

# Al Kavadlo - Episode 781

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people, calisthenics, working, talk, trainer, book, good, started, gym, fitness, feel, kids, life, world, training, new york, man, thought, moved, pull

## SPEAKERS

James Geering, Al Kavadlo

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### J James Geering 00:00

Welcome to the behind the shield podcast. As always, my name is James Geering. And this week, it is my absolute honor to welcome on the show, coach, author and movement specialist, our covered low. So as you will hear I bumped into al in a store after being made aware of his work through social media, and we sat down in his home and had an incredible conversation. We discuss a host of topics from the bodybuilding environment that he entered as a coach, his journey into calisthenics, the importance of flexibility, the aging athlete, and so much more. Now, before we get to this incredible conversation, as I say, every week, please just take a moment, go to whichever app you listen to this on, subscribe to the show, leave feedback and leave a rating. Every single five star rating truly does elevate this podcast, therefore making it easier for others to find. And this is a free library of almost 800 episodes now. So all I ask in return is that you help share these incredible men and women's stories. So I can get them to every single person on planet earth who needs to hear them. So with that being said, I introduce to you I'll cover blow enjoy. Well, I want to say firstly, thank you for welcoming me to your home. We are now in Ocala, Florida. I know it's not what you're from originally, but just as an icebreaker, tell the audience how we met.

### A Al Kavadlo 01:47

I was in the supermarket. And James approached me and said, Do you have some sort of a movement practice? And I think I knew what he was getting at. But I wasn't exactly sure how to respond. And I kind of said yeah, he said, I think I might have seen something in yours on the internet. And I said, Oh, cool. And I thought that was gonna be the end of the conversation. And then he said, Do you want to be on my podcast? And I said, No. Okay. And then I invited him over to my house. kind of unusual to do that with someone you just met at the supermarket, but I felt I felt comfortable with him. And here he is. And here we are.

### J James Geering 02:23

Here we are in need. And this was funny because I was laughing my wife like there's times

where without being too gross and graphic. I've I've made connections while I'm in the bathroom. You know, obviously via message not in camera. But um, this is a beautiful thing about this project is you know, someone and I wish I could remember who it was and please message me if it was you. Someone turned me on to your work and said, hey, they just moved to your town. But there's no meetings, no emails, no have your person talk to my person to human beings met and happened to be a meat counter. And then here we are.



02:57

We met over meat.



James Geering 03:01

That doesn't sound weird. Well, just just seeing



03:03

you at Earth there. You were somewhat vouched for already just by being there. I knew we had a few things in common.



James Geering 03:09

Yeah, there's definitely only a certain group of people in Ocala. I got a fair amount of people listening. That is our our not only health food store, but it's my favorite one now. And it's, I would say a good go between between a very expensive Whole Foods and



03:23

better than Whole Foods,



James Geering 03:25

I think I think



03:26

it's got just as much quality food and it's way cheaper and a lot of the stuff that they have at Whole Foods I don't want and a lot of that's not at Earth fair. It's a smaller store. I don't want to spend this whole time as a commercial for them. But it is a great supermarket. And when we moved to Ocala that was actually one of the things I was concerned about is would we find a supermarket that was up to my snobby New York standards. And we did

**J** James Geering 03:48

well here's was funny, they actually was struggling unbeknownst to anyone, and they closed down right before COVID Not because the COVID like a few months before. The irony was they had the very nutrition and clean food that I would argue most people needed during the pandemic. So sadly, they missed that. I think it was after the pandemic that they opened back up again. So that is Ocala, Florida, I would love to start the very beginning of your storyline. So tell me where you were born. And tell me a little bit about your family dynamic what your parents did and how many siblings

 04:19

are so you're really going back to the very beginning. I was born in Brooklyn, New York in the summer of 1979. My mom was a teacher. And my dad had been a musician. And he always talks about how my birth I'm the third of three children that my parents have. My birth was the motivation for him to get a real job, because he was kind of you know, getting by his musician and my mom had a real job and somehow they were able to survive. And then with the third kid, he had to get a real job too. And he actually wound up becoming a teacher also. And then my mom moved into an administrative position within the New York Board of Education. So both them My parents were educators for my whole life. And then I wound up becoming an educator of a sword as well.

**J** James Geering 05:07

Well, it's a good tangent for me to jump on straight away. So firstly, I have had people from all over the world on the show, I had a guy who I talk about a lot, Pasi Sahlberg, who is a teacher and now an educator in from Finland lives in Australia, but he tours the world talking about the Finnish education system, which when you look at rankings normally is at the top, and they look at the child very holistically. When you compare that to what I've seen with my children in the US system, you have standardized testing, and it's very much about the school's performance more than the child's success as a human being. Have you had any discussions with them about the evolution or devolution of education through their careers?

 05:51

You know, it's really not that we've talked about that much. I mean, I complain to my parents a lot about how I think the world has gotten crazy, but not specifically that aspect of it. And usually, when I talk to them about this, they want to calm down, it's not so bad.

**J** James Geering 06:11

Well, what about from a PE lens, I have a guide, Doug orchard on who wrote a roommate in an amazing documentary called The motivation factor. And it's funny because I asked all these people from the strength conditioning movement spaces, and almost no one's heard of it. But it details this incredible program they had from the 50s and 60s in California, that was kind of taken from a Russian system. And it was almost like martial arts belts, you had thing for

different colored shorts, and the whole school went through his program. So what happened was, you had the basic level, which was kind of intro to it. And it was pretty much calisthenics, which I know is an area that you immerse yourself in the as they progress through and do it as a team. So you carry each other, you motivate each other, by the end, they're doing partner carries for like three miles, they're doing pegboards, up and down, they got those long, long parallel bars that they're doing dips, and then moving across the bar. And these seniors all that, like they can be on the front cover of Muscle and Fitness. And the beautiful thing is if they want to be an athlete on a play a sport, where they're already conditioned and ready, if they don't, they've carried wellness, through their graduation and onwards. So what about PE through your lens? If you talk to them about it? Or is if you just got your own perspectives, I

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think it's pretty obvious that things are very different now. I don't think most high school seniors look like they could be on the cover of Men's Health. And, yeah, the obesity epidemic doesn't just affect adults, it's affecting kids too. So I think that that's that's much bigger than just PE at schools, although that is one factor. Yeah, kids just don't get enough exercise or the proper nutrition. And oh, boy, I mean, there's a lot we could say about that. But I don't even know if we want to spend too much time on it or not. Yeah,

 James Geering 08:00

I mean, that's, it's through your perspective, what if you could be king for a day? What would you change based on what you've seen through your eyes,

 08:07

about schools or about the world?

 James Geering 08:10

Let's start with schools.

 08:12

Well, for one, school lunches are pretty terrible, you know, the kids get, you know, garbage, processed food, a lot of sugar, a lot of low quality stuff. There. They're made to sit and listen to boring stuff that's taught in a boring way, when I look back on my education a lot as an adult, because there's a lot of topics that I've become interested in as an adult that I never thought were interesting in school. And I realized, Oh, I just had a terrible teacher, or the system is so bad, it's not even fair to blame the teacher. They had bad teachers, they came up in that system themselves. But like geography is a great example. I thought geography was a really boring subjects in school. And I always did badly at it. But I find geography really interesting as an adult, because I'm actually traveling to places now. And that's way different than just memorizing cities on a map and regurgitating them in a meaningless way.

**J** James Geering 09:04

Absolutely. And obviously, not everyone has the means to travel the world and go to these places. But one of the things that was amazing, as a parent, I got to go to Paris with my family and my sons. My little one was, Oh, my goodness, I think he was six maybe. And then my oldest one would have been 12. And we went to a place called Les Scargo, in Paris, and it was this beautiful gold gilded restaurant. And they had snails and they had frog's legs. And we went to the Eiffel Tower, and we, I think we weren't able to go into the Louvre because the sound was flooded. But he has a tangible kind of experience on Well, that was the capital of France. Oh, it's Paris, because I was there and I hate frogs legs. Now all of a sudden, it's this immersive experience versus memorization of the capital cities of the world, which as you said, doesn't do anything,

 09:59

right. I mean, not that you can realistically expect an elementary school to take a field trip to Paris. But you could certainly teach about the culture or about the city in a more interesting way than like you said, just rote memorization. I think that's that's the problem with a lot of school is it's not really about the kids learning. I think you've said this before, it's about the school showing that the kids can pass the test so they can get funding so the whole thing can keep perpetuating itself. So it's not it's it's just, it's just teaching them how to pass the test. It's not really teaching them the information or trying to make it illuminating at all.

**J** James Geering 10:34

So what about you, when you were in the school ages? What were you playing or doing as far as athletics and sports?

 10:41

You know, I actually got into working out because I wasn't an athletic kid. So interestingly, even though I'm very into fitness now, as a kid, I was a bit of a nerd and I hated gym class, and I usually got picked last and in dodgeball, I was just trying to dodge the ball. I wasn't the one throwing the ball and trying to get the other kids out. And when I got to high school, I found out you could take weight training for jam and I was a scrawny unathletic kid. And I said, Hold on, this is one an opportunity for me to try to put on some muscle and to I don't have to get picked last anymore. I can just do these things that don't require as much skill.

**J** James Geering 11:23

Beautiful. Well, I know we talked before we hit record about me doing stunts, one of the first jobs I ever had was playing the T 1000. In the Terminator two 3d Stunt Show. Talk to me about how that film has influenced you on the calisthenics side.

 11:39

I think that film influenced every one of our generation, you know, I mean, seeing Linda Hamilton do those chin ups in that movie when I was whatever, 13 when that came out, and I was just doing my first chin ups probably around the same time. It was like, whoa, this lady is better than me a chin ups. And that that was definitely inspiring. And then of course, Arnold, I mean, he was for guys of our generation, he was the man he was the alpha male. So you know, every every guy wanted to be like him.

 James Geering 12:07

It's interesting. I've talked about masculinity, the way it was painted when we were kids, and how there are definitely some sides of it that are very positive, but you're Arnold's and Stallone's and John Wayne's, that big muscles, no tears, kind of facade, I think is also fed into a lot of the mental health crises that we see because these men that were raised on that don't realize that those were actors who actually never served in uniform as well, they portrayed it, but they never actually did. So I think that that physicality is part of it. But if you don't factor in the kindness, compassion element of what a man truly is, you end up with this cardboard cutout version of masculinity. Well, that's

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why Arnold did movies like Kindergarten Cop, right?

 James Geering 12:55

Absolutely. Well, what about that? So as you start weight training, when you were younger, were you actually bullied when you were small, afraid?

 13:03

I mean, bullied is an interesting word. I think every kid gets picked on to a certain degree. But I was not a victim of it to the degree that some other kids were. And one thing that worked in my favor is I was fairly tall as a kid. So it was easier to go after the shorter kids who were also wimps. I was a tall web, but at least being tall helped me a little bit.

 James Geering 13:26

So what was that evolution though that you saw you start strength training, you start and watching my son now he's 15. He's gone from this little chubby, chubby face toddler to this tall Vasa Irana with ABS and he's just fascinated, not in a narcissistic way, just in a physiological anatomical way, fascinated at the veins and the striations, and all these things that are growing. So what did you see in yourself as you started excelling in that area?



13:53

Yeah, I mean, it was definitely I remember, you know, when you start training while you're going through puberty, that's the best time to do it. And not that it's too late if you don't start when you're young, because a lot of guys come at me like, Oh, I'm 40 It's too late. Now. It's like now it's definitely not too late. You still get in great shape. But um, you've got a naturally surging testosterone levels and your body is growing and changing already. So it's just you give it more fuel to throw on that fire. And that's when you're going to make your best gains. And I remember the first time starting to get like some definition in my chest and seeing a little cut at the bottom and being like, whoa, starting to get a real chest that was a cool feeling and starting to get a peek on my bicep. Yeah, that's that's, that's probably actually the best gains I made is the first few years right that's, that's usually how it goes. Now the last 20 years. It's been real real slow since then.



James Geering 14:45

Now I can relate to that. I remember being in basically community college and I was super late bloomer, so I didn't have my gross but so I was 18 and so I'm there you know, Hello, I'm James around all these dudes with you know mustaches. And, but one of the guys was into the whole weight thing. And he was talking about the aka what they call the horseshoe on the tricep. Yeah. And I was looking at my arms, and it was just like a garden hose is no definition there at all. But these were the things were the peaks on the bicep and the horseshoe. And that was that was a very bodybuilding focused weight training philosophy back then,



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absolutely. And, you know, I think a lot of young men are insecure at that time. And having a little bit of muscle makes you a little less insecure. And that's, that's part of the reason that I was inspired to keep doing it is, it was helping my confidence. And I think a lot of the time is I've seen that as a trainer, when people, adults, especially are unfit their whole life, and then they start working out and start getting a little bit stronger, they start becoming more confident people. And it's cool to see that that transformation. And I certainly experienced that. I mean, it was it's like I said, when you're when you're when you're in your adolescence, and you're doing this training, it's a good time to do it, because you're becoming who you are. So it just solidified me as being someone who was into working out and then I stayed on that path.



James Geering 16:02

Now, one of the jokes about CrossFit is I don't want to be the best at working out gets Eastbound and Down quote. But what I found is that the I love playing sports I played anything was never really good anything but I just would jump in and you'd give me a bat or ball a break or whatever, we'll figure out a game with it. But then you become a better athlete. As far as strength conditioning, it opens doors. So as a coach, I've always told the people that I train if unless you're truly wanting to be a full time competitive CrossFit athlete, find the things that you love to do and use that as a barometer of your improvement. As you start training, did you find yourselves venturing into sports or other activities that you used your strength conditioning for? Well, martial

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arts and and I think that that fitness in itself, I mean, it is a good line. And to a certain extent, I'm sort of like the the anti Kenny powers, right? He was someone who was great at sports, but a shoe fitness and exercise. And I'm someone who's terrible at sports. So I really dove into fitness and exercise. But I mean, sports are just as arbitrary is working out. Right? So it's like, what's the difference? But it's a good line I get I love that show. So

 James Geering 17:14

well, what about career aspirations? When you were in the high school age? What were you dreaming of becoming?

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I wanted to be a musician.

 James Geering 17:20

And what what instrument?

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So the first thing I learned was drums. And then I started playing guitar a couple of years later. And yeah, I thought that I would be a musician for sure. And thankfully, that didn't happen, because I found a much healthier lifestyle, I think, going down the the career path that I did.

 James Geering 17:40

So how did you get to that? Because I mean, a lot of people, you know, might might work in the gym, and I did in the sports center when I was younger, and train for a bit and then they find themselves somewhere else. But to actually stay full time in this space, especially, you know, into your boys. That's a rare breed really. So what what was the kind of Genesis? What was the nucleus of that evolution?

 18:01


Oh, man? Well, you know, one of the really awesome things about my life, when I look back on it, is I never in a million years when I got into working out would have thought it would have been what I do with my career. It was just something to do, because I really genuinely enjoyed it. And it was enriching my life. And it was was completely pure. There was never any armor to get something out of this in the end or financially or status wise or anything like that. And then



the first job that I got after I graduated college, and I was I was trying, I was playing in bands and trying to do that. And then I had this job I was teaching working for the Board of Ed, like I said, my mom was an administrator at the Board of Ed. So when I graduated with an English degree, it was like, Hey, Mom, you got new openings for English teachers. So they throw me in teaching ESL, English as a second language, which was a very challenging subject to teach because it's immersion. So you only speak English, but everyone in your class is all different languages and different backgrounds. So I was doing that. And I knew pretty early on that that was not what I wanted to do with the rest of my life, but I really didn't know what I was going to do. And I was starting to come to grips with reality that maybe I'm not going to make it as a musician, I need to figure out something else. And I was at a gym where I was a member because this was still before I went down the calisthenics rabbit hole. And it was mostly just working out at gyms. And I remember seeing a trainer at that gym who just kind of was like thin like you were male. And back then this was in the early 90s Or I guess the late 90s Nevermind late 90s every trainer I saw was like a bodybuilder like roided out Arnold looking guy, so it just never even occurred to me like that's not what I look like I can never do that. But seeing this one guy being like, Oh, they hire trainers that look that just aren't fat basically. And that's that's good enough nowadays. So that I didn't jump into it right away. But that was kind of What first got the thought in my head. And then it was maybe a year after that. That I said you know what, I think I want to pursue this And again, you know, I've never lived my life with too much of a long term planner. So it's just kind of like, let me try this and see how the path unfolds and the path unfolded. And here we are.

 James Geering 20:10

So what was that journey for you specifically? You said you were weight training. And then when I was around the same age, weight training was basically packed x and, you know, lat pull downs and all the machines. They saw that you have a CSCs on your thing, I went through the NSCA as well. What was that journey, including calisthenics from when you first picked up a barbell or satin a machine to where you are now.

 20:36

So it's kind of funny because I really actually started with push ups and pull ups like, like I mentioned, weight training was was a big thing for me in high school because I got out of playing sports. But the summer before I started high school, I got a chin up bar. And I started doing some chin ups and I started doing some push ups. So that's, that made it that much more excited, like, oh, I can do weights because I didn't have weights at home. I just had the chin up bar. So that was that was cool. Because, you know, it's funny, people would say to me, I had an uncle who, well, you know, if you want to get strong, you got to you got to lift weights, you can't just do chin ups. But as I continued down that path, I sort of lost the calisthenics and got deeper into the weight world and bodybuilding and all that stuff. And eventually, I became a personal trainer in my early 20s. And most of what I was doing in the beginning of my career was just, you know, like you said, PEC deck lat pulldown, benchpress conventional gym workouts. And I remember the pistol squat was one of the first exercises I saw that kind of piqued my curiosity about calisthenics more. And I guess it must have been 2001 2002, something like that. And I saw somebody do this at the gym and other trainer that I knew who was a little ahead of his time. And I was curious, I said, What is that he's like, Oh, it's a one legged squat, you know, try to do it, and I could not do it. And it really bothered me and I did

you know, like the calisthenics mathematics and said, Well, I can put a barbell on my back that weighs the same as my body weight and squat that on two legs, so no barbell one leg, same thing, right. But it was not the same thing. There was all this balance and stability and core engagement, flexibility. But I was really intrigued by that pistol squat. So I kept working on it, and eventually started to get the hang of it. And then one of the next things that I saw was a handstand push up. And it was a similar thought process. Well, I'm strong on a military press. So I can do asked and push up. And you know, I kicked up against the wall and started bending my elbows and just fell on my head right away. I was like, Oh, that's weird. Why is this so hard? So I kept trying that and eventually started to get a feel for that. And then the muscle up, I saw that early 2000s. Like you mentioned, CrossFit, I guess that was around the time when CrossFit first started to get a little bit of traction. And I thought, well, well, I can do lots of pull ups, I can do lots of dips, I'm just going to do a pull up and then do a dip and I can do this. And of course, it took a lot more than that. And then you know, gradually all these things kept coming into my my regimen and little by little other things started falling out because it's like well, now I'm doing pistol squats and handstand push ups and muscle ups. I got to drop the benchpress I don't I don't have the energy to do that in the same workout. And then you know, as you know, probably the calisthenics Compendium goes very deep, and I kept Oh, well, what's this human flag? I want to learn that what's this front lever, I want to learn that one arm chin up, that's possible to do a chin up on one arm. I want to try to do that. And then eventually it was just it was everything I was doing. But people sometimes think, oh, did you just decide to become a capital statics guy one day, and it was it was really a very gradual, organic process.

 James Geering 23:36

The very first episode I had is a guy called Mitch Dreyer. And we met in Ido portal workshop. And he had been in a structure fire in actually he was New York state, we're not mistaken. And there's a bowling alley and the ceiling of claps had been trapped. And the burns basically took one of his arms. Oh my goodness. So we're all learning these, you know, ring muscle learning, working our ring muscle ups I hadn't, but um, you know, certainly wasn't peak form by any means. And by the end of this, it was a two day session, Mitch was able to do a one arm ring pull up. So when I hear of one arm pull up. So think of this amazing amputee that I had on Episode one I hear right on. It's amazing. So your uncle says if you need to get strong, you need to do more than pull ups.

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I think it was just kind of like like a passing comment.

 James Geering 24:26

But it's what a lot of people believe. So as you go through this journey, talk to me about the path that you took really

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work out, you know, most people who get it.

 James Geering 24:39

It's very true is that the guys that talk about participation trophies have never even participated themselves. So but what was some of the aha moments where you realize how much benefit you were getting from calisthenics using just your bodyweight?

 24:54

Well, the big aha for me was I thought I was really strong. And there were all these things I could wouldn't do all these things that looked easy enough that I should be able to do. And that was sort of like, well, I guess weights aren't really giving me the strength that I want. If I can't do a muscle up from weight training, and I can't do a pistol squat, and I can't do a handstand push up, and I can't do a human flag, well, maybe I should stop doing weights and start training those things.

 James Geering 25:19

So what did that training look like? I mean, obviously, even in CrossFit, which I have done for 15 plus years now, I threw in some strongman stuff as a guide, Julian pugno has strong fit. And it's a lot of sandbags, sleds, and when I look at the fire service, I'm like, CrossFit is great, but we're not really moving with Wayne. So with that, your push pull, carry drag, lift. And when you're talking about some of the gymnastic calisthenic movements, again, it's not really mirrored in some of these movements. So what did the training look like for you to start working towards, for example, the human flag? Well,

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human flag is an interesting one. And I'll come back to that in a minute. But I think there is a lot of similarities between weight training exercises and calisthenics exercises, you just have to think of the movement pattern a little bit more, vaguely and zoom out a little bit, you know, obviously, I mentioned the barbell squat and the pistol squat, do each have their own unique differences, but they are quite similar in that you're loading your legs with a lot of resistance and squatting all the way down and standing back up, you know, a lat pulldown and a pull up, yeah, they're different. And if you want to do pull ups, lat pull downs might not be enough to get you there. But the movement pattern is obviously a similar movement pattern. So you can train all the same general movements, I actually think generally, like I was alluding to, the body weight versions are usually more functional, more like how you're gonna move in real life. So I don't think that there is much of a disconnect there. As far as the human flag goes, that is a very, very unique one. And there was a lot of trial and error in the beginning with that. And I think when I first started messing around with that there was a website, I don't know, if you remember b skills, a guy named Jim Bathurst, had a website in the early 2000s. And that was the first place I ever saw an online tutorial about the human flag. And it was, you know, fairly brief, but it kind of gave a couple of jumping off points. And other than that, and you know, a couple of photos of just like old time strong men doing it, like black and white photos. I really, maybe there was like one or two people on YouTube who were doing it. But there was really it was it was it was very, very fringe at the time that I got interested in it. And I mean, I think I'm

one of the people who helped popularize it. Because once I started to get good at it, I started posting stuff online and, and sharing it and I think I helped a lot of people get it themselves. But it is very specific. And that's the thing with with any kind of training, you know, at a certain point, being strong and being flexible. And being mobile is a great foundation, but you're not going to be able to throw a baseball 90 miles an hour into a catcher's mitt all the way on the other side of the field, or, you know, submit somebody with a Omoplata if you don't know those techniques.

## James Geering 28:13

So you talked about YouTube, walk me through your journey into what would be very early social media, because now you know, people refer to YouTube as almost a thing of the past now you're now you're a twitcher, or whatever the latest thing is, but at the time, the pioneers in that space, were able to truly grab the throat of a lot of audience members early on,

## 28:34


I think YouTube still doing pretty well. I mean, social media has grown much beyond YouTube and right, every every platform has video now. But YouTube still has a lot of eyes on it. And I just had really good timing, I was really lucky. I've been I've been very lucky in a lot of ways throughout my life. I originally had an idea that I wanted to write a book. And this was maybe around 2007 2006, something like that, because I had been working in a mainstream gym for a lot of years at that point. And I was getting really frustrated by how little honesty there was in fitness literature. And I felt like there was a need to put some more truthful transparency out there. And I really wanted to get that message across. And I had a friend who was involved with social media at that time and internet, I don't even know exactly what he did with various internet things. And he said, Oh, you know, if you want to write a book, eventually, you should start a YouTube channel. Because that's going to help you get people who will eventually buy your book. And if you can get followers on YouTube that might help you get a publisher and blah, blah, blah. And at first I was like, No, I don't want to do a YouTube channel. That's that's a lot of work. I'm just gonna write. And then he said, Well, you could you could try doing a blog, you know, it's writing. I said, alright, well, let me let me let me try doing a blog. So I started the blog. And then I said, Well, you know what, let me get The YouTube going to let me just throw like a video to up there just to have something. So he helped me film a couple of videos and I started doing a little bit of a blog. And then you know, like, like anything once you start, that's the hardest part. And then you know, I started getting a little bit more momentum. And in the beginning, the expectation was so different. I feel like a lot of people nowadays think, Oh, I'm going to start a YouTube channel and I'm gonna get famous and I'm gonna get rich. And my expectation was, nothing's gonna happen. My I thought I want to write a book because I want to write this because I've always been the type of person like I said, I wanted to be musician, like I've, I've always felt the need to express the things that I feel inside, in some creative way. And the book that I wanted to write, yeah, of course, I wanted people to read it, but I just needed to write the thing because it was just on my mind, and was just burning me up inside, and I needed to get the ideas out. But um, so I had no expectation for the for the YouTube or the blog, and just getting 100 views on a video back then was Wow, 100 people watched this. That's wild. And I remember the first video that I got 1000 views on I was like, holy moly. 1000 people have seen this. That's so crazy. And now you know, I put a video up on YouTube, it doesn't have 1000 views on the first hour. I'm like, What the heck is going on here?

 James Geering 31:14

Yeah, I find that Well, I made a video and I used a song. So it went for a long time. And then finally, I think there's a lot of retroactive like, oh, actually, you're not allowed to use this. So I think they've kind of, you know, kept it away now. But at the time, it was just on first responder mental health. And it was a bunch of slides in between these pictures and talking about, you know how people struggle, but then also some solutions, and it got one and a half million views over over, you know, a certain period of time. But then since then I've posted things. And it's not my intention is never to grow. My YouTube, specifically, your Instagram is the one that I've had the best luck with. But it's funny, because if you don't keep, quote, unquote, making content, like each of the one I put out since has less than 100 views over weeks and weeks and weeks. So that's the problem with where we're at now, I think is you know, as you hear Gary Vee, and some of these other people talking about, you've got to constantly be putting out this content, which is great if you have the content. But if you get to the point where you've kind of hit a ceiling, how do you maintain that that consistency,

 32:18

I think, again, I'm lucky in that I do not feel like I'm ever going to run out of things that I want to say, I can't keep up fast enough with all the things that I want to put out to really say them well, and make a video that gets my point across properly. It's like you ever have that thing where you're writing with a pen, and you just can't write down as fast as you're thinking, that's that's how I feel trying to make eye contact, I'm never gonna run out.

 James Geering 32:44

So talk to me about the books walk me through, you know, some of the early topics. And then let's get all the way through to the most recent ones with the aging athlete.

 32:52

Yeah. So the first book that I wrote was the one that I was saying it was I was trying to sort of be the antithesis to what I felt mainstream fitness was at the time. And honestly, I gotta say, I think we've moved the needle a little bit in the right direction, in that alternative fitness is bigger than ever. Now, mainstream fitness is still what it is. But I really feel like there's this big space of alternative fitness that wasn't there, when I got started, that I have been a part of helping develop. So the main, the message that I hated was just the constant emphasis on goals and the constant you're not good enough. And it really frustrated me, because it's those things are both lies. The goals are irrelevant. The process is all that matters. And I mean, you're good enough or not good enough. Thinking of it like that doesn't help you get better. Yes, you you can you can accept yourself as you are and like yourself and still say, hey, I want to get better, I can improve. And that's a desirable thing that I want to pursue. So I was really bothered by both of those things. But but mainly the goals thing has always driven me nuts, the obsession that our culture has with goals, because the irony is, the only way to get that goal is

to not think about that goal and just embrace the boring, monotonous process that's gonna get you there. And that's sort of what happened to me with YouTube. Like I said, I had no expectation. I just wanted to make this stuff, because it was kind of fun.

 James Geering 34:22

So you start with some of the calisthenics books. Is that right then? Yeah,

 34:26

I didn't answer your class. Okay. I

 James Geering 34:28

was I was trying to recall my question myself. That

 34:29

was good. So yeah, so the first book that I did that that's what I was trying to get to was a book called were working out a Zen approach to everyday fitness and the Zen approach being be present for it. Rather than saying, Oh, I'm going to distract myself by sitting on a exercise bike, looking at a magazine, or, you know, listening to my headphones and pretending I'm at the club, whatever I'd rather be doing. Try to enjoy it. Really be present. When you do your push ups. go for a jog and feel your heart beating, breathe, feel your feet hitting the floor, be aware of all that look at the world around you. And that was such a weird concept to be putting out there, but there was a small fringe audience on the internet, who that resonated with, and then the calisthenics. And that really went together. Because the message kind of became anti JAMA, it was sort of an anti establishment against mainstream fitness movement. It was, Hey, you don't need the gym. You don't need that. That whole world of materialism and, and obsession with this never achievable ideal. You just need to go to the park and do some pull ups and breathe some fresh air and feel your heart beating in your chest and feel good about yourself and go on with your day and be confident. And yeah, there were people out there who needed to hear that, I guess.

 James Geering 35:54

So that was the initial one walked me through some of the other ones. So then the

 35:57

next book, so once that book came out, so there's a book called Convict Conditioning that you may or may not be aware of, that came out right around the same time that I self published my book. And Convict Conditioning is written by a guy named Paul Wade, who the story goes, he was in prison for a long time and developed a calisthenics system in prison. And for whatever

reason, he did some bad stuff, and he wants to be anonymous. So I don't know if Paul Wade's even his real name, and there's no photos of him. So he put out this book combat conditioning. And I mentioned the guy Jim Bathurst, who had that beasts Skills website. Jim was the model in that book, who demonstrated all the exercises. And after Condit conditioning came out, the book was very successful. And the company dragon door publications that published it, said, Hey, we're gonna make a sequel to this book. And they reached out to Jim Bathurst, and he said, I don't want to do the sequel, I'm doing my own thing. And, again, I got lucky. Coach Wade saw my blog, he said, Hey, this guy looks like he could have been impressed. And I haven't, by the way, he said, This guy's got tattoos he looks like has the kind of look that I want. And you can do human flag, and you can do these other moves that I need someone to model for me. So he reached out to me and we, we got on the same page, and he got me to do the photos in that book. And then after that, I had a connection with Dragon to our publications. And I'd been working on a manuscript for a book that was called Raising the Bar, which was all about pull up bar calisthenics. And this was a book that I had wanted to read, but it didn't exist. I was looking for a book all about pull ups. There was no book there's a million books about barbells bodybuilding dumbbells, kettlebells, not a single pull up book at that time. So I wrote that book and Dragon to our took me on as an author and published it and it did pretty well. So then, of course, as is the nature of things, Dragon door, said, Write some more books. So I said, okay, and I did a book called pushing the limits, which was all about things that you could do with no equipment at all. Because as silly as it might sound. When raising the bar came out, people would write to me and say, I don't have a bar, I just, I'm at home, what can I do? So that book was to answer those questions, really, to eliminate any barrier or objection to why someone can't work out. These are things you can do in a tiny space with absolutely no equipment. And obviously, like I mentioned, that book, Convict Conditioning was sort of that similar thing also, but I felt like the Convict Conditioning book, as much as it had a lot of ideas that I liked, there were a lot of things I really didn't like, and a lot of things that I wanted to present differently. So I was very much inspired by that book. But also, I said, I'm gonna, I'm going to do my own thing with this. And that book did very well. And then I did a book that was about flexibility, because that's the other part of my training that I haven't really talked about is I've been doing yoga, since my early 20s. Also, like I mentioned that I I worked at a Globo gym for a lot of years. And one of the nice things about working at that type of place, is you take classes for free. So I started taking yoga classes when I worked at the Globo gym, and it was a nice complement to the weight training. And then I started getting more into yoga later in my life. And and also dabbling in martial arts. There's a lot of flexibility training in that. So I put together this book about flexibility. And that one did well too. And then I've got a brother. I don't know if you know about my brother, Danny. He's the one that you've co authored with. He and I have co authored a couple of books together. So he's also a trainer. And he's also an author. And he and I wrote a book together called St workout, which was sort of like an encyclopedia of every body weight calisthenics exercise that we thought was worth mentioning. So that's a big thick encyclopedia attic sort of text. And when we put that together, we thought, Oh, this is the book that people who are really into calisthenics are going to watch and I think we may have been right. But what we realized after that book came out was the book we We need to write isn't necessarily a book for people who are really into calisthenics. But a book for people who are kind of interested in calisthenics and want to take that next step and go a little farther. And that's when we put together the book get strong, which is far and away my best selling book. Because there's a lot more people who are just a little curious about calisthenics. And there are who want a full encyclopedia. So get strong, really it was, it was a combination, I'm really happy with how everything played out. Because I couldn't have written that book if I hadn't done a lot of other books before. And if I hadn't trained a lot of people and taught a lot of workshops, so that book was informed by a tremendous amount of experience. And that's, that's why it's good. And that's why it resonated with people. And that's why continues to sell




even though it came out six years ago. But it's the kind of book that you can only do once. So we tried to do it again, we wrote a book called next level of strength, which was very similar to get strong, but it was all focused on using gymnastics rings. And apparently, it's because it was like, Well, what else are we going to talk about? I did a book about pull up bar, I did a book about just using the floor, no equipment, I did a flexibility book, we did this encyclopedia, we did this overview for beginners. And then we said oh, well, we never did a book about rings in power leads. So we did that one. And for a number of reasons, that book was not as successful as we were hoping it would be. And after that, I didn't continue working with Dragon door as my publisher, and I happen to link up with this other company. So I know you're a martial artist, and probably some of your listeners are too. So people probably familiar with BJJ fanatics, that instructional website that sells Brazilian jujitsu videos. So they have a sister company called strong and fit.com, which is just general fitness strength training conditioning videos, not martial arts specific. So the last three things that I've published, I published through them. And the first program I did with them was a program called calisthenics conditioning, which as the name implies, was sort of intended somewhat for a martial arts audience, but also just for general fitness. So it was more of a like a strength and conditioning program, which is funny because you know, I mentioned the book Convict Conditioning, not a conditioning program, just a strength training program. But calisthenics conditioning, similar name is actually more of a cardio conditioning and strength program. And again, it was one of those things, it was my first product with a new publisher. So they said, We just kind of want you to do a general overview, you know, just do your thing. But I didn't want it to be too redundant with my other content, which is why I focused a little more on the conditioning aspect. I know you asked a question was a really long answer. No,

 James Geering 42:45

but I wanted to hit it off whenever you No, no, no, because you got other books talk about.

 42:48

So then I did a book after that one with strong and fit. That's called Old man's dress. And this book, it's sort of like a get strong for older guys. Because I said to myself, well, you know how this works. The calisthenics conditioning program did well, they said out, put out another put out another thing, we want to make more money. I said, I want to make more money too. But I got to do something I think is really good. And I think it's going to have some some meaning. And that was soon after I turned 40 myself. And a lot of my clients are people I've trained for a long time. So they were getting older and a lot of the same issues and concerns started coming up. And I realized maybe there's there's something to this, you know, this this going after this over 40 niche, and you're the name old man's strength. People always say to me, oh, but you're not old. Come on guys in our 40s we're not old. Um, I know, it's a catchy name. People probably heard that expression, like when you were a kid, and you'd go to your friend's house and your friend's dad would like carry something really heavy up the stairs. Oh, man, how did you do that? Oh, no old man strength. So that's that's kind of where the name comes from. So I just need to clarify that. In case anyone listening. It's like, I'm 40 I'm not all where you'd be amazed. Every time I post about that program, two or three people in the comments have to chime in and point out before he's not old. So I just am a little defensive about that. I suppose.





 James Geering 44:07

It sounds like you are old and you're getting triggered by that. So there we go. These days now not you the dude. Oh, yeah,

 44:14

they do too. No, no, no, we're crotchety old man. I I feel like I'm an honorary Boomer with my crotchety Ness. Sometimes I project a lot of positivity, in my videos and online. But if you sat at this dinner table with me every night, you'd hear quite a lot of comedy conversations as well.

 James Geering 44:31

So I listen to you on the BASTARZ podcast, and you made a comment which you just kind of touched on a second ago. You've coached the same people for a long time. Now they're in their 40s and you're in your 40s and it kind of hit me like, I never thought about that. They can get some phenomenal coaches, but if they're in their 20s they're not going to know what it feels like to be in my case. 49 and beaten up as a firefighter and a martial artist and a stunt man and you know, being broken and still trying to put the pieces back together again. I personally have had a shift very recently where I realized that I'm perfectly fine with my aerobic capacity and my strength where it is. But it's the mobility and the balance, the rebalancing of muscle imbalances that is important to me. And once I put that in place, I'm going to probably watch my efficiency improve my strength improve. So talk to me about what you've witnessed what what is in the pages of the old man strength book?

 45:30

Well, you know, the old man strength book, it's funny, I was picking on counter conditioning a second ago for not really being a conditioning program. Old Man strength isn't just a strength program. It's an overall wellness, mobility, fitness strength program. And there's a lot of emphasis on stretching, and a lot of emphasis on walking and jogging and low intensity aerobic exercise. And then of course, there's push ups and chin ups and I sets and all the things that I hold dear to my heart from the calisthenics world. But utilize your 100%, right, guys who are in their 20s, who are personal trainers do not have the experience to coach guys in their 40s. Now, they might have experience in the sense that they're experienced working out, but they're not experienced with what it feels like to be older. And it's always a weird dynamic. And I remember feeling this way, because I got into the personal training industry, excuse me, I got into the personal training industry when I was 22 years old. And that's a very young man. And I remember in my early and mid 20s, having clients who were 40, and me feeling like this is weird that I'm kind of the boss for this hour, when I'm this kid, and a lot of cases they were, you know, status wise, they were they were executives, they were high ranking people. And it was it was a very weird dynamic, and I was aware of it at the time. And I think that that's the best thing that a young trainer could do is be aware that your client is going to have experiences that you can't relate to, and you're gonna have to take their word for it. And I've always thought of myself, when I'm a trainer, and this sometimes throws clients, I always tell my clients, I'm a consultant, I'm not a trainer, your trainer, you know your body better than I ever

could you've lived in it your whole life, I just met you today, or I just met you a month ago, I'm going to tell you what I think is best, I'm going to tell you what my firsthand experience and reason have led me to think but if you feel something different, I'm wrong. Go with that.

J

James Geering 47:37

Yeah, I love that. Well, you talked about the the yoga side as well, in my you know, through my eyes, through my own body through watching people just in general in the street watching my athletes, when you get 40s 50s That's a lot of sitting, that's a lot of more recently devices, computer screen, steering wheels, etc, etc. And you watch the human form change. Talk to me about the philosophy of mobility and what you see shifting in the human body that is hindering the the middle age athlete, and more so than they probably realize,

i

48:15

well, it goes back to what we were saying about about kids and Pa PE we just have evolved away from moving as a culture we've, it's a weird thing. Technology exists to make our life more convenient. But I think we've crossed a line where we've gone too far. And maybe that's again, me just be a curmudgeonly old man. And when I was a kid, guys, my age thought that about a VCR or whatever the new technology was then and maybe they were right. In retrospect, maybe they were right, maybe we'd already gone too far then. But yeah, people need to move we were not made to sit down all day. And you know, you had to ask me to go down the line of all my books, I did not get to the most recent one, which is called mobility man, which is exactly exist. For this reason. People especially guys our age get really tight. And if we're not actively swimming against the tide, we're gonna get pulled to the shore.

J

James Geering 49:14

One thing I've seen in the evolution of myself as a coach, especially in the CrossFit space as it used to go, it went from the nucleus of CrossFit which were some greats in their space. There were Olympic lifters that were gymnasts, etc, etc. But now it's filtering down to my first experience, it was a firefighter, the trainer at a gym that was telling me and then it was me working off the main site, so you're not having that subject matter expert passing it on. And so as you start becoming a athlete in a CrossFit gym, and then you evolve to become a coach. Now you talk cues, you know, okay, don't let your knees go over your toes and keep your your body upright. But then as we've evolved even more, there's been this realization that you You can't tell someone to do something their body won't allow them to do. So again, talk to me about how mobility, training and awareness will then allow you to do the very cues that you've been told as an athlete that you physically can't get to your body to do at that point.

i

50:17

I think one of the biggest misconceptions about strength and flexibility is that they're opposites. When really, they're complementary. The better your range of motion, the more capacity you have to build stress. So sometimes people especially guys, especially guys who grew up watching Arnold movies are so hell bent on wanting to increase their lifts, wanting to increase

their bicep size. That's like, bro, you're 40 and you're fat? Like, why are we still trying to increase your bench, your shoulders fucked up, like what's going on here. And, you know, I don't always have that conversation that, frankly, with people, although sometimes I have had to over the years, and depending on your client's personality, you know, you got to do what's appropriate for them. That's an important part of personal training, some guys need to hear it that way. Other people will walk right out if you say to them like that. But ultimately, when when you can make somebody have that realization, and if they give you the chance they see for themselves. You know, one thing that's been good for me at this point in my career, is the people that I train respect me. And they respect that. Even if I say something to them, that might seem really weird, they're gonna give it a shot, because I have have a proven track record. But earlier on in my career, it was often very hard, and there were a lot of like, Hey, I think this is good. And I get a lot of pushback. And that's, that's why I had that conversation about consultants, like, Hey, if you don't want to do it this way, that's cool. I'm not gonna force you ultimately, my goal as a trainer is to get somebody to do a better workout than they would do without me. So if I'm doing that, I'm happy, even if it's not all the way of where I think they can go or where I think they should go, at least they're meeting me beyond where their current alone capabilities are. But I'm now I lost my train of thought, I might have

 James Geering 52:11

mobility, the ability to actually put your body in a position versus queueing,

 52:18

right, so you get a lot of these trainers. And this is true for any one who's new at anything, when you, when you're brand new to something and you don't know anything about it, you're really eager to learn a little bit. And then once you learn a little bit, sometimes you think you know more than you know, because you're like, Ah, now I know this, this is how it is. And I think a lot of time with trainers, that trap happens when you're like between six months and three years into your career, you've coached a few people, you've seen a few things, and you think you you get it. And then you keep doing it longer and longer. And you see more people who defy those things or don't understand those things, or can't do those things or won't do those things, or have to have some sort of other cue to get them to do what you want them to do. And you start expanding your arsenal, and you start realizing that there's more out there and you start realizing Wait a minute, there probably is still a lot more that I don't know. And then you know, by that point, a lot of people aren't even in the industry anymore. Because like like, you know, a lot of people don't make it very long. But if you make it past three years, or five years or seven years, it's impossible not to get humbled. And it's impossible not to come to the conclusion that, wow, there is a lot of difference. Even though we're all a lot the same.

 James Geering 53:39

So you were doing all this coaching in the New York area did you find yourself on on Manhattan ultimately, did you stay in the suburbs?

 53:47

I actually the first job I got working at a gym as a trainer was actually in Chicago, because for other personal reasons I was out there in my early 20s. I was at a gym called Lake Shore Athletic Club, which I don't think they exist anymore, sadly. And then when I moved back to New York, I worked for a New York Health and Racquet Club in the East Village and I think New York Health and Racquet Club went out of business during the COVID times also unfortunately, but my my years at HRC. I was there for five years. And you know, I don't know if you've ever worked at a gym like that. But five years is an eternity to work at a gym like that because the turnover is so fast. So I think after about three years, I was not only the longest running trainer at that gym, I was the longest running employee I'd been there along with all the management, all the trainers, all the laundry people, everyone. I was the longest going guy and then I was still there a couple more years after that. So you see a lot of people come and go, you see a lot of trainers come and go you see a lot of clients come and go and you train everybody. Because what happens is all these trainers get hired, they get fired, they quit. And all the clients like Oh, this guy has been here since I've been a member. He's the only trainer I've recognized since day one. I'm gonna work with him. I don't want to work with these other guys who just started Got three weeks ago. And then eventually you have a lot of clients who have a long history with the gym. And it's a tremendous opportunity to get experience. And you know, nowadays I don't want to work in that type of world anymore. But man, I'm glad I did. And I would strongly recommend anyone who's getting into the fitness industry spend at least a year working at a Globo gym, because it's just you're going to learn a lot, and you're going to see a lot and some of what you're going to see is going to be a Gee, I don't want to be that I don't want to do that. But sometimes you have to see what doesn't work to know to avoid it.

 James Geering 55:35

So what was it about that philosophy within that organization that created such a revolving door for their employees,

 55:42

I mean, it's not just that organizations, it's every big mainstream gym, it's every big company. I mean, the it's, it's get the people on the top of the food chain as rich as possible, treat the bottom people as poorly as possible. And if they quit, we'll just hire someone else, it doesn't matter. Now, I happened to for whatever reason, I really liked working there was it was convenient for my life. You know, I was I was in my mid 20s, when I started there. And I stayed there till I was about 30. And just at that time I live I was a young man living in Manhattan, I could walk to work, I was single, and it just, it was a good life. But even even after a while when I left that job, because the thing that happens to when you're a trainer at a gym like that, like I said, you acquire clients, and over time, you have a lot of people and you don't really want to walk away, because you know most of them will come with you. Like they've I know Sally's trained with six other trainers at that gym before I became a trainer. She's gonna leave the gym to train with me no way she would love to train with one of them. She didn't. So yeah, a few people are gonna go with you when you leave. But walking away from a good thing like that often means starting over, which a lot of trainers are willing to do because there's a lot of downsides to working for a facility like that. But when I left, I was ready to start over I was I was ready to to lose a lot of business. And I did. But it allowed me to dive into the the online world a lot more. You know, when I when I mentioned earlier that I started, you know, blogging, and I started YouTube, I was still at New York Health and Racquet Club. And some of my earliest

YouTube videos were filmed there. But it was as soon as the YouTube started to take off just a little bit. I had a sense like this, this, this is gonna lead somewhere. And you know, again, it was one of those things I said to you. I think before we were rolling, you know, I sometimes do crazy things because I just feel like the universe is trying to tell me to. And when I quit that job, all the other trainers like what you're leaving, you're making more money than anybody else. Do. You have all the best clients, you have the best schedule. And I was like, I know what I'm sick of it. I've been here forever, I want to do something else.

 James Geering 57:42

So what did that look like? Then you're in this organization that you're obviously thriving, and you're doing well, you've kind of cracked, cracked the game a little bit. And now knowing that a lot of these people won't follow you talk to me about the courage and then how that kind of played out making that leap?

 58:01

Well, you know, I saved a lot of money first. That's the nice thing about being single and working a lot and making a lot of money is I had I had several \$1,000 hauled away. So it was like, well, if things are a little slow for a couple of months, I'll be okay. But I had a handful of clients. So you know, I like any trainer who leaves a gym, you tell a few your best clients. And you know, you do that like gradually, little by little, I don't know if that picked up on the mic, I think it is. But you you gradually start getting a couple people out the door. And once you have enough people out that it's like, alright, because you know what, the thing I didn't mention is the gym takes most of the money. You know, you're a top level trainer, Jim, the client might be paying 140 \$150 A session, you're getting maybe 60 of that, which is not bad. If you can stack eight or nine sessions back to back in one day, you can make a lot of money. But it's like that that pistol squat math, it's like, well, wait a minute, I could train a third as many people and make almost the same money that I was making and have way more free time. But like the pistol squat, being an independent trainer is much more complicated than that. It's like, oh, the gym was just handing me clients. And now I have to find them on my own. And so it definitely is a similar thing. But I had enough people who I knew were coming with me. And I had enough faith in the path that was ahead of me that I was going to take my chance and I knew in the back of my mind. Like every trainer who quits a gym, they'll take me back. Whenever it comes to that.

 James Geering 59:26

Or when I think in New York is quite a unique perspective in the health or the seeming. We'll just say the body composition, maybe health is the wrong word because you got to see where people are surrounded by skyscrapers and not seeing the

 59:40

drinking alcohol non stop exactly skinny,

 James Geering 59:42

but the skinny so when I look at a lot of places that are really leaning heavily towards pedestrianisation, you tend to see less obesity, someone who's very, very heavy just would not be able to get to the store to work etc. So with all the traveling that you've done, what is your perspective? Do you have, you know, the pedestrianized urban city center versus, for example, where we live now, you can drive and drive through almost everywhere not even leave the seat of your car?

 1:00:12

Well, you're right, that is one thing I miss about New York is you can get your 10,000 steps and without having to make any concerted effort to do it, just running your errands, and walking to the train and whatever. Not that not that I'm into the 10,000 steps. But that's, that's people can relate to that, I think. But here, I have to make an effort to go for a walk. And I do. And I walk my dogs every day. So that's one good thing about having the dogs so they forced me to get out and walk them for half an hour or so. And then beyond that, whenever I have the chance, I just tried to get out and go for a stroll, or I got the Santos trail right over here. So I go hiking in there a lot. But you definitely have to make more of an effort. And you're right, people in metropolitan areas, for the most part are not as fat as people in rural areas. But I gotta tell you, I feel like the culture in America, and probably in Europe, too, is such that there are fewer people who are just like regular people. You're either obese, or you're into working out. And there's very little in between.

 James Geering 1:01:12

That's interesting response. Because you're right. I mean, there's a lot of talk about the shrinking group of people that we can pull from to be in the military to be first responders. And that is a very real thing. However, I think because of you know, bar styles and calisthenics videos like yours, and you know, mud runs, and CrossFit and all that I think that fit group of people are now fitter, like our Fit kids are fit now. And then the problem is, like you said, our fat kids are fat, fat. And you're absolutely right, when you think of your average person, which I think you would see walking around Stockholm, or Lisbon, which is someone who's not really focused on specific performance, but also through their environment is just leading a healthy life. And they walk a lot, and they swim, and they're out in the sun, and they have community. And that's a very interesting perspective, you do see like, just like politics and COVID, and everything else is kind of polarizing. Even with our wellness, you're either really, really fit, or a lot of our people have, I mean, 70%, or obese or overweight, the both ends

 1:02:21

of the spectrum are moving farther away from each other, right? We have athletes, setting new world records, doing things people have never been able to do before, with athletic performance. And then you also have more obesity, more diabetes than we've ever had in history before at the same time.

 James Geering 1:02:37

So talk to me about your experience with the pandemic, when, when that happened, I actually had two episodes a week and I bumped it up to three because I was so appalled by the lack of middle of the road common sense of wellness advice. You know, every I haven't met a person yet that didn't say when it first hit. No one knew what was going on. We all took it very seriously. And then there's varying degrees of like Florida, where we started opening up and then seeing an opening up more and seeing and I think they did a very good job in the state. And then you have some states that were you know, borderline maniacal, when the rest of the country is already open, and they're still shut down. And what really angers me is the very things that people needed, parks beaches, gyms were shut down. But they were able to get fast food and alcohol delivered to their house while they watched Tiger King. So you're a trainer in that city. Walk me through your experience?

 1:03:37

Well, you know, before I get into that, I have to tell you more about the months in my life leading up to COVID. Because my life took an unexpected turn a few months before COVID And then kind of made a U turn, because of COVID. And then kind of made a completely different direction a little while later. So I had spent a lot of years like I said, I quit that big box gym in I think it was 20 Tanna, and I spent a lot of years training people in parks and traveling and teaching workshops and going all over the world and writing books and making YouTube videos are really deeply entrenching myself in the world of alternative fitness. And I made a good name for myself and a good living for myself. And in 2019 I mentioned that I published the last book I did with Dragon door next level strength. And then that book didn't do as well as I hoped. And I after that I really didn't want to write another book. I was kind of frustrated with the process and with how a few things were handled with how that book you know, things behind the scenes that I wasn't happy about. And I wanted to take a break from from traveling and my daughter was just born and I said you know what, I'm just going to get a job at a gym. And I called up a friend who works now the brand crunch I think they have Yeah, location. Yep. I had a friend who was pretty high up the crunch. I said, you know, are you guys hiring on the management and he said, I got a club, I could put you there next week, we need someone at Union Square, which is like one of their flagship locations. And I was like, fuck it, let's do it. So I became the Personal Training Manager. Very, very big gym, even bigger, big box gym than the New York Health and Racquet Club I'd worked at. But it was it was it was exciting for me, because it was the complete, it was just different, you know, you got to change things up in your life. So as I was eager to get back into that world after being away from it for so long, and I was doing very well, and I was really enjoying it. And then and then COVID hit, and the gym shut down. And I got put on furlough. And I was like, Alright, I'm gonna go back to making YouTube videos, I guess. So it was kind of really ironic for me in a way, because I felt like I had made this huge life change. And then the world around me was just like, Nope, you're not doing that you're gonna go back to doing what you were. So I just went with it. So I never we know when the gyms reopened, I never went back even though they said, Hey, you can come back. We're open again. I said, No, thanks. My YouTube stuff took off because more people were at home looking for bodyweight exercises. So I started getting a big boost in my book sales again. And it was it was actually a great thing for me professionally. And personally. All the stuff going on in New York around me was crazy, right? They were they were taking away people's rights and letting people go broke and saying they couldn't work. But I was okay, I had enough clients



who were willing to, hey, I'll meet at the park, I don't give a shit. I'm not worried about getting COVID Let's let's go to the park and work out and I'll pay you cash or whatever. And that that kept me afloat. And then ultimately, we wound up moving down here to Florida.

**J** James Geering 1:06:49

So during COVID, I think the UK especially London, and some of the bigger cities initially went through a lot of the same things that New York did. And it was very frustrating. Being in the kind of wellness world, whether it's as a paramedic, and firefighter, whether it's a coach and an athlete, as exercise, physiology graduate, all these different things that you understand pretty well, the how to build the resilience of the human being, what happens when you get a virus or bacteria, whatever, and your ability to fight that off and survive based on your overall health. And so you're hearing all this kind of misinformation. And you know, it's just it's nauseating. But what happened in the UK, and it's funny, I was trying to remember his name, it just popped in my head, there was a personal trainer called Joe wicks. And he's like you but not, you know, not to the level of knowledge or anything or anything like that. But he just happened to be a guy that started making daily workouts. And due to the lack of good information from the British government, and I'm sure he all kind of blew up at the end, when they were telling the British people to stay in home and they were having Christmas parties or the politicians. This one guy everyone was talking about, I actually want to try and get him on the show. Because like yourself, that's what people leaned into. And now all of a sudden, the convict fitness style workouts are extremely pertinent. I don't have kettlebells and barbells and pull up bars in my house. But I have my body and I have a carpet or have the Muggeridge. So talk to me about that, from the other end the demand that you started getting? And what were you seeing what was some of the stories that came out of the people that you are coaching or interacting with, that were told to stay in the house but still understood the value of their fitness?

 1:08:37

What Well, exactly what you just said, but you know, I gotta I gotta add to that I may have made a point in my career, to not really talk that much about the COVID and Saturday, and about my personal feelings on it. Because I feel like what happened to a lot of people in the fitness wellness space, is they started going down that road a little bit. And then they had no choice but to really make that their whole brand. Because half of their followers said, How dare you I hate you. Now I'm gonna unfollow you and the other half of their followers says, Tell us more about the conspiracy theories. So it's like, well, I just lost half my followers and the people who I have, this is what they want me to say. And I didn't want my whole brand to become about the COVID lockdowns and that's that's why I went out of my way to not really talk about it directly. Now, obviously, my message indirectly was, take care of yourself, do what you have control over. You don't have control over the tyranny that might be happening in your city, but you do have control over your decision to do exercise at home to get some sunlight to try to make healthy choices when it comes to your food. And and empower yourself by embracing the things that you can control.

**J** James Geering 1:09:55

Well, I think that's one of the least discuss areas of mental health is autonomy. I've saw that even in the fire service, the last place I worked was incredibly unhealthy. It the real. And this



happens a lot ironically, in fire departments, the people that everyone knows, on social media, as you know, they're always at the fire trainings and you know, there really are leaders in their field, a lot of times their own department doesn't want to hear any of it, it's kind of interesting, the the profit is never received at their own land. But that, you know, that was the truth is just by explaining look, you can still own your own health. And this wasn't what anyone who was actually paid in leadership position was doing but the autonomy, putting that back into people's hands, not stay in your house Shut up, you know, we'll tell you when to come out. But like you said, here are some, here's some things to think about eating, here's how you can grow herbs in your flower box, you know, here's some exercises you can do in your living room, and putting that power back because by tell it taken away people's autonomy. And this isn't political, this is about wellness. That's the problem that drives me crazy. I stood in the middle watching the extremists of the left and the right, basically saying the same damn things from a different, you know, parapet, but in the middle of the normal people just wanted to get back to, you know, to improve their health and get back to work. But by giving people the power to maybe choose some better things to eat, to maybe exercise to follow your videos, that is such a powerful mental health tool, because you take away autonomy from people that is debilitating to the mind as well. That's why they do it. Exactly. I don't think it's even like they're wringing their hands. But it is this no one could deny that there's an element of Oh, we've controlled them a certain way. And then there's some great people in leadership positions that don't want that. But the ones that are, you know, making a lot of money from people doing what they tell them to do, of course, I mean, that's not, that's not a conspiracy theory. That's just basic economics, if they see that they can make people do what they wanted to do, then, you know, there's some people that were realizing that as an opportunity to continue doing the same thing, all the



1:12:01

stuff that you just said, is stuff that I said way before COVID, and stuff I wrote about my books, and it wasn't controversial. In 2010, I published an article about how the government doesn't want you to be healthy, and they don't want you to be fit and they don't want you to take care of yourself, and they don't want you eat good food, and nothing but positivity in the responses to that article. I wouldn't even repost that. I should just delete this one. But don't want anyone to dig this up. You



James Geering 1:12:26

got a bunch of dudes in suits showing up at your house. But But no,



1:12:29

it's just it's just wild to me that so many people who were otherwise free thinking anti establishment type of people just fell right into line.



James Geering 1:12:40

Yeah, yeah. And I've been saying the same thing. I mean, the reason why I started this podcast was because for two years I hired six of my friends, first responder, friends. So this has been

was because for two years, I buried six of my friends, first responder, friends. So I've been talking about, you know, for example, sleep deprivation and first responders, we work our people to death, truly to death. And then through COVID, it was even worse, because they were in the frontline with no PPE originally. And then, you know, as they were getting, Oh, you were exposed and now we have to take you and send you home. So now less people have to work. And then all of a sudden it doesn't want at Oh person that just spent a year working on what we fire you we're gonna get to that. Exactly. So again, it's just just, it's it's crazy. It's absolutely crazy when the truth is simply makes the country healthier. Winston Churchill said you can measure the greatness of a country by the health of its people. That's what it boils down to. But it was so blurred, especially in a health care system where its profit based. So there's no money in sick people asking me and there's no money in dead people or healthy people. But there isn't sick people. Where are the checks and balances? When I look at our country that were said 70%, obese or overweight? This isn't a left or right conversation. This is coming from an altruistic place of love, that we want our people to be healthier



1:13:52

word. Yeah, I certainly don't consider myself a political person. But you know, it's almost impossible not to get dragged into these conversations nowadays because everything's become political.



James Geering 1:14:06

Yeah. Well, I guess the thing is, when people say about this, they're like, oh, I don't do politics and like, no, do I it's like, trying to figure out how our children can not be murdered in the schools. That's not politics. That's I hate seeing I just posted the the montage of the 21 people that were killed in the Valley. It's



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so weird to me how Republicans on the one hand, can rightfully say, hey, we don't want our kids in school here and about you know, sex and adult situations or whatever. That's bad for kids. We don't want them to be exposed to that. But then at the same time, you know, it's cool someone could go into a school and shoot it up that's fine. It's like why don't you care about the kids? I thought you cared about the kids



James Geering 1:14:47

yeah. What is so here's the thing is I see the both sides is what happens is we have one of these God,



1:14:53

anti gun person but we come on we got it. We got to try to make a little more effort to keep schools safe.

**J** James Geering 1:14:58

Yeah, well, this is the this is yes. So there'll be a shooting, and then the two sides will divide and argue about guns. They won't talk about mental health, broken families, the side effects of psychiatric drugs, violent video games, sleep deprivation, all these other compounding elements that have created this problem. And if you look at the streets, for example, in New York, you don't see people murdering each other on the streets of Stockholm or Reykjavik. Why are we not talking about that? What is it that they do so well in Portugal and Iceland, and Norway, that we don't do here. And if you reverse engineer areas, for example, the prohibition of drugs that's created this horrendous crime and these problems at the borders, that's your nucleus, but if we just divide over gun ownership, all we do is they shout each other. And a few days later, there's a transgender on a Bud Light commercial, and they're just thinking about that. And these children is still dead.

 1:15:54

Both sides are terribly corrupt. Exactly. It's unfortunate. Yep. And that's not our government is just completely owned by corporations. Yeah,

**J** James Geering 1:16:04

it's not politics is just the people of this beautiful country, need to take it back. And we've been, someone said, and I've repeated this a lot. One of my guests said, when you get the people arguing amongst themselves, the Lord and the lady are looking over the castle wall going good. They're not thinking about us. Absolutely. I mean, that's a Mic drop. To me, this is exactly where we're at at the moment. Well, I

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think that's why not to get too into politics. But I think that's why a lot of people like RFK you know, he's he's a Democrat. And a lot of people like us. We grew up in Democrats, we grew up identifying with a lot of those liberal values, but now it's like, the current state of the left like I can't get down with with what's going on there now. And it's like, thankfully, a breath of fresh air a guy who's not anti abortion, a guy who's who's not insane about some of the the far right stuff that that will make it impossible for me to ever be Republican, even though I agree with a lot of the things that are currently Republican things. But he's, he's also reasonable about like the COVID stuff. He's just, he just seems like a reasonable person who, like you said, actually wants to try to make things better, which is why he won't get the nomination probably

**J** James Geering 1:17:14

was same with Tulsi Gabbard, I think she's amazing. But she didn't stand a chance. And she lost against Clinton the last time who, you know, I mean, our last choices were Clinton and Trump. You know, every single four years, we hear it's the lesser of two evils. We have 330 million

people in this country. Clearly the system itself on how these people get to this position is what we need to be talking about, not the individuals, not Trump or Biden. But the system itself.

 1:17:43

You know, it's interesting, you mentioned how many people are on the country, because I think about this a lot. You know, the last election, more people voted than in any other election ever. And yet, most Americans didn't vote. So the media, they want you to think, oh, half of the country is red, half the country is blue, that's a lie.

 James Geering 1:18:03

Most of the country, or the country doesn't give a fuck either way, because you have all bullshit.

 1:18:08

I don't want anything to do with it. That's how most of the country really feels. I'm one of those people who didn't vote. Yeah, well, I

 James Geering 1:18:14

actually I let me see I did this last time talking about it. I did but I voted libertarian because the other two choice.

 1:18:22

Well, that's why didn't vote us I can't vote for these guys. They're all awful. I can't, I can't in good conscience pull the lever for either these people.

 James Geering 1:18:28

But to me the real litmus test, and I've said this before, the test of a leader is during a crisis, you pull people together. And look what's happened with the last least two administrations. If you divide your country, you have no business calling yourself a leader. So we're getting the wrong people. And it's not a democracy as a demonstrate cracy you have to be a millionaire. And you have to have no ethics to even play in that game.

 1:18:54

Let's talk about polling.

 James Geering 1:18:57

So anyway, we're gonna go to that now. So you're in New York. COVID happens but then you are able to pivot because you've set yourself a foundation of this online presence, the books that you've written, walk me through how that kind of continues to improve. And then what made you decide to come down here to Ocala, Florida.

 1:19:16

So my wife is from Miami originally. And she's for years talked about moving back to Florida one day, so it was always a possibility. And then my mother in law, my wife's mom moved to Ocala about a year before we did. So we visited her and we really liked it. And then during COVID We visited for much longer and ultimately decided to make it our home.

 James Geering 1:19:44

So talk to me I mean obviously there's very obvious kind of architectural differences between New York City and Ocala, Florida, but outside of that what have been some of the the aha moments or the the pros and or the cons of living here now.

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When I was a young man, I used to come to places like this. And I used to look around and be like, there's nothing here. But now that I'm in my 40s I'm like, oh, there's nothing here. New York is so bloated and crowded and polluted and overwhelming. It's just so peaceful and relaxing here. And like I said, when I was in my, my 20s working at that New York Health and Racquet Club, living in Manhattan, that was the time and the place for that media. And this is the time and the place for this me this me wouldn't be happy living that life and that me wouldn't be happy living this life.

 James Geering 1:20:35

So a lot of your in person, clients, I'm assuming we're up in New York State,

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I do not train anyone in person. So

 James Geering 1:20:42

you've shifted comes online. Okay, now what about down here? Have you started growing in person as well, I



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am not seeking it out. If you would like to do a training session sometime we could discuss that if you know someone who wants to I'm not opposed to taking clients on. But I have about 20 people I train online and that keeps me busy. And between that and products, revenue and everything else and living a very comfortable life. So you know, I know some people have the mindset and you know, working for a company like like crunch, where New York Health and Racquet Club or any company, there's this mindset of more and more and more, we sold 150,000 and personal training last month, we're gonna try to sell 160,000 this month. And I don't have that mentality. I think it's a very unhealthy mentality. It's kind of the same thing I was saying before about mainstream fitness, obsessing with the goal obsessing with no, you're not big enough, you're not strong enough, we need to try to hit a new PR. It's like, I'm good. I got everything I want in my life. I eat great food, I shop at Earth there. I live in this beautiful house, I got a wonderful wife, a wonderful child, I get to workout every day, be in the sunshine, like I got everything I don't I don't I don't want to have more than this. I don't need to.



James Geering 1:21:53

I just saw a video. I'm gonna post it later today as a guest of mine, John Maloney. And he was talking about, he was in his basement. And he's he's, I forget his background accident, so many bloody interviews, but he is kind of a motivational speaker, you know, human growth, and he works with businesses, that kind of thing. And she she said, or he said that he was down in the basement and he got a text that he got not only one speaking gig, but actually two, and I'm assuming they were big gigs. And his wife heard him like, literally cheer from the basement. Show. So she goes down. And you know, she's like, What's What's all the commotion about is that I got these two gigs. And I forgot exactly remember how he phrased it. But she looked at him and he was like, you don't seem very happy. And she goes, I've watched you slowly die before my eyes. And I'm assuming she was referring to how busy he's been. And now you've just taken two more gigs. You said that pie chart, a lot of people talk about, you know, you've got the piece of pie that's finance a piece of pie, it's spiritual, she says that finance pie is full. And if you keep pursuing these, that means you're gonna have to start taking from the family piece. We've got enough money. And it was like, that was such a beautiful way of putting it because whether it's what did he do? There's a good question, because the clip ends is a very good question. I might have to call him and ask him. Hopefully, he, you know, turned down the gigs or said, you know, another cluster and made more money and counted it and bought a crunch. But no, but it's it's that you know, there's that that term, you know, work life balance. But you're absolutely right, going back to that targets those goals, this kind of chasing the holy monopoly philosophy that seems to be so big, since probably the 80s is, you sometimes you just got to step back and go, it's enough. And that's how I feel like I have a beautiful home in Ocala. And it's not anything big. It's just a beautiful home. I love it there. I've got a little car that gets me from A to B without breaking down. And my kids are healthy. I love to travel. So that's where my little extra money goes. But you know, people like oh, you could advertise on your website and you put, you know, sponsorship in between like, every 20 minutes in this conversation. I'm like, No, if I'm talking now, I don't want to interrupt it with a Hemorrhoid Cream. Commercial. I'm good, you know, so that work life balance really is about like, look, take a step back. Look at the things that are most important to you. Not the materialistic things but the most important to you is that being fulfilled, how can you spend less time working and make the same amount of money? I think that really is the goal.

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Yeah, no, I've that's exactly what I've managed to do since I moved here. And and the cost of living is less here. But the other thing that I didn't tell you as I got super lucky. That's kind of the theme of this interview is I'm expressing a lot of gratitude. I bought a place in Brooklyn in 2019. And that was part of why I took the job a crunch. I was like I need I can't be freelancing. I've got a big mortgage. I gotta have a six figure salary that I know is guaranteed and, oddly enough, in spite of all the crazy lockdown stuff during COVID property value is soared. So that house that I bought in 2019, when I sold it in 2022, I sold it for \$300,000 more than I bought it for. And that's that's the other reason I left New York was like, I can make hundreds of 1000s of dollars if I leave right now.

 James Geering 1:25:27

Yeah, and you can literally buy a house just with that profit that

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you made the reason I'm kind of relaxed down here.

 James Geering 1:25:33

Beautiful. Well, I want to be mindful of your time. I'm gonna ask you have some closing questions. But before I do, where can people find the books? And even if they're thinking about, you know, wanting personal training, where can the access all that online,

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if people can spell my name or even get it almost right, and they can type it into a search engine, I'll pop up. That's the great thing about having an unusual name as a kid I hated that. But as an adult who's Google bowl, it's it's great

 James Geering 1:26:00

to spell it for people. So

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it's KV a DL, if you Google Cavallo, you'll find me and my brother, Danny,

 James Geering 1:26:07

beautiful. All right, well, then the first of the closing questions, we talked about your books, are

there books written by other people that you love to recommend? It can be related to our conversation today, or completely unrelated?

 1:26:19

Well, there's there's two books that sprang to mind. The first one is one of the books that inspired me early on to change my eating habits was a book called The Primal Blueprint by Mark Sisson. And I don't know if you're familiar much with them, you probably are, he's a pretty big deal. And I think that book came out in 2008, something like that. And before that, my my diet was, you know, protein powder, and just a lot of garbage and processed stuff. And that really opened up my eyes, and started me down the road of changing my eating habits. And then anything by Alan Watts, not fitness at all, but I just think his philosophy is beautiful. And he explains really out there things in really simple ways that make them easy to understand.

 James Geering 1:27:02

Yeah, he's one of the people that we've lost that I would love to have sat down, you know, obviously, I'd have started this almost seven years ago now. So, so many people that either just sadly too old now or, you know, have already passed away that would just be incredible to sit down Alan Watts for a couple of hours and just, you know,

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we can read his books and listening to his recordings and pretend we're having an interaction. Right, exactly.

 James Geering 1:27:25

He left us left us a lot of wisdom. All right, what about films and or documentaries that you love?

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Some of my all time favorite movies just off the top of my head and include Fight Club, the matrix. Glengarry Glen Ross, The Big Lebowski, Batman, The Michael Keaton Batman, it's talking about although the the Christian Bale ones aren't bad, either. And, you know, I liked that director, Christopher Nolan. I like inception a lot. I like what's the one about the magician's with Christian? The guy who played that in a Christian Christian Bale. Yeah, logician and Hugh Jackman plays it. And

 James Geering 1:28:06

now you see. Oh, that's right.



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I love that movie.

 James Geering 1:28:10

Brilliant. What about documentaries, any of those?

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Oh, man, you know, I finally watched the Bob Ross documentary the other day. I know I'm a little late on that one. But I thought that was pretty good. But I don't think that's an exceptional one. It's just the most recent thing that I've watched. But nothing. Oh, you know what? Free solo. That's the best.

 James Geering 1:28:30

The Bob Ross one. It was, again, underlying some of the topics that we hit, you have a guy who truly has a passion for his art, which is obviously painting. And then you watch that corporate element that you need to make us more money start to filter in and become a cancer in his life.

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But at the same time, he went to Ben Bob Ross without them. Yeah, a double edged sword this stuff.

 James Geering 1:28:53

Yep, absolutely. But again, I think that's where the happy medium comes in. Yeah, I can make you some money. Just don't make make me make you all the money.

 1:29:00

There's a saying that I like I don't know if I made it up. Or if I got it from somebody else. I can't remember. But it's just because something is true. Doesn't mean the opposite can't also be true. So yes, it's true that money is important. But the opposite is also true. Money is not important. But it is it's weird. There's a lot of paradoxes like that in life.

 James Geering 1:29:23

Well, the next question, is there a person that you recommend to come on this podcast as a quest to speak to the first responders military and associated professions of the world? I know,



1:29:33

buddy, nobody springs to mind off the top of my head, but if I think of anyone afterwards, I'll let you know.



James Geering 1:29:38

Beautiful, perfect. Yeah, that happens a lot. All right, within the last one before we make sure everyone knows where to find you on social media. What do you do to decompress?



1:29:48

I hang on a pull up bar. Literally, that's what I do to decompress.



James Geering 1:29:54

Brilliant, beautiful Do you ever do the the upside downs get the cat well, not so much skin the cat you know the



1:30:00

Oh yeah, I can hang from my ankles. Yeah, okay. I don't mess around with those Gravity Boots. No, I just do barefoot on the bar.



James Geering 1:30:06

Oh dear. Flex your feet. Yeah, yeah, Gravity Boots



1:30:09

are for sissies. Sissy loves when I work out. That's right. I don't put a bar if I if I do a barbell squat, there's no sissy pat on it,



James Geering 1:30:19

not a tampon. All right. Well, then the very last question, we talked about your website or googling you, what about on social media? Where are the best places?



1:30:26



1:30:15

Well, you know, the other way people can find me is if you google how to hang from a pull up bar by your feet. I think I'm the only one with an article on that.



James Geering 1:30:33

There we go. Beautiful. I'm the only one has an article that says how to kill a firefighter in five easy steps. There's a tongue in cheek piece, but yeah,



1:30:42

but now I'm on I'm on Instagram and Facebook and Twitter and YouTube.



James Geering 1:30:45

Fantastic. Well, I want to say thank you so much. Firstly, for inviting me we've had dogs barking, we've had thunderstorms and you know, some really cool and organic Florida things happening. But it's been a great conversation. You have a very unique perspective. And I want to thank you for being so generous with your time today.



1:31:02

Hey, my pleasure.