, "Communication is a strength of mine, I need to put that to work."?

Mike: Yeah, that's exactly right. That's exactly right. Then the third question is, what are your top priorities or motivations? In other words, what makes you most naturally come alive, what is it that you want out of life? Those three things, the first three questions, the values, the strengths and the priorities, that represents your positive core. You use this positive core to outline a radical vision for the future. The next three questions are what you answer to outline that vision. Those questions, I'll run through them quick and I'll give you a metaphor for how this works.

Hal Elrod: Okay.

Mike: Those questions are, once you've got your values, strengths and priorities, or your positive core figured out, you ask yourself, what might a truly fulfilling life look like? Why might it look like that? In other words, what are the characteristics of it that make it so, and how might you go about actually designing and living that life? Those are the next three questions. In our example we used expression as a value. We used communication as a strength, and let's say that one of our top priorities, for me personally, something that really fills me up is effecting positive change in the world.

I've got my positive core here pretty well complete. I may create a radical vision of myself rather than continuing in the business that I'm in, which is running a branch of a mortgage company. Maybe I'll take my positive core, and the way that I could use that to revolutionize my life and create a radical future is maybe I could become a consultant that teaches organizations around the world to end that conversations in their internal dialogue that trigger growth, right? In this way I'm allowing organizations to use expression and to communicate using language internally that drive them to be more socially conscious and create positive change in the world.

That's how this all comes together. Your values, your strengths, your priorities, they represent your positive core. Metaphorically, you can see this as if you're a painter, that's your palette. That's your raw material. Your radical vision, that's your brush, right? Life is canvas. If you've got a vision

but no clear understanding of your positive core, your values, strengths and priorities, you've got a brush but you've got no palette. Your canvas is going to remain blank. Now, if you've got an understanding of that positive core but you lack vision, you've got a palette and no brush, and you can't paint a masterpiece without a brush. I think this is where most people operate.

Maybe they've got an incomplete palette at best that's made up of limiting beliefs or outdated rules they've set for themselves and self doubts and they certainly have no brush. They proceed to randomly apply whatever materials they can piece together or they've been given on their canvas using their fingers, right? What comes out of this? What's the result? It's an unrefined, sloppy, childish, one dimensional work. Life is a member of the unhappy, unfulfilled and disengage majority, but it doesn't have to be that way. When you combine your positive core with your radical vision and you keep moving forward, you can stack and align your strengths in a way that make your weaknesses obsolete or inconsequential.

When you have a refined positive core, you've got a world class palette. When you've got a radical vision, you've got all the brushes you need to apply the best of you to the canvas of life, and the result will be a masterpiece. Because you can't fail Hal, as you know you cannot fail when you act in alignment with your values, your strengths and your priorities. You can only learn, grow and reiterate.

Hal Elrod: That's right. It's only a matter of time, right? The only failure is giving up, but if you keep moving in that direction, and aligned with your positive core toward your radical vision, it's only a matter of time. You should be a writer Mike, you've got a way with the words, buddy.

Mike: I just wrote a book actually.

Hal Elrod: Oh, hey, well, that's awesome. Now, when's the official launch date? I'm thinking of this podcast, because I know, I pre-ordered it the other day, so I know it's available on Amazon, right?

Mike: Yeah, it is available for pre-ordering on Amazon in Kindle format and in paperback. The official launch date is November, the 14th. The reason it's so far out is because there's two free courses that come with the book, and I want to make sure that those free courses are as well built and value packed as possible. That just takes a little bit more time.

Hal Elrod: Yeah, no, beautified. I planned on creating a course for the Miracle Morning, but the release date for the book was announced 12/12/12, and I was attached to that date. I had announced, it was, well, 12/12/12, there wasn't really a chance to redo it. Then that time came when there was no course, but, man, I'm glad you're supporting the book with the Course as well. That's awesome. Mike, dude, really powerful powerful powerful stuff today, as I predicted earlier. It's not predicted, I had an idea of what you were going to talk about.

Going into the episode today, I was excited knowing what you were going to share. I hope our listeners, I would imagine they got as much value as I've gotten. Is there anything else, anything to add? If not, what's the best place to get a hold of you or get a hold of the book?

Mike:

Yeah, I mean the only thing I would add is that it's really, if there's one takeaway from this, right? Because I think in order to really get the value of the six fundamental questions and the avid process, you really need to go through the process of being led. That course is going to be available soon to walk people through. The most important takeaway for today is that our words create our worlds. Make sure you're using language in your internal dialogue. Language and conversation with yourself that are creating and driving the internal culture for growth, for the person that you want to become, right?

Because the language and the conversation, the language we use, the conversations we have with ourselves internally, they give us images in our minds of how we see the world and how we see our future. The images that we see in our minds are what our future becomes. It all starts with the way we talk to ourselves. That's a great way to walk away today with an actionable step

Hal Elrod:

Very very very very profound, man. Thank you for that. I'm going to see you, is our next time we're going to see each other, is it at Best Year Ever Blueprint?

Mike: Let's see, I will see you, I think probably at Best Year already ...
No, I'm going to see you-

Hal Elrod: The Dad's Retreat?

Mike: At the Dad's Retreat.

Hal Elrod: Awesome, man. Cool, I'll see you at the Jon Vroman's Front Row Dad's Retreat, that's right.

Mike: Yeah.

Hal Elrod: Achieve Your Goals podcast listeners, grab a copy of Mike's book, Closer Than You Think on amazon.com, highly recommend it. I haven't read it yet, obviously it's not out. It may be out by the time this airs, it's definitely available for pre-order, because I did grab my copy. Mike, thank you so much for adding so much value. I just honor you for sharing your gifts with the world and going through this process on your own and now helping other people do the same.

Mike: Thank you so much for having me, Hal. If any of your listeners want to reach out to me, you can go to personalevolutionplan.com and sign up. I will e-mail you an

overview of the six fundamental questions of what we just talked about today. That's personalevolutionplan.com. If you prefer, if it's easier, you can just text the word evolve to 44222, and so you open up your little message app, right? You write the word evolve and you send it to the number 44222. I can then deliver you an overview of everything that Hal talked about today.

Hal, I just want to and by saying thank you. You've been a huge mentor to me, you are hugely responsible for much of the growth in my life and I appreciate your friendship and your mentorship and everything that you do, man.

Hal Elrod:

Cool. It's an honor, Mike. Thank you and I'm glad. I'm grateful for the round and round we go helping each other, so very very cool. Achieve Your Goals podcast listeners, thank you so much for tuning in. Before you go, if you are not yet registered, join us in San Diego for the Best Year Ever Blueprint, I invite you to go to bestyeareverlive.com and check that out. Check out the video, check out the site, secure your spot. The first year we sold out about three weeks in advance, last year we sold out four weeks in advance. As of the recording, we haven't really done any promotion of the event itself, or we haven't done much other than on the podcast here. I know we have two hundred of the spots gone and we're about three months out. I would love to spend a few life changing days with you in San Diego. Thank you for tuning in, I appreciate you so much and I will talk to you next week. Take care, buddy.

Nick: Thank you so much for tuning into this episode of the podcast. You can find links to all the resources mentioned in this episode as well as all the past podcast episodes over at halelrod.com/podcast. Also if you haven't done so yet, please go subscribe to the podcast on iTunes by going to halelrod.com/iTunes, clicking the little subscribe button and then if you would, please leave a rating and a review. Because rating and reviews truly are the best way for more people to find out about the podcast and decide if this is the one for them. All right, until next week it's time if you got there. Take action and achieve your goals.

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