

Chris Irwin - Episode 769

📅 Thu, May 11, 2023 11:03AM ⏱ 1:53:33

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

people, work, talk, thinking, mental health, put, figure, problem, feel, military, realize, wrestling, team, hard, body, crossfit, science, emdr, years, absolutely

SPEAKERS

James Geering, Chris Irwin



James Geering 00:00

This episode is sponsored by a company I've used for well over a decade and that is 511. I wore their uniforms back in Anaheim, California and have used their products ever since. From their incredibly strong yet light footwear to their cut uniforms for both male and female responders, I found them hands down the best work were in all the departments that I've worked for. Outside of the fire service. I use their luggage for everything, and I travel a lot and they are also now sponsoring the 7x team. As we embark around the world on the human performance project. We have Murph coming up in May, and again, I bought their plate carrier, I ended up buying real ballistic plates rather than the fake weight plates. And that has been my ride or die through Murph the last few years as well. But one area I want to talk about that I haven't in previous sponsorship spots is their brick and mortar element. They were predominantly an online company up till more recently, but now they are approaching 100 stores all over the US. My local store is here in Gainesville, Florida, and I've been multiple times. And the discounts you see online are applied also in the stores. So as I mentioned, 511 is offering you 15% of every purchase that you make. But I do want to say more often than not, they have an even deeper discount, especially around holiday times. In fact, if you're listening to this in the months of April or May 511 days is coming up between May 9 and May 16, you will get 20% of all gear and apparel. And that applies both online and in store. But if you use the code shield 15 That's S H I E L D one five, you will get 15% off your order or in the stores every time you make a purchase. And if you want to hear more about 511, who they stand for and who works with them. Listen to Episode 580 of behind the shield podcast with 511 Regional Director will airs 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, former Navy SEAL and founder of rare cents, Chris Irwin. So we discuss a host of topics from his early life, his journey into the military, his time in the UK, his own very powerful mental health story, catharsis through music, the concept of mind fitness, 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 fast approaching 800 episodes. So all I ask in return is that you help share these incredible men or women stories, so I can get them to every single person on planet earth who needs to hear them. So with that being said, I introduce to you, Chris Irwin enjoy. Well, Chris, I want to

start by saying, firstly, thank you so much for your patience. When we originally had scheduled this conversation, it was around the thing that I did called the Human Performance Project 7x. The entire goal of that was to physically and mentally break down a group of it was seals, Delta guys, couple of firefighters, and then observe the physical mental breakdown that would kind of parallel deployment, you know, a 911 incident, something like that. And then how do we put them back together again? Well, when we talked, I was in the middle of that. And this is a perfect testament of how my brain just absolutely took a ship because I had this Zoom meeting, scheduled and no name put to it. And you literally appeared. And were kind enough to say I understand your idiocy, James, thank you so much. It's funny. So So firstly, thank you for rescheduling and come on the behind the shield podcast today.

C Chris Irwin 04:22

Yeah, no problem. Great to be here.

J James Geering 04:24

All right. So where on planet earth are we finding you this morning? I'm in northwest Montana. Beautiful. Well, I would love to start at the very beginning of your timeline. So tell me where you were born. And tell me about your family dynamic. what your parents did and how many siblings?

C Chris Irwin 04:39

Okay, wow, going way back into the archives. Absolutely. I am from Massachusetts. I was born in Massachusetts, at Mass General Cambridge mass. Don't remember much about that particular incident. But yeah, and grew up primarily in mass. We traveled That's a little bit to Europe when I was very young. Because my dad worked for the State Department. He didn't law the see stuff, a lot of see convention type things. He was a an attorney, a lawyer by trade. And so like my very early years, I think we even lived in England for a little bit. I mean, this is all kind of like, I have scant memories of these things. But the joke in my family was always something would come up some image of the Eiffel Tower or whatever. And my parents would be you've been there. That was sort of the joke, right? Like I had, I think I had my second birthday on the cube with the Queen Elizabeth to going from, like, we actually took a boat. From the East Coast to England, we're going, but like I said, scamp, memories of that most of my childhood was in Massachusetts, growing up in suburban Boston kind of doing what suburbanites did back in the 80s. And so it was, I mean, look, I, I had a typical, I guess if there is such a thing sort of suburban upbringing went to public school for the most part until I was in high school and, you know, did the things that we did, we would go around skateboard and ride bikes and come up with games to play and great stuff before the the invention of the internet.

J James Geering 06:24

Well, you mentioned the Curie to my sister actually. And my my brother in law now we're both servers or whatever the term was then waiters and waitresses on the think was the Queen's grill, which was the nicest of the restaurants on the q2, so I know it. Well.

 06:39

Very cool. Yeah. I mean, I don't remember anything about that. I think I they told me I had a baked Alaska, which is like this big cake that you set on fire and then blow it out? Right, like for my second birthday, but recollection of it whatsoever? Yeah. I

 James Geering 06:53

think this ice cream on the inside of I remember something like that. Yeah, yeah. Brilliant. All right. Well, then you mentioned about your dad, just as a tangent right off the bat. When I first came to the States, for the first time, I worked in summer camps for years upstate New York. And I remember in one of the times I was in a hotel, I think it was traveling after the summer camp. And I looked at the yellow pages from the site. And there was this one section where the pages were kind of a different color. And I remember thinking, Oh, it must be, you know, doctors or something that everyone would use. And when I opened it up, it was lawyers. And that was my first real exposure to the incredible, you know, litigation issue that we have in this country. There are lots of things where law is absolutely imperative and needed. But we found ourselves in this lawsuit, happy mentality, which I obviously witnessed years later in uniform and the abuse of that. So did he have any perspective? Do you ever have that conversation of the kind of frivolous lawsuit issue that we have in the States?

 07:52

No, he was. My dad was kind of, he was never like in a law firm that I'm aware of. He wasn't like a big corporation type guy. He was very much a freelance worker. And I honestly never knew what he was doing in terms of making income. It was like he was doing this and doing that he like ran a he was a developer, like a real estate developer for a while ran a company that built condominiums, he was kind of like a freelance architect. He was an exceptionally smart person, like ridiculously smart to this day, I think he's one of the smartest people I've ever met. And so he just kind of did his own thing. And, and he always said he didn't know what he wanted to be when he grew up. So he just kept kind of changing roles. But he was he was he went to Cornell, which is where he met my mom, I think it was valedictorian of his high school, he did some kind of like, genius program at Cornell, where if you had an extra year there, then he went to Cambridge, which is where I went as well. And then he went to the Harvard Law School. And I think what he, he was very much a trying to come up with the right term for this. It was like, you can use the law to your advantage. And you don't have to feel like you're a victim of it. You can, like, okay, use it. Right, like, be smart about it, and, and use it. And that's the way I think he looked at it. And I get that, like, I understand that. I never would want to do that. But I understand the sort of, hey, it's a process. It's a law is a fabrication of human beings. It's an imaginary thing. And therefore it's not like written in stone, so to speak. It's not the hierarchy of the universe. It's just something we made up so that we can function in a civilized society. But don't think it's anything more than that. That doesn't mean you should like go break the law, but just realize what it is like have an inherent understanding of most of the things we do value or take for granted or think of as just the way it is, are just made up by other people. Right? And then we sort of think that's nature. But it's not like we even apply the term law back to nature as a metaphor. And we talked about the laws of nature. But we fail to realize that that's


a metaphor, a lot of times, right, like that idea of law is a human construct. And then we were so arrogant that we reapply it back to the way things work in nature as if there are quote unquote, laws there. And they're not there are

 James Geering 10:37

pigeons with the, you know, holding legal documents.

 10:41

Right, we're so used to that saying that we've forgotten its metaphor. And I take that from Rupert Sheldrake, who has a really incredible TED Talk. That was actually it says on the YouTube video that it was banned, because it was anti science, but it's essentially questioning, questioning some of the fundamental precepts of science itself. And it's a fascinating talk. I've watched it a couple times, just because I was like, Huh, that's something that is interesting, we should think about

 James Geering 11:08

that. I just had a guest on Emily Kaplan, who's one of Greg Glassman, his right hand, women now, and they have a thing called the broken Science Initiative. And what they're doing is questioning some of the so called ironclad laws of science and research. And when you hear them actually kind of unpacking that, it's amazing how, actually, a lot of these studies firstly, of course, we're looking at who is funding the study, you know, one of the things that really kind of shocked me is I have multiple certs from the NSCA. And I learned that they're actually funded by Pepsi, huge conflict of interest, in my opinion, but yep, so when you look at the studies, it's more probability, and then you hit you see some of the shifting of the so called study groups to match the outcome that they want. And there was no better example of how science could be misused in the last couple of years. You know, I don't think most people woke up wringing their hands wanting to destroy the Earth. But that blind, you know, belief in science, I think, has actually got in the way of common sense. And I say, even in the fire service, our average work week is 56 hours a week. And I will have people literally say that, to me, it should be what we call a 2472, which should be a 42 hour work week. And people say, Oh, James, would you have studies to show that a 56 hour work week is worse than a 42? Are you fucking serious right now you want me to prove that working firefighters two extra days a week is more detrimental to their sleep, their recovery, etc, etc. And but this is where we're at. I think people are so entrenched in this absolute, mindless belief in all science, that we forget to question some of it? Well,

 12:47

I think it's a difference between look, science as a method of inquiry is a good thing. I think it'd be hard to argue with that, like, we're going to hypothesize something scientific method hypothesize something, we're going to test that, and then we're going to objectively evaluate the results. That's, of course, I think, again, that would be a difficult thing to say. Now, that's not a good idea. The dip, so we shouldn't confuse that with what we're saying sometimes these


days about science as an industry, which means it's the people that execute these things, whether it's experiments, or whatever it may be refund studies are people, which means they're fallible, and they're, you can sway them, you can bribe them, you can they can fudge the results, they can have their own biases going into them. All of that is true. It's not necessarily the case. I'm sure there are people obviously out there that do their best to objectively do something and hypothesize something and even know that they have a bias. But then if the results are contrary to what their bias was, can say, okay, look, it came out in a way that we didn't want, and we didn't think but here it is. That's what we should be doing. And that's, that's kind of like what science should be is. But again, it gets mixed in mixed up with industry and with profit and with bad incentives. And that's the problem, right? We shouldn't throw the baby out with the bathwater and say, science doesn't make sense. Like, of course it does. Like science, science is just what happens, right? Like and try to figure out how stuff happens. But what I will say on like, even the Rupert Sheldrake stuff when he was even questioning what again, wasn't science, it's more in terms of a method of inquiry. It's like the fundamentals of it. Some of the things we agree to as like, that's just the way it is. He was like, Well, is it like constants, universal constants, saying that the speed of light is a constant is something that it's like, yeah, that's the way it is. The universe has constants. And His thing was, well, it did does it is that Do we know that's a fact. And then he started looking into the speed of light over time and the way it was measured, and it was like a dip during the 40s where it was, it was slower than it is now. And he kind of brought this up like, Hey, why was it slower? Why was ever everyone measuring it slower? And the kind of the answer to that was like, well, we don't know. But we're pretty sure it's constant kind of thing. And that's something I'd never heard before. Like, well, maybe it isn't constant. We've gotten, we think an expanding universe that changes and evolves. So maybe the constants evolve to I think that's a fascinating idea. I don't know if it's true or not. But I think that kind of thinking is, is gray is just constantly kind of going back to what's at rest on our laurels and assume we know everything. And we're really guilty that a lot of the time is like, yeah, we kind of we know the basic structure, we've just got to fill in the details. And it's like, oh, I don't know about that, guys. Like we're a very, very tiny species on a very, very tiny planet, in a gigantic Galaxy amongst hundreds of millions of galaxies in the universe. So we don't even know the, you know, the George Lucas line of when it comes to knowledge about the universe, we're at about an eight. The problem is that the scale goes to a million. Right. And it's like, that's where we're at.


 James Geering 16:27


Yeah, what exactly, I think that's just it. It's just questioning. It's not, you know, disregarding all science, because I mean, most of us, our entire livelihood, revolves around science. I had medicine, I had physics, I had all kinds of stuff in the fire service. But it's questioning. And I think if you look back at, you know, what people were being told about cigarettes and cocaine by doctors, you know, a few decades ago, you know, if you look about the heresy that was attached to hemp, and chiropractic and acupuncture, and now we're having this ancient wisdom reawakening again, so you have to think just question what you've been saying, I would argue, even in religious texts, all of a sudden, the human that was born 40 years ago, as an expert on what God wants. That's an interpretation. That's not gospel, in my opinion, there are some in all religions, I think, kindness, compassion, service, etc. But when we start deviating, then that's when you need to question.

 17:20

Yeah, exactly. And all of that is the result, again, of sort of bad incentives, and personal motives, and profit and those types of things. And it turns into, it's not science, it's propaganda. It's, it's just a business, right? And that again, that's the difference. Like, I don't want to, we're going to be in a very dangerous situation, if we just disregard the idea of science. That's a bad thing for everybody. What we need to figure out, and this is a, I don't know what the answer is to this, but because of the way our entire system is set up, it's everything is profit driven, for the most part, and therefore, and you have shareholders that you have to be beholden to, to drive growth every year and make more money. And if that's the case, then that's the incentive. And therefore, you're gonna go with whatever is the most, most people are most profitable, not necessarily what's best. And I honestly don't know the way out of that. Other than probably people start people themselves starting to say, Huh, yeah, like, kind of what's happening now. Right? When it's like, hey, just, you need to do all this and take all this and the and it's, it's what's best for you. The second people say, No, we're not going to do that. Okay, well, then all the profit goes away to like, if people are buying your product, your profit goes away. And that's kind of the only way to change it. The trick there is, it's so tough because this whole idea of do your own research. Okay. Like I understand that, but how do you do that? Like, how does anybody how do you or I sift through the information out there to quote and research and figure out what's valid? That's really tricky, because we are prone to our own biases as well. We want to believe certain things. I guess, to some extent, this is why I'm a believer of you got to sort it out. Like you have to figure out what works for you without being stupid about it. And without being dangerous. I mean, you can believe some really crazy stuff and get yourself into trouble. But like when it comes to your things, I talked about mental health, nutrition, okay. You're we are different. Everybody's different, like your nutritional needs, and my mine are are different. We have these, like fights out there now where it's like, we have to, it's like, it's gotta be my way. My opinion has to be right. And this is the exact diet everybody should eat. It's like, No, I don't think that's true at all. I know plenty of people that have really very diets I know people that eat like nothing but meat, basically, I know people that are essentially plant based all who thrive and neat and those things don't have to be mutually mutually exclusive or wrong. It's like and why do we even care? It's like, you figure out what works best for you. And if that works, great, go do it.

 James Geering 20:19
By religion, same

 20:21
to true, like, as long as you're not imposing upon me, I don't care, do whatever you want. And as long as it doesn't become a part of public policy, either, it's and that that goes back to like imposing something on me, right? But believe whatever you want to believe, live, however you want to live, just don't make just don't infringe upon anybody else's rights. I mean, that's the kind of fundamental thing we should all be cognizant of. It's like, you can you should be able to, essentially do whatever you want, as long as it doesn't negatively impact other people.

 James Geering 20:51
Well, it's interesting. I had James Wilks who wrote the or made the game changes movie on the on the podcast. Oh. yeah. And I listened to an episode Ioe Roan does. Ioe. I think Ioe is

fantastic radio, but this is one of my least favorite episodes ever heard? Because they tore apart the film. And then he went on their shows him and Chris kresser. And then they had a debate, and I've never ever witnessed a debate where someone's gone. Oh, you know what? You're right. I've changed the way thing. I think debates are complete fucking waste of time. Personally, that's my opinion. Because what they did is total of about six hours of conversation. Not once did they just go? You like eating meat? I like eating vegetables. But you know, we both do. We remove processed food, we vegetables aren't covered and chemicals. If you do eat meat, a meat that's not full of hormones and antibiotics. That is the middle ground where carnivore, you know, all these different ones. They're probably if you look at people that are thriving on it, they're just taking all the shit out of their diet. And so rather than fighting over it, plants and meat, let's all talk about the weather Venn diagram meets, we're all doing the same, which is probably going back to how we ate like 100 years ago, whether it's meat, whether it's vegetables, the quality of the food and the lack of processing of most of the foods.



22:09

Yeah, yeah, it's funny, I remember that episode, because it was the most uncomfortable Rogan episode I've ever listened to where I was like, it was hard to listen to, because of the conversation there. And I mean, I guess I would disagree with you a little bit that this is a funny thing to say right about arguing. Because I think real argument is how we get to solutions. Like what we've, we don't argue anymore, what we do is yell at each other. And we're with our own opinions. That's not an argument. An argument is supposed to be I present my opinion. And the information or data may have to back that up, you do the same. And we might and if we are. If we're open minded, we actually consider what the other person is saying. And think okay, well, yeah, maybe maybe that's a good point. And maybe they they can change my mind. The problem is our attitude these days, it's we go into everything with this assumption that we're right about everything that we've already got it all figured out. And therefore, my only charge in this conversation is to convince you, you're not convincing me, buddy. I'm just going to yell my opinion at you. And, and I'm going to, and I'm going to do it publicly in a forum like that, so that everybody else hears that I'm right to. And that's where we're at. And that's the problem, we need to get back to, hey, let's help. Yeah, sure. Let's have an argument here and not have argument have a negative connotation. It can mean exactly what that what is supposed to be like Roman Forum type arguments, that kind of idea. And yeah, and a situation like that, look, again, I go back to like, what are the incentives there, if you're, if you make money off of whatever side you're pitching, doesn't mean you're wrong. It doesn't mean you're, you know, evil or bad or anything like that. But But remember that that's, you're trying to make money off of that, and in some way, right? That's a big difference. And if you have no monetary interest in kind of what you're putting forth, and by the way, I completely agree with you. I've been, I've traveled all over the world, people have very different diets and are very healthy in places. I mean, like the Maasai, and Kenya, I think, essentially eat goat meat, blood and milk. Right? And pretty sure I don't, I don't have data in front of me to support this, but like just looking at them, they all look really fit to me, they probably don't have much in the way of cancer or heart disease or any of these conditions. Right? And then you go some some other places in the world and they're going to be eaten. I don't know roots and tubers and whatever else. And same thing, so yeah, it goes back to the body my opinion The human body is extremely adaptable in terms of what it can be fueled by we know this in terms of things like ketogenic diet, right? Like, your body can shift and say, Hey, you're not giving me this food source anymore. So I'm going to use this food source. In that case, it's going to run off of fat. It just goes back to like, just don't put the crap in there, don't put all the toxic garbage that's made in

a factory, you know, if it's, if it grows out of the ground, or if it was walking around, or swimming at some point, you can probably eat it. And it's and your body's like, Cool. I'll work with that. You know? That's, that's my opinion on it. And that's kind of what I've seen with people and friends. And myself, too.

J James Geering 25:40

Yeah, what are this. So I think, what I found 750 or 760, interviews, now pretty much you can have such an amazing conversation where you agree, and then just start pushing the wars out a little bit and dipping your toes into, you know, the the extremes on the left and the right of where you are coming from. And overall, you'll probably come away going just like you said, Hmm, I've never thought of it that way. Because you started with commonalities. And then you start stretching out. And if you deviate too much, which I've had on the show, and there's lots of people that I don't align 100% with on the show, and we have great conversations, because I don't care if you think this way about this religion, or this way about guns or whatever it is, we're talking about kindness, compassion, human health, you know, trauma, suffering, all these things that are human experiences. So if you start there, and then push out, I think you can find yourself in new territories and, and you've taken five or 10 degrees outside your own personal circle. And you're like, huh, I never looked at it that way. But if you start with what you disagree with, I'm black. And I'm white, and I'm gay, and I'm straight. And that's what you're screaming from the rooftops, you're missing the 90%, where you probably actually aligned where you would have an amazing conversation and exchange of ideas.

 26:54

Yeah, yeah. And I think we, we fail to realize how much we are role grand, to some extent. And I don't mean that in some in a way of someone deliberately doing it, but our environment and background where we were born, all of this sort of innate characteristics that we have, they shape who we are. And we don't appreciate that, for the most part, we just sort of feel like, No, I made all my decisions on my own. And I'm, I'm very with it, and I objectively look at everything, and it's like, yeah, you got to really take a hard look at yourself and realize how much of who you are was basically asked to you in either explicitly or implicitly, as a, as a child as growing up like things you were told, like, that's the way it is. And you take that on board eventually. And you just don't even realize it like you don't go back to say, well, if I had grown up in a completely different part of the world and looked completely different, like, would I feel this exactly? I mean, that's a really good question to ask yourself, would you still be you? And I think the answer is probably no. And that's, that's a really important insight for us to latch on to.


J James Geering 28:09

Well, that gives me a great opportunity to segue into something that I asked everyone, especially if they've served in uniform, as I progress through the years with this podcast, a truth that became, you know, extremely obvious, but it was totally unknown to me prior to this was the element of childhood trauma to so many people who serve and it makes perfect sense a lot of us, you know, they want the suffering to end they want to be the protector. And then you could also argue, a dangerous profession also gives you a way to kind of suppress the stuff

that's in your head, because you're too busy staying alive and protecting other people. You now have this incredible mental health lens and your own personal journey. When you look back to your kind of earlier years. Are there any elements of trauma that you now recognize being being older?

 28:57

No, it what's interesting with me is it's not it's, I think most of my trauma, so to speak, is actually from my time serving. But I agree with you, one of the things I've learned is how many people have childhood trauma of some sort, which I really didn't realize, I mean, obviously, you know that there are people out there that have trauma, but yeah, how big of a component that is for people and how important it is that they reconcile that in some form or fashion, recognize it, figure out what it is, it might not even be on the surface and apparent for them, and then go back and deal with it. But like, that's something that I've only learned in the last probably couple of years that there's so many people in the military that especially that had some kind of childhood trauma and to your point that probably has something to do with why they went in in the first place even if they didn't realize it at the time. And that you got to deal with that. I think If, whenever you are faced with, I don't like saying mental health problems, because to me, it reinforces a incorrect paradigm about mental health, which is that it's different from physical health and that it's a yes, no proposition. It's binary. And that it's, it's just that it's like, do you have mental health problems or not? And that's how we view it. And that's not correct. But so much of what we are what people deal with, from a mental health perspective is multifaceted and isn't as simple as you might think a lot of times we sort of dig around for like, what's the one? We love this in all walks of health and fitness? What's the one thing I hear that all the time when it came to my chronic illness? Has anyone ever figured out what it is, right? Like, what the causes what's the problem? And that's very myopic. And unfortunately, it's a result of kind of the allopathic approach that we have in medicine and health. That's how we view things. It's like you're sick. So therefore, we it's a pathogen of some sort. And we've figured that out, you have a staph infection, got it, we're gonna give you an antibiotic that kills the antibiotic, or sorry, that kills a staph infection, you're good to go. But when it comes to chronic conditions, mental health, and even our overall physical health to like, if we're really talking talking about optimizing that it is a complicated multifaceted onion of all sorts of things. And there is no one cause there's no one thing that's doing it all. I mean, I can get into it. I've talked about this another podcast, but I have this kind of Jenga puzzle analogy that I likened to a human being basically how that works. So the attorneys,

 James Geering 31:48
absolutely go for it.

 31:50

Okay, so I think of like, in my own context, my real chronic illness problem started in August of 2016. And it was like, I went from one day feeling basically fine, right? To the next day. Also sorts of problems spelled super weird. And, and just my health went off cliff. And I didn't exactly know why at the time. But I had this kind of line in the sand where I had been as I've been outside and been in our shed like pressure washing the entire day before. And as as it became

a chronic thing where I felt like this every day, I kind of went back and said, Okay, well what happened this day, I had a very clear day where things had changed for me what happened there? What what did I do the day prior? And it was like, Well, I did this, I was pressure washing all day, I was outside like spraying stuff off our driveway and inside the shed, and it was like, well, maybe it has something to do with that. But turns out it was a lot of it was mold. And I was spraying all this mold off of things and probably inhaled a bunch of it. And I didn't know that there was any even a thing but then it turns out like yeah, mold exposure can really screw you up in a big way. So then I went after this mold thing forever, like Jim gets the mold, mold and get them mycotoxins, which are kind of like a output of mold. It's almost like a defense mechanism that they have which can get in your body. And for some people, we have a genetic predisposition. It's hard to get out level up. But I had that view of like, it's a single thing. It's this thing, and I can just fix that thing. That's, that's what happened to me. Well, I did I think, and I still wasn't any better, or I wasn't damaged better. And what I had to figure out was like, no, no, that incident was like was a trigger, it was not the cause. And so it took me years to figure this out. But the analogy that I use is, is a Jenga puzzle. So those towers, that game that people play, where it's these wood blocks, and they're all stacked up kind of perpendicular to one another into a tower. And you pull a block out of this at a time back and forth, or with four people or whatever. And you're trying to keep it standing. And then at some point, somebody pulls a block out the whole thing collapses if they lose the game. Well, your body you sorry, more than your body, you as a human being are like a Jenga puzzle. And so when you're born, you're like this perfectly constructed Jenga puzzle. But then over time, pieces get pulled out. And that can be trauma as a child that can be like a serious infection that can be screwing up your circadian rhythm by operating at night all the time, that can be hyper vigilance, and anxiety and depression and all of these things Lyme disease. And at some point, the last piece gets pulled out that topples the system. And so what a lot of us do is we go that's the I just got to get that piece and so what you do is you address that and you put it back on the tower. And then you're like, Man, I still don't feel good. It's like, Yeah, cuz all the other pieces are still on the ground, you have to now, this is the real trick, you now have to build rebuild the whole thing, you have to dress all of that. And that's honestly the best analogy I can come up with for kind of how my experience has told me that it basically works. And to sort of your, you gotta go back and address the trauma, you got to address any of the toxins you might have in yourself, you got to change your habits, you got to sort out your diet, all those things. Because until you do that, those pieces are still just gonna be lying on the floor. So it's

J James Geering 35:43

funny you say Django because I just did a video recently talking about the same kind of thing. And it's slightly different context, but it was really trying to illustrate, again, all the different components, but starting with the foundation being your childhood, because I've discussed this a lot as I've become, you know, the I've gained more lessons as a student through all these conversations. But if the foundation you have trauma, but it's addressed, well, that puts that Jenga piece back in, it becomes sturdy again. So you're not like we talked about you're not a victim. And I'll try and live with my mental health issues. No, you can address them. And even I would argue even become stronger with the trauma that you've had. You know, so you're putting them back in and in my profession, you know, organizational stress and sleep deprivation and, you know, obviously, emotional problems and excuse me, relationship problems and financial problems. And then in your profession, especially TBI is now the elephant in the room a lot of people don't think about. So if you're just going well, you know, it's what you saw at war. And that's all you look at, and you do EMDR and all these things, it's not working, well, you're missing all these other pieces. And then if you want to take the action

model, now, when you put the piece back, it's not square anymore, it's round, because you've used porn, gambling, you know, substances, alcohol. So now you feel like your tower is actually complete, but it's actually even more vulnerable than it was before more detrimental. So I love that analogy, because it does illustrate that multifaceted approach. And so many times whether it's a disease or whether it's a mental health challenge, we just look at that one thing. Oh, James, you had that kid that was killed in that car crash, that must be why you're depressed. Well, I was also for when I was stuck in a house fire as a child, if we're not talking about that, which I hope I have processed, but say I hadn't. And then I almost got killed by a falling wall. And I was about nine that crushed all the cars in the parking lot, except the one that we were in driving away. And my parents divorce, you know, and all these other things that can happen. When you just looking at this one call as a firefighter, we're missing so many other areas that we need to address.

 37:48

Yeah, yeah, for sure. And I think that the danger there, though, is you sort of said it, we don't want to fall into the victim mentality, right. So that the intent here is to process these things appropriately not to then stew on them for the rest of our lives. So the problem is, we have some kind of trapped energy, some pattern of behavior, that is, where is resting kind of on that trauma, or whatever it is, right. Because of that we've developed a pattern or a habit that is not serving us in any way. And so we got to deal with it so that we can change that pattern and not stew on it anymore. Like you mentioned, EMDR. Actually, I found EMDR really effective in that for me, and for the traumatic experience where it, I went from something that I stood on and beat myself up over for 12 years to something that I remember, but I don't really care about anyone. And that's that's the difference, right? It's like you no longer it doesn't affect you in the same way. It's I have a different relationship with it now.

 James Geering 39:04

Well, I want to walk through your career and out the other end. So before we do that, when were when you were still at the school age, were you always dreaming of the military? Or was it something else in your mind?

 39:14

No, not at all. I mean, my dreaming of the military. My, the impetus for me was Top Gun. I mean, it's as cheesy as that sounds, that is the truth. It is I saw Top Gun when I was whatever, 11 years old or something like that. And it was like, that's cool. Before that, I had no idea you could do a job like that, that that was a possible job that you actually made money doing and you could support yourself. Seeing that movie was like, that's cool. I want to go do that. And so for the longest time, I wanted to be a fighter pilot. But I didn't come from the military family. So I knew very little about the military at all. I didn't have a lot of exposure. Measure. My grandfather, my dad's dad was in World War Two. But my parents weren't in the military. Like, I didn't have this rich tradition or history of the military, in my family at all.

 James Geering 40:15

So walk me through then what took you into the Naval Academy? And then I'd love to hear about your time in England as well.



40:23

Oh, yeah. Yeah. So I, I, at some point, I told my dad, like, Hey, I think I'd love to be a fighter pilot. That looks cool. And I think his reaction was great. If you can get to go to the Naval Academy. I don't have to pay for college. So, so he took me down there at some point, we did a little trip down at the Naval Academy. And I was like, Yeah, this is, I don't know, I was, I think I was enamored by the structure and the order and discipline for some reason, I really liked that. And I liked pushing myself physically, I really was always somebody who I liked the hardest stuff possible was kind of a glutton for punishment. Like I went out and wrestled, and I was a soccer player, primarily. But I, I started wrestling in high school as something to do in the winter, because I wasn't any good at basketball, because I'm five foot eight. And like, I just basketball was not my future. And, and I got my ass kicked to start in wrestling, and like, I wasn't even having fun. But it was like, so what I got to stick with this, I got to, like, get better at this. And so it took me until I was a senior. But by the time I was a senior, I was pretty good at it and like won most of my matches and wrestled up a weight class. And so. So that kind of stuff just appealed to me. I was, I was strange. I went to the last two years of high school, I went to a private school. And I grew up in Massachusetts, kind of liberal, like a lot of people walking around socks with Birkenstocks, and, you know, listening to the Allman Brothers and Grateful Dead and stuff like that. And very few people went to military academy from my high school, my private high school, in fact, to the point where it's like, every 10 years, somebody would get in and they usually like quit and didn't make it through I think the last person that had made it through was literally like a decade before or something. So but I got it I applied and you know, I got the appointment and did all that stuff. And and so yeah, I went and then the the seal stuff, for me was just something that came along later, I found out about it later, again, I didn't I wasn't really like a military buff or anything like that. But to me, it was it was like the closest thing you could get to being a superhero. It was like, and you didn't know much about it. It was this was back when there were some books, there was like some Vietnam books and it was a Charlie Sheen movie and but it wasn't all over the place. And all these stories and there wasn't the internet. And so it was very very steeped in mystique and mystery and, and like the even the the books would have these grainy black and white photos of the trip. Like you just didn't know what the hell was going on. But these guys were likes just superheroes. It was like, the closest thing you could get to being Batman, in my opinion. And I was like, I want to be Batman. And that's, that's cool. Batman is cool. And so yeah, so that's what I from that point on. Like, it was like, that's what I want to go do. Go do that. That's even better. That's harder.



James Geering 43:35

Now you wrestled and you play football, soccer. I played actually field hockey, which is not as common for men to play in the UK, but I loved it. It was like football, but you had a weapon in your hand as well. And then I did martial arts pretty much my whole life. So one was very much a team sport. And then one even if you're fighting as a team, you're on the mat on your own one on one. What did you pull away from those two different dynamics? And did it apply to your career in the military?



44:04

Ah, well, that's a great question. I don't know if I've ever thought about it in that context, I think for and by the way, I when I got to the Naval Academy, I actually got cut from the soccer team. I still think I part of me thinks I was good enough to play on that team. I was burned out. I've been playing like year round my entire childhood. Like I played every I played winter soccer and indoors I played in the summer. But who knows, maybe if I'm objective. Maybe I just wasn't good enough. And I wasn't going to wrestle either. So I actually ended up on the crew team at the Naval Academy lightweight crew. But yeah, I think first of all, I think a team sport is a great thing for anybody to participate in because it's it isn't you alone and I talked to my kids about this. Were learning to work with a team and everything that goes into that practice and like suffering together and Having to whether you win or lose, it's like the team lose if you can play it play great yourself, but it doesn't matter if the team loses. I think all of those lessons are really great lessons. I'm a huge proponent of playing a team sport. I think it just is a great thing. And then on the flip side, I think doing something as an individual is great as well, because then you're just you out there, like so my oldest and youngest boys figure skate. And that's something I know nothing about. And I didn't, you know, they that's how they were, they wanted to go. And that's totally a different thing. Because like, it is just you out there, like, no one's coming to save you and no one's helping you. There's no, I can't pass the ball back to somebody to help me out. When I get in a jam. It's like it's all on you. And there's a lot of pressure there. So I think that can be valuable too. And that was let's kind of like wrestling, right? Like it was it's just me. And wrestling is even different, because it's not a performance. I'm like, I've got to solve a problem here. But somebody else is trying to do the same thing to me. And then at the same time, it's wrestling is interesting, because you're like, you're with all these guys that are on your team. And you're beating each other up, which martial arts I'm assuming kind of the same thing, where you've got to fighting each other every day, but you're on the same side, and then you go put those skills to work elsewhere. And wrestling was one of those things where again, I don't think I liked it at all. Really. I mean, like, I don't think I enjoyed going to practice every day. But it was it was something I felt like this is good for me. And somehow I think I think that innately, I felt that there were some good aspects here. And it was making me better in some form or fashion. And I had a great coach. Who was awesome. It was just like, the nicest guy in the world. But the end, the prep of the breakfasts were hard. I mean, like anyone has wrestled like that is that is hard stuff. You know, a six minute wrestling match is about as I was laugh, because when I'm a CrossFitter, primarily now from a physical fitness standpoint. And like when I learned about CrossFit, when a lot of people learned about it, it's like, well, how do you get a workout in six minutes, and yet I had done sports wrestling match is six minutes long. And you know, how much of a workout that is? Six minutes going as hard as you can rustling some and then crew as well. Were you doing like a 2k bird, or 2k Row 2000 meter row, same thing. It's like, with a team, it's, you know, seven minutes or something like that. And it's exhausting. So the fact that I couldn't like put two and two together with those things, still funny to me that I couldn't do that. But yeah, so



James Geering 47:48

ya know, it's interesting. When you look at Fran, I don't do Fran in three minutes. Mine's a lot longer than that. But you know, you have that and even I did the the Muay Thai. So you kick and punch a bag, full belt for three minutes, you will be dead, you'll be you'll be just Yes. And

then you watch these combat athletes, and you're like, now I get it. That is an incredible level of fitness. Because I can't imagine doing this for, you know, three rounds, or five rounds or 12 rounds even.

 48:14

Yeah, I mean, you can do something for a minute and be exhausted. Think about Olympic sprinters like a 400 meter run. Right? That's exhausting. And it's not very long, especially if you're good at it. It's less than a minute. Certainly. So. Yeah.

 James Geering 48:30

And when you talk about the wrestling as well, it's funny, I just was talking to my friends at jujitsu the other day, and we were out the back after the class. And I had this moment earlier in the class, where I was trying to finish someone they were like, literally like No, no need to squeeze harder here and here. And I was like, you know, this is the only sport I think we're someone we like, Hey, let me stop you for a second. You're not hurting me enough. Let me show you how to hurt me more.

 48:53

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, I think that and that aspect of any martial art, if done properly is is great. Right. Like, I mean, the the idea is like making everybody better and more confident, more skilled. And it's not about it shouldn't be anyway about really hurting somebody. And as long as it's done that well, I think it's fantastic. You know?

 James Geering 49:15

Yeah, absolutely. Well, tell me about your exchange program with the UK.

 49:19

Oh, yeah. Well, it wasn't an exchange program. It was graduate school. So I got it. I mean, like, there's when I was at the academy, it was I think this is right, if it was a top 25 graduates in terms of Order of Merit could if you got into graduate school, and you got a scholarship, you could go you could essentially defer your service assignment whatever you're gonna go do and you could go to immediate graduate school. So that's what I did. I got into Cambridge I applied got in and yeah, I went over to England and, and that was I think that was a little bit of like chasing my dad, quite frankly, like he had been to Cambridge and I wanted to do that. I think effect it was more about Cambridge than probably granduca I do at school. And I don't know if there was any reason other than that. It was like, yeah, he went, I wanted to go to. Plus, I did like Europe. I'd been back to Europe a couple, numerous times as a kid. And it always just loved it. Just fun Europe, so fascinating and interesting and cultural. Yeah. So I went over there for a year, I studied international relations. I did modern pentathlon, which was a blast again, the team that I was a part of was so fun, and, and just enjoyed the hell out of it. It was fantastic. It

was funny, too, I didn't even really travel all that much, I probably could have, I could have traveled on weekends, and I was having such a good time with the people there and college and graduate school that I just kept staying local. I'm just, I was also 22, or whatever. So I was partying a lot and, you know, drinking and doing all the things that young single people do.

 James Geering 50:58

What were some of the differences that struck you back then, obviously, culturally, where we have a lot of similarities, but there are a lot of differences too.

 51:07

Yeah, um, I had this kind of anthropological theory that the worse the weather is, the more interesting the people are. Right? I agree. Right? If you go to a place like England, like, everyone's really interesting, because the weather sucks, and that's because people are less prone to do something outside. What they're gonna do is they're going to go to a pub, and they're gonna have a, you know, pint, and they're gonna talk about stuff. Whereas in Hawaii, it's like, hey, Surf's up, man. Like everything's good. Not denigrating anybody that's from Hawaii or anything like that. But like, by and large, I think that's kind of true the way that we've evolved culturally. So yeah, so I think that's it. I found the people in England to be very cerebral and willing to engage in conversation, very articulate to like, some of my, you know, friends that were English were extremely articulate. And they also it's interesting, that team, certainly the modern pentathlon team I was on had a fantastic, carefree attitude about things. So very much a work hard play hard group of people, and that might just have been our age at the time. But they got after it, but they also already got after. Yeah, and it was just like, okay, um, I think there was a little bit less. I mean, it's hard because some of this is a it's a result of the time we were in, I don't know if now this would be true, because we didn't have cell phones we didn't have the internet existed, but people weren't like spending all their time on the internet. What we did was we got together with people, and we did our practices, and then we would go to the pub, and we would chat and and it was just, I mean, part of me wishes I wish we could somehow get back to that, like, just get rid of all this crap, all this technology garbage that we have. It's, it's made our lives a lot better. But man, it's made him so much worse in so many ways, too.

 James Geering 53:13

So you said about the weather. I've noticed the opposite. With physical fitness though. I've lived on the West Coast. I live on the east coast, I've traveled to Australia, all kinds of places where there's a tendency to be outdoors, even Colorado, you can say places like that to you tend to get normally just more naturally active people. I think there's more of a leaning towards there for a better fuel as well. The thing about the UK is because it's so cold and wet and gloomy. There's not I mean, you're not even in a bikini or boardshorts hardly ever unless you go, you know, to Spain for a holiday for two weeks and and burn yourself to death and come back as a lobster. It's peeling. Yeah. So you know, I've had that observation, like you said, it's not that we're more interesting. I think it's more like, like you said, there's, there's, there's an element of resilience in his element, I think the humor as well. So it's a lot more cerebral,

whereas what I love about Huntington Beach and Colorado and some of the other places is there is that, you know, I don't really need to talk too much because I'm gonna be surfing or skating or riding my bike. I love that side, too.

 54:15

Yeah, and I look, I think that's inherent and just the way we are as humans to, to your point, you wake up, the weather's beautiful, it's like, let me get outside and be active and do all these things. And it's, you know, on the opposite side of that, it's, the weather sucks. I'm gonna sit inside and read a book and drink cup of coffee or have a beer or whatever. And that's just natural. Like that makes all the sense in the world. I will say I do like the humor to like I love I love British humor. I always have I loved Monty Python growing up and that type of stuff. I just think it's so witty and clever and fantastic.

 James Geering 54:49

I think there's this a lot I mean, there's there's a lot of whining sometimes but I think there really is a lot of that kind of glass half full mentality to you know, it's just like the shoulder shrug and well you know, it is what it is you So I like that mentality. Yeah, yeah. Now, were you in the team's pre or post 911?

 55:07

But what both? Okay, it

 James Geering 55:09

was in great. Okay. So I don't want to drag you through every element. But as you progress through, you don't have this military family, like you said, you've got this kind of ivy league educational experience. What was it mentally and physically, that allowed you to progress through buds and get your Trident when so many people rang the bell?

 55:33

Well, I mean, that's, that's tough. I think, like we kind of talked about before I really try to avoid diving into my military career in any detail. I will say that. I think that any hard physical training and crucible is, what it's trying to figure out is because people don't look, there's a hiring fallacy, I think, these days where companies look to hire people based on experience, and you hear this a lot, like, they just want some more experience, okay? To me, that's looking for the wrong thing. Because one, you're going to lean just by default towards older people, if you're older, you're going to have more experience. And that doesn't mean that they're even all that good at something. But it's really missing, like what makes someone good at anything. And that is there, in my opinion, is sort of is their character and their capacity. And so any crucible, whether it's some kind of special operations training, or you know, getting into whatever it may be, is realizes that none of these people have experience. So we can't base the decision on

that, well, we need to figure out who they are as people. And so that's what they're trying to figure out is that, what is this person's character? And what's their capacity? Like, what can they handle, right? And a lot of that is mental, a lot of it is mental, most I would say, let me back up, actually, all of it is mental, in my opinion, because everything we think of as physical is really mental. It's just a mental construct. You can't do anything physically without experience, the only way you experience mental, right is mentally. So what gets you to the gym in the morning is because you make a choice to do that. That's a mental that's a measure of mental health. And then the way you experience the workout is mental. It's like you, you without the experience of consciousness, you wouldn't have the workout, you wouldn't know what was going on. So it's really all a mental thing. And so look for me, I just, I think in your bones, you need to know that you're capable of something. And if you believe that, if you believe anything about yourself, you can go do it. And it's a huge component of mental health in general. It's just, I was like, I, the few people can do this, but I want to, like, I know I can do this. And that's an important thing. You know, let me just dovetail on that a little bit. Sadly, I think when we would, if we were in a profession like that, we get out of it. And we sort of lose sight of that we lose sight of the fact that like we can believe things about ourselves that and make them true. So we get wrapped up into these I'm broken, I'm screwed up, I'm I have TBI. And then we believe we're going to be sick the rest of our lives, or we're believe we're going to be incapacitated the rest of our lives. And all we're doing is reinforcing a negative thought pattern that's just going to make ourselves worse. And we we need to step back and really change that and be like, Okay, fine, whatever is going on with you. Do you believe that? It's going to ruin you for the rest of your life? Do you believe that you've been locked into these patterns and these thoughts? Because if you do, you're never gonna get out of, but you got to get back to like believing in your in yourself. I think for some reason, like, that certainly happened to me, I lost the ability to believe and I know I'm going off now into the sort of like, this, this is the stuff I like talking about. You know, I, I realized man, it's like and I didn't even realize it was happening at the time. But I I lost belief in myself. At some point. Like, I started to believe I was failure that I was, you know, I felt guilty about things. I felt ashamed about things I felt. And because of that the story I spun in my head was that it was a belief that I was unworthy that I shouldn't be here that and that's all just those are all just beliefs. And it's it's amazing how I think if my younger self had looked at that be like, What the fuck are you doing? You know, like what? What happened to you? And that's not to make myself feel even worse, it's more to like, snap myself out of it to be like, Dude, get back to believing that you are valuable and that you can work through things and that you have inherent power in yourself to improve and overcome, you know, we, we view if you're one of these people that's in a hard line professional like this, or really anybody, we're pretty good at like X, believing we can overcome external problems. It's like, okay, this is an obstacle course, this is a long swim, or whatever the, whatever the hell it is. That's an external problem. And I'm good at external problem solving, I can overcome that it's gonna be uncomfortable, but got it no problem. When it comes to internal problems, though, when you are stewing on, regrets for survivor's guilt, or whatever it may be, we've we view it differently. It's like, no, no, I'm screwed up. Right? The problem is me, it's not external to me, therefore, I'm the problem. And that's different. And we need to change that mindset to one of now it's just, it's just a problem, like any other problem. And it's an honestly, if it's just a thought, or a pattern of thoughts, stream of thoughts that you're having. That's just a stream of information. It's not you don't have to identify with you don't have to latch on to it. It's just a stream of information. It's just like somebody else yelling at you that you're a piece of shit. You know, except you're doing it to yourself. But you don't have to treat it any differently. You can gaff it off in the exact same way if you train yourself to do that. So anyway, that was a big tangent, I get it. But

J James Geering 1:01:40

no, but as I asked the question, I didn't have to go anything military, specifically. Two things out of that, firstly, you're on ramp in, you know, buds in your selection. The Fire Service is the same. We have that element of shared suffering, and we have that attrition rate. And we have that self belief in Florida. The irony is our fire academy it's called minimum standards. So it's even labeled for us, this is the most shit you should ever be in your entire career. But what happens is that it's kind of like, you know, the uncle Rico thing where you get a lot of guys look back, oh, I was my fitness over beams in the academy. Well, shame on you. But the problem is, I mean, to be fair, firstly, a lot of these departments, these guys get men and women get worked into the ground with the call load and the way that we work them and the sleep deprivation. But I think that whether you look at the fire department, or whether you look at the country, as things become more and more comfortable. And there's less crucibles and less suffering and less shared suffering, you lose that tribalism and that the person that you remember as being really tough gets further and further away chronologically, which is why I think, you know, when I see in police and fire now that the selection bar is getting lower and lower and lower, we're only setting up people for you know, a greater fall when they get to that point. Yeah, the second thing is, what you talked about is something that I've seen that you don't see on any of the Mental Health discussions, posters, messaging, whatever, is, again, through this process, one of the reoccurring common denominators that people say, and after a while I picked up on it, we're like, wait a second, this is something we never hear. I felt like I was a burden to the world. So you think about all this, this conversations that myself and pretty much all of us had when we were younger? Oh, how could you do that? It's so selfish. It's so cowardly, why they take their own life. And now as you touched on, I'm realizing that the brain slowly if unaddressed, starts Miss wiring itself, to the point where there's absolute belief that the world would be better off without them. And you add, again, you know, trauma and TBI, and sleep deprivation and organizational betrayal, and all these other things that compound, some of our men and women find themselves in that perfect storm, where they truly believe that they are a burden. And that is an extremely hard thing when they get to the crisis point for them to unlearn. But then you take someone that believes they're a burden, and someone says, oh, just think of your wife. Think of your kids. I am, you know, and that's what finishes it. So I think that should be one of the big red flags in the mental health conversations is when you start believing you're a burden. That is when you need to really dig down, find whoever it is that you feel comfortable talking to, and then going down the path if not before, of course, but that's the giant Hey, we're getting towards the end red flag, but you never see that really discussed in any of the kind of mainstream messaging when it comes to mental health and our men and women in crisis.

o 1:04:38

Yeah, and it stems from I mean, it makes sense because, like, let's talk about that kind of whole rough idea of a pipeline Okay, so it's this crucible you go through first of all, on the standards thing, like I'm a big believer of like, you shouldn't be lowering standards for anything like standard is so someone can do a job where physical standards A mental standard, whatever it may be, right? Here's the job. Here's the standards, we said, done deal, like meet the standards, you can do that you're, you know, we'll accept you into the job. And then we'll evaluate you in other ways, right? But that should be like a cut and very cut and dry thing, I've never understood why the standards are about the ability to perform the job period. So whoever, if you can pass the standards, you can perform the job great. And then we'll evaluate you for all these other things, whatever it may be. So that's kind of one thing. But the people

that go into those types of professions, we're very proud people, and we take ownership of ourselves in a big way. Right? So it's very much about like, what can I do? Me, me, me. And I don't mean that in a selfish way or anything like that. But it's like, you're very confident in like, the things you think and the things you do you very much latched on to those things. And so and then the, the only tool we're really taught from a mental health perspective is suck it up. It suck it up and suffer in silence. Go harder wake up earlier. And you see this a lot out there. Right? This this kind of like that mantra? Don't I mean, how many times you heard don't quit? Oh, got it. Don't quit. Thanks for having me that I haven't heard that a billion times. Right. That's not that it's a bad message. Like that is important. And obviously, to be able to do these things, you have to have that mentality of don't quit. And it makes sense in terms of job performance, like you can't doesn't matter how physically uncomfortable you are in the moment. Like if lives are on the line, like you have to keep going. Right? That's a really important thing. The problem is all of that, like you take everything, all of those pieces, and then you go into the sort of host, job, veteran space, whatever it is. And now it's like you got these other things you're dealing with, like you're talking about your regret, you're guilty, or you get these kind of like notions of being a burden. And like, these are the only tools you have one. It's saying something like you're weak. And in that moment, right. And the only thing you know how to do is suck it up. So what do you do you like you suck it up. You just like keep it to yourself, you isolate, suffer in silence, terrible idea. And the problem is we don't from the get go, like, when people are like young in these things, we need to start teaching people about sort of mindfulness and this idea of being aware of your own thoughts and not identifying with them. And and so when it comes to the point where you're thinking that thought crosses your mind, like I'm a burden, you're not saying that's me, and that's true. You're just going that's a thought I can I can objectively observe that thought of a burden and ago, yeah, that's just a thought I don't have to pay attention to that. And by the way, nobody else is saying, like, you might think other, you spend a lot of time thinking other people are thinking that then they're not. They're just not they're thinking about themselves, they're doing the exact same thing you're doing nothing like, I think that's one of the biggest lessons I had to learn was, and here's another tough piece about like, roofs that are built on whether it's a soccer team, or a wrestling team or special operations team or a, you know, a group of firefighters, firehouse ops, were very reputation based, right? Like, that's a big deal. Like your reputation matters. But what's your reputation? It is by definition, how other people think about you, or what how other people feel about you. So because of that, we spend a lot of time thinking about what other people are thinking about us. The problem is that people actually don't think a lot about us, we think about ourselves, right? So if you if you sort of extrapolate that out to humanity, what everyone's actually doing, what that actually sets up as a situation where everyone spends their time thinking about what other people are thinking about them. And since everyone's doing that, no one's actually thinking about anybody else. And that's a hard thing to kind of get your mind around. But once you realize that, it's like, yeah, you know what, I'm not thinking about a whole bunch of other people, I'm thinking about myself, which means they're thinking about themselves, too. Right? And that, I think that thought can be very freeing, and that understanding that reality of like, you know, what, people aren't really judging me for stuff. I'm the one judging myself and all of this is internal right now. It's just in here. And if I can start to objectively look at that I can actually change that talk track. And that's hard. None of that is easy, but it's definitely doable. And I guess my point is that we need to start doing these things way earlier in life with people even as kids, I think. Because we're seeing we're seeing the downstream effects of not doing I mean like, this is why All of our trends are terrible when it comes to anxiety, depression and suicide. Yeah, we don't teach anybody I didn't learn any of this shit till I was like 45

J James Geering 1:10:08

Join the cloud. Yeah, right.

i 1:10:11

That's true with most of us, like, fight us, any of my buddies, like, how many of you guys meditated when you were 16? Nobody would raise your hand. Nobody, they wouldn't even know what employment was. We didn't know what that was, you know, and that probably the same thing like 20s and 30s. I would say it's true. You know, Now luckily, I think this is becoming more in the public sphere in terms of information out there. And I'm hoping we're sort of heading finally for a, you know, mindful pneus revolution of some sort the way we've had sort of industrial revolution and technological revolution. I think we're due for it for sure.

J James Geering 1:10:46

Yeah. I think there's a holistic revolutionary do the kind of ancient ancient wisdom that we've, you know, arrogantly disregarded for the last couple of generations, because there's no evidence for Yeah, and there's no profit to be made from mindfulness.

i 1:10:59

Right, right. There's no evidence sorry, guys, no evidence, the 1000s of years that you've practiced this, there's no evidence of that.

J James Geering 1:11:05

That's what gets me is like, Oh, finally, science is able to prove that meditation is good for you, like already. So you said 1000s of years of people doing it wasn't kind of like a heads up, because you seem to be aligned to books that were a couple of 1000 years old with no problem whatsoever, but you're questioning mindfulness. So yeah, with the with the what people were thinking, I absolutely adored Wayne Dyer. And if you ever came across him, he's kind of I was describing almost like a white Deepak Chopra, he, he took all the wisdom. It could be ancient, you know, Greek and Roman mythology, or, you know, Holy Scripture, or whatever it is. And he just extrapolated the actual takeaways that were common denominators from so many. But one of the things I remember him saying, I love this quote, what other people think of me is none of my business, when you put it that way, and realize that you're the only person that can control your trajectory, you know, more than anyone if you're doing things that are right, or doing things that are wrong. So worrying about, you know, for example, my last Fire Department, I know, you know, I referred a lot of feathers, because I was trying to improve areas that absolutely needed improving. And some people didn't want that done. They didn't want the boat rocks at all. But it's irrelevant, because I knew at that point, I'm not saying I was a, you know, great person. But the mission was, I don't want people to die in the area that I protected at a time. I don't want my firefighters to die from obesity or take their own lives. So these were some of the things I was forging. But I know I didn't make a lot of friends back then either. But it doesn't matter. Because if you are on your own path, and like you said, You're

worrying about oh, God, what will so and so think. Ultimately, you have to look within which I think is where meditation is great. And but am I doing things for the right reason, I'm doing things for the wrong reason, because you're your harshest critic at the end of the day.



1:12:50

Yep. And I would say I would go even one further, which is they're not thinking about you. There's a quote from Winston Churchill, and I'm paraphrasing here, but it's something like, you know, my 20s, I worried what other people thought about me in my 40s, I stopped caring what they thought about me, my 60s, I realized they weren't even thinking about me. And that's, that's where you ultimately got to get to, I mean, like, of course, like we get an argument with somebody or someone rubs us the wrong way. We'll think about it for a little bit. But it goes away pretty quickly. We don't sue on that. You're not five days later thinking about the argument you had with somebody or judging them or the person who cut you off in traffic or the coworker you had an argument that just you just don't do that you move on. We're the internally, we're the ones who don't move on. We're the ones who then a month later, still stewing on whatever the hell it is. And that circumstance is gone. It doesn't exist anywhere, but in your own head at that point. And the only reason it exists there is because you're perpetuating it. Like you're deliberately making a choice to keep it there. And that's such a waste of everything, a waste of energy, it's detrimental. It's, you know, and so it's getting out of that, that habit, that pattern, you know, the quicker you can just sort of let things go about anything, man. Like that's such a skill to develop.



James Geering 1:14:08

Alright, well then I want to hit CrossFit quickly. And then go to your kind of journey as far as your own Holistic Health, bamboos. Ron was the gentleman that connected us. So I want to say thank you to Ben, talk to me about how you first found CrossFit and how you ultimately ended up having a gym on in the Caribbean.



1:14:26

I found CrossFit because we were I was my last tour was overseas and the wife of one of the guys that was stationed there with me was is kind of like OG crossfitter type person. And she was like coaching people and working out with a lot of the spouses and my wife had just had our second baby and like we had kind of our first two kids were almost like back to back within 17 months of one another. So she was trying to get I can share. And so she started doing this. And she loved it and just thought it was really effective and really cool. And like we were sort of doing stuff that was, or I was doing stuff was kind of similar but what it wasn't strictly CrossFit, it was kind of getting more into functional functional fitness. Right. But um, yeah, so she went and did a level one in Holland while we were there. And it came for a weekend and came back was just like, Oh, my God, it's so great. And like, literally, you get to look at all this stuff and read this. And at the time, it was very resistant to it. It was very much like a, like I said before a how do you get a workout in six minutes? Like, that's, you know, I don't understand that. It doesn't make sense to me. So anyway, so I got out of the military, she signed me up, like the when I was processing out, she signed me up for level one. And she was like, You're gonna go? So I did. And I went to this level one. And it was like, Okay, I mean, it was, it was clearly

evidence based, right? Like, there was science behind it. It made sense. Like, everything they were saying was like, Okay, I understand how this works. And then we did like workouts on the weekend. And I was like, I mean, I think I actually really liked the competitive aspect of it. That was kind of part of what I always liked competing. Like, anytime we went for a group run or anything, like always wanted to win, like, just really like competing. And it has a competitive aspect to it. It's there's a leaderboard. It's like a tree racing, everybody. And I really doubt that. So from that point on, it was kind of hooked was like, Okay, we're this. Yeah, this is great. And then look, you see the effects of it, too. It's like totally works, right? Like, I mean, I've seen that with numerous people over and over and over again. Yeah, so I've just got completely hooked on it. And then we moved to St. Thomas. quickly thereafter, I was had a job down there for a bit. And we started the CrossFit St. Thomas, we started Reebok, CrossFit St. Thomas, down there. And in the Virgin Islands, we were the first CrossFit gym in the Virgin Islands. And it was because my wife was kind of training people on, like training wheels, like kind of working with people on the side. And then some people were kind of working out with me. And eventually, we had all these people that were working out with us. And it was like, we should just affiliate and just have a gym. So we did and it was literally in our house down there. And and what was cool about it was that nobody down there had done, they didn't even know what CrossFit was, when we came down. This was a brand new thing down there. And then we found a space and we, you know, built it out, it was a maintenance bay that we painted, everything rolled out, like all the equipment and, and it was we did that for three years, kind of as a little side project. And it was amazing. Like it was such a dark community down there. It was like the tightest community I've had outside of the military anywhere by far, like just super close. change the culture down there. From a fitness standpoint, now there's crosses at least one down there. And those people, they're still great friends of ours, we actually just went back there last summer for the first time in like eight years. It was like it. They're just great people. It was such an amazing experience. And I think that for me, that's what CrossFit does, or has done for me is it's a combination of super effective fitness regimen. Yeah, I love the I love the competitive aspect of it, it like makes me better. And the community aspect of it, I think is such a huge piece to it is it's not people lifting weights walking around with their headphones and not talking to one another. It's the like working out together and you encourage each other, just like BJJ, right. Like you're it's like trying to make each other better. And so it's a there's a social aspect to it that I think is is enormous. And it's a huge benefit, especially now.

 James Geering 1:18:59

The wife of the the one of your teammates, that wasn't Sara Wilkinson, was it?

 1:19:06

No, it's not. However, Sarah was my, one of my level one. coaches, trainers.

 James Geering 1:19:14

Yeah, okay, beautiful. Yeah, yeah. So one of the things that again, that seems to be a reoccurring truth is a lot of us that were uniform. Have if we're not careful, you know, we have that tribe, we have that purpose. You know, we have that kind of almost the ego side of it. And I don't mean that in a negative way attached to our profession. And then when we transition out,

some of us it's very, very jarring and it takes some of us it takes some time to to adapt some people that it crushes them. You transitioned out and you found this community in this tribe. How was your transition specifically from you know, full time active duty seals to the next phase?



1:19:55

Well, it was tough. I'm not gonna lie. I mean, so my thing was When I when I got out, this is when I developed this anxiety problem. Right around the time I was kind of getting off active duty and for me it was a situation where I had a lot of, I guess it was survivor's guilt, like, I've just felt like, well, a couple of things. So one was, like I said, I had this kind of, I call it like a Bill Buckner moment and people don't know Bill Buckner Bill Buckner was the first baseman for the Red Sox and 80s. And in the game six of the World Series against the Mets. They were about to win win the World Series for the first time in whatever whatever it was, like, wasn't 100 years. But this is the Curse of the Bambino. Right? They hadn't won the World Series since the trade away, Babe Ruth. And there's a infield pit down first baseline, all he has to do is pick it up and scoop it up and step on first base game over World Series over and it went through his legs, and they lost the game. And then they lost game seven, and the Mets won. And it was like it, man, and everyone, obviously, in Boston came out hard. I'm sure Bill Buckner had a terrible time after that, right. But it was just one of these things where it was, it could have been the best moment of his life, it was the worst, right. And I had something kind of similar, like, wasn't a World Series, but like the idea of just sort of tactically, not performing the way I should have, and I won't get into any details beyond that doesn't really matter. But, but that weighed on me in a huge way. And me just, I just kept thinking, like, you're a failure, you're an embarrassment, guys to like you, you know, you let everybody down. And, and then it turned into you, you shouldn't be like these other guys die to like, some guys didn't make it. And you did. And like, you don't deserve that. And so you should die. Like, I mean, this is where my head went. And so then it turned into like finding things that tried to find some killing me. And like thinking little sensations in my body were the start of some terminal condition or something. And, and then it, then I didn't realize it at the time. But if you do that, like you will start to feel worse physically, because you just what you're doing is you're ramping up your limbic system, your big you basically telling you about you're in danger all the time, and like therefore, it makes these sort of sensations worse, and then you think that you're actually dying, and then that makes the weak so it just snowballs on itself and it I mean, it can really screw you up in a big way. So that's where I was at. That was like the my exit from the military. It was like right in the middle of that. And I didn't have anything anywhere to go I like didn't. Nowadays there are more, there's better support structure. There's a lot more programs and stuff like that the time it was just kind of like biopsy later. And that's okay. That's the way it was for everybody. I didn't think I deserved anything better than that. But so yeah, that's, that's where I was. That was the sort of transition. That was my transition, basically. Right. And so like going down to St. Thomas, like that group that definitely, like, helped in some ways, certainly have a community and everything, but it still didn't really help me deal with what I was dealing with, you know, because I didn't even realize it was fully, basically psychosomatic at the time either. I thought that there was stuff physically wrong with me. And it turns out that there probably were some things that didn't get really highlighted until I kind of had this chronic illness crashed later. But but so much of it, so much of it was instigated by basically, me being mentally unfit, you know, doing it to myself.



 James Geering 1:23:47

Did you ever get to the point of actual suicide ideation?

 1:23:50

Oh, yeah, for sure. Yeah. Yeah. I mean, for me, it was the, I mean, plenty of ideation. Certainly, like, I'm not afraid to say that, like, I think we we feel like we can't talk about these things. Like it's embarrassing or something. And it's like, look, I think there's way more suicidal ideation out there than people let on. Like, it's a perfectly normal thing to think like that. Like, you can think that, you know, and you don't have to be ashamed or think you're weird or unusual, because you think that I think that thought probably crosses everybody's mind at some point in their life, even if it's just a fleeting thought, because of whatever right? That they don't take seriously. The problem is when you latch on to that thought, right, like when that becomes something where you you start to think maybe that is actually a really good course of action. That's when it's becomes an issue. But yeah, I mean, plenty of times that crossed my mind, but like, for me, the the real sort of nature of everything was I got three years into my chronic illness like I was just so bad, like just feeling horrific every day. And I just had this point where I was like, I don't know what to do like can't figure out the solution. And, and I posted this, this is what started everything that I have done it now with rare sense. And with kind of mind fitness was I posted this picture myself, I took a selfie. So I was, I was on the floor of my kitchen, like on our hardwood floor just curled in a ball. Like with my wife holding me just crying my eyes out, I'm just like, I gotta kill myself. This is just I can't go on. And I didn't, um, but I took this picture myself on my phone, just a selfie, like a not a flattering selfie like, of what I looked like in that moment. And in the thought was, like, kind of, there was a couple of things that occurred to me that day one was like the actual like, I really was emotional and like doing that made me feel a little bit better. And it was like, hmm, there's something there where like, I need to be, I need to tap into my emotions more like I think I've suppressed way too much of the ship for way too long. And then the other was, I wasn't even when I was at my worst, I wasn't like that all the time. I just was it was like there were brief moments where I was fine. So I kind of had this epiphany like, okay, whatever is going on with you isn't, isn't permanent. It's not a you're not broken. It's not like a broken limb, where you're if you break your arm, it's broken until it heals. You can't be you know, you don't have a day where you're like, oh, no, it's fine. It feels good. Today feels fine. Today, I'll just go lift weights with it. It's like no, no, it's in a cast. And it's broken until it heals. That wasn't what was going on me. It was like, even at my worst, it would be like, Oh yeah, I've got I've got some moments where I'm fine, or a couple hours where I'm actually like in a good mood. So it's like, okay, well, this is a software problem here, right. So that's I anyway, I posted that picture on Instagram, finally, because I thought, because I've made some improvements. It was about a year later. And I've made some improvements. And I thought all right, there's a I think there's a lot of people that feel this way. And, and I don't like to talk about my kind of military stuff, but like this needs to be talked about. And if I start doing it, maybe somebody, maybe somebody who is on the verge of suicide won't do it. Because they'll realize, hey, this guy is a lot like me. And I'm not alone in my struggles. And like maybe we can figure this stuff out together. So that's what I did. And like that kind of launched this project that I've been doing now for the past year and a half, two years at this point.

 James Geering 1:27:32

So walk me through that journey, though you're lying on the kitchen floor, you've got this, you

know, the all these kind of emotions, and this, this shame and guilt attached to the incident specifically, when you were serving, you've got this physiological breakdown post, you know, pressure cleaning, what was your personal journey? What were the tools that you started collecting? That made you realize that you're not, you know, irreversibly broken, but that you are actually start able to put those pieces of the Jenga tower back together again?



1:28:02

Yeah, I mean, it's a lot of stuff. And this is part of the thing is that each, I think we look for solutions that are someone can say, here's the solution, here it is, here's step a step b 1234567, just do these, do my 12 step process, and you'll be fine. Or you will achieve whatever result you're looking for. And one of the things I talked about is that it is not that way for anybody in terms of their mental and physical health, it is bespoke to you, you have to there's sort of generalities, but like you got to figure out exactly what you need. And that's part of the journey. So like, for me, it was one I had, I had a lot of emotional repression that I had to sort through and I did that a myriad of ways I did it through well, okay, so like the EMDR, right, so I had a lot of storytelling, I've just like, thought patterns that were unhelpful, and that were not serving me. And so EMDR was really helpful for me. And in making me realize I didn't have to tell the same story about these memories, I could change the the memory is not going to change, but I can change the story. And that you can do that. And you don't have to be locked into just telling yourself the same damn thing over and over again. So that was like, one piece of it. The emotional thing was a huge piece of it. Like we I think I had spent 20 years just like stopping every like I'm just gonna stuff this emotion down, right, somebody died. No, I'm not crying about that. I'm dealing with that. Not processing any of that grief. I'm just going to tamp it down. And so I had to go through various therapy to do that. I mean, I did I did psychedelics which really helped there. I did psilocybin which was extremely helpful from an emotional state processing standpoint, and then made me realize how much I need to lean into emotion. So it like sort of opened the door. I think a little bit for me, too. Be comfortable crying. And to the point now where all if I start crying one day at home video, and I'll put it on Instagram, just to be like, this is okay, like you can do this. And it might come at a random time and what you need to realize, because what I would notice is I've watched some like kids movie with my cartoons, my kids, and I'd start getting all choked up. And I'd be like, What the hell is why is this, you know, I shouldn't be. So do what I always did, like, Don't and, and what my body was telling me was like, Dude, we are looking for a window to get this shit out of you. And you keep resisting it. And so it wasn't until I did the, the psilocybin that that opened my eyes to you know, and I did legally, this was like, out of the country and everything, it was actually a very organized thing, I wouldn't, by the way, I wouldn't recommend anybody not recommending anybody do that. And I would also say like, there's a lot of bad ways to go about that, like, I have a whole podcast episode where I talk about that experience that people can listen to about, like, you know, just being in the right setting, and like doing it with the right people and all of that kind of stuff, like very safely but, um, but what it taught me was, there was so much of that, that I needed to get through, and that you this might come up and you're not going to exactly know why but you gotta lean into it. So like, one day I was sitting here, this was after the fact it's probably a couple of months ago, sitting here and like it was this song came on by, you know, I'm listening to music while I'm working. And the song comes on. And for some reason, it was like, like, the emotional trigger was there. It was like, I could feel myself. And it was like, Fine, I'm just gonna, like, let myself cry right now. And I videoed that and put it on Instagram, it's just like, you know, explaining that to people, like, that's your body trying to tell yourself, like, and like you shouldn't resist that, you know, it's like being hungry. When you're hungry, your body's telling you we need some food. Right? This is like you need this energy

release. So it was that it was a lot of diagnostics on toxicity as well, like, you know, I do, I did have a lot of and still I still work through this as well like Lyme disease and parasites and heavy metal toxicity. And like, that's a component as well. And I won't deny that that's, that's a piece of it. So I've done a lot of alternative treatments, stuff that people would be like you did what, like you've injected what into yourself, you know, so I've gone deep down the rabbit hole of that type of thing, certainly got into mindfulness and meditation, being able to separate myself their energy work where whether it's hot yoga, or Chi Gong, it's just, it's a lot of it. So it was kind of a combination of one relieving the sort of physical load that I had, so to speak through this toxic load of varying components. You know, like the mole thing was a thing, that's a thing. So like, that was a piece of it, releasing the emotional load. So like D burdening all of this like emotion from an energetic perspective, learning how to D down regulate my central nervous system, and, and all myself down because so much of it too, was just without knowing it, being in a state of hyper vigilance of just like your you, your brain and your body is like your is basically telling yourself, you are in danger at all times. And that's really, really detrimental. So working on that through things like yoga and Qigong, and meditation and breath work, and all of that. And then kind of just trying to come up with a routine, then the whole, that's the whole idea is like, how do we then how do we move forward with a mental fitness routine, so that we're treating this like the fitness of our bodies, it's like, you know, you, you can show up to the gym every day, because you're trying to make your body fitter. And those things you have to commit to that, like forever, if you're going to do it, it's not a one and done scenario. So it's the same thing with your mind. Like you can make your mind fitter over time. It's a slow process. And you have to come up with a routine that works for you. It's the exact same concept. It's not this yes, no thing like, Are you mentally ill or not? No, like, I mean, like, is real mental illness thing for sure. Like there are people that absolutely need like, you know, serious medical interventions, but for the most part, most of us just deal with shit. And some of us are good at it, and some of us are bad at it. And it depends on the day and when we can get kind of lost in these rabbit holes and go down. And so it's, it's recognizing that and figuring out how you counteract it so that you have good mental habits, regimen that works for you.

J

James Geering 1:34:53

Well, I think it's so powerful hearing someone from your profession talking about this and the reality is huge. As a human being and as a human being the teacher and the you know, the caretaker, we're all just people. But we our generation was raised with this facade, I just what I would refer to as toxic masculinity, either it was two dimensional, suck it up, rub some dirt in there, John Wayne bullshit that we were raised on. And the reality is, and I always point to this particular example, the real man in the band of brothers series, 60 years later, still in tears for what they saw what they did, that's what these are some of the most, you know, heroic warriors that our modern society has ever seen. So I think that, again, the way you think, you know, no one's actually thinking about the people, our professions, plural, are so good at that poker face, because I can't walk up on a car crash or a house fire and go, Oh, my God, you know, that's not going to instill confidence. Yeah, so I have to have my game face on I have to be in that flow state, I have to do the hard part of the Yin Yang, and go in effect a rescue. But after in whether it's kindness and compassion, the soft side with that particular person in the back of an ambulance now, whether it's compassion towards myself, that's the part is lost. And I think that we have this facade, and we become a circle, rather than a union, we come all hard. And that's where that inability of downregulate comes from. So when someone from police fire, you know, special operations, military, whatever it is, talks about this talks about their, you know, near suicide, or, you know, the inability to cry and all these things. It's so important, because there's so many people out there that think that they're weak, and they're alone,

because you look around you look at me, James is fine. inside my head, you're like, Oh, my God, he's not fine. Not even close. So I think it's so important to hear that. The other thing is, as you touched on is everyone has their own journey, I had a couple of guests on once swore up and down that their mental health technique would solve everyone's problems. And I was like, I'll listen to it, we'll add it to the toolbox. But mentally I'm that I disagree with you that this is going to fix everyone. I'm sorry, because some people equine therapy works beautifully. For a lot of people psychedelics do. And I, that's my big thing with the whole prohibition of drugs. We have people that fought for this country that have to go overseas to get a very effective part of their treatment. I think it's absolute bullshit. I think the war on drugs is an epic failure personally, but But yeah, so understanding that this is your toolbox is extremely broad. And now being able to go okay, I have all these tools in front of me. Why am I going to start unpacking? Because, as you said, it's a combination of some physiological damage, especially in my profession where we're sleep deprived for decades, every third day, and then the psychological and slowly starting to unpack and go down your own very personal, holistic rabbit hole.



1:37:45

Right? Yeah, exactly. I mean, like anybody who says, I've got it all figured out. And here's the solution. I think it's full of shit, right? They're just trying to sell something. And that's, look, it's okay. Like, we should feel. It's okay to sell stuff. Like we have an economy and we have to make money and like, this is how this is livelihood for people. But, but then like black and white, like, just, you know, this is the way not this way. Yeah, no, I'm not, I'm not about that at all I'm about about sort of opening people's eyes to the paradigm here with this paradigm shift of going from, we get that physical health is on a spectrum, we get that it's, you know, all the way from an elite athlete to somebody who's morbidly obese, and that nobody did, it's not just two categories, people are spread out amongst this, and that, and we know that we basically the way you go one way or the other is on us, it's and we kind of know the factors there. So it's basically diet, exercise, and recovery, right? It's what we eat. It's how we move our bodies. It's how we sleep. There's some other things too, like sunlight exposure, and that you could throw in the mix. But that we all pretty much agree on that. And there's no mystery there. We can't we we argue again about the specifics. But I go back to like, sorted out for yourself, whatever gets you there. That's what gets you there. That's what works for you. And it doesn't have to be the same as it is for anybody else. But then we look at this sort of mental health side and we go again, are you do problems or not? No? Good. Great, good, good. Well, Yep, see you later. Right? Instead of saying no, no, it's exactly the same deal. It's on a spectrum here. And you are the one who have the power to move yourself one way or the other. The problem is, we don't know what those components are. We can't point to the diet, exercise recovery component of mental fitness, mental health, right. And so what I'm doing is sort of offering like, well, but so what I'm doing then is also taking that and saying yeah, not only that, but these things are combined to it's not like your mental health and your physical health operate independently of one another and they're just like siloed, right? This is a mind body solution. All this stuff is wrapped up with each other. So what I'm saying is kind of taking all these disparate elements and saying, look, here's, here's a better paradigm here of how you achieve sort of like mind body fitness that incorporates all of these things. And it's really driven from your mind, because I go back to Everything is mental, your entire existence is a mental construct. It's nothing other than that. And so therefore, it's really a mentally mental first mind first solution paradigm. And you kind of get once you do that, you get sort of physical fitness as a byproduct of that, right? And so it's like the basic components of it, but how each one of those like in what combination and what you do, yeah, that's something you got to sort out on your own right? Like, it's, it's

worth your time to explore all these things. Just like it's sort of worth your time to be like, you know, what, let me try a plant based diet, see how that works. For me, we try a meat based diet, or whatever it is, right? Let me cut dairy out and see what that does. For me, all those things are really worthwhile. Like, if you have the discipline to do that, you're probably going to stand a much better chance of figuring out what your actual dietary needs are, rather than just going with some formula that somebody gave you. It's the exact same thing. It's like, I'm gonna try some meditation, shallow breath work, and try these different breathing exercises, and try some yoga. Let me go to let me go to therapy and see what I got to work through. Right, let me really dig into my like, there's all these exercises that we can do, and to figure out like, what works for us, you know, and then realizing that it's, it's all incorporated to the physical side of things I completely agree with you like that's sort of like Yin with no Yang, I always think of like samurai warriors, or at least what I think of the samurai warriors. Those dudes were like badass warriors, but they meditated, too. And we've somehow lost that component of the warrior mindset. Right now. It's, it's just about the sort of kick Asri without the reflection and the sort of meditation and wisdom, right, like, it just feels like that way to me.

J

James Geering 1:42:00

Absolutely. I had a guest on Meg Tucker, and she was referring to the Viking culture has become very popular at the moment. And she said, if you actually explore the Viking warriors, it was like the samurai they had the yes of course, there was the combat element. But they I forget exactly what she said whether it was sewing or something, but there was there was an art element and you look at samurai there was calligraphy there was all these soft and hard. So yeah, we've attached not only our own biases to modern, quote unquote, warriors, but also we've almost negated as we talked about earlier. Ancient Wisdom like our I don't need the whole tea ceremony, calligraphy bullshit, just bring me the samurai on the sword. And we'll just talk about that.



1:42:39

Right, right. Because I mean, like, because that stuff, it's like, more fun to watch. Right? And like, it's, it's in your face, and it's cool. And so it's harder to, like, watch. It's harder to make something visually stimulating. That's like meditation. Like, it's just some person sitting there with their eyes closed. Right. And so yeah, it's really easy to forego that aspect of it, but it is. And look, the proof is out there. Like, yeah, again, like look at the trends, look at what we're dealing with, as a society, right, from a mental health perspective. Like, is it going to be any more apparent that like, we need that aspect of things we need that balance? I just think it's it's right in our faces.

J

James Geering 1:43:23

Yeah. Well, even physically, I mean, I would argue that obesity is absolutely attached to mental health as well so you can physically see the crisis in the actual size of our American sadly



1:43:34

right because you can say Yeah absolutely doesn't have to do with like not not exercising or

right because you can say yeah, absolutely doesn't have to do with like not not exercising or eating. Yeah, but where does that come from? Right. Why do people act that way? Again, it goes back to a decision that's a choice and that choice is a mental health thing right like when I'm given the choice between eating something healthy and eating something unhealthy you know, ultimately, yeah, what I put in my body is gonna have that impact but the way I reason I make the choice I do is a mental health thing. So yeah, absolutely. Those things are completely intertwined and you can't separate

 James Geering 1:44:09

well, you talked about mental it's gonna be mind fitness talk to me about the decision to create real asked me rare cents and then kind of educate people on the podcast and the resources available to them.

 1:44:21

Yeah, so I I was so like I said, I kind of posted some things on Instagram very well received, people were like, This is great. Like, keep talking about this. very hesitant though. It was like yeah, you know, I don't want to be this public figure. I'm uncomfortable with that to some extent. But I was on a flight and I watched the movie Logan, which is the kind of the last Wolverine movie Wolverine movie right about sort of old man, Logan. And I'd seen the movie before but I was like, Oh, that's a good movie. I'll watch it again. Somebody else was watching it cross from the and it's struck me in a different way that it hadn't the first time I watched it, I realized I was watching basically an autobiography. It was like this broken down superhero dude is me. He's like, his body's kind of fallen party's mind is screwed up, he's drinking too much. It's like, this is like, this is like, my plate and the plate of so many other people, right, that sort of veteran struggle in a lot of ways. It's sort of the broken superhero struggle. And I was just very struck by that juxtaposition. And I didn't know what to do about it. But I felt like I had to say something about it. So I just wrote this, like, on a Word document wrote an article about that. You know, realizing that seeing that, and the way it made me feel, and I was like, What do I do with this? So I heard about substack, which is kind of like a, it's a blog, but it serves as a newsletter as well. So people write on there. There's a lot of independent journalists and people that do very, very successful on it. Like, I guess I'll put it on substack. So we've created a substack account, I just put this article on, and put it on social media, like, Hey, I wrote this article. And again, I had a lot of people that were like, that was great, like, yes, right on the money. So I'm like, Okay, well, I guess I'll maybe write something else, some other stuff. And I just, I decided that I had to codify everything. It was like I had all these lessons learned as a sufferer, not as a doctor, not as like somebody in the white lab coat doing the peer reviewed studies, which is fine. But my own experience, I had actually found more sort of inspiration and solace. And everything from suffers from people that had said, Hey, I did this, and I'm better. Now. That meant more to me than somebody who said, Hey, I'm the doctor. And here's what you should do. You know, and I've treated people it's like, okay, yeah, I don't know that I trust you. Sorry. But that's just the way I feel. So I felt like I actually have a lot to say, in this regard. I've done so much. And I think I can help people. And I think I can codify this in a way where it's new and fresh and make sense. So I did that. I was like a wrap this up, I came up with a rare sense. Name, which is it's like the opposite of common sense, right? It's like, and I started writing articles. So I just started writing, like a monthly article, it was just about sort of, I wrote a manifesto, which was like, here's what this is about. And then I wrote a write articles sort of about mental health, mainly, but sort of chronic illness as well, about like a topic and things

that I've learned. And I've done a little bit on the go rock blog as well, actually, they let me they had me do some things called Mind Matters, which people liked as well. And then it just kind of grew out of that. So it started as that. And then I was like, Well, let me try a podcast as well. So I can talk to people and I can talk to either experts in sort of mental health. But a lot of people that are veterans that are now like doing mental health things, a lot of guys that are they are a veteran, and then they went into the sort of mental health realm to help other people I think they're super interesting to talk to. So I started doing that. And then I would do a book recommendation every month. So it kind of like, here's an article about this topic. Here's a book that I've read, that's how you can kind of really deep dive on this topic. And then I started just recently doing where I've kind of really eventually figured out I wanted to get to which was month or sorry, weekly Pro Training. Like, the way CrossFit has a wide everyday workout of the day where it's like, here's the WOD here's the workout. It's like that, for your mind, like a mind workout, which I don't I haven't seen anybody do, but it's like, and I do it on a weekly basis, because part of this is building good habits, right? It's like, well, I want people to try stuff, and then be like, did that work for me? Or, or not? Right? Like, did I like that or not, and then sort of adopt it as needed into their own regimen. So it's so I'm now doing it on a weekly basis. So it's like, here's the, here's what you're going to do every day for the next week. In from a mind training perspective, here's your mind workout. And, and then see what that does for you. And then next week, it's something different, and I'm just going to keep going with that. And it'll be different. And this is everything from meditation, breathwork journaling, problem solving, you know, like, even skill development, and then permutations and mixing of those things as well. I mean, that's just what CrossFit does, right? They just take different exercises and put them in different combinations. So it's, it's the same idea. No,

 James Geering 1:49:46

well, I love that too. Because like you said, you know, I, I meditate for example, so I follow certain routines for that I use headspace. I love that app. I do CrossFit. I do Jiu Jitsu, but as far as a mental workout I know too. Read I know how to write you know, I know that learning another language things like that are great for the mind too. But to actually have a structure be like, Hey, pick, you know something from category A something from category and do this on Monday this on Tuesday? I think that's a great resource. I haven't seen that before, either.

 1:50:15

Yeah, I don't think it's out there. I mean, because I think it's really tricky. And I don't think it's a, it's taken me a while to figure out how to do it. But it's something you know, a lot of people the reason why people do CrossFit or whatever is because they don't want to have to figure out what they're doing every day, from a workout perspective. They just want someone tell them do this, right. And like, over time, though, really all you're doing like, you know how to do the movements, like I go to the gym now, because I like the camaraderie and and it's fun that way. But I really don't need anybody to coach me, per se. It's great that like, there's a workout on the board. Cool. I don't have to think about that. And I can do this with people. And it's fun. Same thing here. It's like, people don't know where to start. And it's like, well, do I matter? How do I meditate? What where do I go with like, breath work, there's a gazillion things out there. So it's like, Here you go. And here's some instructional videos. So I tied to my YouTube channel if I need to instruct people on how to do something. And it's like, try this out, you know, and over time, my hope is honestly, like, you don't need to. Here's the other thing, too. I'm not out there

like, hey, you need to follow me forever. And it's like, no, no. Like, hopefully, my intent is to expose people to all these different modalities, have them, try them over time. And then eventually, sure, they could keep doing what I'm recommending each week, or it's like, no, I'm good. You know what I understand what I need to do now I figured out a good regimen for myself. And I'm just gonna move forward that that's awesome. Right? And that's, that's my hope for people.

 James Geering 1:51:45

Beautiful. Well, where can people find that online? And then what about social media as well?

 1:51:51

Yep, so rare. sense.com is the website and that's linked to the podcast, it's linked to the substack rare.sense.substack.com, which is where most of the content gets published, even the podcast comes through the sub second counts. So the easiest thing is just to subscribe to that. I do have a personal website, I'm this [chrisirwin.com](https://www.chrisirwin.com) went across the Internet personally. So that's my website. That's every social media handle. The ones I primarily use are Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn, I don't really do anything on Twitter or anything like that. But I do post videos on all the podcast episodes are on YouTube, at this resort, Chris Irwin, and, as are like any of the instructional videos, so like the meditation videos and breathing videos and things like that.

 James Geering 1:52:37

Beautiful. Well, Chris, I want to say thank you so much. We've been chatting for over two hours now. So it's been an amazing conversation. We've been all over the place. But I like it. As I said, it's important, I think for people to hear. Men and women that find themselves on pedestals. They didn't put themselves out but they are through society's eyes, but hearing the vulnerability, hearing the struggle and then most importantly, hearing the solution that there is a way out and you actually can be an even stronger and more resilient version of yourself once you figured out what some of the challenges are and you've been able to address them. So I want to thank you so much for being so generous with your time and coming on the podcast today. Yeah, thanks man. Really enjoyed it.