

# Chance Burles - Episode 778

Wed, Jun 07, 2023 3:00PM 2:37:52

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

people, horses, work, good, talk, conversations, part, sit, years, leave, point, happening, day, put, person, military, podcast, afghanistan, walk, moment

## SPEAKERS

James Geering, Chance Burles

---

**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, Canadian Armed Forces veteran and host of the collective chance burls. So we discuss a host of topics from his childhood and journey into the military, the power of equine therapy, his road into podcasting, Jujitsu, 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 give them to every single person on planet earth who needs to hear them. So with that being said, I introduce to you chance burls enjoy John, I want to start by saying thank you so much for taking the time and coming on the behind the shield podcast today.

**C** Chance Burles 01:29

It's absolutely my pleasure. Seriously, I've been listening to you for quite a while. And you've had a bunch of my friends on so it's I'm, I'm honored to be on here, man. Appreciate it.

**J** James Geering 01:39

Well, I was also honored to be on your show the collective on YouTube. So I want to thank you for those invitation as well.

**i** 01:45

Like I said, You got an open seat, man. Any day you want to show up if you're not too busy running around the world. You're welcome. Anytime with the collective.

 James Geering 01:53

Yeah, thank you. Yeah, for people, people listening. My morning has been somewhat of a shit show. And having to travel internationally now. So John's has been very, very patient as far as the beginning of this podcast. So all right, well then jumping in where on planet earth are we finding you today?

 02:10

So I am in Sherwood Park, Alberta, which is just outside Edmonton. And that's up in Canada. For those that don't know. I, I'm an Alberta boy. I've been born and raised kind of all over. All over Alberta. I've been up north and down south. I've been left and right. All over the place.

 James Geering 02:29

Well, let's start that. And 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

 02:36

so it's, it gets interesting here. So I'm I was born in Calgary, in Alberta. My mom had many jobs. She's basically picture like a hippie, like your quintessential version of a hippie. That's my mom. And my dad is actually a he grew up on a ranch down in southern Alberta. But he is a musician, mechanic. You name it kind of thing. He can if it's got strings on it, he can play it. And if it's got bolts, he can fix it. So he's kind of a jack of all trades thing. They they divorced when I was three. And so I got a little bit of time with my dad, but not a whole lot. And I started we went my siblings. And I went with my mother. And often to the races. I'll tell you the rest of the story there. I do have a brother, an older brother and an older sister. So I'm the youngest of three. And I got a half brother as well from on my dad's side. But that's, that's about it. We didn't spend a whole lot of time with him. So in terms of family wise, like we didn't do a whole lot. My mom did many, many different jobs. She was posting for a little while she's run her own businesses for 234 I think four or five different businesses on her over the span of time. But we moved around a lot too. So we were continually renting houses and stuff like that. So we would you know we were in Lethbridge for a while we were in Claire's home for a little while we were in Calgary for a little while like and we would kind of jump around I realized that before joining the army I had moved I think seven or eight times just as a family jumping from house to house. And yeah, it was interesting. I grew up kind of half on the ranch because I would go out to hang out with my uncle on the ranch down just north pincher creek for every little while, like for a summer here and summer there and hang out and go help out do branding and Gosha gophers and you know live the ranch life for a little bit. And and you know, I just kind of made my way through that. I tried to get into sports. I was really good at running. You know, I could just I could do whatever but I spent a lot of time on on our own the three of us the my brother my sister When I because my parents were always working, you know, this was the 90s and 80s and 90s, right when you just kids stayed at home. And that was the way it was. So we did a lot of stuff out in the country, in the city, in small towns, just kind of running the neighborhood and doing all kinds of crazy stuff. I got scars all over my body from dumb things I did in order to


have fun seek stuff out. And it was, it was an interesting, interesting pastime, it started cause some issues later on in life that I started to realize in the last, you know, two, three to three years. But it was good. We actually lived in one spot called Wilson siding, and it was nine kilometers outside of Lethbridge. So Lethbridge is not a big town. For those that are listening. It is a small city in southern Alberta. And we were way out in the countryside. And it was two houses, two grain elevators, and a highway. That was just Fields was 360, right, there was nothing else. And so you had to you know, make your own fun. And we would run around and play inside the grain elevators, which is not safe to do, but we did anyway, we used to go out on tracks all day, we believe first thing in the morning, my brother and I and we'd go off into the field, see how far we can get, and then make our way back log on past hours. And my parents would be served my mom and my stepdad would be there just kind of, well, here's some dinner, go to bed. He got school in the morning, we like Alright, cool. But it was it was a lot of exploring a lot of just running around trying to figure out stuff to do with anything for most of my most of my childhood.

 James Geering 06:51

Now, you said grain elevators are not that familiar with that term, oh,

 06:55


grain elevators. So if you've seen anything from pictures of the West, or you see these big, they're wooden buildings that are probably four stories tall ish. And they're always beside a railroad track. And basically what it is, so the farmers would bring all the grain to the elevator. And they would, you know, there'd be a big sale and make sure everybody were bought and sold and so on so forth. But then the grain would get loaded into the base of the elevator and it's just basically a, it's an elevator, so it has a scoop that brings all the grain up to the top. And then once it's at the top, there's a funnel that shoots it down into the train, so you can load trains,

 James Geering 07:36

full of grain, super safe place for kids to play. Oh,

 07:39

super safe. Yeah. 100%. And you know, grain dust is highly, highly flammable, very combustible.

 James Geering 07:49

When I was in Fire Academy, they showed us a video and it was one very well known line of duty death where the I think it was a more rural fire department. And they were cutting on the side of a grain silo. And it's exploded and I believe it killed the fire fire



08:04

100% Yeah, it is supremely combustible. It'll go up pretty fast. But yeah, we used to run around in there, we just play in the trains. Because there would be trains that would roll up and stop and wait for the wait for loading and stuff. But yeah, it wasn't, wasn't very safe. But we also had tons of animals too, right? People would, especially being that far in the country, people would just drive their dogs and cats and stuff out to the country and toss my driveway. And so we had at one point, we had 14 cats, three dogs. And we get lots of straights to just randomly run up to the house because we'd be in the middle nowhere. And so it was an interesting place to save. So we stayed there for a couple years, you know, move to another place. Stay there for a year to move to another place. Most of my time was spent in in and around Calgary, though, just you know, being a crazy teenager in the 90s.



James Geering 09:01

What do you have that many cast? Isn't this shift where now the cast and say I have five humans rather than you say you have 14 cats?



09:08

You know, I didn't even think about that. But I think you're right. Yeah, I think the cats basically owed us for sure. The we thought we own them. But yeah, we really did.



James Geering 09:18

Now, you talked about the divorce itself. Obviously there's a lot of dynamics. Sadly, I'm divorced, and my little boy, it used to be when I was on shift he'd be with his mother when I came off shift than he'd be with me. And that worked pretty well. And then you know, kind of went to more half and half when I transitioned out was just you know, during the regular work week. So what was that dynamic? Did you get to see your father or are you one of the ones that really lost contact with one one parent?



09:44

It was tough. So looking back on it at the time, I didn't really realize this but there was a moment I think I was that are one of the earliest memories I have during the divorce and it was getting really bad my dad was playing lots of music and he's at bars all night drinking, you know, he was just it was not a good scene to begin with. And I remember my mom coming home at one point being absolutely terrified. We locked all the doors, she was telling us that we can't let that in. And it's not okay. And we so my brother, and I just started, like laying traps in the hallway for my dad, which was an interesting read, like, we would take our bobby pin, like our pins and stuff, right, and he bent them up, and you put them on the floor. And just like, anything we could think of to if he gets in here, we got to stop them this way. And if he gets here, we got an It was challenging to look back on later on in life. And then unfortunately, well, both fortunately, and unfortunately, my dad decided he was going to do his own thing. And we

didn't see him very often, I think, you know, we might see him on a birthday or Christmas or something like that. But it's usually my mom. Like, hey, you know, you have children, you should do something with them, right? So we would kind of get dropped off and hang out. Luckily, my stepdad was a friend of my mom's initially, and then eventually they became a partners. But he, he was there the whole time, he basically was like, he helped us out, he drove a taxi at that point in time. So he would take us to school in the mornings and do stuff like that. And he became 100%. My dad at that point. My biological dad, there was a point in time, I didn't see him for seven years. And I think it was between I think it was like 11 to like 18 kind of thing. So it was like, right, when you would want your death to be around. And he just, I've never heard from him. We didn't even get cards, we didn't get anything. He just disappeared. I was faced years and then randomly I think on my 17th or 18th birthday, I got a forgotten card in the mail, it was just like half birthday. So eventually, that turned into a lot of there was a lot of resentment, a lot of anger and a lot of missing like, I don't know why, why wouldn't you want to be with the kids that kind of stuff it I figured it out later on in life, but it's wrote that teenage and 20s it was a it was a hard pill to swallow.

J

James Geering 12:24

So when you look back now with this, you know, different lens that you have, especially with navigating so many of the Mental Health conversations that we have currently, which is phenomenal. Do you identify a sense of kind of diminished self worth like that, why wasn't I good enough that so many people whether it's you know, I got my X, her father, the sperm donor, literally up and left when she was five, and just went and started a brand new family, and she never heard from him. And that, to me is a piece of shit. You know, I'll say that I'm a huge fan of her either. But, you know, I mean, I understand the trauma, I'd really do I get it, I really get it. But so you know that that impact of being present as a father and you were talking to me about your little boy being you know, off sick today, you're there with him, you're taking care of him, that's what we need. So talk to me about the impact and what that did to you, when you look back now and analyze a father who, basically through a child's eyes, you know, they weren't good enough for him to stay?

i

13:22

Yeah, it was, it definitely affected my self worth quite a bit. And it wasn't actually till recently that I recognized how much it affected my self worth. And you know, as doing the podcasts and doing the all the chats and discussing mental health and being an advocate, and all these things have led me to an area of my own psyche that I can now kind of detach from the actual emotion of it, and look at it separate. And so I gained a lot of empathy over that actually, which is quite interesting. I really looked at the the anger, the resentment, all the stuff that I was holding on to for so long, and then realized that, you know, it's not helping anybody. And not only that, he doesn't know. So, it was one of those things that, you know, he kind of flipped the script completely instead. Right, okay. I also get it too because I understand his background. My grandmother, his mother was a undiagnosed schizophrenic. For his entire childhood, he didn't get diagnosed until he was an adult. And some of the stuff that he had to go through, especially living on the ranch out in the middle of nowhere with a schizophrenic mother. That that messes the kid up right and all of the things that that led up to the issues between my mom and my dad, I have an understanding now. I don't agree with them. Right because we've talked about this before is that it's all choice, right? You always have the choice in each

moment to make either good choices or bad choices. And those choices are up to you. But at least I can understand them now. Whereas being younger, I really couldn't. Because it was so attached to the emotion of just, you know, I'm a 15 year old boy, and I want to know what my dad is doing. But I haven't heard from him for years. So, like, you start to really go inside on it and go, well, like, what is it? Is it us? Is it me? Is it my brother? Is it? Like, what is the problem? Because we always wanted to be near him. Right? You just have this innate sense of I want to be around my dad, especially for young boys, you, you, that's the person you're looking towards. And it's challenging for especially stepparents, when you're dealing with kids that aren't technically yours, right, you can love them and raise them and, you know, pour your soul into them. But a teenager is so full of emotions, and so full of hormones, and they don't know how to deal with anything, and it becomes an impediment. Right? Because you're not my dad, you don't know me then. And so my stepdad did his best to try and manage us. But if we really want it to be around our debt, and then once you become an adult, and you haven't dealt with any of those feelings, then it becomes anger becomes resentment, and it becomes this. It can turn into things, right? I mean, you know, this could turn into this drive, where you're like, I'm gonna prove that I'm worth something and screw you and screw that guy. And then I'm gonna do whatever it takes. And, or it can turn into, well, I guess I'm just, you know, I'll, I'll do what I do what I can, we'll see what happens. And you kind of just back away from the world a little bit, and you let the world dictate what it is you're going to do from there. And it's, it was tough, because up until I decided during the army, I think I was just floating in this sense of like, well, it's not really worth almost nihilism, right? And just the effort to do anything is really worth it, because people can just leave at any time. So yeah, it's almost like a trap. You know what I mean? Like it can. It's a self laid trap, because you are in a negative state of mind to begin with, you're in a or you're having negative thoughts. Let's put it that way. And you set yourself up with questions like, well, if nobody else cares, why should I care? But you're only looking for people who don't care. Right? You're not actually looking for anybody that does care. And, you know, we've said it a couple times. I think on the collective was, you know, who you surround yourself with, matters. And when you're in a negative spot, and you learn looking around for people that don't care, you're gonna surround yourself with people that don't care. And they did, and that it's down that hill down that rabbit hole, it's absolutely silly. Yeah.

 James Geering 18:11

What do you mean, first thing you touched on was the multi generational trauma. And I think that's, that's the next part of this conversation, that's my second book is going to be addressing that. Because, you know, we look back at our childhood, where if you keep reverse engineering, you get to World War Two, and World War One. And, you know, it's just a never ending cycle unless you finally are able to break it. So when it comes to the life on the ranch, I know that you ended up becoming a horseman, when you were in your childhood, we already ran out horses, and if so, were you finding any therapeutic element from that?

 18:45

I think I found the the naturalistic healing of it, right. Just being around animals being around nature. It gives you a unless you actually take the time to find the insight there. I think it happens naturally, but you don't really understand what's happening. Right? Like when you have a rough day, and you just you're like, Oh, this is friggin ridiculous, and you go for a long

walk. Right? Being out nature is going to allow you to process some of those feelings and let go of that, because that's a natural process. But if you don't take the time to really think about it, or really understand what you're doing to intentionally do it, then it's hit and miss because you just know that going for a walk helps sometimes. Right? And then by being around horses, especially I've always been attracted to them, I guess more so is the power. And it's such such a docile power, which is what I think I really love about it, I think really gave me some insight on why equine therapy helped me so much after coming back from overseas, but the the nature of a horse is that they are technically prey, right. They are preyed upon animals. In the wild, you know, mountain lion, take them down, or sometimes a pack of wolves maybe, but kind of rare. But the thing is, is that they're still at the top of that chain, right? Like, nothing messes with a herd of horses. If you can get one off to the side, okay, cool, you might want to take that down, but horses will run over basically anything

 James Geering 20:25

by a horse, you know how hard that is to, I got knocked across a stable,

 20:30

hurt a lot. I've been kicked by a few bucked off a few. But I think that's what really attracted me to them was the fact that they are were so powerful, but I didn't use it. Like it wasn't an aggressive power, it just was power. And I think that really helped quite a bit. Once I became a soldier, I've said this quite a few times for my own podcasts and stuff. But, you know, being prayed, prayed upon, that's how we lived in Afghanistan. Right? We were constantly being aware that people were hunting us on a regular basis. And I think that's why I saw such an attachment with horses when I got back because that's how they live their lives. But being a young kid, yeah, there was a, you know, we had three four horses out there with lots of cattle. And that was, and then just wind, lots of wind. I don't know if you've ever been in southern Alberta down by pincher Creek. It is one of the windiest places in the world, literally. And it has wind turbines all over it. But it is a massive wind tunnel, you'll see easily winds of up to 100 120 kilometers an hour. It'll knock over trucks, like on the highways or signs or like be aware, this is the wind speed right now. And people are there's pull offs for trucks and stuff that they can just stop. And there's been lots of rollovers and all kinds of things from it, it's, it can drive you nuts, there's actually been quite a few cases down there to have people being driven mad from the wind, just how consistent and hard it is fun. Sidenote, I go down there to hunt down, which is fun, but it's yeah, that life on the ranch was, I think the break from the life in the city. Because we kept kind of jumping back and forth, especially through when, when I was young. Once I became a teenager, it was you know, all of those emotions, all of those hormones, and then I would be able to go to the ranch for a summer, right and just kind of let it all go and then it come back and we'd move and kind of do it all over again. It was it was interesting, but I I liked the fact you brought up the multi generational trauma stuff because it's so accurate and so true is that you got to be the you got to be one you got to be the one to make those hard choices. You got to be the one to make those hard decisions and go you know, it'd be so much easier just to yell at my kids and tell them what to do and they'll just cower in fear and do what I tell them. But then you also gotta go okay, well that would be easier. Sure. Okay, but I want to do a better than what I got. You know, that kind of stuff and you have to make those choices in those moments to to get rid of that multi generational trauma.

J

James Geering 23:17

Yeah, no, I agree. 100% And it's interesting because I've never thought of it this way but you just sparked the thought the way you describe horses in our professions we love the term you know, the lion is not whatever bothered by the opinion of the sheep or you know, the sheep dog protecting the flock. But I think the horses are much closer alignment, they were not very good predators as species, let's be honest, like have you tried catching a fish with your bare hands or a rabbit we're really lucky. Even our teeth on set up for let's be honest, so I'm not saying that we should all be vegan, but you know, we are definitely more suited to scavenging and you know, foraging but that being said, I think that's why there is that close as obviously we do with dogs as well but with horses and I grew up around horses my dad was a horse vet veterinarian. So you know, I grew up with all kinds of I just got to ride whichever horse happened to be with us at the time, which is probably why I became a stuntman eventually. But you know, that's what you want you want and you know Jordan Peterson articulates as well but you want that kind of you know, walk softly but carry a big stick you don't want to be a predator walking around beating your chest you want to be a kind compassionate creature, but just have the capacity if you have to, to be able to hurt to be able to protect

i

24:39

exactly I think that it aligns very well for sure. I really love the idea of you know that the stallion the herd this is the other part that it really applies to the fact that you don't see lone horses groaning roaming around and it actually when you put a horse by itself it freaks out right like you know this is that you You'd never put a horse by itself out in the middle of nowhere. It they just go nuts. They're gregarious creatures by nature, they need to be with other animals, even if it's like a goat or a dog or something else, but they need a friend. And, you know, when you're a first responder or military or something like that, you're you work as the part of the team. Right you but that's the best part of it is that you work as a part of the team, because the team doesn't actually work with everybody's working on their own. The team works only if everyone's working for the team and working for the betterment of the team. One of the things that horses do regular in this day post sentry, I mean, I'm sure you've seen this many times, right? One horse will be up, the rest will be eating, that guy goes down, somebody else pops up. You know, if they sleep, there's always one watching, right there. And it's, it's because there'll be their prey animals naturally, right? They groan those instincts, but it's also because the herd matters. More than, you know, me being able to eat right now, or the herd matters more than me being able to sleep right now. It's all about the team. It's all about the group. Versus it's all about me. And I think I think dogs as well, because they're pack animals, why we attach to them so much versus the, you know, other large scale predators, why we're not all run around telling ourselves, you know, I'm lion, I'm a I'm a Nile crocodile, right. I'm a cocktail, but the rest of it. But they're, you know, they're, they're pinnacles within there. They're the apex species in their area, right. So why don't we call ourselves Devin, because we're all hard and tough and raw. Now, it's because we want to be part of a group, because we're not lone animals is looking to survive and eat whatever we can. I think it's important to recognize, especially in first responders that we all want to be hardened, we all want to be tough, we all want to be but it's got to be, that's got to be secondary to being at peace, being calm, being regulated, you just have to have that as a tool. Similar to you know, a firearm, or similar to a weapon or a knife or anything like that, is that those things in themselves? Don't help. Like, if I were to just to hand you a firearm, I would not be comfortable with the fact that you have zero training, I don't know, whether you have traded or not, you know what I mean?



Hypothetically speaking, hand a firearm off to somebody and just say, Here you go. Have fun. Like that. That seems not smart to me. But you know, some of the guys you know, some of the guys I know, if I were to hand out festival to Shawn, I would feel better.

J

James Geering 27:47

Right? Yeah, it's in your hands.



27:50

But it's, it is a, that that strength, that power, that stuff, the reason that it feels good to hand that off to somebody else, or that's to hand somebody off, like, say, Sean Taylor, is that they're skilled, they've taken the time to regulate themselves they can manage high and low stress levels and and be calm and clear. And so you know, as warriors is, you know, first responders as people that want to run in run into the sound of gunfire or fire or, or running save someone's life or do whatever. The reason we do that is because at a base level we are compassionate first. Then there's the warrior, then there's right least that's my view on it.

J

James Geering 28:41

Yeah, no, I agree. 100% And you think about the the analogies The Lion King of the Jungle that will first say they're not in the jungle, so you've even got that wrong, but it's there's that it's based on, it's based on the John Rambo, you know, predator, I mean, these these fictional facades of masculinity. And I think the thing that we forget, and it's something I talk about a lot now, is what sent us into uniform, if you really unpack it is kindness and compassion. But then you put the uniform on you get indoctrinated, and all of a sudden, no, I'm, you know, I'm a seal. I'm a firefighter. And that's when we start falling apart because we forget that the other warrior poet, we forget the poet part completely. And we think we're supposed to run around just sticking swords in people's faces, which is not when you look at any ancient warrior culture. That's not what they did. You know, the samurai weren't just, you know, lopping off heads. They were tea ceremonies and calligraphy and all these things. So that's what you've got to you've got to create that Yin and Yang and we've just become this white circle, which is a complete fictional version of what a man or woman actually is.



29:48

Yeah, I think it also I think it comes from a natural deflection and insecurity. I think the harder you want to be that predator that dangerous thing wandering in the dark, right? I think that a lot of that comes from the insecurity of, you know, maybe I'm not that right now or the wasn't that at some point and therefore now I'm going to be that I saw or interesting quote online and it was talking about the the fact that it was the hero and the villain story are the same. But their reasoning to do what they do is different. So it usually starts with, you know, being orphaned or being damaged in some way or being left out, you know, having trauma. And then it becomes a choice, I'm going to make sure nobody else feels this ever again. Or I'm going to make sure everybody feels this right now. And that choice, it's a lot, if you look at it from a larger scale, I think it symbolizes a lot of what first responders military people do is that they

want to make that choice of, you know, I don't want anybody else to feel this pain. So I'm going to stand up and protect those around me, well, how do I protect those around me? Well, you know, maybe I'll be a policeman, because they protect people every day. And then you become a policeman. And you see the SWAT guys rolling around attack gear, and you're like, ooh, that's pretty sweet, right? And they don't care. They're not part of the rabble. They're not in amongst the, the, let's say, the rest of the population, right? And you're like, Oh, I'm gonna do that. Well, how do you do that? Now you got to work with certain people with a certain drive. That can get you up to that to that level. And then you have to be indoctrinated into that system. And then you have to run that system. And depending on how, who runs that system, and who the leadership is, and how that's played out. It's very easy to make it you know, who's got the biggest muscles? Who's got who can run the fastest? Who can shoot the FET, who can shoot the best who conducted a rather than our team? How many lives were even saved? Like my buddy said, I mean, you know, separate. You've had him on here. Yes, sir. Blah, blah. Yeah, he's fantastic. And he is of that mindset, right? He is one of the pinnacles in my eyes of that warrior poet. He will do very bad things to you if you try to hurt somebody. Right? But he's also super chill. always got a smile on his face. And he loves life. So like, it, it shouldn't really work. But when you make it work, there are some fantastic people.

 James Geering 32:29

Yeah, I've always said some of the nicest people I know, some of the most dangerous people. And

 32:34

yeah, it's a it's interesting, too. Because if you just have the if you're just dangerous, but you're not also calm and relaxed and regulated, I should say, it's probably best for Ford. Then you're just a scared little kid. Right? You're just scared little kid with a stick running around trying to hurt people, because you don't know how to do anything else. Yeah,

 James Geering 32:57

which is cowardice, not courage. And that's the thing. And I don't mean that judgmentally but it's, it takes true courage to address the pain that's inside you.

 33:06

Oh, boy does it ever because it takes work, and you got to sit with it. And you got to be there. And I mean, work not in terms of drudgery. But you're gonna, like, if you go through a journey of healing, if you really want to be, you know, a better person, or you want to be the person you used to be, or you want to make yourself into the pinnacle of what you can be, you're gonna have to sit with all that, you're gonna have to be in it, and then you're going to have to wade through it. And then you're gonna have to find the pieces that you need to learn from. And then you got to flush it, and then you got to move on. But there's so much, there's so much entangled in all of that, right, your personal identity and, you know, all of your training and the lifestyle that you came from Plus, why me Why do I have to go through this and then you get

into imposter syndrome. And like, there's, it's it's untried to untie the Gordian knot. And it is. Sometimes you gotta come in, come out at like Alexandria, and just cut it in half, and then start from the center and work your way out. It's a it's a tough run. Absolutely. Well worth it.

 James Geering 34:22

Yeah, exactly. So I want to get kind of into your kind of military timeline and that the other side. So when you were in this school age, you're running around, you know, getting on trains and riding grain elevators. Before you actually enter the military. Was the military always something on your mind as far as career was or something else prior to them?

 34:45

Oh, no, it was I have a picture of myself when I was I think it was three or four. With an olive drab sweater with the word army stenciled across the front, right? Like I would want to be in the Army since I was teeny tiny. I got other pictures. Me standing on top of a tree house with my popcorn just standing century old school British century do like but forearms and everything. It was a, it was kind of silly, but I just I just stood there I'd like that's all I wanted to be that was my, my vision

 35:18

of what it was to be I guess what I was really looking for was the

 35:29

group. I was really that was where I was like, I get to be a part of something big. And, and I was, you know, grew up growing up southern Alberta. It's very, it's called the Texas of Canada. Right? Like, it's super patriotic, and it's all about service. And there's, you know, farmers and ranchers and people who understand that you got to work in order to survive. And if you want to thrive, you got to work harder. So there was this mentality of just like, who were the hardest workers around? Soldiers. Okay, cool. Let's do it. It did lead into some other things of, you know, thinking that my, that my worth was based upon the work that I was able to put out, right, but I had to wade through that stuff later on in my life. But yeah, I always wanted to be in the army. And I just thought soldiers were the coolest people in the world. And then I actually delayed my my sight off, which was stupid. By the time we became in high school and I was a, I was a pothead. I was a, I was just looking to kind of disconnect at that point in time, I didn't really want to be a part of the world. I tried doing some sports, I played some football, played, soccer, played rugby played, you know, whatever I could do to get rid of some of this. excess energy and all the extra feelings that I could turn off when I was smashed into stuff on the football field. But he was also super tall, really lanky, and frickin awkward as heck. Just my body was not working out by the time I got to grade 12. I was six, five, and 175 pounds. Yeah, so I was like rail thin. And yeah, growing pains are not not a fun thing to go through. But that's a side story. As for the army, you know, I thought I wanted to be in the Army up until I was about 1718. And then I was like, I'm gonna be a drug dealer. Yeah. The other battery. And so yeah, I just kind of did a bunch of, you know, jobs. Right. I worked as a painter for a little while I

worked at a gas station, I worked at a liquor store, whatever, as I got out of school. And it wasn't until I was about 21 as 21 Some when I actually signed up and that was in 2003 initially. Kind of a Funny Story that what that with that though I walked in there. Did all my paperwork. Right? GM, I'm going to sign up or walk in here and they're like, Do you know what you want to do? You want to watch some videos? I'm like, No, I'm going to be a combat engineer. Let's freakin do this. And they were like, Okay, well, here's all the paperwork. Done. Here you go, Okay, here's all the references done. Here you go. Alright, come into an app to test smashed out, like I was motivated. And, and then when it came to a substance use form, looked at it, and I was like,



38:31

This is gonna be and in my mind, I was thinking to myself, like,



38:38

if I lie, there's gonna be a piss test. As I walk out of here, right? i That was the one I was thinking there wasn't but so I was like, okay, you know what, I'm just gonna be honest. They don't care. All they want to know is that whether or not I can be in or not. So I was honest. I was a smoker at that point. So I wrote all that in my, I had been drinking, probably more than I should have. But I wrote that in all the marijuana that I've been smoking, throw that in, and then wrote in some mushrooms that I had done, and I couldn't remember when it was, it was like, it was probably like a year, year and a half should be good and not that big of a deal. So I wrote in that had been 18 months since I've done mushrooms, and they took all my stuff, looked it over. And they're like, II Yeah, so you need at least three years of separation from any psycho. Psychedelic, there we go, that sort of look for psychedelic use. And I was like, okay, you know what, fine. I'll be back in 18 months. I was all like, again, super motivated. Which benefit at the time, actually, it gave me a whole bunch of time to train, which is what I did. I started running more I was rocking more and I was doing all the stuff I thought I had to do to kick butt. And I showed up year and a half later to the day. Boom through my paperwork and Let's do this. I told you I'd be back and the recruiters like, I don't know who you are. Everybody you've been posted out with a whole new career.



James Geering 40:08

That's what's up in your face. Yeah, that's right.



40:11

They're like I don't know. Okay, sure, man, whatever. So yeah, we and then I got in in December of 2005 saunas foreign with



James Geering 40:20

Sears funny I my very first recruitment effort in the fire service was city of Miami Beach. And they were at this this testing where we do the physical and rate the EMT skills and then they

they were at this this testing where we do the physical and retain the EMT skills and then they send the results out to a whole bunch of fire departments will man maybe just send someone to go to this event, basically to try and kind of head hunt. And they have these preamps among brand spankin new Fire Academy graduate with honesty in my heart like oh, okay, well, this is when I remember talking still quite a long time ago. Yeah, I tried ecstasy when I was in Japan, it was in had a good time, just danced a lot hugged a lot of people and nothing big deal. Dude, literally, like screwed it up and threw it in my face. And I'm like, Ah, so have to lie to be a firefighter. Okay, and then never had a problem after that. No, no, no, no, never would try to busy in church reading the Bible to try anything bad. You want me to run and burning buildings and cut dead people out of cars? Yeah, I can see why you want someone with a fucking clean slate that makes perfect sense. Perfect sense is such bullshit, I made me realize that we How many people do we disqualify based on these fucking backward, you know, parameters that we create, I totally get it. If you've abused drugs, you know, as far as you know, stolen opiates or, God forbid something with children, you have no business in this profession. But for sure the you know, all the fucking, you know, speeding tickets, and you tried a personal use of this or whatever. These are the kind of people that are going to line up to be in the military or first responder professions. So we have to get over that kind of pseudo Victorian mentality that, you know, we're all concerned, all that happens is you're just forcing us to lie. And that's the one thing that I hate doing. But I had to if I was going to be a firefighter, so it's funny that you had the same experience.



42:09

Yeah, it's, uh, the funny thing is, I think it really doesn't matter. Right? None of that actually matters whether or not I smoke some dope or whether or not this person did some ecstasy. Cool, right? Don't do it anymore. Let's go work. Right. Like, once you get to basic, or you get into your, you get into a firewall, you want the people that have other experiences, right? Like, if you were a completely straight laced, never deviating from the past or the you know, whatever you want to say it was in church 24/7 or however you want it, whatever image you want to come up with your mind on that, but has absolutely no experience in terms of, you know, drug use, or, you know, the lesser, I can't say even lesser, it's not even great word for it, but the places you would normally want to keep kids away from, right, if you've never experienced anything of that world. And you become a police officer, you're gonna be dealing with that 24/7 And that is gonna be your life. Firefighters, same thing, EMS, right, I mean, you should join the army kind of joining a bunch of other degenerates to begin with so not a huge culture shock there but that's not something you want to put a brand new police officer into, or brand new firefighter into having to run into a burning building full of needles and have no experience with like, what that is or how it works or why people are there and because now you're not doing your job as well. Right. And it's blows my mind it really does blow my mind. But yeah, mushrooms kept me out for about 18 months it also what it did was had I been on that class, that initial class when I first signed up, I would have been in I would have been in Afghanistan earlier and I would have been probably on up Medusa, stuff like that where we would have been running gunfights and all kinds of things which could have very easily changed the rest of the outcome. Right so I look back at as a bonus like hey, yeah, I got an extra 18 Mustang with my family. First off, I got an extra 18 months to train I got an extra 18 months to kind of figure out what I what it really was. I wanted to do there. And then yeah, then I got it. Eventually got there. And it's kind of funny. said this couple times about the training portion of it. Once I got into the military, I had the dream of what everybody wants right is you I did my basic in January I did my next course in was April or March did my threes course in the summer I by the my first year was spent training. By the end of that year I was in my unit in

October, I was in once you're in Edmonton, January of 2007. We got stood up for tour did training all the way through 2007. Left in February of 2008, to go to Afghanistan went to Afghanistan for eight months, like then. So there was this. I was in the the kind of the perfect pipeline what most people want. And I was still chomping at the bit still thinking it was going to slow and I was complaining all the time. And it's like, you had three days in between your courses that I was like, Yeah, well, I wanted more. And then I get a little bit more on the between the next two courses, and I'd be like God, taking too long, like it was just, you know, if you're not complaining, you shouldn't be a soldier. The art of complaining in the Army is it's an art for sure. But it was, it was I mean, it was good training, we did quite a bit. And it was fast. As fast as you know, the military can get you through. So within within two years, going from first day in the army, January of 2006. I was in Afghanistan, February 2008. As an engineer, as an engineer, yeah, it was, uh, oh, yeah, I guess I didn't really say that. So I joined up as a combat engineer, and I get to do all kinds of fun stuff with explosives and bridges and ditches and obstacles and cutting down trees and, and you name it, we do kind of everything. Fun time.

J

James Geering 46:30

So one thing that I always ask anyone who was deployed into into combat in the media, especially here in the US, we got a very polarized view. And I always kind of preface this question with the same monologue. Either kill him or let God sort them out stalking bodies on one side, or maybe your mum, because of this one, the other Oh, baby killers, you know, the the peace, love movement. And then you have the men and women, arguably children that we send overseas to fight for our country. So when you got over there, regardless of the politics, or the reasons that sent you to that place, was there a moment where you realize that there were some atrocities happening, you know, largely, probably to the native people of Afghanistan, that made you realize, okay, that was there are some some horrific people that we do need to take care of.

i

47:23

Yeah, while I was there, it was pretty bad. And we were. So to preface this, I'm going to there's a bit of a preface to this because it took some introspection afterwards to really understand this. Through my training in 2007, the guys that were training us were the guys that had just come back from up Medusa in 2006. So what we were getting trained for was basically running gunfights, they're like, Hey, you're gonna be over there, you're gonna get shot out every day, your guys are gonna be advancing into contact, you guys gonna be clear and building clean rooms. And so a lot of our training was very heavy on you know, firefighters and gun combat, like we were, that's what we're getting ready for. So at the very beginning, it was we're gonna freakin glass this place. Look, let's, let's get it. It's on. They wanted they picked a fight. We're here fight. Let's see what's see what's up. And once we got there, the whole dynamic had changed. Like, this is the thing about Afghanistan, that anybody anybody will tell you is that you use one tactic on them. They will change theirs, and then you got to change yours. As soon as you change yours, they changed theirs. And so there's this constant up and down and what's going to happen and yeah, so in 2006, the guys that were there, they were still getting a deed but the gunfight was the you know, point of impact for a lot of people when we were there either IDs everywhere. They so they had completely almost completely switched to IDs, and

they started to use the tactics of an ambush. And then they would run away and lead us into IDs, stuff like that. So the the tactics had changed but we had got there and we were like, Alright, boys, line us up. Where are we going?



49:20

And so our mindset initially was very much of let's just smash this place about halfway through tourism, and we started to realize like how



49:31

absolutely different Afghans were compared to us. And that was the big one. I think for me when I started to go none of the logic that I would have coming here makes any sense here, nothing. I watched this is this happened somewhere mid tour, but still blows my mind. The there's this highway, spring road south so it is the one main highway goes around Southern southern Kandahar. And there were IDs on it regularly. But it was the main thoroughfare so there was lots of traffic on it regularly. This particular day, I was standing this century protecting a bunch of heavy equipment, I was building another road behind us. And so all I was doing was staring across, staring at the desert, with a road in front of me watching traffic, right? It was super, super entertaining. But I saw this motorcycle coming down the road. And it was picking up speed and coming, it was gonna go around a van, I guess it was a truck, something like that. And there was another car coming from the other side. And so the two cars were lining up to pass each other at the motorcycle tried to go in between both of them as the cars passed. Now that right there, you'd be like, Why? Like, why? There's there's no reason for that. But the logic doesn't work there. So this did do did exactly what I thought was gonna happen. He went off one of the mirrors and went in between the vehicles as they passed each other like and wiped out his bike. Both cars stopped, one guy got out of the car, the other car then just carried on. The guy that got out of the car went over and I was like, Oh, they're gonna go check on how he is and like, see if he's okay, right? No, you just ran over there and started laying the boots to him. Just beating the crap out over the military. And I'm like, Okay, so do we, I'm like, looking at my changing, like, do we do anything they're like, civilian issue. That's they're doing their own thing. Some Afghan national police show up, we're, and I'm like, okay, the police are here. They'll deal with this. They got out, talk to the guy a little bit. The guy that was beaten the other guy. And, and then the cops proceeded to, or the police started to lay the boots of this guy. And then that guy got the car and walked off. And then they just threw that guy off in the ditch to come around a building, and then we never saw them again. So it was, it's a different country, right? And the rules that they live by are completely different. And so about halfway through halfway through the tour, I was like, I don't even I don't even know what to do anymore. Like, I know, my job is. But are we actually really doing anything here. Like what is I'm building a road, that they can then blow up in a month, or a week or whatever, and then we're going to rebuild this road. Hooray. This is good times. And then by the end of tour, I was so so bitter and so done with it. I was like we should just frickin nuke this place, turn to glass and it'll be gone. And then it won't bother anybody ever again. But again, that's it's we weren't seeing or getting any of the information of what was happening. Or we'd get intelligence reports it sounded like this. Be on the lookout for a white and yellow Toyota Corolla, license plate, squiggly su seven, hashtag squiggly seven, and we'd be like, Roger, very cool, man that white and yellow Toyota Corolla is out there are. They're everywhere. They are the car of choice. They're just everywhere. So that doesn't help us at all. But that's the kind of stuff

that's the information we were being fed at the lowest levels. And we didn't get any of this strategic like, Hey, we're making progress here. We're making progress here. This is what's happening. It was just wake up. We're going to patrol today. Okay, cool. We get our orders and we're going to attack this objective, we're gonna get this town, and then we're gonna hang out there. And then we're gonna come back here.

 James Geering 54:03

And that's so similar to the full the fire departments I've worked out. And I've worked some some great ones. But there was never a mission. There was never, this is the amount of house fires we have last year, we're going to try and reduce this. And this is how we're going to do it. We're going to this is you know how many wrecks were there and we're going to try and, you know, impact working with the CEO, maybe improving driver safety, you know, putting on free classes, defensive drive, whatever there was never just show up, put your gear on the rig and wait for someone to call 911 They're having their worst day, try and unfuck it as best you can. And then go back to the station. You know, and this is I think weather and I've heard this from the military too. And this is exactly what I heard from Iraq and Afghanistan, some as other places. You know, you go into a hostage rescue, you know exactly what your your goal is, you know, I think maybe maybe the some of the top tier forces had a little bit of that, you know, we're going to get bin Laden, we're going to, you know, rescue the Captain from the Somali pirates, whatever it is, there's a little bit more, you know, beginning and end. But for especially as you start getting deeper into some of these conflicts, like you said, it's like, what exactly are we doing, especially when you start seeing, you know, the the lat, as you said, the lack of results. Now, I want to throw the other side of the question for you. Another thing that we don't hear about is the kindness and compassion in these places that we deploy. And I really hate the fact that normally the entire country is tarred with that same brush. Oh, we're at war with Afghanistan or Iraq. And the reality is, there's the tyrannical, you know, few oppressing the masses in their own country. Yeah. So talk to me about the memories you have with some of the kindness and compassion that you saw overseas.

 55:46

It was interesting, too, because the kindness and compassion, especially in southern Afghanistan, it's a very rural rural area, right? Kandahar is not a bustling metropolis by any means. But a lot of the the actual compassion came from the kids more than anybody. The adults, really everybody kind of looked at us with this, you know, an air of suspicion, just in general, because we're walking around with weapons, right? I would do, right. But the the kids, they were just, they were so interested, and they just wanted anything, something, they wanted to have something, see something, get something. So anytime we could actually give them something. So when I was in massacre, right at the beginning a tour, we had a, there's a small village, kind of just on the side of a mountain. And we would sit up on the HESCO, if we had a bunch of golf balls, and somebody had brought, you know, three or four golf clubs at some point, and, and so we would hit these golf balls off the mountain, and they go flying down into the valley, and they'd hit the ground. And the kids from that village started finding all these golf balls, and they realized that they were ours. And so what they did was they would go out and collect them. And then they bring them to the front gate, and we give them like a bag of candy or whatever. And we'd take the balls back, and we'd go back up and hit more balls. Right? And, and it was super fun, up until the fact that the kids started to realize that they're



like, all the kids don't realize they're getting candy from the base. So at one point, the kids stopped waiting until we were done hitting. And they were just sitting at the bottom of the hill to catch them. And some of the guys were just ripping shots. You know, see how far we can hit them, right? But they would come down slice and get weird turns. And I think we missed this little girl and at one point by like, a couple ages, but she just kind of like she was sitting there waiting for like, but a lot of that and watching the kids play with each other. And, you know, again, different. Very different though. It was a different kind of community. It was a different kind of discipline system. It was different kind of everything. But the kids you could always, always see a smile on didn't take much they would smile and they want to hang out and talk and they thought it was hilarious. Anytime we tried to speak Pashtu to them. They thought it was hilarious. And they tried to correct us, especially me I'd come out and I tried to get rid of the try to push the kids back off of our vehicle. And I'm kind of I'm a nice guy, I guess. I would come out and I would try to speak Pashtoon tell them to go away and this is dangerous go somewhere else right. And they would start correcting me. Thanks, man. But yeah, it there were there were some moments there that were really, really nice. But it was there was a hard tour. And it was a lot of work. I myself I was on the qf team for five months out of the eight that I was there. So a lot of my time was spent kind of like a firefighter you know, you just sit in there wait for the call. And you know you're cleaning your weapons, you're getting stuff ready. You're making sure everything's good to go vehicles already. everything's good to go. And you gotta call it qf out the door we go. And you gotta run into again, somebody else's worst day. And especially with combat engineers. That means we're walking into minefields, other IDs secondaries? Tertiaries. We're, it's a it's a different, slightly different ballgame. But yeah, the Compassionate part and the really nice part was watching the Afghans working with each other, especially the kids, they had a blast. Of course they would also start fights at a drop of a hat. It wouldn't take much you know, a cold water bottle would start a brawl between six and seven kids who We all want it and then, but I did see, you know the old from the old cartoons where you'd have a bunch of characters all fighting and just be this this big dust balls. And then one character would like slide out the bottom and kind of take off. I did see something like that happen. We had tossed out of cold water bottle to one of the kids. Another kid came up, punch that kid's face, took the water bottle, and then that guy got swarmed by like four or five kids. And they were all just like this big old tussle. And the first kid who had we had tossed the bottle to, like snuck on over, reached in, grabbed the water bottle from underneath the fight. And I was like, good, y'all little man. Well done. Yeah, it was. So there were some some really nice points to it.



1:00:47

It's a hard country. And very, very different than life here. That's for sure.



James Geering 1:00:54

So I want to get to your transition out. But before we do, I mean, you talked about being on the QRS. We talked about, you know, obviously, detonation of IEDs. What was some of the, the incidents that happened when you were wearing the uniform that you carried once you transitioned out?



1:01:12

Now, there were a few. We had, we'd lost a number of people on that tour. And we lost three guys from our squadron we had our equity one Bravo, they got hit a really large ID more than likely set up for one of our tanks. And it, it tossed the turret out of the lab, like it's the big shot. But we lost three of our guys over the engineer squadron there, and the engineers are very, it's a small group. So for every battle group breakers, uh, you know, the brigade sends out you got a battalion of infantry, but you only have a squadron of engineers. So we have, we're like 100 people, 110 115 people, something like that. And within your troops, then you're looking at 40 some odd people. And we lost the Iraqi element, the entire record in one shot like it was a bad day. Some of the other ones were rollovers and blasts and I saw a lot, so it's hard to break down all of them one of the probably worst ones, there was an American Marine convoy that was rolling through our so they decided not to tell us that they were going through, they were leaving Kandahar Airfield headed over to Helmand. And they just went in the middle of the night, for some reason. With all of their headlights on 30 Plus vehicle convoy, just rolling down the highway, like screaming Hey, look who I like, bad. Anyway, they hit 90, a big one, it launched the lead Humvee up and over, and landed on its roof, slid for a while and then turned back around, facing way to come. And that was a that was rough on, I think to two Marines died, well, two were wounded. And we got called out and I was so like, I got kicked out of my rack, you know, let's go jumping into the back of the truck. You know, that's very similar to being a firefighter or a police officer. Because I just jumped in the back of the lab, throw my gear on as we were driving. And then the next thing you know, the ramp would drop and you have to Okay, now what? Alright, so the first thing was even for secondaries in the dark, which is never fun or smart. So we were looking for other IDs and things like that. Didn't see anything but because the blast was so big and the Marines on their vehicles they have just everything we were finding you know, blocks to see for that hadn't gone off that had been on the truck so we have to secure those we found in grenades and ammunition and food and stuff and all this stuff is covered in blood. And it it was a was a long day. put it mildly once we policed up all the stuff, we made sure there wasn't any secondaries. Then we got to clear all the road because it's still ring road. So that's the main thoroughfare, right, so we have to clear it and we got the vehicle removed, we had the casualties taken away. At one point, the there was a whole bunch of Marines still searching through the debris on the road. And my sexual mentor told me to get him off road so we could we're gonna scrape all the debris into the hole and then refilled a hole and repave the road and get it to go. So I went up to them and I was like, Okay, guys, like, don't worry about the stuff like clear off the road. Let us clear this off. We're gonna put it in a hole. And the I think it was the first sergeant some came over and was like We're still looking for parts of our guys. I said, Roger that. Take your time. And I turned around and told my boss same thing. And he was like, Cool. We'll wait. And so we sat there and waited. And this image has stuck in my mind for a long time. Based off the emotions I was feeling at the time, too. So I watched this, it was weird, because there's a whole bunch of Marines, right, and their jumpsuits and all their coyote brown stuff. And there's one army captain, I remember she was a cat. She was wearing the her bars around the front of her of her armor. But that was the best part was that she was like five foot three, maybe, like she was tiny. And she was wearing the full neck armor. So it was like here with the helmet. And then the full crotch protectors and the arm. Brossart is down. Like she looked like a little tank. She was learner and she was wearing these really bright blue surgical gloves. She walked out to one of the Marines bent over picked up a finger, put it in a bag, sealed it, and then they all clear the road. And I remember sitting there thinking like, seriously, a finger. I've been sitting here in the sun for an hour for a finger. All right, well, and then you start working. And so we cleared the rest of stuff into the hole, filled it back in, carried on and then left. And it wasn't until later where I was like really stopping thinking going. Yeah, I think I'd spent the time looking for a finger. Right? Foot in the moment, I felt really annoyed more than anything. But afterwards, I start to realize it's like, yeah, yeah, spend the time do it. Right. But that was that was just, you know, a day. And the sad part was

is that wasn't even the end of my day. That was first thing. So as soon as we were done with that, there had been another hit that we were gonna run off to. So we finished all that got everything cleaned up. Good to go back in the truck off, we go to another call. And we do the same thing over there. And we do the same thing on the next one. There were one particular day I remember Greg, leaving it like I think it was two or three in the morning at one point. And we didn't get back to base until the next day afternoon. At just constantly call call call call call call call call holed up here because it's dark. Sit in the middle of nowhere liquid your guns. And then call call call call call call call call call back to base. It was a long tour.

 James Geering 1:07:39

sounds absolutely brutal. And it's interesting because what you're talking about with the finger it's so easy for us to develop compassion fatigue was so burned out with so hyper vigilant and we see such horrible shit that your bar starts to drop and drop and drop and drop. And it's only in reflection that you go. Yeah, I get it now.

 1:07:59

Yeah, it I think I was probably fatigued to compassion after about a week or two like we was we were getting called to you know, civilians hitting IDs we're getting called to. But that also so I did five months out of the eight months and the rest of the time when I wasn't on cura if we were patrolling. So he was like, wasn't that I got time off. It was the fact that we were just doing other stuff. At one point we had to do a BDA. The, the Taliban had come up into our position in mass and guard tried to cut through the fence and tried to come up to one of our Opie's, they got spotted. They got engaged. They started running away, and there happened to be an F 16 flying around. You. I didn't do that, obviously. I was just I remember waking up to hearing gunfire going, Oh, I guess it's on and then hearing bombs drop. And then. So this guy dropped four or 500 pound bombs, trying to get these guys that were running away. And then we went out to do the BDA was the battle damage assessment afterwards. And me and my, my section commander were roaming around, you know, oh, look, here's a leg. Oh, look, here's an arm. Oh, look, here's it, you know? And one point we started realizing that we had more femurs than people. And we were like, Wait a second. I'm trying to do the masculine. But there were, there were four guys that ran away. Why do we have 10 fevers, and we're still finding stuff and we're like this, like this is starting to not make sense. Up until we got to near where some of the second the sort of the third fourth bombs were dropped was the Taliban or the insurgents had run through a graveyard. There were extra people that were being blown up into these things. So it was very hard for us to manage. You know how many people there were also, by the time we got out there, the Afghans had, like, from the village had already come out and started burying people in parts of people because they got to be in the ground within 24 hours of, of death. Right. So that made it even worse that yeah, there was a randomly we found we found a torso. And we were like, Okay. Cool. And it had been wrapped up in rags. But because it had been wrapped up in rags, we're like, well, it could be booby trapped. So I guess we got to check it. And luckily, I looked at my sexual manner. And I was like, I am not qualified for this. So I fallen man, just sat there. So I jumped up on my machine gun and just sat there and watched to Afghans, like, give me the evil eye illustrate up, stare me down as my subject matter, to file the body, right that they had already wrapped up. But we can't be sure that so we had to make we had to be sure that it wasn't we were trapped. Again, more images, things that just will never leave my brain button. I don't need to tell you guys what it's like.

J

James Geering 1:11:13

But it's important that we hear this though not not that you have a lust for the graphic nature of what you know, a member of the military or first responder sees, but if we keep that from the public, then will they ever see is jet skis and rock music and recruitment videos, and they never see they never put two and two together, that person was decapitated on national television was one of those kids that answered the call to the rock, you know, the jet skis in the rock music. So we have to pull that ugly side in as well. For me, my personal, you know, perspective of this. So we only send our children to war, when it is completely unavoidable. And not when some you know, business is going to make billions because we're back in country X dropping bombs and, you know, sending rounds downrange again.

o

1:12:04

Yeah, that's unfortunately part of it. You're absolutely right. And I did. I wanted to make sure that I was as open and honest about my experience as possible, because I watched my granddad, who was a veteran from World War Two, as he was also a combat engineer. And he he let all of that pain and all that stuff, fester for 70 plus years. And it wasn't until I came back from Afghanistan, where him and I had a little sit down. And we had a little nod and a chat and all that, you know, just a little bit of that weight I saw come off his shoulder. So but Yes, unfortunately, when you're, when you're dealing with bodies, or parts of bodies, it is a it's a very distinct smell. First off, and especially when there's anything to do as explosive when you ever deal with fire. And it is a very interesting, kind of a sickly, almost sweet smell. And yeah, when you're, you've become very dissociated from it very quickly. Right? You start to go okay, well, yeah, this is, you gotta you gotta you're looking at your friend's phone, like you got the left. One is that the left hand is white. No, it's gotta lie down at Okay, so this is somebody else's arm. Again, it, it becomes very matter of fact, this is just your day. And that, you know, unfortunately, that was a lot of it when you're, especially with explosives, man, I mean, when you're dealing with things that I think a lot of people have this mythical idea of what explosives do. Right? They you know, they see it on movies and fireballs, and which my military training ruined movies for me in general, because anything with a fireball was not an explosion. It's just burning. But you're talking like sea four has of lightning velocity of detonation, I think of somewhere around like 7000

o

1:14:08

feet per second. meters per second. I'm not I'm not 100% Sure. It's been a while since I've done the Calix but

o

1:14:17

it's ridiculously fast. But it's basically at its very core element it is a it's an expansion of gas. At a very high rate. What that does to a body is the pressure wave passes through at first and that can if it's close enough, basically it will liquefy your innards and but the outside shell can usually withstand the initial blast, but it weak points, you know, joints, things like that. Things start to separate. So you'll get to you know, explosive amputations and things like that where

you're, you're gonna lose limbs from the main body you're gonna lose all kinds of stuff, but that is a you know, depending on your how close you are to things will depend on how affected that blast wave is upon you. If you're right, close the eye, your your body's gonna like going to all kinds of different places and all kinds of different ways. And also, Afghanistan is very dirty. So even if you do survive a blast, you're gonna lose a lot of the flesh that's still attached. Because of all of the bacteria and fecal matter and stuff that's just in the air, it's in the dust, it's in everything. That reminds me of another the other part of Afghanistan that most people forget is the dust. It is, is a very fine, especially southern Afghanistan, it's very fine. It's almost like talcum powder, baby powder, superfine stuff. And so any disturbance of the earth, you get these puffs of smoke, or have dust coming off of everything, and then resettling. So if you're inside of that cloud, you just get caked with talcum powder and all the sweat. It just adheres to and then you're immediately dirty, it gets in everywhere. And it is it is a consistent challenge throughout your day, trying to deal with the fog and sand. That is that is that area. It's friggin Yeah, it's a rough one. But yeah. As for the, the negative side of it, I guess, kind of the funny side, kind of the negative side of it, in terms of just dealing with explosives on a regular basis is



1:16:46

you stopped really caring, you start really caring about the rest of it, because everything else seems superfluous to it. And what I mean by that is like, at one point, I had my I would roll up my sleeves because it was hot, right? So I'd give myself a couple of rolls to up to the elbow. And my sergeant would be like, hey, you need to keep your sleeves down. Your your, your shirt is fire retardant. I was like, Dude, if I get hit by an ID, and I have to worry about flame on my on my forearms, I have bigger problems, right? It doesn't matter. And, unfortunately, leads to that complacency of like, the only thing I'm worried about right now is I'm either right, or it's not my problem anymore. Which leads to a bunch of other issues on top of like later on. Because you're when you're on patrol, and I'm in front of the entire infantry platoon that's behind me, every single one of their lives is based on what I'm doing with my metal detector across the board. So the worst thing that can possibly happen is not me stepping on an ID, it's actually missing an IED and having someone behind me stuff on it. Right? I don't care if I get taken out by a sniper, I don't care if I walk around the corner and get little by machine gun, I don't care about stepping on it myself. I need to make sure that no one else does. But because of that, my life becomes whatever. Right? Which then leads afterwards once you get once you get out of the military. That's a really heavy effect, I think a lot of us is because we put ourselves second to everything else. What do you do after when there's no team around you? To to give to you know what I mean?



James Geering 1:18:46

So the transition is obviously extremely jarring for as we discussed anyone who was part of a community part of a tribe have a sense of purpose. And then they find themselves on the outside. So for your journey, what was it that made you decide to transition out of the military? And then what was that experience like for you personally?



1:19:09

Well, that's a good story, actually. So the reason I got out of the army was I wasn't going back on tour first off those first one. So after I got back from the first tour, or my only tour, I got back

and very, very early on, it was made very clear to me that no one really cared. Right? So I'll give you an example. The in between post deployment leave and when you return so you get home and you have to go to work for three days. So you show up in your uniform, you know just like a regular everyday you know, day job. You show up you kind of report in Hey, I'm here do some admin works and paperwork, stuff like that. And then you go and post appointment leave, and you get some time off, you get to hang out. And my first day back, we get called into our new worn officers office and we get told specifically, and I'm quoting here you guys may think you're all hot should come back from tour. But you're still piece of shit sprogs go down to the bay, shut the fuck up. And don't talk about anything.

 James Geering 1:20:27

That is yet amazing kindness and compassion. So that must have made transition really easy. Am I right?

 1:20:33

For free with my two buddies that were with me? Yeah, 100% They were like cool fees out. And I thought, you know, okay, maybe this guy is just a dick. Right? Okay, cool. I'll go down to the band, I'll do my stuff. And I was, like, I was expecting, hey, we're gonna have to go back again, like this isn't the rotation is still happening like to see ours there. Right now we're going to be training up this year, we're going to be going back the next year, etc, etc. And because I got, I had some computer skills, like I could use Excel, basically, I got put as a true clerk. And then because I was good at that, I got moved into the intelligence cell within my unit. And I stayed there for a year and a half, and just begun chomping at the bit to get back out into the field to get back with the guys and eventually made it back out, was scheduled for a tour. And it was all excited. But they're like, hey, unfortunately, your contracts coming to end Do you want to extend it, and then you're already slotted for tour. So you don't have to worry about that extent, make your extension you're good to go. So I signed for a three year extension. And a couple of weeks later, my my name came off the list of people going on tour. And so I was a little annoyed, as you can imagine. And I started, I got started getting bitter. So I got an angry started getting. Now I had been getting angry and bitter beforehand. But I had thought that that was just, you know, being there. So I started looking at releasing started getting started looking at getting out. And a friend of mine was like, Hey, man, I got this great spot out me for Ontario, you can come out and be an instructor. And it's lots of fun, great time. It's away from the unit, you'll get a break, you'd be good to go. So I was like, okay, cool. Let's do some posting, talk to my chain of command, got the posting setup. And headed off to me for Ontario to teach recruits how to soldier which was super fun. And I had a blast there. And this is where it was actually a benefit because I had about two years left on my contract when I got there. And I was like, Okay, this is pretty good. And I was the only guy qualified to do any sort of munitions disposal on base. So I got a, like a range of troll phone and they were calling me every day. Hey, we found something you want to blow it up. Yeah, yeah, I do actually. Cool. No problem. And that happened almost daily. So I was doing more demo in two years. At me for that I did it in six years. And at at the engineer regiment is kind of crazy. But as my time was coming up, I was not sleeping. Well. I was angry all the time, which I had, again, attributed just to the old unit and being like a wool, or a bunch of dicks. So make sense that I would not want to be there. But yeah, I started not sleeping well. And I started. I can't say I started not sleeping when I started to recognize that I wasn't sleeping well. But it was in a place that I was enjoying

being right. I was surrounded by friends. I was doing good work. I had an actual mission or purpose. But I still wasn't sleeping and I still was getting angry really fast. And it was still a lot. So I was talking to my wife. And I was like, you know, I'm just maybe I'm not sleeping well. Or maybe it's like, maybe it's the bed. Maybe it's the fact that I'm you know, away from you. And that's the posting was called IR it's imposed restrictions. So my wife stayed in Edmonton. And I flew to Meaford. So I was there for a year and a half by myself or you're in three quarters. But she was like, Well, maybe it's maybe it's just a sleep issue. Like maybe it's sleep apnea or something that you don't recognize, go to the docks. Ask, see what's going on. And so I went into the docks, and I was like, Hey, I'm not sleeping very well. There's someone I can talk to. And they're like, Yeah, sure. Hold on. They put me in an office and I went talk to the guy and he started asking me a bunch of questions, right, like how are you doing? Do you ever have nightmares? Do you ever find yourself restless? Do you ever drink A lot do you ever done it? All the questions that I didn't really even think about at the time. But I was like, Yeah, I barely sleep, like I was on, maybe four hours sleep a night, just in between. And it was all broken up to it was never any solid sleep. And I would do my work on my job all week. And then on Fridays, or Saturdays, when I'd get off, I'd sleep for like, 18 hours, like my body would just shut down and wake up, and I do it all over again. And so it wasn't very conducive to being healthy, but is what it is. Talk to the dogs. They eventually gave me a diagnosis. They're like, yeah, posttraumatic stress. Looks like you were also major depressive disorder, as well as you have an anxiety disorder as well. And I was like, Cool. What does that mean? And they're like, nothing. Keep working. We're gonna You and I are gonna sit down, we'll have chats and and I was like, oh, okay,

 James Geering 1:26:00

I guess it's a lot less for nothing.

 1:26:03

Great and cool. So yeah, I started talking with this like, psychologist, psychiatrist, that was on base. Every once in a while, you know, every week, two weeks kind of thing. He prescribed some medication to help me sleep, which made me super lethargic, I guess, like I just I would be would let me sleep. But I'd wake up and I'd be super, like groggy and hazy. And I couldn't really focus on anything. It's hard to teach recruits when you can't really focus on anything. So I stopped. I told him, I wasn't taking that. And as my release came up, I had about two months before my contract ended, and I started to think like, maybe I should be doing something like this or any paperwork I need to fill out or do I just like walk up to the front gate, drop all my gear and like, see you guys later. So I went to my address, my adjutants office. And I was like a sir. I got two months left my contract should I be? Is there anything I need to do? Is there any paperwork I need to fill out and goes, Oh, yeah. Come back tomorrow. Okay, Roger, that, sir. spot out, went back the next day. And he pushed a piece of paper across the thing that was a offer for a 17 year contract to stay. And I was like, No, thanks very much. And I've just decided, I'm like, no, no, I'm good. Done. And he goes, sure, for sure. Like you're already slotted. You're on your sergeants course next next year, you're the career mandatory is put forward. You're going to be the engineer Sergeant here on base when you come back next spring. So the offer to put me to keep me in the military is to send me to gauge down in New Brunswick, which is basically a base built on Swamp for six months. No, I'm good. Thanks, man. I'm going home. And so at that point, it was a flurry of activity. Like it's supposed to be a six month process of

getting out of the military. All of a sudden, they're just like, you know, try catch up to the roof. I got really lucky though, because I was the only one releasing on base. I wish there was one Veterans Affairs liaison there. So I walked in, I was like, Hey, I'm getting out in two months. And he was like, oh, okay, sign this sign this sign this sign this sign and just like paperwork, paperwork, paperwork. And it was hitting me with basically a claim for everything. Like we don't have time to actually go through all this. So we're just going to apply for everything and see what sticks. I was like, Cool. Sounds good. All right. Well, the docs for my final medical and went through that. And I had been given some advice from one of my buddies who had gotten out and he was like, be 100% honest, I don't care if you have a hangnail, make sure that's on the paperwork when you leave the military. And I was like, okay, so I was 100% honest. And I asked the doctor at the end of it, he was just like, how are you even walking, you know, one foot in front of the other, you just keep going. But I had like, dislocated both my knees multiple times strains on my ACL, MCL LCL. I got I had shoulder surgery for a separated shoulder at one point they found a bunch of torn ligaments and this one's got a bunch of old like my back got herniated disc in my back. Plus my hearing plus my like all this other stuff. And the docs were just surprised that I was working. Yeah, so you know, a lot of my stuff got not only pushed through the VA system, but it was getting approved right away because it was everyone was like, Oh my god. That's a big hectic mess. So I went from exiting out of the army, which was in December,

 1:30:07

December 13 2013. And I had about I think it was maybe a week, maybe two weeks worth of a pay gap, which was at the time on heard of just gonna put a blanket on my toes, it's cold down here.

 James Geering 1:30:28

I'm sweating my ass, I was doing cutting grass in Florida.

 1:30:32

It's really nice outside. But this is the basement I'm in is like, it's really pretty well insulated. So it's like, cool, which is nice in the summer. But it's not right now when I'm wearing shorts, and it's cold. But so I got a quick little gap and pay and my great idea. This is a, an amazing idea I had was to get my wife to fly out. Because she has family in Montreal to fly out to Montreal, I would drive to there, pick her up and we would drive home. And I while I was mullahs in Meaford we had my wife and I given birth to our first son. So it was all excited I get to see the baby. This is like I saw him when he was born and then took some parental leave or some paternal leave but had to go back to work right. So I when I left there was this little baby. And when I picked them up in Montreal, there was this five month old baby very different way to deal with things. But then I decided that since we're going to drive all the way back to Alberta, so those that don't know. It is a 3000 kilometer trip with a five month old baby and a truck full of stuff and an a wife that I have not been living with for a while. And it was the fact that we survived the fact that we didn't kill each other and are still married. Today is a testament to perseverance on that because man we were it was not a good plan. And especially for me with



all of the stuff that I was going through and all the training. I was also Maskull Burrel. That's what it was right there was no ifs ands or buts about it. If I said something, recruits went wherever I needed to. He was just instant. Obedience and a five month old is not

 James Geering 1:32:34  
doesn't care about rank.

 1:32:38

So it was a that was a really big challenge. And then I got home and it went go back to Edmonton and it went kind of sideways from there. I went to the OSI clinic here in town. And it well, I saw the doctor that the army had told me to go see, right because I was still very army mode. They said go see this guy. Okay, cool. And I would see him every week, on a Friday in a mall. That was in an area of town that is an ethnocentric I guess like it has a high population of Middle Eastern people. And having, you know, issues with being in crowds, I walked into a mall full of Western people at the time, and I was like, really agitated just getting there. And then I'd go in for the session. And he would walk me through some of the worst times from tour over and over and over and over. And so over the span of a year, it just kept getting worse and worse. And worse. And then I was yeah, it was really bad. got to a point where I was suicidal. Couple of times I remember just sitting there staring at my pistol and like reading the serial number over and over and over and just thinking about all the different ways of like, how much pain I caused people right now might be assuaged. In a while. If I were around, it'd be so much easier that way. I never did it, but came close couple times. And it was a kind of an awakening moment because I walked into a room one day and my son was young, he was probably maybe a year old, something like that. And just me walking into the room. He flinched. Like maybe as as he, as I walked into the room, and I was like that's not that's not okay. This is not this is not the way to have relationship with my son. And so it was like I gotta do something different. I was talking to a friend of mine. And I was like, you know, this doctor is just not good. And I'm getting worse and everything's getting bad. And he's like, You do know, you can see whoever you want, right? And this took me a second. And I was like, No, this is the guy they sent me to, I thought this was who I go to. And they're like, No, man. Like, you can literally go see anybody you want the veal will cover and I was like, oh, oh. So I immediately started looking for trauma specialists and people that, you know, actually deal with it. Found my doctor who is still used today. Kind of a fluke, actually, it was one of the first things that popped up on the Google search for trauma specialist, and it said trauma specialty equine therapy. And I was like, seems like when that seems like a win.

 James Geering 1:35:51

Talk therapy does not seem to be working. So especially in a densely populated Middle Eastern part of town, who I'm sure are populated with amazing people, but a probably reminding you of the not so amazing people you used to work against.

 1:36:04

Yes, exactly. And it was a so it was that whole debacle, it was actually kind of funny. I

Yes, exactly. And it was a so it was that whole debacle, it was actually kind of funny, I remember at about six months of seeing this guy, where one of my triggers was when my son would scream at a really high pitch, right, which kids do. And it was about six months, and I realized that he continually we'll check his notes to make sure that he can say like, he would be like, and so his name his years your son is, uh Oh, right. Our Arden Yes. Okay. And I was like, I talked about him every week, man, like, every week, and you don't know his name yet. Like, I don't know if you're really paying attention. Anyway, started seeing my new doc, and started getting an equine therapy. And I just immediately made like, massive leaps in recovery. And it it a because my psychologist started challenging me on stuff. Because I would say stuff. You would make really absolute statements. You know, civilians are garbage. Like really? Are they? I'm like, yeah, 100% She's like, What's your wife's civilian? I'm like, Well, I mean, she's okay. She's a civilian. I'm like, yeah, he's pretty cool, too, right? And so, every time I made a statement like that, she would challenge me. And every time I would make progress, she would challenge me. And so it was this continual like, prod, prod, prod, prod, prod, prod, but it wasn't an it wasn't a just Oh, yeah. Okay, you're good. Just however you're feeling is all right. It was you can do better, you can do better, you can do better. And I was like, you know, what, I can't do better than we, and, you know, work with the horses, especially that was it was the tipping point, I think, between everything where I started to actually recover a little bit. And it was a Yeah, I used to work with this big horse named Dante. And he was kind of perfect too, because he had a big white cross on his forehead. Shirt, that was kind of hilarious. And he used to push me around, I'd be like, brushing them off, or getting them cleaned up, you know, picking it as hubs and stuff like that. And he would just lean on me as horses do. And but he would never let me get away from the moment. So while I was doing all this stuff, this is the great thing about equine therapy, is while you do things with the horse around the horse, you start talking about, you know, the the issues that you're having talked about your feelings. And horses innately sense how you're feeling, they can actually pick up on all of the bio rhythms, right, and the way your heart's beating now, how quickly you're breathing all that stuff. And so if you start falling into a memory, and you start experiencing it, like it's happening, all of a sudden, the horses are gonna, they're gonna do stuff, they're gonna move quickly, they're gonna, like, lean on you, they're gonna bite at your elbow, they're gonna knock you in the head with their head, right? They're gonna do something to be like, what's wrong? Because they work as a team, right? So when you enter into that environment inside of group forces, you're just automatically adopted as part of that team. If the horses aren't running away from you, you're part of the crew. So when you start to get agitated, they're growing like, oh, something's wrong. And they start looking around, like what's going on? And then they find out oh, it's just you. Oh, it's just you. Okay, maybe you should do something about that right. Now, you got to work your way through the feelings or, I mean, there's been days where I've been really agitated and I go out to the horses at the meet At least scattered, right? And they gotta take a moment. Bring your your rhythms down, bring everything down nice and soft and the horses come back. And then you can work, but then you can continue. But it's that immediate feedback, even before you realize that you're getting agitated the horses. No. And then you know. So, yes, good times.

J

### James Geering 1:40:25

Have you ever heard of a man Buck Brennaman? Oh, yeah, so I head back on the show, I actually went and watched him. Yeah, it's further back. Now I'm redoing my website, because I want that I didn't realize but iTunes and all those, they only hold your most recent 500. But when you've got almost 800, that's kind of shit, because people are missing, you know, 300 Amazing episodes. So. So I'm kind of redoing it. And going back and putting in transcripts, it's going to take me a long, long time, but because I want you to discover these but I went to

Georgia, watched him do a clinic sat with him and did half an interview, kind of like we did today, if people listening you had to do two sections, because I want to make sure that we you know, got the whole story. And then a few weeks went by and then we finished it off how we're doing it now through zoom. But it was amazing, because like I said, I grew up as a little boy. So when you're a child around horses, as you know, you're almost aware of your energy more, because these are fucking huge creatures when you're six, you know, and I was very small when I got kicked across the stables so I learned fast you know, to, for example, not be in the back of a horse, my sister's clipping it. But but the the basically the whole, when you pull out bucks story, the horse or you could argue that the canine the dog, there are a mirror to how you're doing but especially the horse that you said that you've got that prey element as well. So at and you just in new illustrated it perfectly. When you see the way that your horse reacts to you in almost in a way that that one year old, beautiful little boy reacts to you that's holding up a mirror to like, you're not okay, and which is the same thing. I think that we we have this thing like, oh, it's your tribe, you know, chance ask your friends in you know, EOD or the engineers, how am I doing? Oh, you're fine. Well, yeah, because they've also seen horrible shit and got blown up multiple times. That's the wrong person to ask, but you ask your wife, or your children? How, you know? Is there Do you see anything wrong? How are we doing? Well, Dad, you kind of scare me a little bit, you're always angry, okay? Now that's that mirror again. So if people aren't around horses are family or another good example. But when you're deep in that hole, you can't, you have no concept of what your baseline even is. So in our experience, a horse is such a beautiful way of not only identifying where you're at, but a barometer of how to get to back to where you actually need to be



1:42:53

100% and the, the connections that you can make through the horse is it's unbelievable, because they are one, as you said, through a mirror, no doubt about it. You know, dealing with family, or, you know, kids or anything like that is that there's still a perceived bias there. Right? Even if, you know, I can have a really bad day, and I can talk to my wife and be like, you know, hey, how am I doing today? Like, not Well, okay. But there's there's an innate human interaction that right, because it becomes words and interpretations and how am I feeling in that moment? How is she feeling in that moment, there's a lot of that stuff. Whereas with a horse, it is, I think, probably the, maybe the clearest mirror that way. Because they can't abide. Just trust in the unit. Right? So they can't have a horse inside the herd that is constantly freaking out. Because if it is, then everybody's on guard. And if the whole herd is constantly on guard, nobody eats nobody sleeps nobody. Like there's a, the system breaks



James Geering 1:44:07

down. sounds exactly like COVID-19.



1:44:11

Right. And the sad part is, is that there are times where, you know, a horse will get kicked out of the herd. And it's a hard lesson because sometimes it's a young horse and they gotta, like, cold gets booted out the side and not allowed to hang out with everybody else. But they learned very quickly that it's because their actions and their state of being is not aligning with

everybody else. And so they bring their energy down, they stopped kicking it, they stopped biting another horse, they stopped doing all those things that makes everyone else mad. And then they're just welcomed back into the herd again, it's an it's an instant Oh, okay, everything's cool. Right? There's no you know, memories of you Will you beat me last week and I don't like you because no it doesn't matter where And that was then this is now, right here. And that's what the so why they're so clear is because it's always, in this moment, right now, I put a post out on social media last night, I was riding home and had this really beautiful sunset. And I was on my bike, and I could have just been like, oh, well, that's nice Taunton kept riding home. But I stopped, and it took a second and I watched the clouds kind of like, you know, slide past the sky and the way the colors lit it up. And it was it was just a really gorgeous spot. spot of a moment. And I realized that that that's, that's all day, that's every day, that's your whole life. Right? In this moment. This is your whole life right now. And horses live like that all the time. So if you get a chance to work with horses and do some equine therapy, it reattaches you to that rather than being you know, I have to get this, this, this this, this stuff done, right. And then the future vert or all these things happened to me in the past. None of that's none of that matters. It's all right here, right now. So if you can regulate right now, then everybody's good. Can't curve buddy. Go from there?

J

James Geering 1:46:18

Well, that's such a powerful take away from that as well, like I said, the last now three years, you know, ultimately, it's what is best for the entire herd, the entire tribe. And what we're seeing now, so often is division and splitting and fragmentation. And if people can just refine their true north, you know, you know, your, your concern for your one year old child, then the in protected them, clothe them fed them, you know, not too hot, not too cold. I mean, these are the basil things that I would say almost all of us hold nearest and dearest. And that is the tribal that is the the herd mentality. And in a positive way is like, Well, we, you know, we're a community, we want to take care of each other, it takes a village. But if you're that person that now all you care about is a horse racing as fast as you can, and you're separating it from its herd and you just want it to go until you ride it till it's done. And you send it off to the glue factory. That's the polar opposite of what we're talking about. And if we're not careful, we're not even going to have a semblance of what a herd is anymore what a community is. And everyone's to hype in a triggered and, you know, what's the word offended? And they forget that we're all actually sharing 90% commonalities, and then you look at the differences and go Well, that's really cool. Oh, you're from this country? Oh, that's interesting music. I like you know what I mean. But until we stop pigeonholing and dividing, we're gonna miss the very lessons that are there in nature, like for, you know, 1000s and 1000s 1000s of years, and we disregard it for this, you know, these mouthpieces that we have at the moment. So if ever there should have been a coming together, it was the last three years. So when we listen to what you know, how you describe the selfless protection of a herd in nature, that's what we need to refine.

o

1:48:10

Yeah, I agree. The it's kind of funny. I was telling my my five year old, my little guy today. He's a little sick, and we're trying to get him dressed. And he was just not having any we're just sitting there. Everything we did, he would just scream in my face. And I would, I had to, you know, keep it calm. I didn't last that long. But at one point, I looked at him like Kinley, babies

cry, and they scream, because they don't know how to communicate. They can't tell us what's wrong. They can just scream and cry. You can talk, you can speak to me, you can tell me what the problem is. If you're having trouble getting there, we're gonna breathe together and we're gonna calm down. And then you can tell me what's wrong. And he would just kind of like, the news kept crying for a little bit, but then he calmed down and was like, hey, look, you need to get underwear on. I think this is it. This is a basic was at the start of the day. We're gonna get underwear on, we're going to close on we're gonna get our stuff on. And we're gonna breathe as we do it and just slowly got his stuff on. And then once he was totally calm, and I was like, Okay, what is what is the problem? And he's like, I didn't really want to wake up. Exactly. I felt the same way. When I woke up at six this morning. Thanks so much. But the point was, is that unfortunately, I think we've gotten away from the ability to actually communicate. And this is, this is where the problem is because it's really easy to just scream and yell. Really easy to do that. It's more challenging to communicate how you feel it's more challenging to communicate who you are as person. And the more we do it, the better we get at it. Right? It's practice like anything else. Just like regulation, just like being able to go into a crazy invite. Ironman and being calm. The neat part is, and I think this is the thing that most people don't realize is that again, being gregarious by nature as humans are, we pick up on the energy around us. And so I'm sure anybody listening, I'm sure yourself could probably attest to this. If you're in a really hectic situation, and people start panicking, right, and things are starting to go wrong, and this isn't working, and everyone's starting to spin, and then one person walks in, who's totally calm and goes, grab the hose, you set that up, you go over there, take care of those people, and the whole room changes, right? Everything stops. Or you could be in a very calm room and have one person come in and just flip around and just start freaking out. And if you're not able to regulate people are just energy, you're going to start coming up again. So that's something that we all need to be aware of, too, because we are gregarious by nature, we will pick up on what's going on in the room. And then it's up to us to make the decision on how we react to that. And so sure, somebody could say something offensive to me, I actually worked with a guy who was a Holocaust denier. And I was I'm being Jewish, I was like, No, that's not okay. But I sat there and had a conversation with them. At the end of it,



1:51:18

I thought he was an idiot. He, it didn't make any sense what he was saying,



1:51:25

but I wasn't upset about it. Whereas, you know, years ago, I would have been, I would have been upset, I would have been like ready to throw down right now. Because I will beat your ass. And I will tell you what's going to happen. But I don't need to do that anymore. Like it doesn't make any sense to do. And the ability to communicate the ability to actually regulate your own emotions, and then



1:51:47

talk to people is how we get out of that. fractious,



1:51:53

divisive. Well, you said and he said, and that person did these things and done it the cool.



1:51:59

That was then we're here. Now, let's talk about I know it sounds easy, but it's probably one of the hardest things to do.



1:52:10

Out there. At least in my mind, I think. But yeah, it's it's a challenging, challenging situation to be in, I guess.



James Geering 1:52:20

Yeah. Well, I think one of the problems that I've talked about this a lot, the holy grail of communication is held as the debate. And I have never watched a debate where I've come away going, Oh, no, I've changed the way I think thanks person who changed my mind? No, I just ends up being two assholes arguing with each other trying to show who's right. So this is the problem is our gold standard is this. I think the gold standard is is listening, shutting the fuck up and just listening to someone and then absorbing what they tell you. You know, then obviously, if they're also listening, then you listen to that. And it goes back and forth, back and forth. And at the end, you're like, huh, I never thought of it that way or, you know, whatever it is. But as soon as it's like a competition, oh, so and so won the debate. Did you go listen to that podcast that was to debate it. And he he did this to them? Like no, they both walked away the same exact fucking ding dongs that they walked into it. Because if you're debating, you're not listening, you're not listening. You're trying to win. So this is the thing that I've found with podcasting is it's really taught me to shut up and I write down things that I want to ask you. Because one of the worst things that we do in Monza say Oh, well, I say something, otherwise, I'm gonna forget it. Yeah, okay, well write it down, and keep listening. And then if they haven't touched that topic, then we can circle around and talk about that. But yeah, I think the biggest thing is listening, we got so much white noise, you can't go sit in a restaurant without fucking TVs and your face. And, you know, happy birthday songs being sung at every fucking table is just yeah, we've lost that ability to just sit with each other, you know, and maybe not even talk or just simply sit next to each other and, and be present.



1:54:01

I think that stems from our inability to sit with ourselves. Right, we've spent a lot of time especially in the Western world, we've taken a lot of time to, I guess, cuz smooth things out, right? We try to, you know, make things efficient. So, you know, I want to get a coffee in the morning while there's a drive thru, right? I don't even have to get on my car. But every ounce of effort that you put into your day of intentional effort that you put into your day, allows you to actually experience that. Right. And we we don't experience things anymore. And that's the problem is because we don't we're not ready to sit with ourselves to experience who we are. We can't sit with anybody else. Right? That's why the phone sits on the table when you're

having a conversation because what if somebody would have somebody needs to talk to me We are talking like somebody is talking to you right now. kind of deal so. And I'm guilty of it too. There's lots of times I've had my phone up on the table. And I'll be having a conversation with somebody and it goes ding, and I look at it, and then I look away. But just that shows what the priority is. And it's about being intentionally present. So now it's actually kind of funny. If I do put my phone on the table, and I can see it ding. That's a That's a choice. Do I look at it?

 James Geering 1:55:34

Do I, not? You Pavlov's dog or Pavlov's cat?

 1:55:38

Exactly. Do I get to make the choice or not? And then I say, well, because all this stuff happens really fast. But they are actual conscious choices. We just don't look to look at them as conscious choices. You know, if you're having a conversation with somebody, and they say something that offends you, or rallies you off, or makes you upset or something like that. Okay, take seconds. Right? There's no rule stating that I have to immediately snap back at somebody and be like, Well, no, you said, No, I can sit there and think about it. You know, where's that person come from? How is this applicable to what's being said? Does it actually make sense? Is it a joke? Is it not read the situation, right? Take a second. And then engage, or don't write again, these things are all it's all choices? And that one of the biggest things I've learned working with horses, and through my transition is that everything is ours. Anything in our world is ours to choose whether we want to engage it or not. If we do, good, engage it. actually engage intentionally engage it? If not, why is there? Do you even need it? Not really. Right. So yeah, the big thing was ownership, intention, things like that. And I have learned a ton ever since that, you know, starting the podcast and talking to awesome people, and then starting up the collective with Sean and talking to more awesome people. And the thing that I learned the most is that if you go into it with an intention that you're ready to learn, right, you're just, you're just there excited to converse with people. Then everybody wins. Again, the team wins, right? Because we're all just sitting here ready to talk. It's not that I want my opinion shared. And there's been many times on my podcasts where I've said very little. Or there's also times that I've said a lot. And that's okay, both sides. Either way, works. Good.

 James Geering 1:57:41

Well, I want to circle back to a moment that you discussed a minute ago. And then we'll get into, you know, podcasting and some of the amazing humans that we both know, now. You are sitting there reading the serial number on your weapon, and you touched on something that is never mentioned in quote unquote, suicide conversations is never talked about on the posters or anything. But in almost 800 conversations, I realized this is a glaring common denominator. When someone who is of a species that their sole purpose is to recreate and protect that next generation takes their own life, it doesn't make any sense of someone who's healthy on the outside looking in, because it literally goes against our very biology. But one thing that I've just kind of realized over these conversations is, you know, we say, Oh, it's so selfish, it's so cowardly, how could they think of your family? Well, when you listen, you again, like we just talked about when you shut up and listen to these people, whether they're, God forbid, they're

in crisis, or hopefully, they're, they're reflecting on when they are in crisis. They truly feel like a burden to the world. And they believe and this is such a miswired broken perspective, but this is their truth at that moment. That they that their their darling little you know, baby, or their husband or their wife, or their parents would be better off. If they were dead. They brought all the pain to their family. So I've kind of loaded that, but you touched on it before what you know, talk to me about that moment and that feeling of burden. If you had that, you know, through your eyes



1:59:20

it's a it comes from, you know, kind of who we are, as you said, right? Like we we go into these particular styles of jobs because we want to serve, right, we want to be part of a larger group, we want to be, you know, cog in the wheel for lack of a better term. What, unfortunately, where that comes from is especially for young men, we get this a lot is that your ability to work, what you can physically do equals your worth. So if you are incapable of working, so when I got released from military, I was medically released. I'm I'm on a pension, I'm what they'd say, I can't work right those through, like you are done. In those moments, you go from being a really high functioning, I'm here for the team, and everybody depends on me, and we're all good to go to sit on the couch. And don't just, just don't. And when you do try, you're trying from a place of anxiety, you're trying from a place of depression, you're trying from a place of, you know, you're just trying to do something. Without any real intention as to what that's going to do. You're just, you just see somebody working, and you're like, Oh, I gotta, I gotta help, right? Like when my back would go out. And I'd be completely laid up on the couch, and I couldn't walk. And my, my wife would be dragging in the groceries. And I'd be like, No, I can't help it. I'm kind of like, roll myself off the couch and start crawling Jesus, like, no, just No, lay down, stop. But someone like us, that is soul crushing to watch someone else work. Because you don't have any worth at this point, right. And so you see somebody else struggle and work and do all the things that you should be helping with that you should be you should be capable of doing should I'm using that word specifically. Because in our mind, if we can't do that, we are worthless, we shouldn't be here and that now we are relying on somebody else. To not not only do their work, but to do ours. But we're still around. And that is one of the most aggravating and deceptive views on it. Because it's really easy to get there. It's really easy to go down that path and say, bald man, like, if I wasn't here, that'd be one less dinner that they would have to make. That'd be one less, you know, trip to the bathroom, that someone would have to help me get up from the couch and make it there. That'd be one less these one less of these things, whatever. And so you start to feed it into yourself and that negative circle and just start going down that that path? Well. You know, if if I wasn't here, and this is the misnomer, this is the big thing that most, I think people don't quite understand is that when you get into that realm, you're thinking of not being there as in like a, like a puff of smoke. Like you just disappear. And everybody goes, Oh, well, I guess, I guess chances in here anymore. We'll just carry on with their life. But it's not. It's not that at all. Because not only physically, right, there's a mess. You got to deal with the body, you got to deal with the cleanup. You got to deal with all of the then hugely traumatic incidences of finding bodies, right? Coming home to someone being gone. Never seeing someone again, no answer is no thought like, all these questions, all these things. But none of that is thought about because in the moment when you're there, all you think about is just me in this moment is a burden. Therefore, if I remove the burden, problem solved. It's that simple. And then you start that's where that goes down the hole is that you stop thinking about other people. And it becomes all about you. And so it is selfish isn't a great word for it. But it is a very self centric view of life. And it's, it's, it's very difficult to get out of that. But what it takes is actually recognizing the people around you. And that if they didn't want to be



there to help you, it wouldn't be right. And so actions do speak. Actions are the key is that you can kneel thoughts and prayers are great, but action is what people do. That's how people prioritize things. If someone wants to help you, in your time of need, and they're they're helping you. They're there for reasons.

J

James Geering 2:04:10

Absolutely. Well, I think that's that's the problem in these conversations, as you don't hear what you just discussed, discussed and what I think is even more scary, and I'm just being very caricature in the way I describe this. But for example, if you're a plumber, and you get to this point, there's going to be X amount of pressure behind you pushing you down that dark pot roll. That whole Excuse me, but if you were a uniform, and when you signed on that line, you said I will die for a complete stranger. You've already made that deal in your head. So now you get that firefighter that, you know, Canadian Armed Forces member at that dark place. Now you're like, Hmm, I'm a burden. I've come to terms with this and I've already decided that I'll die for you. My best friend in Afghanistan, or I'm going to go find my friend in a structure fire that we've gone missing. And now you're at that place. To me, that's probably one of the very many compounding reasons that we lose so many people in uniform. Because if they truly believe that they're a burden, that then is the sacrifice, the very sacrifice that they signed up for, and they would die for a stranger, what would they do for their own wife or child or husband? And this is a problem. So our suicide awareness campaigns? To me, one of the biggest things is, do you feel like a burden to your family that needs to be out there in black and white, because that is the common thread, I want the pain to end. And I was a burden of the two things that I've heard over and over and over and again, and if we can pull that out the shadows and make that's what we're looking for. And then you know, create an environment for it for us to talk about this openly. And, you know, tell everyone, hey, look, we want to help people that are dying to help in any way. Those are the conversations not Hey, open door, I'm always here for you give me a call, that fucking doesn't work. We know it doesn't work. So we need to reframe the way and actually listen to the people that were there and take their words and put it up there.

i

2:06:15

You know, the funny thing is, you see this in the movies actually, all the time. And I don't think it's attributed well enough. You know, there's always that heroic moment in the action movies, where one of the supporting characters takes a takes a shot, and they're dying, and they main characters, like try to drag him away, and there is like, leave me just leave me here. Let me die, that kind of stuff. That's exactly that mentality, does 100% it right there it is just like, do not let yourself be dragged down by me. Do not. Because I'm thinking of your safety. I want you to leave me there so that you can get away so that I can hold them off so that I can do whatever. But again, it still is very self centric. Right? It's so that I am no longer a burden to you. And I think that having that question, are you a burden? Or is outstanding? It is the it is the question. When you're dealing with other people, though, this is where it gets challenging, because after I started to see a lot of really big growth, I immediately started going, Oh, well now I know. So now I'm going to help everybody else. You know, being two, three years into a healing journey. I didn't know anything. But I thought I do. And so I started diving into advocacy. And I started trying to help my brothers and sisters. And I immediately tried to do work. Right, I started trying to do stuff. And it led me down to some pretty, some pretty cool to

some pretty cool places. And I've done some pretty cool things because of it. But I was just doing the same thing. And you know, Shawn, and I talked about this on the collective at one point was external proxy, the excuse of external proxy, right? It's very easy for me to not deal with my own stuff when I'm helping somebody else.

 James Geering 2:08:08

Business is one of the least recognize addictions.

 2:08:11

Exactly. And it is, and it's killer, man. I mean, I don't know how many times I went on leave when I was in the military, you know, first week, and you do absolutely nothing here like Oh, thank god, yes, I can just relaxed, super cool, awesome. And within four or five days, kind of like, just just give me something to do, man, like, just any do something just like I can't just sit here do nothing. You're vibrating off the walls. And, you know, by the end of like a three week stint on leave, you're just you're dying to go back to work. You just like let me get back to doing something. And you're right, it will, it does lead to the point where you will burn yourself out or you will, you'll work yourself to the bone or you will sacrifice your own health for others. Because they need it right. They need it more. I used to use this terminology as if you were to walk into a fire hall or police hall or you know, an army barracks or whatever. And he said, Okay, everybody line up, and he had everybody lined up you go, who here deserves a medal? Everyone would pointed everyone else, right? That guy that did that? Do did sub that asked me to give him a medal. And he was like, What? No, I didn't do anything. It was that guy who jumped off the building to go, like, we're always deflecting. And so unfortunately, when it comes to suicide, it's the same thing. We want to deflect to everything else. And we want to get rid of we don't want to deal with our issues. So we work more or we help other people with their issues or we we try to be there and I mean, I've been woken up at two o'clock in the morning to another friend of mine who's suicidal who just like it was reaching out in that moment. And in that moment, I'm not gonna I'm not I don't care how tired I am. I don't care how sick I am. I don't care how many times I woke up my wife that night, I'm going to pick up that phone and I'm gonna answer that call, regardless. But after doing that, for months, and months and months and months and months, I'm not able to help people as well as I wasn't beginning of it. And that's the key is that there's gonna be points that you have to say no, that you have to be like, Hey, I'm not in the right headspace. You should call this guy. Or there was actually one dude where he sent me a message. And he was like, I'm really not doing well tonight. And I'm like, you know, I'm not doing well either. Do you want to have a chat, but like, I can't really give you any advice today. And he's like, no matter what's going on. And he immediately tried to assist me, right. But it's, that mentality is also just, oh, well, my issues aren't that bad I can, they can be put off to the side, so I can help somebody else. When in reality, the first step, the very first step of first aid, is self aid. Right, you have to fix yourself up into a point that somebody else can come and help. Because you're not you're just laying there bleeding. And unfortunately, I think a lot of us are metaphorically laying there bleeding.

 James Geering 2:11:10

Well, you hit on a an important turn, I found this, like, when I first really started kind of being out there, I had a Facebook page called the dark side project, which was collecting a lot of my


friends, either that were going through stuff at the time that were, you know, the or out the other side that maybe it even never really struggled, and everyone was talking about what worked, what didn't, etc. And around that time, I got a lot of those those phone calls. And, you know, I will always be there for people that need to reach out. But the problem is the, the people that everyone knows is the mental health person, for example, in your department, wherever it is, that's the one that gets inundated with phone calls. And what we need to realize is if we just find one person, say that 50% of the population is hurting. So the other 50 that aren't, you know, that are doing okay, at the moment, we just find one buddy, and we become their go to person. Now, you're not gonna get that burnout. But when one person gets hundreds of phone calls, you end up you know, Michael, excuse me, Michael Clarke Duncan, again, you end up absorbing so much, that sometimes as you said, These people aren't really out of their own journey, they kind of dove into serving because it does feel good. And now they're starting to spiral down again. So I think that's the thing is once you realize that, if we just have like, that group of, let's say, five, and your watch each other, now you alleviate bombarding, you know, that one peer support person or that one, you know, whoever it is that figure that you're gonna go to. And that way, you know, you, between the five of you, you can juggle who's having a good day, who's who's having a bad day, and they'll always be someone that is in the right headspace for them.



2:12:54

Yeah, exactly. And the other part of this is that we say this a lot, right? Like, if you're going through a rough time, reach out to your buddies, and okay, absolutely. You really should be social. If you're, if you're in a good way, reach out to your buddies, right? Just talk to people, man, like just talk to people. It doesn't take much. Some of the some of the times I've had, I don't know if you'd call them interventions, but where I've caught kind of people off guard was just random text I would I literally would sit on my phone, and I'd scroll through my messenger, it'd be like, I haven't talked to that person. Well, little Hey, man, how's going? What are you up to? You know, just anything? And I've gotten responses anywhere from? Oh, good, man. Yeah, I'm just working and having a great time, blah, blah, and we'd chat for five or 10 minutes and cool to man, I'm really glad you messaged me, I was in a really dark place. And I didn't know who to talk to. And I'm really not doing well. And then we sat down and had like a two hour conversation. So it's not just on the can't put all of the onus on the person that's hurting. Because if they're hurting, and they're in that dark place, they don't want to be a burden to somebody else. They don't want to reach out to another person and have that weight put on another person. They're already at the point where they don't want to add more weight. So reach out to each other talk, man just speak to each other. It's really, we have this great thing called the internet. And this is something that I said on my podcast, I've said it in real life. I've done it and speaking of it, we have the greatest gift that a veteran community has ever gotten and his Nothing like this has ever been around for any veteran community in the history of mankind. The fact that you and I are 5000 kilometers away from each other and having a conversation about suicide. That that's that's an important piece that we all have. Right? We all have messenger. We all have a phone we all carry it around. We can all talk to people at any point in time. Do it make that choice, right? Reach out to your friends and be, you know, I haven't talked to you in friggin six years. And that's the other part is time disappears once you're out of the service, because you're not seeing everybody every day. Alright, so you're just going about your day and they're going about their day, and all of a sudden, it's 10 years. And then all of a sudden, it's 20. And then all of a sudden, you you don't know where they live anymore, because they move six times. And then what, right back in the day, if you that person


moved in, you didn't get affording letter. They're just gone. Right? never see him again. Hopefully, you might see him at a reunion or Legion one day, that kind of thing. But now, man, I can call my buddy who I served with for eight years. I could call him right now. And he would pick up the phone. It's that simple. And we forget it that simple. Absolutely.

 James Geering 2:15:58

Absolutely. I agree. 100%. And even if you've lost touch with someone, the internet is great. Now, you can search they're probably got a social media profile as theirs, you know, you can you can do a little internet creep in and, and reconnect as you did. One of my closest childhood friends, we lost contact and in the end, I ended up going to his childhood home. Sadly, he'd lost his parents had both passed away in the in the kind of two or three years prior. And so they just sold the family home, the new people that moved in, and I gave him my business card. They immediately sent it to Joe. And then by that evening, we were talking on WhatsApp. So you know, this is a beautiful thing. If you've lost contact with someone play Sherlock Holmes still challenge yourself to find them again.

 2:16:40

And re reconnect man. I mean, this is one of the things about especially service style industries, I guess you could call it, you know, police and fire and military and EMS is that you create these bonds that don't go away. Right? And that, you know, after 10 years, if you haven't seen them, it's gonna be one of these. Hey, and you'll pick up immediately where you are right? There's no gap in time. And I've seen it at reunions. I've seen it. It's the Legion randomly seen people that you haven't seen in forever? Where have you been? How's it going? And you start, you know, you start having those conversations, you start immediately jive with each other and poking each other. It's just doing all that fun stuff. But yeah, we here to connect more. I think it's, it's sad that we don't utilize this tool that we have in front of us. And we do want to utilize it nearly enough.

 James Geering 2:17:37

Absolutely. 100%. Well, you talked about the power of the internet. I've been doing this for six and a half years. And you know, as you said, I've spoken to, you know, child soldiers from Sierra Leone, and artists and dancers and actors, and you know, special forces, soldiers, I mean, just all kinds of incredible humans through the podcast. So what made you decide to start your podcast, tell the people listening about that. And then let's talk about the collective as well.

 2:18:03

Roger. So my podcast I started was called tools for the toolbox. And it was it started because I would go for little hangouts with my buddies. And, you know, 234 Guys, we'd hang out at the pub, and we'd get lunch, and we'd have a couple beers. And we'd start chatting. And almost invariably and I mean, I had a, I had a bunch of different friend groups, right. So I had groups that were military had groups that were civilian, I had groups that were infantry had groups that were police a group like



2:18:35

I'm a pretty social guy, my wife called me a social butterfly wants to know me, and she's like, Oh, yeah. So I would go and link up with some buddies here to go like up with some other buddies there, etc, etc.



2:18:50

And almost invariably, there was always somebody that was having an issue. Every time we would sit down, and it was sometimes it was small, right? Like, I keep getting these frickin parking tickets or whatever. Sometimes it was, you know, I think my wife is gonna leave me. There were some deep conversations. There were some, some shallow conversations. But there was always a problem. And every single time somebody always had, oh, yeah, that happened to me. This is what I did. It worked out for me, you should maybe try it. And sometimes they already had. Other times I hadn't. And I started to recognize the trend there was that this was happening every time. And I started also realizing that it was only ever happening in these little groups. As the only time I was ever actually getting these bits of these tidbits of information that I was able to kind of cherry pick from these conversations. Because even if it wasn't my problem, I'd be like, that's a that's a great tip. That's a good tool that I get to keep that in the bank. And and that I started thinking we had this we sat down for this one real re The deep conversation probably had too many beers because very in depth. And we started talking about what it meant to be a soldier, before the war, during and after, and did that change and how it affects how we live our lives now. And you know, we're all retired and just like, oh, like, what did it all mean? And how did we do and at the end of it, it was a really great conversation. But at the end of it, someone stood up, I'm like, man, we should have recorded that, that would have made a great podcast, I was like, indeed, she did word. It's a good idea. And so I started thinking, like, maybe I should start recording some of these conversations. And I started sewing, you know, initially with my phone and just keeping track of, you know, hanging out with people and trying to record it and realizing that that was not a great audio experience. And, and started evolving from there. So I started buying the equipment started getting hooked up and started doing audio podcasts with some of the friends, some of the people I know, on, basically anything I could think of so you know, my first couple episodes were like, Let's talk about pain. You know, I talked to a friend of mine, who's a double amputee, above the knee. And I was like, how do you deal with pain? How do you manage pain? How to What are you on medication? What kind of medication? How does it feel what happens when the medication wears off? What do you do then? And so I would start mining these people for gold nuggets of information to for tools for the toolbox. And so the funny thing I came up with that terminology was because in the army, there's lots of times where you have to give context to a skill set. But so it doesn't really apply to what you're doing right now. But it's, it's a good piece of information at, but it's part of the context of the story. And it will always be here. You may never you might not need this right now. But it's a good tool for toolbox. Keep it in there. And so that always stuck in my head. And I was like, oh, yeah, that would be a good tool for the toolbox. Alright, cool. Anyway. So I started talking to people, and then I started reaching out to more people. And I started reaching out to people that I hadn't talked to in a while. And then I started, you know, who would I like to talk to you about this stuff. So I started reaching out to other vets and other special forces guys, I started reaching out to people, I wanted to talk to you like Dave Grossman, and things like that, where you'd be like, oh, cool, I'd be so awesome if I could talk to the first. And that started to develop where I got, I got about three years in

talking to all sorts of just wicked people. And I mean, you know, this, when you get into podcasting, it's not one discipline. It is. Now you're learning, audio editing, and you're learning audio quality, and how to figure out interfaces and you're doing and then I started into video and then add that added a whole nother spectrum. Now I can edit video, and I can create little intros and outros, and, man, it becomes this, it's like six or seven disciplines in one. So you just start going down that road and you start buying equipment and you start setting it up, you start looking at it going. Does that does that work? Does this work? Does that work? How does that look? Does he things look good. And one of the problems is because I have hearing damage, I can't really do a lot of the audio stuff, but I did my best made sure it sounded pretty good to me. And then I kind of carried on from there. During the the whole thing about what the tools was that I was doing one on one chats, you know, just for an hour, and we'd talk about a particular topic. And then, but I was still doing those linkups I would still hang out with people and we still have these chats. And I noticed that it was an easier conversation to do as a group versus one on one because sometimes you can hit a hard you can hit walls where people just don't want to talk about it or you know, they get really agitated or triggered or whatever. So it makes the flow of it very challenging to maintain. So I got into, I started something called the Sheepdog roundtable, you know, invite six or seven people together and talk about a larger topic, you know, like, the whole concept of mission men self. Is that an antiquated version? Like does it not no longer necessary? Or how does it apply to everyday life, that kind of stuff. So we talked about it as a group. And then I think I made it through six or seven of those, but they are editing heavy. So it would take me a lot I do one, and it would take me weeks to get one edited through and then I then I'd have a second one ready, ready there and I'd have malt and I had the other podcast or had the total toolbox still going so I was constantly editing and I realized that what I was doing was just us getting busier and busier. I started Phil I'd have 10 minutes sweet I'm gonna use that I got 10 minutes I'm gonna use that you start to fill all this time. But it wasn't filling it with things that were enjoyable. You know, I sit in front of the computer and edit for Three hours straight and just exhausted by the end of the day, but didn't do anything. And I wasn't spending time with my family and I wasn't doing stuff with them. And I started to realize that that was just not I wouldn't maintain, I couldn't maintain that longevity of that, right? I couldn't keep doing that constantly. And my buddy, Sean, who had been on TOEFL toolbox a couple of times, he'd been on the Sheepdog roundtable a couple of times. And he came to me, and he's like, you know, I think we really need to do something about this and figure out how to make this utilize the internet, rather than allow the Internet to utilize us. So how do we do that? And I was like, Well, I mean, the best thing we can do is have open honest conversations with people, in my view, like think this is what we, what we really require, and what we're really missing is being able to converse with one another. And he was like, That's a great idea. I, you know, if you want to work with me, be ready, because I'm sure that I know how to work. Right? And I was like, Okay, I'll, I'm gonna do my best I'm gonna keep up. I'm gonna, let's, let's, let's do it. So we started January 1 of this year. And we've been doing a live broadcast every day, since. And we've talked to, again, all kinds of people, all kinds of people, group formats, large format I've had, I think we had seven people on at one point, as down to like, three, down to just Shawn and I, to four or five. And I mean, you've been on a couple weeks, it's all about conversations, the topic is, I actually kind of pick them up almost at random, not quite random. But whenever I have a thought in the car, or I have a thought in the shower, or I'm walking with my son, and I go, I wonder why people do that. And I'll write it down. And then we'll just pass posture to the to the group and say, you know, what are your thoughts on this? And let the conversation flow. And then it just kind of carries on, we start asking questions, there's interaction from the guests, or not just from the guests, but from the audience. So the audience gets to interact with us as well. And I put the questions up and the than the guests and us interact with the audience directly. It's such a great format and really clean open conversations, and we always keep it we got three rules, there's no swearing, there's no

politics, and there's no religions. And everything else is just stay positive. So we're not like toxic positivity, but we're trying to so where he always uses not motivate. Inspire, thank you, that is exact word. We want to inspire people to just do better, just be better. And we so we got my mugs that say do your best, these are gonna be for sale for sale. And once I get them exactly perfect, too. I want them. But that's the whole key, the key the show, when you show up, we do our best to have a good conversation. At the end of it. We learned something.

 James Geering 2:28:10

Yeah, it was, it was a lot of fun. I think I might have broken the swearing rule. Okay. I don't mean to you, I just say that when I get Oh, I get that something. But uh,

 2:28:20

but so hard not to swear, it has been a sheer test of will, for me not to swear, consistently on our show. It is. I think we made it the first episode. And I was just swearing left, right and center. And at the end of it, Sean was like, so, you know, the swearing? And I was like, yeah, he's like, let's not do that. And I was like, Okay, you will do my best thing is like, I bet you will. And I think I did, I think it's for once or twice after that. But it's actually been really good. Because I don't swear as often now in my regular life. Because of that discipline on the show. And I know, there's like I swear a couple times here. But the it takes, it almost takes effort to do it now. You know what I mean?

 James Geering 2:29:06

Yeah, yeah. And that's the thing. I mean, I believe how totally that you know, if you use a swear word, then that could be another adjective. But then I also buy into the fact that sometimes the swear word is the perfect description, you know, so there is a happy medium, I don't want to be like, you know, just just swearing for the sake of swearing. But I also don't want to limit myself. That's why I have the explicit rating on my podcast, because this is how big boys and girls talk sometimes and it's okay. Sure, you know, but you know, it's also as you said, Would you speak like that in your grandparents house? Probably not. So the ability to be able to get it down and take a moment and be I'm going to use different words today. You know, if I'm on someone else's podcast, I try and you know, be a little bit more but if they asked me about something that, you know, do you think that it's okay to not worry about school shootings and focus on transgender models on a Bud Light can I might start us next week. Yeah,

 2:30:00

yeah, well, you know, it's a it's part of the language, right. And you're as you're right, there's a balance that I think needs to be maintained. The big thing, why we wanted to keep it disciplined was the fact that the information that we were gathering the actual, you know, the tools that were being provided and the conversations that we're having, were really, really good for everybody. Right? Not just adults who are trying to go through a healing journey. But everybody, kids, teenagers, adults who have never experienced any major trauma in their lives. People who have experienced tons of trauma in their life didn't matter. The tools, we're all still

relevant. And so we wanted to make it as appealing to everybody so that, you know, a 14 year old kid could sit there and watch the collective and not have his parent walk into the room and sitting there going well screw that. None of that. Right? There's, it's clean, it's clean in general, right? So that we that way, everybody can enjoy it, and everybody can learn from it. And everybody can grow and build from it and just be, you know, they can really do their best and get a better version of themselves.

 James Geering 2:31:13

Yeah, no, that makes perfect sense. Absolutely. Well, for people listening, where can they find all the costs that we just discussed?

 2:31:21

So the Tulsa Toolbox Podcast is still up, you can find that on basically anything, it's tools for the toolbox. It's on YouTube, it's on Apple, it's on Google, it's, you can find it basically anywhere. It's audio and video, it's on Spotify, or wherever. I haven't put a, I haven't put out a new tool toolbox in a little while I got a few in the hopper. But at the moment, my focus is on the collective. The Collective is you can find that on Instagram, you can find it. Well, the actual podcast itself is only on YouTube. So if you search, this is the challenge. The Collective is a pretty common name. So there's quite a few collectives there. I'm working on the SEO so that I can get it out to the top. But it's a takes a longer process. But if you look up the underscore collective underscore yt, for YouTube, you'll find us and we have, like I said, we've been doing since January 1, so we're at I think we're like 100, and 40, something like that. However many days we've been in so far this year. That's how many we have. And, yeah, we have all kinds of great people on there. I got I've talked, I've talked to people I never thought I would engage with which is super cool. Not a bad way, just like I never thought I would get a chance to meet them. One of them, Chris Hunter. So one of the original Dirty Dozen, who was first one of the first American, non Brazilian to get a black belt in BJJ. And so he's he's one of the the old school crew. He's the sixth degree black belt right now. Super cool, dude, great artist, and still chokes people out on the regular, like, really cool to talk to people like that and just engage with a broader view of society. And really talk about stuff that that matters. One of the neat parts about the show as well is that, like I said earlier, the topics are kind of random. And I don't tell anybody beforehand. So we started up, and everybody shows up, and then I go, Okay, well, here's the topic, let's discuss. So there's no pre thought, or I wanted to really avoid having anybody research stuff. And then have to like, you know, try and get it verbatim. I just wanted authentic reactions and authentic conversation so that if you have an experience on this particular thing, cool. Let's hear it. If not, sit and listen. It's all about conversations.

 James Geering 2:33:54

Brilliant. So what about on social media? Where can people find you there? Oh, social

 2:33:58

media wise. So I am at Maskull burl, so mcpl be your alias. For Instagram, I'm on Facebook channels and tools for the toolbox. The collective for Instagram is the underscore collective



channels and tools for the toolbox. The collective for Instagram is the underscore collective underscore IG. And but if you follow me, masculine girls, I have all the all of the posts and links from there too, as well. So there is the collective as a website at the dash collective.ca. And you can go through that to get to the YouTube. And as, as I figure out how to do merch and stuff as I get the sales of the mugs and stuff sorted out on how to actually sell that that'll be up on the website. And there's gonna be more as we develop this as the other part of the collective is that we're being shaped by the collective. So we've done a quarterly after action review and we had You know, the audience tell us what they want to hear, what are they wants to do? How do they want us to grow? What directions you want to talk about. And then we're going to do another one at the halfway, another one to three quarter and one at the end of the year. Then we'll see after 365. If, if things change if things grow, if things adjust or adapt, then we'll see what happens then.

 James Geering 2:35:22

Beautiful. Well, Charles, I want to say thank you so much. It's, it's been an amazing journey. It's so funny how when you as you said, I don't I don't send people questions. I don't talk about topics. I mean, obviously, there are some obvious areas that they know we're going to hear. But you know, we talked about earlier ranch life, and then now you have full circle where in equine therapy is one of the biggest elements of your healing, and then your perspective of some of the lowest points. And I mean, it's just been so much to take away from this conversation. So I want to thank you so much for being vulnerable and courageous today, and being so generous with your time.

 2:35:57

That's it truly is my pleasure. I got one more little story for you before. So I had mentioned earlier about a little moment with my granddad, where I came back from Afghanistan. And, you know, he gave me a little nod. And I gave him a little nod and we sat down, we started talking about, you know, soldiering a little bit. And all that weight that I saw come off his shoulders, and just the ability to speak to somebody that actually understood. It was in that moment that I, I made a promise to myself to be as absolutely open and truthful about my experiences as I possibly could, at any moment with anybody that talks to me, because I did not want to be that man. He's suffered in his own head for 70 plus years. And it wasn't until after I found out that he thought he was these audiences himself a coward. For 70 plus years, even though he volunteered, slightly volunteered to go to war. He signed up. He did the work, he went to Europe, he saw combat. He was fixing railroads across Europe, in France, when, as the push came up, like it was, he did it. He did his job. He did his duty. He's not a coward. But for seven years, he thought he was just because he didn't talk to anybody else. So I'm going to be as open as honest as I possibly can so that I'm not that person. And if my example can provide for anybody else to be as open and honest as they can, then they can see healing. They can see growth, they can see a better way forward.