

Christy Warren - Episode 838

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SPEAKERS

Christy Warren, James Geering



James Geering 00:00

This episode is sponsored by NuCalm. And as many of you know, I only bring sponsors onto the show whose products I truly swear by. Now we are an overworked and underslept population, especially those of us that wear a uniform for a living, and trying to reclaim some of the lost rest and recovery is imperative. Now the application of this product is as simple as putting on headphones and asleep mask. As you listen to music on each of the programs there is neuro acoustic software Beneath that is tapping into the actual frequencies of your brain, whether to up regulate your nervous system, or downregulate. Now for most of us that come off shift we are a exhausted and B do not want to bring what we've had to see and do back home to our loved ones. So one powerful application is using the program power nap, a 20 minute session that will not only feel like you've had two hours of sleep, but also downregulate from a hyper vigilant state back into the role of mother or father, husband or wife. Now there are so many other applications and benefits from the software. So I urge you to go and listen to episode 806 with CEO Jim Paul. Then download NuCalm and you see a LM from your app store and sign up for the seven day free trial. Not only will you have an understanding of the origin story and the four decades this science has spanned, but also see for yourself the incredible health impact of this life changing software. And you can find even more information on nucalm.com This episode is brought to you by Bubs naturals and one of the most profound new supplements I've added to my own diet is collagen. And Barb's provides the only collagen that is not only NSF certified, but also whole 30 certified. Now when we think of collagen, you might think of beauty products, but when ingested, collagen not only positively affects skin, nails and hair, but also joint and gut health, something that I witnessed personally within myself. Now I'm also a huge fan of altruistic business and Bob's was founded out of tragedy. Glen Bob Doherty was one of the two Navy SEALs killed in Benghazi. And his friends Sean and TJ founded this company to not only create great nutritional products, but also take 10% of the proceeds and donate them to charity. So they're offering you the audience of the behind the shield podcast 20% off your first purchase if you use the code shield at bubs naturals.com. And if you want to hear more about the inception of Bubs and Glenn's powerful story, listen to episode 558 of behind the shield podcast with Sean Lake. 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, retired firefighter and author of flashpoint Christy Warren. Now in this conversation, we discuss a host of topics from Christy's journey into EMS, some of the horrific calls she had as a paramedic,

transitioning into the fire service, the Berkeley fire, the mist search that haunts her her own mental health journey, some of the tools she's used for post traumatic growth, her own podcast, writing, 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 well over 800 episodes now. So all I ask in return is that you help share these incredible men and women's stories so I can get them to every single person on planet earth who needs to hear them. So with that being said, I introduced to you, Christy Warren enjoy. Christy, I want to start by saying thank you so much for coming on the podcast. We were just chatting before I hit record. I have listened to you for a few years now. Every time I'm having someone come on the show, I like to research and it's in the podcast and yours is one they've heard several times so I am so glad that we are finally getting to sit down and have a discussion together. So welcome to the show.

 Christy Warren 04:52

Thank you so much for having me, James. I'm I am super honored to be on and yeah i i to listen to your show and I Oh no, I never even like reached out to be on your show because I was like, Oh, this guy's got way too many super cool people on I don't think I'd ever get on. So yeah, I'm really excited. Thank you

 James Geering 05:08

as funny so many people who said that including people that are very, very famous and it's just like, we're all human beings that I mean, if someone's my only kind of the bar that I said is just simply being a good person, you know, don't come on here. I had a guy reached out once. And he said, Oh, he has a T Shirt Company. He's a firefighter. He should come on my show. Like, that's it. Do you do anything for charity with this money? Yeah, why not? Okay, well, then you're not coming on my show. Yeah, good human beings. Some of them are famous. Some of them are not. And obviously in the fire service. None of us are famous. So I'm glad that we connected when we did them.

 05:42

Yeah, me too. Thank you. Again, I'm, I'm excited about this.

 James Geering 05:45

So very first question, where on planet earth are we finding you? My afternoon? Your morning?

 05:51

Well, I am in a place called a city called Pleasant Hill. It is very pleasant. And it's on a hill. It's about about 20 miles from San Francisco about north east of San Francisco. So yeah, just in San Francisco, you know, California, in the Bay Area, I was born and raised in the Bay Area

San Francisco, you know, California, in the Bay Area. I was born and raised in the Bay Area. Well, pretty much but yeah. So yeah, Pleasant Hill.

 James Geering 06:16

I wish we had a time machine to go back to when they named that town. That's probably exactly the conversation you just had?

 06:22

Yes, probably.

 James Geering 06:26

All right. Well, I would love to start at the very beginning of your journey. So tell me where you were born. And tell me a little bit about your family dynamic. what your parents did, how many siblings.

 06:35

So I was actually, strangely enough born in Los Angeles, my parents grew up in the bay area. In fact, I went to the same high school, my dad went to the high school my mom went to was one of our rivals. And so they just kind of did a stint in LA for work. And then I happen to be born down there. And then we came back, so I have no recollection of living in LA. Um, so my childhood was pretty challenging. You know, my parents were very, very young. My mom was 19, my dad was like, 21. And, you know, they are kind of oops, we have to get married, because that's what they did back then. And, and I was born. And then three years later, my brother was born. And shortly after my brother was born, my parents got divorced. It was not a pretty divorce at all. And so, but, you know, it's like they were they're really young and had no idea what to do with a couple of kids. And my, my mom, you know, she, that was the last day that she, I think, wanted to do was was raise kids. And she, she was really an alcohol and kind of gotten into the wrong crowd and started doing drugs. And my brother when he was nine, he went to go live with my dad, we'd, we'd see him every other weekend, it was, you know, the custody agreement. And so he wants to go live with my dad, and I started living with my mom. And, yes, I kind of really raised myself, you know, my mom was really not around very much at all. And when she was, she's still really wasn't like, present at all. And I had a grandmother who was incredibly supportive and love me a lot. And I was actually going to go live with her when I was nine. And she ended up getting cancer and dying pretty quick. So that ended that. And yeah, I just, you know, I grew up as an angry kid, because, you know, my parents weren't around. And it was always, I don't know, it just felt like everything was a constant. Excuse me, everything was a constant fight. And see, yeah, it was kind of a sorted, sorted growing up.

 James Geering 08:51

I've asked this to a few people, it's just come up organically recently. When you are raised with a mother, I mean, as you said, she wasn't super present. And I know, I heard you on a slight

chance, a slight change of plans, podcasts. And you talked about there being recognition when you succeeded in sports, but behind closed door, there wasn't and I can definitely relate to that. But growing up with a mother, but no father, there's an assumption that, well, you know, it's a daughter, that's fine. You can teach them the woman ways or it's a son, that's fine. The dad can teach them the manly ways. But obviously, there's a need for two different energies, whether it's an actual gender or you know, whatever it is, but, you know, it takes a village. So at least two people to raise a child. When you look back, what were the the kind of ripple effects of not having that father figure in the family dynamic as you were growing up?

 09:44

You know, that's a tough one because I really didn't know anything, any different. You know, I mean, I was four when they divorced. And so as far as I knew, that's just kind of the way it was. I think, if I had spent you know, when I did go to my dad's he, he was pretty angry guy and South and, you know, we felt like we were a burden, like he would complain all the time about having to pick us up from soccer or, you know, the drive. You know, it was a good 45 minute hour drive between where we lived, and there was always a lot of traffic and, and so yeah, I hear what you're saying about the, you know, the two parents, but you know, I think my mom was present and loving, I think I would have done just fine. But, but neither parents were really kind of invested in being parents at the time. And so, yeah, I don't know, that's a tough question to answer to since I don't, you know, I never had to parents. Yeah, I think then even you know, in a woman ways and, you know, in the fatherly ways. You know, I'm kind of, I don't wanna say weird, but you know, when I was a kid growing up, I played sports, and I even like, I played baseball, instead of softball. And so, you know, there wasn't really, I don't know, there wasn't really any kind of defined deficit in terms of that. That makes any sense?

 James Geering 11:10

No, it does. And I think the difference is the people I've spoken to at this, this when this came up, was a loving single parent, whereas you had this kind of distortion on both sides. So maybe it's a different kind of lens that you have.

 11:23

Yeah, I think it's a real different lens that I see it through. Definitely.

 James Geering 11:27

We talked about football, soccer, and baseball. So what were the sports that you were playing growing up, then

 11:33

I played, I played your football, I played soccer. I played, I played baseball a lot. I played, I played basketball. So those were the three main sports. So I played growing up and I played

them year round. And you know, I played I played, I played basketball for my high school team. And I played softball for my high school team just because that's what I was allowed to play. And then, you know, I played soccer basketball at the same time. So I played I played soccer outside of high school. But soccer was my favorite. But I played all three of those year round. And I started really young to

 James Geering 12:08

what about career aspirations during school? What were you dreaming of becoming?

 12:12

Well, when I was a little kid, I wanted to be the first woman, professional baseball player. And then, you know, I didn't really think about what I wanted to be, you know, I think at some time, I said, I wanted to be a geologist or something silly like that. I have no idea why. But you know, I used to watch that show when I was a kid called emergency. Which Johnny and Roy emergency 51. Man, that was like the greatest show on earth. And like, I just remember looking up to those guys. And just thinking that was the coolest thing on earth. But honestly, I don't think it ever crossed my mind that I could do that. Because there were no women on the show, you know, except for Dixie, the nurse. And so it was never like nobody ever told me I couldn't do it. Like, in fact, my mom always pushed this told me that I could do anything I wanted to do. But you just didn't see anybody doing it. And so I don't know. Yeah, it just never crossed my mind that I could. And so but I was always very drawn to, you know, the that show? Definitely. And you know, any kind of medical show or anything like that. That's really what kind of drew me in.

 James Geering 13:22

What do you think it was about those shows? I'll have this mentioned many, many times that specific show emergency, or if it was the police, I forget it was God that was there was a Johnny something Johnny 10. That some sort of show. I think it was a little bit before emergency bit. It was I

 13:38

can't remember what but yeah, so I remember. I can't remember the name of it. It's terrible. But yeah, exactly. There's TJ hooker, but that was way later but anyways, yeah, there was. Yeah, please show sorry.

 James Geering 13:49

Yeah, that was when we were first introduced to have the lock layer. I remember that clearly. Yes. But you think about from a recruitment point of view, the emergency sent so many young men and women into Paramedicine and all the fire service. When you think about television shows now and it's ironic because I'm writing a book that I want to get made into a show one day it'd be interesting to see what we have you know, that comes to fruition. But what I see in

some of our TV shows now when it represents the fire service is either very, very camp and so proper ask or like rescue me starts well and then now all of a sudden they're having sex in the middle of a structure fire and you fucking lost everyone again. So what do you think it was about emergency that really lit that fire and young people that maybe we don't have, in summary, today's Fire Service shows?



14:44

You know, I think it was the first one and it was the only one and you know, it was simple, and there wasn't all that drama and like you say all that can't be stuff and but I think I have to disagree. worry about Rescue me, I think rescue me was it was really geared towards what I think a lot of people miss the point because, you know, it was it was kind of, you know, such an inside glimpse into you know, the fire service or you know the FDNY which was such a big deal or it is such a big deal. But I think I think the main message got a little bit lost in that almost, it was really about the PTSD and, you know, Tommy, struggling mentally, and you know, all that sex and everything was part of, I think this a lot of there's a lot of young firefighters who struggle mentally, and that's the direction they go. You know, and I've done a lot of work with, you know, put the West Coast post strong retreat, and talking to firefighters and police officers and all first responders, you know, who are struggling with PTSD, and struggling with mental health. That is, like there's alcohol as an outlet. And sexism is an outlet. And I don't want to scare a bunch of wives or anything like that. But there's so many cases of infidelity because they're just looking for you. I mean, they're just looking for relief they're looking for like this, they're looking insects and the same exact thing that they're looking into alcohol for. And so I think that part of the show is actually kind of accurate from a lot of people that I've talked to that have struggled with mental health, you know, that talk about it behind closed doors, and not out in the public or anything like that. But the I think rescue me was pretty, pretty accurate in, in a lot of ways, but um, but shows today. Yeah, I don't know if they get people wanting to do that job or not. But yeah, I can't watch them. They're just oh my god. So I was like, oh, no, I know what all the cops feel like, you know, the cultural, it would say like, oh, that's nothing like that. And oh my gosh, yes. There's a friend of mine who said we should do a podcast where we watch you know, Chicago fire together and just comment on Oh, my God, I need to put the show down. But it's just ridiculous. It's painful to watch.



James Geering 17:06

Well, I had Steve Chica Rhodus on who's behind that show. And, you know, a lot of this stuff is based on real Chicago calls. But he was very politically correct when he put this but you could tell okay, you present the script one way TV company goes, Yeah, I kind of like what you're doing but we're going to do this, this and this and it becomes you know, seeing so I think that's the sad thing.



17:32

Yeah, yeah, they they need to make money and they they want to sell you know, you know, cuz suddenly all the women in the show, you know what I mean? Are all their shirts are on button and they're pretty and they're thin and you don't I mean, it's like yeah, that's not what the fire service looks like. Or acts like either so yeah, I totally get that I totally get that

 James Geering 17:52

Yeah, exactly. We don't like callin the models either. I hate to tell you ladies. I gotta face like a smile. Yes, I'll never be on the calendar

 17:58

Yeah, same here oh my god never

 James Geering 18:03

well, going back to the sex for seconds I agree with the concept I mean, like I said rescue me personally lost me as they got a bit further into the some of the the episodes however, when you look at even physiologically, a man's just pick on men for a second when he has an orgasm down regulates his nervous system. So as you set a subconscious coping mechanism from a hyper vigilant state, to a less hyper vigilant state, there is a primal urge for sex and a healthy relationship it will stay within the family doors maybe for whatever reason doesn't there's a unhealth to that relationship or a mental health on one side then it might be seeking somewhere else. So I agree from that as a negative coping mechanism and and identifying that thing is very important because I think firefighters men and women are some of the most beautiful human beings I know and some of the best husbands and wives and fathers and mothers. And then a lot of them it's the you know, the job happens and then you get into 1015 years and you know, an unaddressed childhood trauma, which I'm sure we'll get into. And then now you have that breakdown. And I don't think that the people that stood on the diamond on the first day of the Academy would have done that in a relationship but when you move forward 1020 years in the job, it's not the same person anymore and this is what we've got to fight to kind of understand and also advocate for an environment that stops that happening as much

 19:30

Yeah, absolutely. I think it just go to you know, identifying symptoms and you know, when all it I still don't know what to do to prevent PTSD I mean, I know ways we can definitely help. But my main advocacy is one of the when you start feeling these things, that's when you don't mean to take care of them and not let them fester and not start drinking. I mean start to find positive ways to deal with it instead of trying to cope or mask it or self medicate. And, yeah, I really believe that, you know, so much of the infidelity that goes on amongst first responders, like police have some of the highest divorce rates, you know, in the country, and it's identified this stuff when it when it starts and deal with it then. And yeah, you're absolutely right about the hyper vigilance and you know, what oxytocin is released, and, you know, all these other kind of feel good things that, you know, that shuts some of the crap that's going on in your head, it just shuts it down. And it has nothing to do with the strength of the relationship at home, you can have a wonderful, incredible relationship with your significant other. But your brain is like is dying inside and needs needs chemicals, you know, it's like it goes back again is a physiological injury. And it needs chemicals. And when you get PTSD, it's not some emotional issue. It's, it's your brain changes shape. As you know, the serotonin levels are too low. You

know, always the amygdala is just like, ready to explode. It's on high alert, your sympathetic nervous system is on high alert 24 hours a day. And you can't you become overwhelmed. And you need to find ways to shut that off and alcohols way and it's really sad, because I had a discussion with my psychiatrist, and she's telling me how bad alcohol is. And I'm like, Yeah, but, but it works. You know what I mean? It actually works until it doesn't screws everything up and makes your brain even worse. But in the moment it works. And gambling works and sex works. And you know, how you get from shopping works and, you know, all that other kind of stuff. And so, yeah, it's really, I mean, it's sad, because it destroys so many families and everything, but it's, it's no different. I think then then alcohol and, and all that other stuff.

J

James Geering 21:53


So one of the things that I've learned as I progress through this, this podcast, and I always credit Jake Clark from cyber warrior really opening my eyes on this one is the massive impact of childhood trauma on mental health, unaddressed childhood trauma. When you hear the conversations in the fire service, specially until recently, it was always well, it's what you saw. It's the fires that you had, it's the decapitated three year old I wrote about in my book, I mean, those are acute events. But we don't think about what happened to us before we ever put that uniform on. So you talked about this kind of unstable, family dynamic that you have, I'm sure you know, Maslow's hierarchy of needs, that security was probably not great for you. When you look back now with this wisdom that you have post career, you know, your own mental health perspective now, what impact did your childhood have on later years?

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22:49

It had a significant impact. And, you know, I think, you know, they say that we don't choose the job, that job chooses us. Now, of course, there are plenty of first responders who and firefighters who had excellent, wonderful childhoods, and they become great firefighters and but when you look at like, who better to, to deal with chaos, than somebody who grew up in chaos, it's like we thrive in chaos, just what we're comfortable. Like, I don't know about you. But I'm very comfortable inside of learning building. And I'm very uncomfortable, trying to figure out how, you know, to do an Excel spreadsheet, you know what I mean? I prefer to be in a burning building in any minute than trying to figure out how to fill in an Excel spreadsheet. And so it really chanted, it develops our brains and our way of thinking and our way of reacting to things to be perfectly suited for the job. And it also has already, our brain has already sustained a tremendous amount of trauma we've already you know, our amygdala is already on alert, you know, like growing up with my mom, and she married this guy, stepdad. And he was one that really got her into drugs. And you know, there, there's drugs all around the house all the time. There's strange people coming and going. Yeah, and you know, like you said, I had very little security, I was molested by my older brother. And, you know, my mom walked in on it, and like, I was like, Oh, look, and turned around and left and never said a word about it. And, and so, like you said, my security was pretty much none. And I was hyper vigilant. And so I already had all that stuff going on in my head. And then when you start adding, you know, working 4872 96 hour shifts and seeing and constantly being hit with trauma and having to be on guard for 96 hours. And, you know, I remember I read some study and I wish I could find it again, but, you know, they they'd measure firefighters, cortisol levels throughout, you know, 48 hour shift, and they found that their levels were just as high when they're sitting in a recliner, watching a movie eating ice cream than they were when they're on their way to a fire, because

even though we're sitting there watching a movie, we know that at any second, the tongs could drop in the world could be coming to an end, or you know, somebody's rules could be coming in, and we have to go fix it. And so that hyper vigilance, just, you know what I mean, it's just, our amygdala is slowly just keep, keep growing, not growing, but becoming more saturated with whatever chemicals it is that that puts those things on alert. And so yeah, I think our childhood traumas have a significant effect on you know, getting I don't know about getting PTSD, but I think it also, I think it also really helps us protect ourselves from those calls. Like all those like we are really good at, you know, going into horrendous call and just walking away from it, and not being upset by it and not letting these things bother us. And, and so I think the trauma packs in more for some of us who've had these childhood traumas, and we're already have built the pathway, so get, you know, to shove that stuff in a box somewhere. And because it's kind of like, it's like, yeah, we're used to this, this is kind of our daily gig, and we grew up in this. And so we are better at shoving that stuff away than maybe somebody who, you know, had a great childhood and sees like, holy shit, this is horrible, you know, and can process it better. I mean, I don't know, that's just me talking out of my butt. I'm no professional or anything like that. But they had a retreat I work at every once in a while you get a couple people through there who who had really good childhoods, but majority of people had really pretty significant childhood, significantly challenging childhoods. So yeah, it's it's tremendous.

 James Geering 26:55

Yeah, well, I can attest, I think I've done with the recordings I haven't put out yet. 840 Plus conversations, a lot of whom are first responders and military and then some others that are completely detached. And nearly all of them, especially the ones in uniform. Most of them have trauma. Now, it could be sexual molestation, which happens so much. And it's so so prevalent in the male first responders, which we are talking about stigma, talking about shame, try getting someone to admit that that was part of their childhood. And if you can't get them to discuss it, how are you going to address it and get them on their wellness journey, you know, so this is what's so heartbreaking. But, you know, there's so many people and I agree with you, 100%, we are drawn to this profession. First. See, the excitement is like the alcohol is like the sex, it's the excitement of the job, when you first come in, keeps all those other memories away. You're also wanting to become the protector. Then you're also adding armor. Well, I'm a firefighter. I'm a you know, I'm an American hero, you know, so there's all these layers that are actually burying that thing. On there's a Mexican proverb that says, they tried to bury us, they didn't know we were seeds. And I love that quote, because oh

 28:09

my god that just gave me goosebumps. Oh, that's incredible.

 James Geering 28:13

It's I mean, it nails it. It's a mic drop, as you say, these days, you know, because no matter what you do, it's still going to grow until you address it.

 28:22

Yeah, absolutely. That's, that is such a great saying. And, you know, I know, I just finished a podcast with somebody who the trauma that she experienced, like, all throughout her life was just like, on believable, and it took the very worst thing on earth happening to her to make her deal with it. And it is not even like she was running away from it. I mean, she was but she didn't even realize it. Like if you asked her like, how was your childhood? She'd be like, oh, you know, it's okay. You know, my parents, you know, she gloss over it. And then you start digging in. It's like, Oh, my God. But it's like sometimes. I mean, I look back and you know, when it was starting to happen to me, PTSD was the worst thing that could ever happen to me. Like I would rather I would rather die I'd rather like lose my legs. I'd rather go blind or deaf or get cancer. I mean, I mean, no, no disrespect to anybody who's gone through any of that. But at the time, that's how I felt as I would rather go through anything, then PTSD and feeling like a failure and being a pussy that couldn't do their job. And because that was that was everything to me. You know, so much for what the job stood for, and held for me. But it took getting PTSD to make me deal with all that because it was either kill myself or deal with it. And those are my two options. And so I chose to deal with it. And I can tell you right now that getting PTSD was the best thing that ever happened to me because I dealt with all that childhood stuff, and all the shame and all these things that happened to me and I'm truly happy now and it It's pretty amazing. It's really amazing.

J James Geering 30:03

Well, I think that's the part of the conversation that we don't hear even nearly enough, which is the post traumatic growth part. Yes, you have trauma in your childhood. And you know, there's nothing you can do about it. I was gonna say beautiful, it's not beautiful. Ideally, you have a great childhood and you know, next to no trauma, but it happened, but you have the ability to process it. And I something I've talked about a lot. I never got to a super dark place. I've been fucking, you know, deeply depressed and all these things, but never to the point of true crisis. Like a lot of people have come on here. And that's just by the sheer lottery. That was my childhood. There was some trauma. My parents had a horrible divorce, almost died in a house fire when I was four, almost got claps killed by collapsing war a few years later. So there were some acute events. Okay, that's

 30:51

okay. That was, that's some significant trauma. Exactly. And I'm glad to answer okay. Yeah, that's some pretty significant trauma there. So

J James Geering 30:59

the other you had a good sorry, no, please carry on.

 31:03

No, no, I was just gonna say, you know, even if your parents were loving and took good care of you, and you know, gave you everything you need. That's pretty significant trauma, but anyways, carry on.

J

James Geering 31:15

So but those are, those are there, and I used to wet the bed till I was God. I think it was like 12 or 13, like really frickin old for a young boy to be wetting the bed. I had night terrors my whole life. Yeah, so there were there were a lots of things. But, and I always say this, I grew up on a farm, my dad was a horse vet, and a small animal vet. So I saw healing. We had people come through our front doors from homeless people all the way through to members of the extended royal family, because of his horse clans, has a lot of rich people. Okay, and so, and then we always ate, we, you know, we grew our own food, mostly, we butchered our own meat, and, you know, we ate around the dinner table most of the time. So when you look at the things that offset the bad stuff, there was healing, it was by accident, but there was healing. So that's a beautiful thing. So when I went into the fire service, I don't think my my bucket was full or whatever analogy as some people are, the foundation wasn't already kind of, you know, on balsa wood, rather than oak. And I think that's a really important conversation is if you have a great transition, and then you need to be fighting an advocate, excuse me fighting and advocating for the people that are struggling, you need to be one of the ones that right then let's raise people up, if you're doing well, great raise people out. But the hope that is using your trauma, processing it and it becoming a superpower. That's what we need to talk about, not like, oh, I deal with PTSD every day, the statement you just made was I am doing really well now. And that is the voice that we need to hear, I think the voice of hope, and strength and resilience rather than just well, you know, I get up every day. And I kind of deal with that, because that's not inspiring anyone.

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32:58

No, I absolutely agree with you. And people need to know that there is hope out there. And that's definitely a conversation. It's that conversation is starting and I'm hearing more and more. I think, I think we're still so far behind the eight ball in terms of getting the word out that it's okay. You know, I mean that cliché, it's become a cliché, but it's so important that it's okay not to be okay, we're still, we're still stuck in that. And, you know, I remember when I was working, and things were fine. Before I got PTSD. We did have somebody in our department that had had some pretty significant calls back to back, you know, where he almost lost his life, and then somebody else's life was lost, you know, not at his hands, but, you know, right in the middle of an operation, he was in the middle of and. And he went off on stress for a year. And, and it was like, it was okay, it was like, you know, call them Hey, dude, you know, do you need anything? Like, I didn't see any stigma towards it. And you know what I mean? Like, you're, it's gonna be, you know, whatever you need. Hang in there, blah, blah. But then, I think so many of us are like that, like, we, but then when it comes to us, we're like, yeah, no way in hell, this can't happen to us, you know what I mean? And, and so it's like, it's, I mean, as first responders, I think it's pretty typical for us, like, it's okay for somebody else to need help, but it's not okay for us to need help. And that's the number one, I think that's the biggest message that I'm trying to get out there. Besides the post traumatic growth, which, like, it's so important, but it's also that we need to it's okay to need help and to ask for help. And, and yeah, and more people who have survived it. And I don't just mean like they're still alive, but they survived PTSD and, and, you know, depression or all these other things that kind of plague us that people need to hear that like this is survivable. They're like you said, there is hope. And that's because that's when we lose people suicide. died when they completely lose hope. And that's and that's just oh my god that just breaks my heart. I just can't me that sounds cliché

too, but I just the suicides are my number one reason for, for doing this work that I'm doing is getting that out there and there is hope and and yeah, like post traumatic growth. I've never been so happy. So many people that I've talked to who've got gone through it and come out the other side or are the same way like I like I'm not running anymore like yeah to deal with a lot of this. But it's just so nice to be present, finally, enjoy my life milva enjoy the small things and need to not just constantly be running. And yeah, you're absolutely right, that post traumatic growth and it's real, it's absolutely real. And it may sound hokey to people. And like, I remember when I started dealing with this, and a clinician told me to like to do breathing exercises, and I'm like, this is the dumbest fucking thing I've ever heard. Like, I wake up screaming every night I'm haunted. You know what I mean, all day long by these calls that play in this video loop in my head. You know what I mean? I just all these symptoms, I was having all these problems I was having second you want me to fucking breathe, you think that's gonna make it go away. But you just kind of got to hang in there. And you know, I say trust the process and trust that if you go through this, and you get to the other side it your life will be better than it's ever been ever been before. No matter. I know, people who've lost everything, because of PTS. And they got, you know, addicted to alcohol and drugs and all kinds of other problems. You know, they lost their families, they lost everything. And they got to the other side, and they got through it. And they are better than they've ever been before. So there is absolute hope. Absolutely. Just got asked for help. Yeah,

 James Geering 36:50

100%. Well, I want to kind of get to your journey into the first responder professions then. So you realize you weren't going to be the first female baseball player, you fell out of love with rocks. So how did you find the MF?

 37:05

Yeah, still not sure that geologists thinking and it goes like from, you know, kids, or they change their mind every month. Um, so I went to college right out of high school. And I initially kind of wanted, I wanted to be a teacher. And so I was doing that. And I love kids. And then I was talking to a friend at school one day as to school at UC Davis. And I said, you know, I really, what I really want to do is be a doctor. And she's like, Well, why don't you do that? And I'm like, No, you're right. Why don't I? Why don't I do what I want to do. And I'm not the greatest student in the world. So that was a big issue. But I was like, I'm gonna apply myself and become a doctor. And so I changed my major and I was taken, you know, the first years you have to take like chemistry and physics. And these are super boring classes. And I'm just like, I know, I have to get through this because it's so boring. And so I saw a flyer for an EMT class. And so I took an EMT class. And I was just in love, like, this is the greatest thing since sliced bread. You know, I did a, I did a ride along. And I mean, we went on the dumbest call in the whole world, but I just thought it was the greatest thing ever. And so I ended up getting a job on an ambulance in Vallejo, which is really kind of rough and tumble town. It had the highest homicide rate in the nation for a couple years. And I mean, it was just the trauma that we saw there. So anyway, so they worked on ambulances, the fire department, there were no paramedics on fire departments back then, was in the early 90s. And so every ambulance had EMT and a paramedic on it, and so, so as an EMT as a 911 calls, and I just like, like, oh my god, this is the best thing ever. So I took some time off school. And I went to paramedic school, and then I came back, and I just was so in love with it, that I was like, I don't want to be a doctor anymore.

Like, I don't want to sit around a hospital like, this is just way better. And so I dropped out of school and I was working full time as a paramedic, and just like the best as the happiest time in my life. I think back then. And, you know, I was I started when I was 19 You know, I'm like 20 years old, and I have these people's lives in my hands and I'm working, you know, five days in a row and we were up all night is such such a busy busy system. And, you know, we made I made like \$5.25 Back then it's paramedic. And and I you know I kind of saw that it's really difficult to make a career out of being a paramedic is you work for the private animals companies and they they just pardon the term but they just rape you they it's a horrible existence in terms of security and benefits. And anyways, um, and, you know, we ran at the fire department and I love the fire department and I saw what they did. And I'm like, I want to do that. And, you know, I was always really athletic and play a lot of sports and really liked the physicality of it looked incredible and a lot more risk taking and a lot more, you know, adventure and excitement and so, so yeah, so I started testing for fire departments. And that became my career. And I just, I, I could not have found, like, a better place for me like, I don't even I don't know what else I ever would have done or could have done. And it was, it was just the greatest. I was so happy. I was just so happy there. I just loved it. It was the best.

 James Geering 40:47

What was the common denominator in Vallejo that was causing so much crime?

 40:57

Well, that's a good question. It was. It city is about 100. And like 40,000 people in the city? And that's a really good question. I mean, just really, there's this really well, I'll tell you right now, I think the the leadership in that city accident at whole Solano County, and I don't mean to upset anybody, but it's very corrupt. Bleh was very corrupt, the city council's corrupt, there's always been problems with it, the EMS system was even pretty corrupt. But, um, I think that that was a big part of it. And, and there was also a Mare Island was right there. And so there was the military was there and they had military housing in the military housing, I have to say caused a lot of problems in the city, there was a lot of domestic violence. There's lots of lots of problems there. And it's just really low socio economic. I mean, I think it used to be a really nice town. And I mean, like the house, they're just beautiful Victorian houses, and just socio economically it was just is in the dumps. They built a big track housing area that was literally called the country club crest. And by the time I got there, it was working there. It was, it was like the hood, it was the worst part of the worst. Like, when we go on calls there, we, we pretty much always have played escort, we turn our lights and sirens off. You know, I mean, it was a very, like, kind of dangerous area. And, and then the other part of it too, is we had a lot of highways, we had, we had, we had highway 80, which is a major, you know, like four lanes on each side thoroughfare from Sacramento to San Francisco. If we had highway 29, which is a two lane road that goes through that used to be the old, you know, main highway to get from south to north. We had, we just, we didn't we in many freeways and highways that kind of criss crossed through there. It was like kind of a major transportation hub in terms of going off east west or north or south or whatever. And so the like the vehicular trauma we had was just phenomenal. I mean, it was incredible. And we had highway 37, which is a two lane road stills a two lane road, it didn't have a divider on it, the speed limit is like 55 miles an hour. 60 miles an hour is a major thoroughfare. And you know, if you, if you weave six inches to your left, you're gonna hit head on with another car, and then that car behind you is gonna hit you. And of course nobody does.

55 or but it's 7075. So yeah, the traffic wrecks that we have out there were just unbelievable. And so yeah, it was just, it was incredible. Like as a as a new paramedic, and a young kid. I just, oh, my god is real estate. It was. It was unbelievable. The calls that we get out there, and the trauma, and the shootings and stabbings and the house fires and it just goes on and on. I mean, you know, story. Everybody's heard of ride along syndrome, you get a ride along and you suddenly don't run any calls. But it was so busy there that we would like literally like remember ride along, pulled in the parking lot as our doors are going up. And you know, I see this guy get out of the car, and I knew we're getting right along and he's like looking around, and he looked last and so I roll the one down. Are you the right along? He's like, Yeah, I'm like, get in, we're going to shooting and it was just, yeah, it was so busy. It was incredible.

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James Geering 44:30

The road safety is something that comes up quite a bit as well. And I'm baffled why you never hear it discussed or there's never been any incentives to make it better. And when there are it's like, well, you know, we got the Tesla's now and they you know, they keep from the car in front or we're gonna have automated driving, but it's never about the education of the driver and coming from a different country where our driving standards are, you know, extremely high and said but really times yeah, I mean, most, most British people take two or three attempts to pass a British driving test. It's a full on and yeah. And if you don't basically perform almost perfectly, you fail. And it's all kinds of stuff. And when you're on motorways round at roundabouts, reversing round corners, parallel parking, I mean all these maneuvers, all these safety things, but it drills into you the why, like you're learning why do I keep buying? Why do I use my blinker. And if you go to the road, you know, go to England you drive around, you'll see. I mean, there's always gonna be some some, you know, assholes on the road, they're everywhere. But overall, it's a very kind way of driving. And if someone's trying to merge on to the motorway, people will slow down, they'll let them on, you know, of pedestrians almost crossing, the driver will already stop and then wave them across. You know, it's just it's a different mentality. But 20 years, or 14 actually in the fire service, which 20 years ago now. All I think most of our horrible memories, most are on the roads, the most ghastly, gruesome, grotesque wrecks. And it happens over and over and over again. I was in jujitsu today, one guy walked in, he rolled his Audi after someone cut him up, almost died. And then one of the other guys I roll with. He said, I almost died eight years ago, rolled my truck eight times and was in a coma for a month. But it's just like, well, you know, the mentality is, oh, well, but the first responders see this carnage day in and day out. But then, where's the conversation of, oh, maybe we should raise the standard, maybe we should raise the age by a year, you know, maybe we should, you know, make the test where you can't pass until you're actually ready to operate this machine that can kill so many people. And yet, you know, you just turn on the TV and it's frickin you know, whatever person's being investigated now, whatever teams coaches wearing sunglasses when they shouldn't, or whoever's on the Bud Light can yet 40,000 People die in America just on our roads every year. And it's just a shoulder shrug.

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47:02

Yeah, I think it's, it's a tough one. Yeah, that that highway 37, that two lane road that, you know, we had such horrible accidents on? They finally, I mean, I was there like eight years, and I would say, the six year as or maybe then they finally like put a divider in. You know, I mean, and that saved a million lives. But they argued about it forever. You know, and I think part of

the problem too, when you compare problems in the United States versus European countries, you know, like the UK, and, you know, people talk about, you know, country that has socialized medicine works really well, you know, it's a small country, the size of the United States, and the size of the differences of opinions and the diversity, it's so hard to come on a common, you know, thing where we can just say, yes, let's increase, you know, driving standards, it's so hard to come to a consensus when you have so such a diverse population. It's such a huge population that has such different capabilities that it needs. It's just, I think it's so difficult to come together. And it's really sad, but I think it's just so difficult to, you know, try and do something like that. You know, you take, I've never been, I've been to the airport, but I've never been to UK, but I've been to Ireland and Italy In Italy is a whole different driving thing. That's pretty fun place to drive. It's insane. But like you say, oh, like so like in the San Francisco Bay area, right? Our trends are public transportation absolutely sucks. It's you, it's horrible. You think that we would be so progressive, because we're a bunch of, you know, environmental hippies out here. But it sucks. It's horrible. You can only get to a very small part of San Francisco. You can, if you want to go anywhere, it's just it's, it'll take hours on public transportation is just ridiculous. And then you go someplace like New York. And it's like, their public transportation actually works. Like you can actually get to places and it's meant to so but that the attitude towards driving, it's just so ingrained that it's, I don't even know how you would change it. And it is it's really sad, and people drive really reckless. And, you know, there's so much we have so much about our freedoms and everything here that, you know, that becomes the argument for everything. And if people don't really don't want to deal with anything until they're affected by it, I think everything's so like far away, you know, you on the news, people or you watch the news, and you hear people killed all the time. That's what every new thing is about and you just kind of shrug it off. And but I think people like you and me, we're like, No, we've like I can't watch the news. If my wife's watching the news. I and either go in the other room or are just trying to tune it out. Because it's like, yeah, I've been on that scene, you know, and they talk about, you know, a fatal accident that happens somewhere. I've been there hundreds of times. And so I, it's not just some random story that's gonna go in one ear and out the other ear, it's gonna go in my ear, and in my brain, and con, you know what I mean, and bring all that stuff up. And, yeah, I don't want to hear that. And people, we just kind of gloss over things. I think too much. We just, it's also survival, like, you don't want to hear about that stuff. And I've totally gone on a completely different tangent, and then safe driving, but I agree with you would be, it would be nice. Like, I think like here, you get your license at 16. And I feel like if you get one ticket between being 16 and 18, you should lose your license. You know what I mean? Because you see teenagers driving like idiots and on purpose and driving fast. And, you know, and it's, so it's like, why are we not protecting them better? Because they're young. And you know, they don't, they still haven't really understood mortality yet. And like I said, I'm just totally rambling now. So, no, but

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James Geering 51:05

I agree with you. I think what I like about these perspectives is when we remind ourselves that we're all human beings so that we live in the United States, or Iceland, or wherever, we can make changes, but what I see is missing. And it's funny, you talked about leadership, as you know, as a problem and your first department. When do you ever hear a leader talking about this? They don't, they grab their extreme view. And then they also throw shit about the other person and what they said and what they did, and nothing actually gets fixed. So I think this is the issue is that we need real leaders with some courage to be like, Alright, who drives who's around a road? Pretty much all of you. Okay, well, let's start fixing this, regardless of your political, you know, persuasion, or your gender or whatever. Does anyone want to die in a

horrible, fiery car crash? No. Okay, beautiful. Let's start doing this and pull people together. And I think that this issue, for example, would be a good one where you could get everyone on the same page. No one's gonna be like, I want to be killed in a fiery crash. No. So you're right.



52:06

But I think people are gonna say, I'm not going to ever die in a fiery crash, like the chances of that happening to me are so slim. That I think that's what, that's where our complacency comes from is not going to happen to me. And then, so they're not going to want to do anything about it. That's like, it's somebody else. It's kind of like the whole defund the police thing that happened over here. Everybody complained about the police. That was a huge success. So the way it was, and so it absolutely wasn't, it continues to be and so and now those same people who were up there complaining about the police are Have you froze her from an so they're the same people that are calling for stricter, stricter laws and more police and it's like, did it what did you think was gonna happen? And, and because that was those people had never needed a police officer, and they never needed they all i sees on the news. You know, they see, they see half of the police interaction, they didn't see what happened before that. And they, they don't, it's never happened to them. So they don't they haven't seen that, you know, what happens to you when you're attacked, or you're a victim of, you know, the violence or whatever. So I think it's just that whole mentality of it won't happen to me. And I think as firefighters and first responders, we do the same thing. With PTSD and everything, it's not gonna happen to me. I would have never, ever thought this would happen to me. I was like, one of the toughest people out there. And yeah, this isn't gonna happen to me, no way. And so I never dealt with it or looked at it.



James Geering 53:41

So you already had a lot of, you know, things in your basket, your bucket, your backpack, whatever analogy you want to use, you enter the world of EMS. Again, in that podcast I listened to I heard you talking about a fatal fire that you responded to when you were still in the EMS side. So talk to me about that and the impact or the lack of impact that particular call had.



54:03

Yeah, so it was it was the middle of the day. You know, we heard the sirens before we even got the call here at the station. You know, I heard that a fire and they are going to something big because I you can tell when you listen to sirens, if they're going to boring medical calls are going to fire by how much they pound their sirens and their air horn. So anyways, we knew they're going to something and then we got the call to a house fire and we got there just as the because it's really close to our station and we got there just after fire. And anyways, make a long story short, a whole second story of the house flashed and there were four kids inside. And one of the one of the firefighters came out and says we got somebody out. He's in the living room. We come and look and see if there's anything we can do. So first, I'm like, is it safe and And so, so anyways, so I was just a paramedic at the time. So we went, so I went in a living room and there was a kid that was, you know, burned beyond recognition that I mean, there's nothing but char like no ears, no nose, no fingers. It was complete char. And I'm like the, there's nothing we can do, you got to leave them here. And so I went back out. And then, you

know, over probably span of five minutes, I was handed three kids that were still alive, but they're completely limp. And you know, they had skin hanging off of them, and they were burned pretty bad. And, you know, they all needed to be intubated right now. And I was still the only paramedic on scene like the only paramedic there were no paramedics in the fire department at this time. And so anyway, so you know, right away when I found out how many kids were there, we call for more ambulances. And so anyways, we got all these kids to the hospital. And it was a huge event in the community, we had to local hospitals near them or trauma centers or burn centers. And so they we ended up flying the three kids out to children's in Oakland, which is a burn center and a pediatric hospital, obviously, and say we landed helicopters and they flew all these were at the hospital after they got to the ER and they flew these kids out. And it was, like I said, it was a big deal in the community. And we had a critical incident stress debriefing. And I remember sitting in the circle with you know, all the firefighters that were there, like the nurses were there, the doctors were there. Everybody who was on that scene, the police officer were there or were in this room. The nurses were crying, firefighter, pretty stoic, but everybody, everybody was pretty shocking. And even some of the veteran fires were like, Yeah, I'm not talking about this. They're like, I'm not opening that can of worms. If I talk about this, everything else is gonna come spilling out. But it got to me and I'm like, you know, I said what I did. And like, I went to the grocery store, like, it didn't mean it was horrible. But it was it just it didn't bother me. I wasn't, I should say, I wasn't sickened by it. It didn't affect me like that. I just kind of went on with my day. And yeah, and that was that I just went on, you know, say like, we would go on this horrible calls, and then be like, Alright, what's for lunch. And in a year, I mean, that's, that's why we did our job. And that, that allowed me to do my career for 25 years. But it also completely, you know, allowed me to build build up so much trauma that, you know, finally exploded. But so yeah, so that call was pretty. Yeah, it's pretty harrowing. It's, you know, not having, you know, just feeling helpless having these three kids and, you know, I'd just start to innovate one, and then they'd hand me another kid, and then I'd be like, shit, and I'd lay this kid down. And I had a really good partner at the time, but he wasn't a paramedic, so he couldn't do any of that stuff. I mean, he can bag them, but you know, he couldn't get them what they really needed. And, and, you know, I had to, and then there comes another one. And, and I still have a paramedic. So to ask, but it was, you know, that was a call that when my PTSD finally really, when it really hit is that call would play over my head over and over and over in the mall, you know, the moms screaming and, you know, the sounds and the smells and the looks on the firefighters faces, or they they'd come out with a kid and said, I call really affected me later. I'm sure it affected me at the time, but it didn't. I didn't know it. Did that makes any sense?

 James Geering 58:39

Well, in the conversation in the podcast, you made a comment as well about telling the firefighters to leave the child that had deceased in there, because the parents didn't need to see that or the neighbor didn't need to see that. So early on, you still have that compassion. You were still thinking about the 360 picture?

 58:59

Yeah, oh, yeah. I always had, like, say always, but, you know, I mean, I was I was compassionate with people. And you know, I remember having we had a guy who was working on his car, and he was like, underneath the card, it came off the little lift and was enrolled down

the driveway and caught him and drag him down the driveway and down an embankment and, and the car landed on top of him and you know, and killed him. And, you know, so we got there and went down to some basement and saw that he was dead. And there's no absolutely nothing we could do. And so I remember climbing back up to this embankment and the wife, his wife was standing there, you know, the top of the soil and banquet on the street. And, you know, she had that look on her face, like, there's nothing you can do on so I remember I said, you know, I'm so sorry. There's no there's nothing we can do and, and he's dead. And I remember. I mean, I remember feeling really bad for her and like, Man, this is just this is brutal. But Okay, there's no you don't I mean, like, hang in there, there's nothing we can you know, and, and I felt great compassion for her but I don't know, I just I just went on

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James Geering 1:00:15

I think people think from the outside looking in that it's the horrors that we see that bother us and and obviously, you know when they replay sometimes they do but for me, I've talked about this a lot on here, I, I was that black cloud. And my whole career, I never had a single code save in 14 years as an EMT. And as a paramedic, I just was that shit show that had the GI bleeds and the brain bleeds and all the things you know, the triple A's you just don't come back from. And so, but it was the howling from the loved ones that really stuck to my bones. And so you know, when you're talking about you're seeing the wife or hearing the mother screaming when the kids are inside. I don't know if that was the same for you. But that was the thing that really, I wouldn't say haunted so much. But if you ask what was the most traumatic thing, it wasn't the grotesque visual. It was the heartbroken people that were left behind.

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1:01:13

Absolutely in the grotesque thing is almost like, like wow, look at that. Like that's crazy. But yeah, the grotesque stuff never bothered me. It was yeah, no, it's absolutely the the people who are left behind the oh my god that hearing a parent scream when their kid is dead. There's no There's no sound like it. There's just this primal. There's just, there's the there's absolutely nothing like it. And that is it is it is absolutely haunting. It is absolutely haunting. So yeah, no, you're right. Yeah. Somebody even asked me when I was working boy, I remember somebody said, you know, it's all a blood and guts bother you and I go, No, I got that doesn't bother me at all I got what bothers me is the way people treat each other, you know, the violence that would happen and, you know, the domestic abuse and, you know, we had this lady that her husband beat her to death with a fire poker right in front of their four year old and, and you know what I mean? The the other blood and guts pretty gruesome, but it was knowing that a four year old watches mommy pizza, you know what I mean? In her app to go through that. And? And that's what, that's what gets Yes. Yeah, it's not the blood and guts. It's, it's absolutely it's the people left behind. And in the end how people treat each other.

J

James Geering 1:02:30

I have a cluster of PD calls. It was two infants, the very first one was literally my medic partner and I were together and we were handed that limp baby. And as they ran out the house, and then the next one, supposedly, this child had fallen out of the crib. And it was, you know, just battered and you know, it was poor thing was just broken. And both of those ended up being

abuse cases. Then I had another one that I'm 99.9% Sure, supposedly she was found in the shower. But again, I think another abuse one. And then I had a kid that was a shaken baby. And now he was five and literally died in my arms. And so again, you think about, not what you're looking at. But that backstory here you are, like I was, you know what, mid 30s By that point? Like, why did I get to be 35. And this poor child didn't make it past a few months. That's so fucking unfair. So again, I think as an empath, which drives us into these professions. It's crushing when you see this, you know, this just simple unfairness of some of the things that we witnessed as well.



1:03:37

Yeah, I absolutely agree with you. You know, when I was going through my struggles and seeing a therapist, I saw two different therapists, I saw regular therapist, and then I saw somebody who did EMDR with and it really came down to like, the common link between all the calls that the plane in a videotape that were haunting me with was a helpless when I would be helpless and feel helpless. And, you know, seeing a baby abused or baby hurt. It's like, kids. And I think that's why animals are tough, difficult for people to deal with, too, is that, like animals and children don't take a part in their own demise. You know, like adults are, are easy in a way of it's like, well, you know, they probably shouldn't have been out at one o'clock in the morning and or they're drinking or they weren't wearing their seatbelt. Or, you know what I mean? They should have, you know, like that guy that, you know, was working on his car and roll them down the embankment. You know, it may nosiness it, but it's like, well, you know, maybe he took a shortcut and didn't do enough safety, you know, precautions and so it's like, as adults, we we usually have a hand in our own demise. We're animals and kids, don't they? I mean, yeah, kids, but kids don't know any better. And so, you know, when they're especially in their infants and they're small and you know, they're so helpless and just that that helpless feeling of not being able to intervene or be able to help or do something That's, I think that's what really can, you know, really, really weigh on us. I had a call really early, early in my career, where a husband and wife were ejected out of the windshield of the car, they wrap the car on the tree in their object, and they literally landed laying right next to each other. And both of them were alive, but like quickly dying, and I'm like us once, you know, the only medical scene, the fire department hadn't even gotten on scene yet. And I'm like, Well, who do I innovate first? You know, who who gets, I mean, not that they're gonna live but who. And, and I remember that was another call, it really haunted me. And it wasn't even. I don't say it wasn't that big of a deal. But, you know, this big, ugly gruesome call. But it was one where I felt helpless. And I think, you know, I think sometimes a lot of those units like the kids in the, in the house fire. You know, I was I was helpless to do anything. Because I couldn't take care of these kids, because I had too many of them. And, um, you know, I think that's one, those are the ones that we have a really hard time. Like, you know, escaping or walking away from or, you know, I mean, I was able to walk away from it, but we're not able to process it. You know, I mean, and you know, how many you've been on? Many? Here's some horrible calls where you're like, Yeah, that was fucking crazy. We did awesome. Er, I mean, then you're like, like, that was a good call. That was, that was great. Even though you know, somebody might have died or in on me or went through whatever it's been there. For me, that was the ones that were, you know, they felt really helpless in that, I think that I, I know, for me that I really struggled with. In the end, those were the ones that really got me.



James Geering 1:06:53

When I reflect now at zero code saves, and 14 years, I think about med school training and EMT school training. And, you know, you're like, Well, if you do A, B, and C, then we have rust, or you know, whatever it is, and then you see where I live worked in my last apartment, it was a theme park. So they had, I think, the highest level of code saves of any department in the US. And again, five years there in the last five, my career zero. But you know, so then you have this expectation, when you're being taught, and I've really questioned the way we teach, maybe we should be a little bit more realistic in EMS training. And then you have the black cloud absolute shit magnet that was for example, me, even on my bloody medic ride alongs people were dying, you know, when I was when I was a med student. And, you know, and so that has a weight to itself, that inability to save Well, what the fuck, I took my job really seriously, I trained diligently. I took extra classes on airway and all kinds of stuff. I did everything the way you told me and they still died. That was an interesting, I like a not hard to process. But you realize that the expectation in a way sets you up for failure, and you have to navigate it. And I think the only way of really processing that is knowing that you're a diligent student. And so a nother real push for training should always be not only you should care enough to, you know, try and get the person that you're going to rescue, make sure that your partner is safe, make sure that you get out safely and home to your family, but also the mental health side, imagine you didn't make it to the fire floor, because you were out of shape. And you tapped out and that family died. That should always be in the training conversation. Because if you lose people and you know, you train diligently, you can kind of process it. If you lost someone you know that you fucked up, because you hadn't open a protocol book in a year, and you push the wrong drug that's going to be with the rest of your life.



1:08:49

No, I absolutely agree with the mental health aspect of it. And, you know, you brought up a good point, it's, it's like we, you know, I am, I am a firefighter paramedic, which means I'm a rescuer. And so if I don't if I'm unable to rescue somebody, then that means that I'm a failure, you know, we look at things so black and white. And and that's the thing that we you're absolutely right, that we really need to teach in class, in the academies and in school. That like you say, I mean, I had 25 years in terms of code saves I can remember one where the guy actually walked out of the hospital I mean, I've gotten plenty of pulses back and everything but I can think of one that actually walked out of the hospital and went back to their life and and Yeah, nobody told me that Yeah, that's so it was called like rescue nine on one with William Shatner. I don't know if you remember that as long and, you know, that was like an hour long and it was all code saves. And so people started getting the idea like, Okay, well if the fire department or paramedics get here soon enough, then these people are going to live and they expected everybody to live in It's like, no, that that's so rare, it is so rare that, you know, people come back, you know, from code, and it all depends on, you know, the circumstances and so many things and, and so people begin to have that expectation. And we have that expectation because like you said, if you do A, B and C, you get the d. And, and there's no, there's no training about that, you know, how often that this is going to happen. And, you know, and the whole thing about not being ready for, you know, call or for, you know, training properly, that's a whole nother, you know, bag a bag of information to talk about, I mean, that's like, yeah, that's, like, Kenny, that's, like, so much to unpack that right there. But, um, but yeah, you're absolutely right, you're absolutely right, in that the mental health needs to be dealt with more in the fact that, you know, you can be the greatest paramedic in the world, you can be the quickest innovator and the best innovator and, and you're still, you know, you're still not going to save, really anybody in terms of, you know, code saves, or whatever the people you're gonna save, you're gonna save, and the people that you aren't, you aren't in, you know,

I've talked to a lot of police officers that, you know, have been in shootings, and like, their partner was shot and killed. And, and they will feel like, you know, the, so many of us feel like, we should have done more. And like, if I'd only done this, and if I'd only done that, then it's like, this chain of events was going on before you got there before you got the call, you know, the person that had a cardiac arrest before, this was already in motion, before you got there. And so you really have nothing to do with this, you know, in terms of the the poor outcome. There's a good story that one of the peers at the retreat I go to tells he was a police officer, and he's an FTO. And he had a, he had a, you know, an FTO, with a new guy with him. And he was having him drive, he was driving one day, and, and a drowning comes in all the way across town. They have no business being there, they're not going to do anything, they're gonna get there super late, but they're like, but he was thinking this will be good, that'd be a really good call for him to practice driving code 300 pressure on, and you know, without, it's not going to make any difference if he messes up or whatever. So anyway, so he's got, he's driving his code through to this call this drowning, and he takes a wrong turn. And yes, it's a permanent turn around. And they, you know, they get to the scene kids has passed away. You know, people are cleaning up and all that kind of stuff. And so then they go on their merry way. Two years later, this cop says to his FTO, is not as FTO anymore, obviously. But he's was saying, you know, it goes, remember that drowning, you got to fight only not made that left, turn and fuck that up, that kid might still be here. And it's like, what, like, you had absolutely no, no impact on the outcome of that kid, like, you are never going to get there. And this guy still felt like his failure, or his mistake caused, you know, the, the death of this kid. And we, you know, we just do the best we can, you know, in the circumstances, and, and we're not going to save everybody. And things happen. And there's, you know, I mean, there's, there's nothing we can do about it. And it's not doesn't mean we're not a rescuer, it doesn't mean we're not, you know, good at our jobs, or we're, especially we're good people, and we, you know, we put so much of our value on our job and our self worth in our job and to do well. And when we like for you, that's just, you know, being black cloud that you call it. It's just got to be just brutal, because that's, you know, who you are, you're a rescuer, and you're not rescuing anybody. And and so you that just makes you feel like well, who the hell am I you know, and your identity and all that and that's sort of the thing they need to teach us in the beginning it's not wrap our identities up in this job either. It's, I mean, it's a calling it's a passion but it's also a job it's not who we are, you know?

 James Geering 1:14:16

Absolutely. Well, I want to end with some kind of some good news before we go down your your mental health journey. The three little kids that they pulled out and you tree it talk to me about the outcome obviously, the sibling was obviously deceased, but what about the three that the removed from the building?

 1:14:35

The three, we're back, we're back at Solomon the hospital shortly after? I believe they all lived I know. I think we even went that way later on. And one of them I think they spent like, an ungodly amount of time in the hospital, but one of them remember her she's riding like a big wheel down the hallway at the hospital. I'm pretty sure they all survived. I'm not 100% Sure they were they were I'll still live when we went saw them, like about a week afterwards. But I don't, I don't even know the full the outcome of them and I don't even the mom was not at home. She's next door. And I mean, people, you know, demonize her for that. And it's like, I

don't know what the circumstances were, I don't know if she just ran next door really quick. You know, like, Do you have any paper towels? I mean, I don't know if it's something super innocent that we all sometimes just try to get away with really quick. So yeah, so I'm not sure their long term recovery, but I know they were all still alive, you know, a few weeks later, and I know one of them did pretty well.

 James Geering 1:15:41

Well, I think that's what, you know, kept me going even though you lose, because obviously has lots of saves, as far as you know, pre codes and all that stuff. So So those right and lots of good outcomes, but it's not being disheartened. It's being ready for that time when you can make a difference. And obviously yours that particular call that came very early in your career.

 1:16:00

Yeah, no, absolutely. Yeah.

 James Geering 1:16:03

So walk me through. I mean, that was your paramedic, then you enter Berkeley FD, walk me through now with this lens that you have your kind of downward spiral and then the ultimate diagnosis of PTSD.

 1:16:18

You know, I actually went to I got hired at Morogoro into fire, which is a local area to is pretty small, that I just want them to not feel like they were left out or anything. I just worked there for about a year and a half. They were there a great department and I loved it there. I loved the people there. But it was just really slow. It was very wealthy community. And I like working in the inner city being really, really busy. So anyway, so yeah, I went to Berkeley. And I was pretty angry person at Berkeley people call me Debbie Downer that I was a highly respected that I was a good firefighter, and I was a good paramedic. And but yeah, I still I'm still pretty angry. And I think it's just a matter of slang great. My parents are not being parents, and, you know, I get really pissed off at leadership or supervision when they wouldn't do their jobs. You know, it's like, just fucking do your job was like, the way I felt, you know, and then people who didn't train as hard as me, you know, they pissed me off and say, as a as a pretty angry person. And anyway, so I mean, I went through the third being a firefighter and paramedic, and you know, and then I got promoted to the driver and I drove for seven years. And that was a great, I love that. And, you know, it's on the truck for a while. And I really love that. And then, and then I was promoted to we first were lieutenant, so first promoted to lieutenant and we're too small department to have lieutenants and captains. So they just made us all captains, because it's pretty much the same job. And so then, yeah, as a captain, and I started, when the tones would go off, I'd start my anxiety, I'd start having these, like panic attacks. Like, it didn't matter what the call was for, you know, we the mean, people call us up for leaking hydrants didn't matter what the call was for when the tone when that sound happened. I had like a physiological response. Like, like I said, it was it was like they said, you know, there'd been a mass shooting

of school or something like that, I had the same physiological response to that, that I had to, you know, like the same drunk guy that we go on all the time. So that started happening. And it's just like, you know, what the hell is this? I'm usually, like, pretty common, you know, don't get excited about that stuff. And so that started happening. The station I was working at, we were really busy. We're especially really busy at night, I had all the merch by the UC Berkeley campus and I had all the fraternities and sororities and most of the dorms. And you know, it's just a shit show every night in terms of drunk kids and fire alarms and, and accident just all kinds of crap and and so I was horrendously sleep deprived. Just really, really, really sleep deprived. And and so, you know, somebody pointed out to me that I was an asshole, and in people are moving out of my station, you know, that I was a captain and I was kind of like, you know, what the hell's going on? Like, I take care of my guys and somebody told me like, yeah, you definitely take care of your crew but people are getting tired of being yelled at and I'm like, oh shit, like that's not the leader I want to be so I need to figure this out. And so I started like kind of, you know, trying to be introspective about that and figure out what's going on and then I had an opportunity to move to a slower station and part of me you know, my pride got in the way I was like, I can't go to slower station your enemy and I need to be tough and I'm proud and balaban and couple people that I work with that were good friends of mine that cared a lot about me were like, You need to go to a flower station and so I'm like, Alright, so I moved to a slower station and and that's what it's like. I almost kind of liken it to like I got off the train No, like, I was just constantly going nonstop at this one station. And even my days off, I'd get home and I was so exhausted that it was, I mean, I was just kind of walking around nervous energy and. And so I went to the slower station. And I mean, we still ran, you know, plenty of calls, but it was a lot slower at night. And so I got some sleep. And it's like, I kind of, like I said, I felt like I got off the treadmill. And that's when all the symptoms really started happening. I started having nightmares, you know, I'd wake up screaming. And then for the most part, I didn't sleep early at all, I'd wake up like at four, and I was wide awake and ready to go. And I just thought it was like, Oh, maybe I really don't need that much sleep, I just got a little bit more sleep. And I'm, you know, I'm feeling great. And the anxiety started getting worse. And then a videotape of really bad call started playing in my head. And it was just like, there's just constant noise in my head just all the time. And I could never shut it off. And it was like, you had a really good crew that was really motivated. And, like, you know what I mean, I just trusted with everything, like, I'd never, they didn't need supervision, it was so my circumstances really good. And then I started crying at work. Like, I don't cry, like would cry if I got really, really angry. So then I that that's only I think it was like my mechanism of, well, I'm either gonna punch this person, or cry. And that was like my keep from punching people. But I never cried and I started crying on calls at work and, you know, obviously having to hide that. And then I started, you know, I was pretty irrational at home, I was mad at my wife all the time for like ridiculous things. And you know, I know us isolating in, you know, waking up screaming and, and that videotapes are playing in my head over and over. And then. And then I started crying on the way home from work, I go through a 48 hour shift and you know, be a fine. And then I'd cry all the way home. And I'm like, What in the hell is this about? And then. So, backing up a little bit to one somebody said I was, I'd been an asshole and yelling at everybody. And you know, and all that anxiety started and panic attacks on like, I went saw therapists and like, I fix this shit. And so I went and saw therapist, and she's looking at PTSD. And I'm like, yeah, no, I don't. And she's like, Yeah, I think you do. And I was like, yeah, that's not gonna happen to me, I'm way tougher than that. There's, I can handle anything and. And so I continue to see her worldly with an attitude of like, let's fix this. So I can get back to my job and get on with my life. And she's like, No, is like something you're gonna have to work through. And I'm like, No, we're going to we're going to fix this and, and we're going to move on. And so that was in May, I started seeing her and then throughout the, throughout the summer, that's one thing. So you know, I moved to that slower station, and things just started getting worse and worse and worse. And until one day, I got off

work, and I'm like, Hey, I'm not gonna cry. There's no way I'm gonna cry. I'm gonna make it home and I made it home, I didn't cry. And I was so like, Dude, I got this. And then I was gonna go meet somebody to play tennis. And I changed my clothes. And I got my car. And I started driving across town, and like the whole world, like, just folded on me. And, you know, it's ballin', I was crying. I was like, I can't take this anymore. And I looked for a tree to drive into just this. You know, I was never really I think that I wanted to die. I think it was I just wanted to stop. Because I even felt like if I even drive into a tree, and I'm in a coma for a month, it's like that's a month that I don't have to go back to work. And the best part of it is, I don't have to tell anybody why I can't go back to work. I don't have to admit. And and because I was full of shame. I was so full of shame. Nobody could find out that you know, I was such a worse bag and I couldn't handle my job because I worked so hard on being like the toughest strongest person out there. That like man what a sham I am. And and so I started looking for, you know, a pole and then I'm like, Poles are meant to knock over and then I'm looking for a tree and then I'm like, you know, I know some people work at this department and like, what am I going to do to them if I kill myself and they have to respond on me and and so I'm like, just get to the tennis courts. Just you know, I mean, it was just like a second by second. You know, people say live day by day and sometimes hour by hour, sometimes it's minute by minute and it was literally second by second just get yourself there and get out of this. This mess you're in right now. And that's where I decided that okay, I've got to I got to take time off work. I can't keep doing this because I am going to end up killing myself. And so then I made the call to to take time off work and I didn't know how to do it, you know, I didn't like how to you. And so, you know, I called and I was lucky that the battalion chief that I talked to was a really good guy and his sister actually committed suicide from Origins not committed, but died by suicide from PTSD, so he really understood and, you know, didn't give me any crap about it or anything. And, you know, told me all the paperwork, I needed to turn out, turn or fill out and everything and and so, I saw I went off work, I didn't tell a soul, you know, people just saw me suddenly, I don't know if you guys have tell us stuff. But they certainly saw and tell the staff that, you know, I was off, like, through the rest of TELUS stuff, I was off on sick leave. And, and so I started getting texts and phone calls, and I couldn't talk to anybody, I didn't want anybody to know, you know, what I was going through, because I was like, I'm going to fix this and come back to work. There's, I absolutely will. And so I don't want anybody to know. And so I text people back, like, you know, thank you so much for checking on me, I'll be fine. I'm hoping to be back to work soon. And, and,



1:26:08

and everything just continued to spiral that just kept spiral, I kept seeing a therapist, and that EMDR therapist and EMDR didn't work. And I had the greatest therapist, and I mean, just like the best therapists in the world, and. And things were working. And so I went to that retreat, the West Coast post trauma retreat, and you know, people were saying, You need to go and I'm like, yeah, no, like, I don't need I don't need that. I don't need some residential six day program. You know, that's not, that's not for me. I'm not one of those people. You know, same thing with taking medication, like, yeah, there's no way I'm taking medication, I'm not one of those people. That's not me, I'm tougher and stronger, I can do this myself, I don't need a crutch and just all this tough guy stuff. And, and so I went to that retreat, and I'll never forget, the first day, I sit in there, and there's six, there's clot seven of those clients sitting at the same table, and I look around, and it's like, there's like 20 people here. And they've all gone through this. Like, I'm not alone. I thought for sure I was the only one in my department. We're kind of a small department, we have 125 uniformed personnel. And I'm the only one that's struggling with this. And that was another source of my shame, like, what the fuck is wrong with me that

all these people are seeing the same shit I am, and they're fine. So I went through this retreat. And you know, it's funny, because most of the people that go to that retreat, they go there to deal with, you know, their PTSD and work stuff. And then they find out there, they end up dealing with all that other crap that they've been piling in them forever. And, and so I left there with hope for the first time and EMDR started working, you know, started doing Dr. On the same calls that I tried before that really didn't do anything. And, and the EMDR started helping, and I start, I still had a lot of struggles, I still had a few suicide issues where I was really suicidal. But I had asked for help. And that was, I think the biggest difference in, in my, in the change in me was now it's okay to ask for help. And so I and we, and you know, I know, it's like I asked for help by going to that therapist, but it was more like, hey, like, fix this shit. Like, I'm not asking for help. I'm paying you money to fix this, you know, like, and so. So I would ask for help, you know, I, you know, I had one time where I was really suicidal. And I called somebody and I told him I felt and we talked for like an hour. And and that made all the difference in the world was just asking for help and having people be there for me. And so yeah, it was a it was a long struggle and continued therapy. And yeah, it's been a long, it's been a long road. But I'm, like I said before I, I couldn't be happier. I've never been this happy in my entire life.

J

James Geering 1:29:07

So you said that EMDR wasn't working? And then it did. Was there an inclusion of the childhood trauma in the second kind of phase of that, that you were bringing into the whole thing that was maybe allowing you to address some things that hadn't been included before? Are you always talking about your childhood with your therapist?

o

1:29:27

No, I didn't talk about my childhood with my therapist very much a little bit. But I think the reason why EMDR started working was I, I was open to asking for help. Do you know what I mean? It's like, it was like, okay, like, I'm, I was never consciously like, you know, I don't want this to work or I'm not open to it. I was totally open to it. I was like anything that frickin helps except for medication, of course. And that was another piece of the puzzle too. That really helped me a lot. I'll get there in a second. But um, yeah, I just think it was because I was ready and it was okay to ask for help, and it was okay to be helped, like in the subconscious part of my brain, like it really became part of me. It's okay to ask for help. And so I think that's why the EMDR started helping. And then when I finally gave in to medication, like things had gotten so bad that I was, it was after it was, well, after the retreat, and I had learned, I would go back to the retreat as appear. And I talked to more people, and they're like, oh, yeah, I'm on medication. And you know, like a cop, like, Yeah, I'm still working, and I'm on medication. And this is what it does for me. And I'm like, Oh, shit, like, these super tough people are taking medication. And so then I started looking into it. You know, it's like, everybody was on medication at these retreats. You know, I mean, it was like, it was okay. And it was normal and, and things were getting super shitty. So I was like, You know what, I'm going to try it. And I'm like God, I put on Paxil and Wellbutrin. And like the videotape, like, shut off in my head in, you know, when I'd start to spiral, like, it was just like a four was put underneath me, it's like, things didn't change, I still felt everything. But I was able to stop and catch myself from spiraling completely out of control. And, and it's funny because I went from saying, like, Don't even mention medication, if you taught if you say medication retirement not going to talk to you anymore, to like, oh my god, if you take away my medication, I'm gonna fucking kill you. And

so, you know, it just has such a stigma around it, we'd go on all these calls, and you know, some, you know, 21 year old girlfriend would break up with him, and he'd be suicidal. And we go and you know, you look for his medication. And it's like Alec, he's on Wellbutrin. He's one of those guys. And it became such a stigma that that was like, There's no fucking way I'm going to become one of those people. And then it's like, and then and then I, when I learned to that is, this is a physiological injury, it's like it's taking like Paxil or Wellbutrin, or any of these medications for PTSD is no different than taking insulin for diabetes, like no different, like your brain needs this medication to function. And so without it, it's not going to function very well and you're gonna have PTSD symptoms. And so you get the take that medication and it's in your brain can function. And then sleep was another part of it, too. When I started seeing a psychiatrist, she says, I don't care what we get you addicted to, you have to sleep, you're never going to start healing, you're never going to be able to move forward in this until you start sleeping in I mean, that's when your brain, you know, heals and you know, gets rid of all the crap out of it and the gunk out of it. So if you're not sleeping, your brain is never going to heal. And so she does. So she put me on Ambien she was I don't like I said, she's like, if we need to deal with you know, you're getting to do this later, we will. But we're not going to get anywhere to sleep. And so that was her approach. And so we started doing that and I started sleeping. And it made a tremendous difference because before you know even sleep at all is awake. You know, my sleep for an hour here haven't been nightmare wake up, fall asleep three hours later, have a nightmare wake up and then it's just like, am I gonna go back to sleep? So that that made a tremendous difference. The medication and sleeping like really made a huge difference. It's like, why didn't I do this months and months and months ago, my, my struggle would have been so much easier would have been so less. And that's one of the reasons why I you know, I have a podcast and I wrote the book and I talked about this all the time. It's because I just want people to struggle like I did. There's no reason for it. There's no reason to be the super tough person and, and not ask for help. It's like Don't be an idiot. Don't waste your life. Don't wait till you've lost everything and pushed everybody away from you. And you know to get help.

 James Geering 1:33:36

Are you still on Ambien now? Are you able to wean off that one?

 1:33:39

Oh, I got off of that, you know, I still I still struggle, sleep I think you know, when I your brain still being wired when you're in your 20s and, and so all my 20s I woke up all year. I mean, I was getting woken up all night long for calls and because of work. And so I think my brain is wired to wake up all night long. Like I didn't even know it was the thing that you're supposed to fall asleep and then not wake up again until the morning like I had no idea that that's like, that's the thing, and that's what you're supposed to do as a healthy human being. So I still trouble have trouble sleeping, like all use Ambien. And like a bottle of 30 will last me six months, maybe, you know, I mean, it's like, have a couple of nights where I don't sleep very well. And it's like, okay, I really need to get some sleep tonight. So I'll take you know, take an Ambien but it's it's very very infrequent. And so yeah, but I was able to totally get off me and it was it was no problem in you know, she also my psychiatrist brought up the fact that it's like, your brain is so like on this loop of not sleeping, that if we you know same thing that kind of like Ativan does for you is it it breaks that loop it gets your body used to like falling asleep at a

certain time and sleeping and and you can get on that kind of a pattern. Then you're gonna be better in you'll be able to get off of it. And yeah, I had no problem, no problem at all getting off Ambien so I was fortunate that way

J James Geering 1:35:09

for a couple of things I've come across one was very recent, but the first one doc parsley sleep remedy, he said, Doug, Kurt passed, he was a Navy Seal, became a physician join the SEAL teams again. Now he's kind of one of the sleep gurus. And he back then had all his seals were on Ambien because of their, you know, kind of nighttime training. And so now you can buy that. And I've used that once in a while, and it works really well. And it's all that one's all the supplements and magnesium and you know, all the different things with a little tiny bit of melatonin, not to snow you with melatonin. But the other thing that I came across very recently, is a thing called New calm. And what it does, he talks about the amygdala, it reprograms the amygdala through sound waves through a headphones, it's like you're wearing noise cancelling headphones. And I'd heard this kind of thing before, but the origin story goes back for years with this particular company. And they actually worked with NASA and the seals and all these performers. But it was a machine before \$6,000 machine. So you and I will never gonna be able to afford that. Well, now with the advanced technology and smartphones. It's become an app. And so there is even a free trial if you put a new commerce and you see a LM free trial. Yeah, it's it's been absolutely a game changer for me. So not only Wow, the sleep side, but also the downregulation. Because my my barometer was driving, like, that's where I would get my angry if someone would cut me off. You know, as you know, we just discussed, we've seen a lot of horrible shit. And it's usually the person that's caused it as they're sitting on the curb feeling sorry for themselves after they've killed the manual minivan for the kids. So that was my, you know, the place I would see my my anger the most. And it's so so much less now. Still, I'm not happy when it happens. But I don't have this kind of physiological, I want to grab them out their car and smash their face to pieces, right. But I only used to have so and then there is you know, there's a lot of downregulation stuff. There's one that you play at night, that sounds like rain. But again, there's these undulation tones underneath, and it keeps you in a deep sleep. So that I literally only interviewed the guy a month ago, and I've been shouting from the rooftops ever since.

 1:37:22

Oh, yeah, I'll check that out. That's pretty cool. That's thank you for that info. Yeah.

J James Geering 1:37:27

Brilliant. All right, well, then you mentioned podcasts. And as you want to go back before I before I go there. So pharmaceuticals. I've had lots and lots and lots of people on here that it didn't work for. But I think this is a really interesting part of the conversation is there's a toolbox. It might be psychiatric meds, it might be psychedelics, it might be equine therapy, diving, you name it. And the worst thing anyone can say is, oh, here's what works. You know, I mean, someone else telling someone, this is what works. Understanding that there's this wide ranging toolbox and everyone has their own combination, I think is so important. And I've got a good friend of mine who Wellbutrin has worked extremely well for him that and testosterone is

a combo that's getting him through. And ironically, he's in a local department here where they work them to death, you were you know, if you're talking about 4896 is 56 hour work week, you guys are getting work to death. So in an ideal world, we change that, and we get our respondents getting a lot more rest, and we don't need to have as much but I think, you know, until then, you know, these are important tools that will you know, won't work for some people but will work for another and they need to definitely be kept in the toolbox.



1:38:39

Yeah, I completely agree. You know, there's, there's, you know, there's two different kinds of like, medicating, you know, there's like hair, oh, you're having these symptoms and just here's there's some medicine that you and walk away and, and you know, there's two things are really, really important is finding somebody who's culturally competent, who understands first responders, you know, how our brains work. It makes such difference in another thing is somebody who's follows up like, I can't tell you how many people have trouble finding a psychiatrist, like they'll go to psychiatrists that prescribe, you know, they get PTSD. Here's some, you know, Paxil and Wellbutrin or, you know, whatever, there's so many different medications out there. Here's some, you know, Seroquel. give that a go. And that's it. There's no follow up, there's no come back next week, my psychiatrist like I had to come back regularly, like there's no prescription until I unless I was coming back to fix, you know, then to go over all my symptoms again, and you know, finding I started on a different one, I think, and it wasn't working. And it takes some time to find or it can take a long time to find ones that work and the tools that work and you're absolutely right. There's a big toolbox of things that work for different people. And you know, we even just, I think as a society, we want quick fix especially as first responders because we're very action oriented, like there's nothing worse than being injured or being sick, and having like, rest be the action, like, no, we want to do something to fix this. Now, we don't want to, like sit here and wait for something to happen. And so being on getting on any kind of medication or any kind of tool, you're talking about it, we, we want things to work right now. And it's so hard for us to be patient and you sometimes you have to wait. I mean, sometimes finding the right medication or the right tool, you know, whether it's gummies, or new calm, or you know, just like that all the therapy, EMDR you name it, it can take months to find the things that work for you. And we are so good at you know, so many people are like, Yeah, I went to therapist once it didn't work. And it's like, okay, well, you know, I mean, it's it doesn't work like that, or I tried I even did that last first prescribe Zoloft. And, and I took it once, and I felt a little nauseous. And I didn't feel any better. And so I said, yeah, it didn't work. And so I was like a team, I was like seeing medications that work for me. And so it's so important, like you said, to look at everything you have and find somebody who's culturally competent, and and find somebody who is going to continue to follow up, and is going to be in a process with you. Because all these tools or processes, they're not, you know, a one time fix at all. And so that's why it's so important that, you know, we don't get caught up in the you know, I mean, health care in this ship can at least in America, it is right now and and it's just, you know, like, your doctor comes in and sees you 15 minutes, and then you never hear from them again. Or they email use lab results. And you don't know what the hell's going on. So anyways, yeah, it's been with this in doing any kind of medications or tools, it's so important to have somebody who's going to follow up with you.



James Geering 1:42:00

Absolutely. I think the other thing is, you know, in an ideal world, because I agree with you

100% playing the long game, I hurt my back in the fire service and the workman's comp, you know, solution was pills and surgery, you know, and I was like, yeah, that's not going to happen. Luckily, I had a kind of coaching athlete background, and I'm like, No, that's bullshit. And so found the single foundation training did Cairo did PT, but foundation training was the extra tool in this incredible Yes, yeah. lapsit You'd love it. And it took five months. But when I got back to the fire service, I was stronger than ever been. And I'd addressed my you know, my issues. So those extra months pay dividends for years after I just did the same competition. I do every year the other day, and it was 225 deadlifts for reps after doing frickin a bunch of other stupid shit before, you know at 49. And it's still working, no surgeries meds. So this is why this work is worth it to give again, that word hope. But in an ideal world, I think the other thing that I think is an important part of the conversation is these medications are amazing. But I hope that on people's journeys that are on meds, eventually, this combination of other holistic things will then start weaning them off. And I don't think and it sounds like you've got a great psychiatrists, but a lot of people in medicine, and you hear it in the firehouse Yeah, well, I got diabetes now. So I got to take this the rest of my life where I got high blood out of losing weight and taking care of yourself. Okay, you're on it right now. Because you're dangerously hypertensive. Let's reevaluate in three months, because the goal is to get you off these medications that needs to be part of the conversation too.



1:43:42

Yeah, I completely agree with you. Yes, there also is people who just, you know, people who struggle with depression their whole life. You I mean, it's like and it's because of a chemical imbalance in their brain, like they're gonna be on medication their whole life. You know, I worked with somebody who's physically fit to triathletes or did triathlons was incredibly fit. And in trim, and you know, low body fat, all that kind of stuff, and has high blood pressure and has to be on high blood pressure medication. It's like she's gonna be on it the rest of her life, because that's just our her body chemistry works. But yeah, you're absolutely right. And so I think it's just a matter of kind of determining what category you're in, is this something that I can get myself off of, you know, by taking care of myself and doing other things? And so for me, I was on the packs on the Wellbutrin and because I needed that, you know, foundation underneath me, and as I've gotten a lot better, I've gotten off the Wellbutrin. You know me because like you say, I have these other tools like I actually get some sleep now and, you know, I take care of myself and you know, in terms of mental health wise and, you know, I go back to that retreat, and if I need Help I you know, I call I call somebody or I should say I asked for help. And, and so I was able to get off the Wellbutrin. And er and my brain has healed a lot. And I was able to lower my dose of the Paxil. And I'm still on some Paxil. Because, you know, I still I don't have the physical, logical, I don't panic attacks, I don't get that physical response anymore. I mean, every once in awhile, I will. But, you know, I still kind of struggle a little bit with, you know, like, intrusive thoughts. And so the Paxil really helped with that. So it's like, you don't I mean, I was able to lower my dose, but it's like, I don't even I don't even want to get off of it right now. Because I don't know you. I mean, this, like, it's very difficult to get rid of intrusive thoughts on your own. I mean, you know, you can I can do all the tools and distract myself, but it's really hard to keep those things from coming up. And so I'm staying on those right now. Yes, pardon me? Yeah, you're absolutely right. There's two different, there's two different categories of that. And yeah, instead of saying, Well, I'm gonna be on, you know, insulin and high blood pressure medication the rest of my life, it's like, Well, why don't you take care of the, you know, the issue. And then you won't need those anymore. You know, if there's, if there's a cause that you can take care of the absolutely, I completely agree with you. But that's why it's so important for it's not just to be somebody handy, some medication and walk away. There's

somebody who's really like actually treating you. And, you know, looking after you and making sure that's what you need. And you know, like the doctor, instead of saying, like, hey, we might need insulin, high blood pressure medication right now to keep you alive. But let's get this lower your weight, let's get you physically active, and we might be able to get rid of this, and which is gonna make you healthier in the long run. So yeah, no, I completely agree with you.

 James Geering 1:46:45

I want to hit one more topic, then go to the podcast, you ended up getting a medical retirement, obviously, with the PTSD diagnosis. When you were struggling, you're like, there's 100 plus people in my department, why am I the only one that's being a pussy? Walk me through because this is I think, a really important thing that I heard in the other podcasts I listened to, you have this perception of this is what people are going to think of me? What was the reality when you transitioned out with the men and women of your department when you went back to visit

 1:47:16

180 degrees different than I thought I had to so once you once you're not in a station for six months, you know, due to an injury or being sick or whatever. Once you're off for six months, and somebody can bid your spot, somebody can move into your spot. And so I was off for six months, and my spot was open, and somebody took it. And so I had to go get on, like I still on the books, I was not working, but you know, still on the books. So I had to go to the station and get all my gear out and clean up my locker, all that kind of stuff. So this person can move in. So you know, I call the head and, and, you know, the crew, there's like, oh, come have lunch with us. And so I was talking to them. And you know, I asked one of them who seems to know, you know, there's always that one person who knows everything that's going on in the department, and you don't know how but he does. And I said, So what's everybody saying about me? And he goes, nobody's talking about you. He goes, everybody's saying that, like if this can happen to you, then holy fuck this could happen to us. And then I, and then I did. I went back in, I talked, there was another guy who ended up getting PTSD. And he called me, you know, calling for help. And so when he and I were both like, well enough, we went back to our department, and we talked to every single shift and told them our story. So when you I mean, just prevent this from happening to them. And every I mean, people were just so supportive, and incredibly caring. And the response was really overwhelming. And how caring everybody was and, and then I started getting phone calls and texts or people in the department saying, Man, I've been really struggling to, like, a not a lot, but a lot, way more than I had ever imagined, like people who are just tough motherfuckers in this guy call me he's like, I'm really struggling. You know, what do I do? And yeah, so I was by no means the only person in the department that quote unquote, couldn't handle a job. I was not the only person that was struggling through this. So I mean, I don't want anybody to struggle with this. But it was also it was another good feeling of knowing that I'm not alone in this. And this is not just me. And it helped. It helped me a lot.

 James Geering 1:49:36

For sure. It's crazy as well, because you hear this over and over and over again. And what's beautiful is when someone goes through this crucible and comes out the other end, all these

other people come out of the shadows and go hey, can I have a word? I've been going through some stuff. Yep. But before that, because we are stoic. You can't come onto the scene of a car crash and be like, Oh my god. Robots blood and start cleaning around everywhere you put your face on and you take care of it. But the problem is we forget to take it back off when the call is done. So when you look around a firehouse, you like, everyone else's good. It's just me, Why am I being such a pussy? What you know, they're all fine, what's wrong with me. But then you climb in someone else's head and this like, everyone else is fine. I'm the only one you know what I mean. And it's it's absolutely crazy. But this is what happens. So ironically it takes the people that survived because, sadly is how many people will be lost, that didn't get the help in time. So the people that survived that come through that an hour out there speaking like yourself, that is saving so many lives, because we're breaking down that facade of, you know, of strength, especially to pick on men growing up in a society where a man was Arnold Schwarzenegger or John Wayne, you know, none of neither of whom were soldiers or firefighters or anything of service, really, I mean, our ultimately held office, but I mean, true sight. And that was who our fucking role models were. And it wasn't even the real people. That was the character they portrayed on a film. And so we forget that it's the yin and the yang, this time to put your big boy or big girl pants on and handle what needs to be handled. But it was that kindness and compassion, it was that softness that took us into this profession in the first place. Yeah, so instead of beautiful yin yang, we become a white circle. And we wonder why we all fall apart. Yeah,

 1:51:30

I completely agree with you. So I met somebody through all my kind of go into that retreat, who was he went through a roof and was in wet right under the seat of the fire, barely got out with his life. And he end up getting PTSD. And he ended up having retire. And it's so funny, because, you know, just as we were just talking about, they ended up doing this video thing. And they realized that not one person on that crew who experienced that talk to each other about it. Like the captain, you know, the captain had, you know, that his own, you know, issues of feeling like he failed, because when this has happened to one of the, you know, Chris crew members and on his watch, and, and so he was going through his struggles, and in the firefighter who did go through the roof, you know, obviously he was having his struggles. And then, you know, the other crew on the truck, we're having everybody who's having like a struggle around this call, and not one single person talk to each other about it. It was like the craziest thing ever. Like, I remember the captain saying, like somebody said, have you talked to Jeff about it? Then he's like, No, and it's like, why are we not talking to each other about it, they all thought that they were, you know, this failure in and had some source of shame around this, or, you know, a source that they should be shameful about. And so never said a word to each other. It was just it was, it was incredible. And that's what we do.

 James Geering 1:53:03

Absolutely. Well, I think one of the most powerful mediums that have come out of all this is the word of podcasting. Because you can listen, on your way to a police station, a fire station, a dispatch center, whatever it is, and hear 234 people having a discussion. And in your own, you know, private way you go, Wow, I'm not alone. And these people have gone through some stuff. And some of it's a lot worse. And I've gone through and now they come out the other end, and

they seem happy. Which I think again, is amazing. But it's a very anonymous, beautiful way of storytelling and breaking down this wall. So tell me about Firefly, a deconstructed and why you started that and your journey through that podcast.



1:53:50

So when I when I went to the retreat as a pair, I met somebody else, and he was a police officer. He was undercover police officer. And we all know how deep and dark that world can be. And he ended up becoming an alcoholic and, and getting addicted to drugs. I mean, he's stealing narcotics from, you know, evidence locker and all that kind of stuff. And he ended up losing his family and everything. And he fought and clawed his way back. And he's doing really well. And he started a podcast and because he's still he works in recovery work and, you know, counseling and everything. And so he started a podcast, and he asked me to be on and I was like, yeah, no, I don't, you know, I mean, I'm not my story is not worth it. And so he kept bugging me. So I finally went on. And it was really cool to tell my story. It felt really neat to tell my story. And it was really fascinating to hear it back. Because, you know, we're so good at minimalizing things. And you know what, we've been through everything and when you when you hear it from almost a third person, even though it's yourself. It's like, wow, it's a lot of shit you've been through. And so I thought that was pretty cool. And so I started And that's when I started writing this book, you know, and they talked about all their platform, and you have to get your name out there and all this crap. So you can sell your book or somebody will buy your book. And so, like, I think I'll start trying to get on podcasts. And so I just started finding, you know, mental health firefighting, first responder podcast and asked me if I can be a guest and tell my story. And I was on this one podcast, and that the end of it, the lady who runs it, it's a whole mental health. It's called a mental health news radio. It's a whole network of podcasts around mental health. And she asked me if I do podcasts for her network. And of course, I said, Oh, yeah, like this, not me, me. Like, I'm not, I'm nobody I don't. And then I was like, Oh, my God, like, this is falling in your lap. Like, this is something that like you'd like really like to do. And so, so yeah, so I started it, and I named the firefighter deconstructed, you know, the human behind the uniform, kind of like yours behind the shield. And, and, and I wanted to help people on, you know, who struggled and to tell their story. So other people can hear their stories and say, Oh, I'm not alone. Like, that's my number one message is I'm not alone. And just like you said, it's very intimate, private way of getting help. Like, you can listen to a podcast, and nobody has a freaking clue what you're listening to, you know, you can listen on in your car by yourself, you know, on headphones, or whatever. And I don't know many people who listen to him, like, Leo's out loud and whatever. But so it's the way that so many can listen to this, and, and hear the stories without anybody else knowing. Because in the beginning, you don't want anybody else to know, for a lot of people. And so. So yeah, so I really started the podcast. So people would would listen to stories and realize that they're not alone. And there is hope, and they can get help. And then I didn't realize how cathartic it was for people to tell their story. Like I'd have people on, and they'd come back and tell me like, wow, that was, that was really incredible to tell my story. And it's really healing. And I think also, like I said, you know, when I heard my story back, it just made a lot more real, and a lot more like, like, wow, like, I've been through a lot, and I survived a lot. And, you know, holy crap, what a career I've had. And it just kind of brought a lot more validity to it hearing it. Like I said, almost from that third person point of view. Yeah, it was. It's neat. And people get a lot out of that. Yeah. By, you know, being on the show. And so yeah, so as you know, it takes a lot of work, and just trying to get back into it and trying to get as you know, as much or just get more shows done. And like,

the word finding, it's kind of like, sometimes you feel like you're talking to a wall. And then you get an email from somebody saying, like, what a difference it made. And it's like, okay, I'll keep doing this, you know?

J James Geering 1:58:04

Yep. Absolutely. Well, you mentioned before even beginning podcasts, and you're already starting to write a book. Now that book is out. So talk to me about Flashpoint and tell everyone where they can find it.

i 1:58:17

Oh, thank you very much. So yeah, Flashpoint. It's a story of, you know, kind of my career and getting PTSD and, and how I got through it, and kind of where I am now. And you can get anywhere they are, what a what a labor of love, I really liked to write in, you know, I just started writing kind of when I was going through this, I start writing about the calls that were getting in me in my head. And it, it was just it was really, it just kind of just kind of wrote itself. Like I'm trying to write another book and I'm like, Oh, my God, writing a book is hard. And say you can you can get it anywhere. I'm as I'm as honest and raw, you know, in it that I could be. And it's gotten, it's getting really good reviews, people are loving it and saying they can't put it down. And so yeah, it's been it's been really cool. You know, and, you know, the best part of one of the best parts about this by doing that podcast, and even the book too, is people I get to meet. It's been so cool to talk to people all over the world, and hear our stories and how they're just they're the same. It doesn't matter what country you're in or what language you speak or what kind of EMS system you work in or whatever. It's like the stories are the same. You know, the circumstances are different, but but the the, you know, the human condition is absolutely the same and it's just it's been so neat. I've met so many great people through this book. And through the podcast. It's been it's been really neat. So the books out there, I'm hoping it helps a lot of people and you can get it. You know, obviously Amazon you get anywhere you buy books. So on Kindle, I haven't done a audio format yet. but hopefully that will be soon. But uh, but yeah, it's been, it's been pretty neat.

J James Geering 2:00:07

It underlines what we talked about earlier, you know, would the UK model work in the US? I think so. But you have to have the community and you have to be pulled back into. We are humans first and then insert pigeonhole second. And that the more that we see that amongst each other, when we're in different countries, different states, different uniforms, or whatever it is, the more healing it's going to go on. Because that two dimensional, well, you're this kind of person, obviously, all it does is just destroy and weaken a nation. But what really heals us and pulls us together? Is that commonality, the seeing the same person in someone else? And starting there, the nucleus, and then expanding out and Okay, well, I don't agree with you about this particular thing. But it's all right. We've already had a great conversation. And, you know, this is where we meet. And it could be, like you said, a female dispatcher in New Zealand and a male SWAT officer in Orlando, but they both know what,



2:01:07

yes, and they still like have the same night, they both have nightmares. And they, you know, I mean, they both suffer from anxiety or depression or whatever, you're absolutely right. And, you know, I admire some of the people who speak out, you know, who are those, you know, SWAT officers, and those, you know, I talked to a Delta Force, you know, was on my podcast, and he suffered from PTSD. And for him to be able to say that it's like, okay, well, this guy's going through this, and maybe it's okay, that I'm going through too. And then for that, you know, dispatcher in New Zealand, you know, you know, like, being a woman in the fire service, it was kind of like, well, they expect us, you know, to kind of get sad and emotional and not be able to handle that part of the job, because we're not tough enough. And so I, that's one of the reasons why I struggled so hard is because it's like, I don't want anybody thinking that I want to, I want to be one of one of the crew members, I want people to want me on their engine and want me on their truck. And, and I can't be this crying, you know, a little woman, because then then what are they gonna think of me and, and so, you know, it's so important for that dispatcher, and in New Zealand, or whatever, you know, to speak up to, and it just allows all of us to, you know, to speak up and to speak our truth. In this kind of, like, just by you, you being you and you being vulnerable and honest and authentic, you allow other people to be vulnerable and honest and authentic. And, you know, that's why I try to be that as much as I can. So it'll maybe give people the inspiration to, to do that themselves. And like I said, get help and know that they're, you know, they're not alone.



James Geering 2:02:46

100% Well, we talked about your book, the closing questions now? Is there a book written by someone else that you love to recommend? It can be related to our conversation today? Or completely unrelated?



2:02:59

So Brene Brown, I don't know if you've heard of Brene Brown? Oh, yes, I have. Yeah, she will. She has a TED talk, which is like, it's 20 minutes long. And I guess like the most the most seen TED Talk, like in the world or whatever. But she has a book called gifts of the gifts of the imperfection. And, you know, as I think so many first responders just like perfectionist or so much we're all or nothing. We put on this tough face, we can't be imperfect, we can't be vulnerable. And, and that book is just, it's incredible is one of the first once I read, it was really, really amazing. You know, to help me make it okay to heal and ask for help. And then I'll there's a scrape, a book that I have is totally escaping me right now. I'll have to send it to you and I can think of it. It's a it's a really short book. It's written like, I think kids can read it, too. It's so kind of short and has illustrations. And it's basically like what childhood abuse does us. And it's like, I read that and I was like, oh my god, like, like, Okay, this year, I mean, like, it did happen to me, and I'm not just being a wuss bag. It's like, this is what happens to kids when they're neglected. And so it's like, it's not just me being a failure. And it's like, it's the easiest read in the world. So people who don't even read, like can read this book. Oh, I think it's called like crying, the pain, outgrowing the pain and it's, it's, it's another one that really, really opened my eyes. And I read a ton so my gosh, I could go on for days about books. They I think those are two really significant, significant ones. Probably a lot for me.



James Geering 2:04:49

I think one of the biggest realizations I've heard a lot of people on here have with their childhood trauma is to finally shirk off the blame. They've always felt well, it was my fault somehow, you know, And then realize that no, you were a victim, that word victim is used in an overused in modern society. Sometimes, however, a young child that was abused or neglected or whatever it had no say in that context, as you said, using your your kind of example of the codes that we don't save. That process happened that happened a long time ago. And you were literally, you know, a symptom by that point of that person or that family's dynamic and bad decisions. And the moment you can realize that, for example, especially a young boy that was sexually abused that you were just a victim, you were preyed upon by a predator. And that is it. That seems to be one of the biggest aha moments for healing.



2:05:41

Yeah, I completely agree. And, and, yeah, so. So one of the ways that one of the things that really helped me heal was, you know, they talked about, like, you know, talk to your little girl, and be kind to your little girl and take care of that little girl inside of you. And of course, in the beginning, I thought that was the dumbest thing ever, but like breathing, and, you know, now breathing is my go to, but, but it's like, treat yourself like you treat a little boy, you know, if you saw a four year old being neglected, or four year old, being abused, what would you do? Like you, you'd probably go apeshit on the person that's hurting them. And so protect yourself the same way, like give yourself the same grace that you would give, you know, a four year old that you saw getting abused, or knew was abused, and what you felt for it. And you have to feel the same thing for yourself in the same, the same exact, you know, kindness that you would give to yourself, or that you would give to that other person that you need to give yourself and look at that little kid inside of you the same exact way that you'd look at any other little kid. And that doing that really helped me a lot.



James Geering 2:06:51

So we talked about books, what about movies and or documentaries that you love?



2:06:58

You know, it's funny, I really liked that show rescue me. And I used to, I used to tell people I say I always say that's the most realistic firefighting show, because you know, you'd see them like trying to drag somebody out of a fire. And it would be dark, you couldn't even see them. And they'd be they'd be running into stuff and you know, getting lost, you know, like it really is not, you know, the run and throw them over your shoulder and run out just before it explodes. And so, but I used to tie that's the most realistic fire show I got except for the ghosts. i Oh, you know what I mean? Like, Tommy would see ghosts and have nightmares. I'm like that. Yeah, we don't see ghosts. And then I got PTSD. And I was like, oh, yeah, it's ghosts. You don't I mean, it was like, it's it is real. So that's show. And then. Gosh, I can't even I can't think of any. Any movies or I'm a role like a documentary person on the role nonfiction person. I read a lot of memoir. Yeah, that's a tough one. He caught me off guard there. I don't, I can't even think of any which is funny, because I do I read a ton of books. And like, look over my books off and see what Yeah, I can't even know. I will tell you when I will tell you when, as the sun does shine by


Anthony Ray hills, hidden Hinton, Anthony Ray Hinton, he was put on death row for a murder that he did not commit, like not even close. Like he was at work. He worked in a warehouse where they lock you in. And that's when the murder took place. But he's African American and the south and they just drag him in. And they said we're and they said it was a sentiment to death row. He was on death row for 30 years. And he talks about how he survived it. And it's incredible. It's the most incredible story ever. And I actually think I even mentioned it in my book about his, you know, people I remember always asking, like, how do you get better from PTSD? How do you heal I don't understand, like, what what is the work that I have to do to get better. And the work is, is telling yourself that you are worthy, even when you don't feel like it because of conversation you've had in your head for your probably your whole life. If you had any childhood traumas that I'm not enough, you know, I'm not worthy. I'm, you know, I'm a failure. I'm a disgrace. I'm, you know, all these things, and you have to change that talk inside of your head, even when you don't believe it. And that's how you get through. That's the work and people say, well, it's so hard. It's like, yeah, it's really hard. That's why it's hard work to get through it. And anyway, so this guy, well, he was locked in prison. He had that attitude of talking to himself and in his mind and taking care of himself in his mind. And, you know, he talks about like, going to Wimbledon and playing in the women's Then you don't I mean, that's what in just how he survived and how he got when he finally was exonerated and got out. How, how he kept from being angry, and, you know, ruining the rest of his life. And, you know, and it's just, it's an incredible book. And so it's like, I first saw it as a as a story on 60 minutes, and I was watching it. And I was like, man, if this guy can, you know, if this guy can get through that, and not, you know, feel sorry for himself, because I think it was so easy for us to get into a pity party. And I will say 30 self pity party, and I throw pretty amazing pity parties. But you know, you just can't You can't stay there. And I think I felt sorry for myself for a good solid year, you know, that I couldn't work, I couldn't do my job. And, you know, why is this happening to me and all that kind of crap. And, and then when I saw him, and then I read his book, I was like, Okay, this guy, if this guy's not feeling sorry for himself, but is working his butt off, you know, to get his life back, then it's like, okay, I can do it, too. So it's a really incredible book. And I think it really speaks to how the brain survives and how the brain heals. And without it's no physiological. You know, there's no big medical words in there all, but it's really incredible. So yeah, that would be big book, I would recommend.

 James Geering 2:11:19

Brilliant, I'm gonna have to get that. Thank you. Well, speaking of amazing people, is there a person that you'd recommend to come on this podcast as a guest to speak to the first responders, military and associated professionals that the world?

 2:11:33

Yeah, absolutely. Oh, my gosh. I'll send you a list. Yeah, there's been some pretty amazing. I've had some amazing people on my podcast that, you know, just like we said, like, you know, you're like, Okay, what's this guy going to, you know, have to say, and, you know, some of the stuff that they talk about are just brilliant. Yeah, I'm, again, drawing a blank right now. top of my head. But yeah, there's, there's some so many amazing people out there to talk to so many people.



J James Geering 2:12:13

It was the Delta guy was at Tom Satterlee, that you spoke

i 2:12:15

to, I was just gonna say, Tom Satterlee. Yeah, he's pretty amazing. Guy, yeah. Oh, right on,

J James Geering 2:12:22

he's definitely, you know, forging a path when it comes to, again debunking that myth that, well, I'm a special operator. So I don't, you know, I don't have feelings. Because to me, if a doubt a guy or saps, or you know, these elite elite performers in the tactical space can be vulnerable and honest and open about their feelings than the rest of us, like, wow, this tough guy thing that I know an SS guy, or a Navy Seal, or a Delta guy that can deal with their feelings and be open. So you know, your excuses invalid. So I love that it kind of breaks that facade of like I said that that false masculinity that I was raised on?

i 2:12:58

Yeah, absolutely. Like, you're gonna go once you go tell Tom Satterlee that he's a pussy for getting PTSD. And you know what I mean, and having this these feelings, it's like, yeah, I dare you. You know what I mean? And so yeah, you're absolutely right, these people. That's why I say then these people when they speak out, it does just tremendous things for the rest of us. And then there's another actually book that I read. When I was when I was starting to struggle. I was looking for any kind of information on this. And the only book that I found at the time, was written by Clint Marlar. Chuck, I don't know if you watch follow hockey at all.

J James Geering 2:13:31

Yeah, he was on my show to have his throat cut. Yeah, amazing. Yeah.

i 2:13:35

So I Yeah, so I found his book, and I read it. And it was like, Oh, here's a super tough badass. who felt who feels the same way? I do. You don't I mean, it's just like, it made it okay for me to feel like that. And it made it okay for me to get help. And yeah, Clint and I are friends now. And yeah, I love that guy. And I sent him an email. You know, after I read the book, and he emailed me back, it was just yeah, he's an amazing guy. So yes, another one.

J James Geering 2:14:02

Yep. That's cool. Very cool. Obviously kindred spirits. All right. Well, yes. The very last question for you make sure where people know where to find you the podcast the book. What do you do to decompress?



2:14:15

I walk I take when I would goofy dog name Harriet. She's an English cream golden retriever. She's the best. I get outdoors. That's a big one. I try to get into nature. I would say the number one thing though to swim like get in the water. I like I really like open water swimming. It's my favorite thing to do. I've done the Alcatraz swim six times. And I always like it. It's like a It's a race even though I'm not racing anybody. But yeah, it's like you want to have a good time and everything and it's like I just want to go out there and bob around in the ocean. And that swimming is a big one. The water is amazing for me. And then breathing. Breathing is my short term one like I'll start kind of kind of spiraling a little bit or getting wound up and it's like, Okay, I just got to stop and breathe and breathe in, I breathe, and just take some deep breaths and just stop wherever I am. I mean, I can even be in my car and do it anywhere I am. And, and, and that's my big one. And this sounds silly to is, you know, so I think one thing that first responders really thrive on is structure. And when you retire, you have no structure around you. And so, you know, like, we're not good decision makers, like, we can never decide where to go eat, you know, all that kind of stuff, we, we can make life and death decisions and, you know, in a few seconds, but we can't make decisions, you know, like daily decisions. And I know I procrastinate and, and so this is gonna sound really silly, but I like to do puzzles and Legos. Because there is a, you know, I have this pile of Legos, and I'm an instruction manual, and I put the thing together and, and I just, it's something I can just follow. And I don't think about I mean, or I could think about things, but it's like this critical structure that I have, and I build something in it. So it just it really, when I circuit and like kind of wound up, you know, bust out, I have a ton of Legos. And I'll build some I'm not good at like making up crap my own but like following instructions. It's, it's really amazing. So I do Legos. My son, right.



James Geering 2:16:23

And I say that 16 He's not a little boy, but it's the same thing. He'll be there and he does the creative stuff. And you know, when he gets a new set, he'll follow the instruction manual, but then he'll start changing it and adapting it and but that's absolutely one of his things. It'd be in the room. cross legged, you know, put the music on now he's older, but he'll be in there for hours sometimes just him in this room for the Lego. It's amazing.



2:16:45

Yeah, yeah. So yeah, and just lately, like trying to like other marketing with my book and everything. Like I don't like doing any of that stuff. And it overwhelms me makes me feel crappy about myself. Because like I said, I can't do an Excel spreadsheet. And so I'm like, like, that was just getting really wound up lately. And so Friday, I was like, Screw it. I'm just gonna sit here and do Legos all day and not worry about any of that stuff. And, and I'm like, Oh, my God, I feel so much better. So yeah. Yeah,



James Geering 2:17:10

brilliant. Well, speaking of the book, then so reminder, well, you've got a beautiful website. So where's the best place online and social media to find all the things?

where's the best place online and social media to find all the things:



2:17:19

So my website is Christy E is an Edward Warren. So C H ri stye. And then wa RR en.com. That's my website. So you can find my, my podcast is there. My book is there, all that stuff is there. We're, you know, like, I do a little bookstore gigs and stuff like that, and all that stuff will be there. I'm on Instagram, I am on Facebook. I can't even I think Instagram is Christie Warren also. And there's also a firefighter deconstructed. I think it's FF deconstructed on Instagram. I'm on LinkedIn. I'm on all the places and then you find my book anywhere. Anywhere you buy books, you can you can find it. And yeah, get my book. Please.



James Geering 2:18:10

Well, Christy, I want to say thank you so much. I mean, like I said, I've been aware of you and your podcast for a while now. I always say this, the universe seems to just make it happen. When the time is right now your book is out. Now we can actually help share that and get people reading it because I'm the same as you. Myself. Marketing is absolutely fucking awful. I wrote a book is there if you want it. But I just



2:18:33

exactly how I feel. Yeah, I feel the same way. Like, oh, I wrote a book if you want to read it is awesome. And if not, I don't care. And yeah, now you have to like, oh, how many likes did I get? And how many reviews do I have? You know, all that kind of bullshit. And I just fucking hate it.



James Geering 2:18:47

One of the authors I had on here, he said, as soon as he's done with his first book, he just forgets about it and moves on to a second one. And that was kind of what I learned into. I'll revisit you know, sometimes, and obviously, it was just come out. But again, for me, it's like, well, my platforms are about other people. I don't want it to be about me and my book. And so it's a hard place. Because yes, you have to obviously let people know is there because it will help but, you know, with so much narcissism in the world, he's like, Well, I don't want to put my face out too much. I want to be behind the shield or uncomfortable.



2:19:18

I know I agree. It's yeah, we're not good self promoters. We aren't at all. No, we're not. I mean, we you know, anybody like if we do some amazing rescue or something at work in the news, you know, sticks microphone in our faces, says Wow, and you're like, No, I was just doing my job was no big deal. I don't like go away. And and yeah, it's the same. I hate it. I thought I did. I published this with a hybrid publisher, which is exactly the same as traditional terms of all the distribution or anything, but you just put the money up front. So I just would like to earn my money back. So I'd spent all my money on it. And so that's what that's why that's, I mean, I

want people to know about us so they can read it. I can maybe help people and like try to get it in Far service and well known, but I'm the I also want to earn some money back because it all I wish I could forget it because that's what I do with my podcast. I put it out there and I don't worry about it. But yeah, anyways, sorry, I'm rambling again, no, not

 James Geering 2:20:17

at all. Well, I want to say thank you so much. It's been an amazing conversation. Thank you for telling your story again. I mean, revisiting some of these memories, obviously can still kind of open a wound a little bit. But as you're aware more than most there's so much value to this story when it gets out there for people to hear and obviously learn more even in your book. But I want to thank you so much for being so generous with your time today and coming on the behind the show podcast.

 2:20:42

James, thank you so much for having me. This has been a really great conversation. I really enjoyed talking to you. And thanks for getting my story out there. And thank you for doing what you do. And like I said, I listen to your podcasts and you've got some amazing stuff on there. And yeah, and keep telling your story and telling other people's stories. It's we just got to get the word out there. I appreciate you having me on and the time and everything. Thank you so much.