

Damian Porter - Episode 790

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SPEAKERS

Damian Porter, James Geering

J James Geering 00:00

Welcome to the behind the shield podcast. As always, my name is James Geering. And this week, it is my absolute honor to welcome on the show, former Special Forces operator, police officer and current firefighter Damien Porter. So in this conversation, we discuss a host of topics from his early life in New Zealand, joining the military in Australia, his lens on law enforcement coming from the Special Operations community, his journey into firefighting, bodybuilding, mental health, strength and conditioning, and so much more. Now, before we get to this incredible conversation, as I say, every week, please just take a moment, go to whichever app you listen to this on, subscribe to the show, leave feedback and leave a rating. Every single five star rating truly does elevate this podcast, therefore making it easier for others to find. And this is a free library of almost 800 episodes now. So all I ask in return is that you help share these incredible men and women's stories. So I can get them to every single person on planet earth who needs to hear them. So with that being said, I introduce to you Damien Porter enjoy.

i 01:34
With Amy, I

J James Geering 01:35

want to start by saying thank you so much not only for coming on the show, but for getting up in your morning in Australia to come on the behind the shield podcast today.

D Damian Porter 01:45

You're very welcome, James, thank you for having me on. I thought about that last night when I was going to be better. This The truth is having my my surgery literally 15 days ago, I tend to wake up about three in the morning with some pain and try and get better sleep and I was eyes

open at four o'clock. So it wasn't as I heard the alarm go off, but I was already up so it's not a problem gearing up for you.

J James Geering 02:08

So you just had foot surgery while we're doing an icebreaker tangent right off the bat. I had knee surgery about two years apart from each other. And one of the most ironic things was when I needed to sleep the most, which is trying to heal an injury. The pain kept me up. So talk to me about I know you're very embedded in sleep. And we'll get into that what has been your experience of trying to get sleep around the pain of the surgery?

i 02:35

Yeah, it's a it's a bit of a vicious circle fest, we want to call it, you're totally right, you need to sleep you know, I'm not training my body as much as I normally would I'm doing maintenance so that my energy goes to healing this injury from the surgery. But that sleeps broken. And what I'm realizing is you know you need to use those pain meds you need to use a sleep things. For me, it'll be net. So you human body repairs in seven, half, eight and a half hours. So I'll be napping, probably about 11 o'clock today, if I can. I'll put some mindless thing on the YouTube and I'll end up with a blindfold on and try and get an hour and a half sleep and a pain free period. But what I noticed because it's all well and good saying you know get the sleep and do all these beautiful sleep hygiene things. Pain will wake you up and when you're in that sort of Twilight Zone of almost awake or not quite asleep. Pain seems to magnify and that will almost like the Princess and the Pea sort of thing and it wakes you up. So let's be realistic. Get the sleeping you can and use tools when you can to to offset that. Sleep, pain drugs. I don't think they're a useful tool the right time. And and Sleep, sleep assistance, USA melatonin I would never use the drugs because that doesn't make you sleep.


J James Geering 04:00

So to begin that list, let's talk about dogs supplement for a second. So dog policy is a mutual friend. I've had an amazing success with using his sleep supplement. It doesn't snow you with melatonin. It's kind of getting you into that sleep cascade. I don't use it all the time. But if I know I've got to be up super early the next day or if I'm maybe had a poor night's sleep and I'm kind of wired the next day. I absolutely love it. So I know that you've had Kirk on the show you have his supplement on your website. So talk to me about your experience with that.

i 04:30

You did right and it's not it's not a sales pitch. It's just I love giving it to people and doing what works. I've helped so many people with sleep that have been horrendous. The Sleep supplement has is just brilliant. I do the same thing. James sale. I've got an early show like five in the morning. I want the best quality sleep because my numbers are off. So but I want good quality safe for what I'm going to do. And a sleep supplement is literally all the things that your brain needs and gets from your body. Through the sleep and interesting melatonin is the sleep inducing hormone not at the sleep hormone. But what is great about Hass starts off with a

human dose of melatonin, which is threatened micrograms, rather than grams of it, which can make it quite Insomniac down the track. But his sleep supplements brilliant. I've taken it for KJ support almost same as you many, many years. And it's so so easy to get a very good quality sleep gets you to sleep. There's no grogginess. And I love that reason he invented it, which to get his fellow seals off the sleep drugs, slash antidepressants, in fix up their hormones, and he's got some phenomenal stories. I love the one. We're one of the commanders quintupled his testosterone over a year.

 James Geering 05:51

Yeah, well, we'll get into that, because I think that's probably one of the lesser known things about that area. I don't know if it's the same in Australia at the moment, but there's an explosion in and I use air quotes men's clinics, where it used to be you tell your doctor, you know, you have your blood tests done, and they were like, well, your blood set, you know, your your T is 251, you're fine. And you're a 25 year old operator. Now this one the other way is like oh, let me have a look. Oh, no, you need to get out every man there's dogs being given exogenous testosterone and not thinking about the strength training the sleep the nutrition side. So I think it's very, very what's the right word? It's an abandonment of care, really, for people claiming to be under a medical community and not having due diligence and addressing the pillars of health before getting someone to a tester and teta excuse me testosterone supplement.

 06:43

You're totally right. I mean, the picture you painted was her renders, once you put someone on testosterone in curse words, so an actual doctors, where's not some some firemen over here. Once you're in, you can't stop. And that's my opinion, too. After, you know, I started bodybuilding 3016, I started lifting weights at 13. And what I've seen over the years, but you know, if some 40 year old seal can have the testosterone of a 67 year old man's testosterone levels in a year quintuplet by only getting his sleep, right, and he was prescribed DHEA, which is a precursor. That guy would have with the people you're saying, James are being prescribed testosterone, and then they had to inject that stuff for the many, many more years. So absolutely. Got to look at the basics first, just like good nutrition, good exercise, good lifestyle. And, yeah, that's a shame to hear that that's the way it's going. But also, also, maybe there's a start to looking at men's health because we women, hormone therapy has been looked at for so long. And guys are just thrown by the wayside. And look how many guys talk themselves. I've actually got some messages from from guys around testosterone levels that wanted to kill themselves. And then they did go see a doctor. They're in their 40s. And they did get testosterone. And they were the happiest, most productive, energized, last 20 kilo men ever. So this is definitely something that people need to look at there and bring into the into the mainstream, but not the way you sit here the 25 year old for sure.

 James Geering 08:25

Yeah, absolutely. I think that's it's a tool in the toolbox. I mean, I think the the men and women that had forms of TBI, were you know, they're not physically able to produce testosterone, doesn't matter how young they are, if you got damaged in the brain, that that's definitely a go

to, you know, our profession, you know, that adrenal fatigue and the hormonal disruption, I think chronically can really mess with that too. But I think there's there's a large group of people that if they just change their lifestyle, they can if nothing else, delay the beginning of exogenous testosterone until they absolutely need it. I agree. I agree. Well, for people listening, I can tell a lot of people, especially the American audience, probably think that you are Australian, or maybe English. But you're actually not from Australia originally. So let's start at the very beginning. Tell me where you were born. And tell me a little bit about your family dynamic. what your parents did, and how many siblings



09:21

Okay, great. I've ever been asked that question before. Born and delayed in New Zealand. Proudly. My dad went from being a chief electrician in the merchant navy, which was a thing back then. And then the emigrated to New Zealand I married my mom ended up selling insurance which actually it was a good thing then life insurance. She had a relationship with people who was actually the highest earner in the country. My mother, I believe, at that time was a mum, you could do that with the money there and And I've assisted she's about 18 months younger than me. And and I moved on eventually to, as I said, lifting weights and bodybuilding but at three years old, she started ballet and she went on to the New Zealand school dance and actually become a New Zealand Royal New Zealand ballerina and then toured with cats as well after that, when I went into the bodybuilding competitions as a as a career in my younger days, so yeah, relatively normal childhood but I looking back a little bit high achieving and it would have been set with normalised with my sister doing her delay competition support for Mr.



James Geering 10:41

Stand with your sister for a second. It seems like a lot of people that did martial arts and wrestling had a higher level of performance later in life and I would argue probably longevity just because of the there is no kind of repetitive element to a lot of these using the whole body. I mean, you know this, it's very different than throwing a pitch you know, in baseball, you know, 1000s and 1000s of times with her being older now has that ballet life served her well or did it leave her with with chronic injuries later in life?



11:13

is a good question and greater insight into what you said there because I believe repetitive sports is wrong. I love the fact you brought up a sport there's not too repetitive like wrestling. She, after the cats, she traveled to England and she ended up with a new Roman and a foot. So an interior foot for the people listening you know, being on point on your toes. It's not very it is very repetitive and not very good. So she had that as an injury, but overall pretty good body. Wellness went to become a Pilates instructor which these these diets are sort of they tangent out on related things. So, you know, I think she's one of my 49 Go for tissues. 4748 and she would be in the top 10% of her body looks into forms now. So I think it's served her really well. Yeah, I think it's done quite well. James.



J James Geering 12:07

Now you teach the martial arts component now were you exposed to combat in any way shape or form in your in your teens or younger?

i 12:16

Let me reverse what you said. I teach combat and then I was exposed to martial arts. I mean, literally, I teach unarmed combat from military stuff. But I was exposed to martial arts when I was young, and that's where it started. I went to I believe my dad told me to judo when I was super young. And that wasn't good. I was like a 20 kilo kid being thrown around by Black Belt men back in the day. That lasted about a month and I went to karate I think pika Shinkai karate or other ones. Try that. Watch the kickboxer watch all those things. And for many many years James I was I was searching for the magic pill the magic move and what was the best thing so that's where my start was with with it.

J James Geering 13:03

Now I know you got into the weight training side when we talk about a lot of men and women in our professions plural. When I listen to their stories a lot of time there are elements of trauma in some way shape or form when we look back in younger years, you got into martial arts we'll get into the bodybuilding as well was there any element of bullying or other areas that you felt as a young boy you started needing to protect yourself or creating the the armor the perceived armor around you?

i 13:36

That's a great question. I'm glad you asked and I'm pretty one of the rare ones with bodybuilding that that didn't happen to and I remember listening to think of course here a ranking Olympia guys certainly a huge huge body but I'm in a little fella here that armor on his was a little guy inside so no lifting weights. I was 13 years old I went downstairs my dad was doing the ironing and here's the weights downstairs he's a rugby player always lifting weights look to the thing is you got to take a show how to use those and he did it was just a thing I didn't know that built muscle I had no idea about these things. I transitioned to a gym at 16 and this was a funny thing going into the gym I just been lifting weights over my barbell in the in the basement and dead barbell oh I could do as was shrug it had lifted off the ground and shrug because you're trying to lift but what the big guy can do. But no one bodybuilding Yeah, it was old school gym, literally old school was all the big guys and there was no women there. There's one exercise bike in the corner somewhere. And I was just reading the magazines one day going home and in a competition was up in about four months. It was the Pan Pacific and I was I was turning 18 It was my last chance to be in there. The age group to ever go into a bodybuilder country in the teenage division. So long story short I I thought okay I'll really do this I went and lived in a different city trained under the Mr. New Zealand and won that competition so that's what got me started but it was never got armor for the bodybuilding was just I was just the thing that I was I was pretty good at for the martial arts. Yeah, I think as a as a male looking back and I've never thought about this great questions or, you know, that might maybe be a bit tougher, maybe a bit more of a than I am because we're trying to find your hierarchy, your positioning in the social circles and your social circle is school. Look, I was

saying this on a show the other day on Mr. Kindness interviewed me a Scotsman living in Sweden. And I said, you know, it takes bravery to throw the punch the first punch you've ever done in my first couple of incidents, confrontations at school, you know, I got I got one punch, I got a couple punches keep in my face if it wasn't, it hurts. And I think I cried it is in not exposed to that. But it wasn't massively traumatic. I don't look back on it in any major way. But I remember specifically the first bully that I had. And when I decided throw the first punch, there's another 12 Straight after at the same time. So it's for me, it was about flicking the switch. But getting into martial arts and get into bodybuilding was not about putting that armor on. For me flicking that switch even though my dad was telling me you know, I'm sure as at home crying went on this guy hurt me. You have to make the decision for yourself, James, the decision to be brave enough to fight back to flip the switch? And and I did. I'm not saying tough guy. I just did it that one decision and it changed my life. But I hope that other people get exposed to making that decision.

J

James Geering 17:00

Yeah, it's a hard thing to do. I mean, people say offense is the best defense. But even in jujitsu, it was only got I don't know if it was even a year ago, where you know, I was a very defensive fire some of the gyms I'd learn some of my stuff from you were literally getting beaten up, as you said, by black belts, and we're once getting in a crucifix by a black belt as a white belt, brand new jujitsu guy and he's punching me in the face at a big shine and have a nice day. It's like, get out the fucking get out, show me how to get that go. Let's just tap thing you show me. But um, but you know, fast forward, now you realize, okay, even if you're defensive, if you are offensive, that will give you the opportunity then to get from under position to go from you know, half guard to side control or whatever it is. And without that offense, which a lot of us that are I would argue a lot of people that are kind and gentle, were often sometimes too meek. And having that courage to actually be the aggressor. Once someone has crossed that line. It that is a that's a huge kind of precipice for a lot of us to kind of transition from.

i

18:05

It really is. I mean, the military teaches it. I saw that I started teaching this stuff. I did the unarmed combat courses and military, I trained under some military instructors, as well. And I started teaching it just so that I could practice. And a good friend of mine was a black belt. And I said, why don't we just try your, your black belt stuff against us against what I do? And he said, Yeah, good. Okay. And we shaped up, which is not a violent confrontation. It's now we've agreed to fight. And I just started attacking him started chopping and kicking, chopping, destroying, kicking his knees, and he went backwards about 10 meters, which is unrealistic in a house, you got about five minutes each way. He went backwards to the wall. And then once he hit the wall, he didn't know what to do, I would have been caved in his throat and chin down and broke his knee. But it's interesting that when someone's fully attacking you and even see a new see the guy who just has an option to go back, but to go backwards in a combat, that's kind of went pretty well. It's momentum of attack as we learned in the military.

J

James Geering 19:13

Now, when you're in the kind of high school years, what were you dreaming of becoming? You're passionate about bodybuilding? Was that going to be a career for you? Or do you have

something else in mind?



19:23

Oh, yeah, I've never been asked this question either. So I watched Top Gun at least 61 times to be specific. You are the lines. So I was passionate being a fighter pilot. We had fighter jets in New Zealand that time with a four skywalks I failed the entrance exam by two points. One of the myths I think, and I was pretty gutted. And the recruiter. I mean, I'm very young. I'm 17 the recruiter Sudol you can become an ombre and I've never said this before on a show. I was bodybuilding. My best friends were New Zealand ski champions in New Zealand golf champions and my surrounded by that clique of people, I was bodybuilding. I'd won the Mr. newsy won the Pacific North Island champs as well. And I was literally ready to get on the bus I supposed to get on the bus that morning to go to the basic training for Air Force. And my friends convinced me because they're sporting don't like the military that convinced me to do this, this bodybuilding thing. So at school I was I wanted to be, you know, Tom Cruise. And, and I, I didn't get on the bus. And I think the recruiter rang me. And I gave him I don't know what you do when he gave some some blow off response. And yeah, I went on to, to bodybuilding was my, my sort of career path then, for a few years and year. If the recruiter was either listening, I'm so sorry.



James Geering 20:57

Well, it worked out in the end, just not with the so I heard on the spot or up podcasts that you were on. You mentioned just for a second that you were into blacksmithing. So how did that kind of factor into your career?



21:12

Wow, yeah. So at that same time, thank you. That was my job. My first job was a blacksmith. So I'd got out of school and I was getting the B Corp that dole over there. And basically, I was a paid bodybuilder to lift weights to give what food you could on that money and and somebody was trying to live the kind of lifestyle, you do crazy things your kid. But of course they want you to do a job. And so his job came up, which was making leaf springs and I worked in a foundry. And I was lifting, I was hammering, I was hammering that hot steel, they read off steel doing the things and there was a man's job at 17. And it taught me a few things. It was it was great. But while I was doing their job, I was self improving mentally so I was listening to it was the winners each tapes cassette tapes on a Walkman by Dr. Denis Waitley, a former US naval fighter pilot, and it was all about you know, your work becoming your love become your work and, and upgrading yourself and away from that to becoming a personal trainer for work, go for seminars, 14 out of \$40 an hour but he has ablations for about a year or a year and a half and yours is amazing job.



James Geering 22:32

Just go into the bodybuilding aside because as you you mentioned, you know, you are pretty grounded and you are lifting for the sport. But I've had I'd say a handful of people now that have been in that world that talks about their body dysmorphia, some of the the trauma in

people's early lives that led them into trying to create this kind of manifestation of quote unquote manliness. Did you come across that with some of the other people that you train with or competed against?



22:59

It wasn't a thing back then James at all, at all. And I'll give you an example. When you say dysmorphia, I won. When I did my my best to vent in that age. I'd won the Mr. South Island or some qualify like that. And and then the the net international one that pimps up was on in about two weeks time. Well, you get so what you do get what you do get as an eating disorder. That's a fair pay thing. That that night after the competition, I'd had a bag of chocolates and I don't mean a little bag. I mean, my friends were to temporaries and the paper bag was a foot foot high beggar chocolates. I went to every every food place there was and i Long story short, I went from 69 kilos to 81 and a half kilos in about 28 hours. So I could pick up the Saturday night and when I weighed myself on the scales. I said to my dad, I'm still young, I've gone back and living with my my dad then as an adult, which was nice. I couldn't really rotate. And I put on you know 1011 kilos. I didn't know what body dysmorphia was. It wasn't a thing and I lost that weight straightaway. And I went and won the Pan Pacific. But what was around was two things One was eating disorder. And it was about toughness. Can you handle this, this horrid diet? But I'll tell you what does happen. You just become a bit of a deck. You're self centered. You're, you're selfish. You think the world revolves around you and then you're you're a bear with a sore tooth on this horrible diet. And, and that's why I got out of it. Because you were alienating yourself from the people you love it and making yourself too Is it weird? I didn't like that. And myself.



James Geering 25:02

They just had a great documentary go out on Netflix here. I don't know if it's made it to Australia yet, but it's on Arnauld I think it was like three or four episodes. Excellent, excellent depth documentary. But you can tell he's looking back now. And obviously he got into the environment and he's a lot more kind of altruistic. But yeah, he was like, you know, basically talking about himself. I'm paraphrasing, but yeah, I was I was a dick. I had to be I got in the minds of other people and fuck with their heads. And, you know, one again and again and again. But yeah, so it was interesting. Looking at the psychology, some of his childhood trauma, there was some pretty significant childhood trauma that led him down his path. Now, you could argue that can send you down negative paths, or it can be fuel for positivity. And I think he's, you know, he's been pretty successful in a lot of areas. Not all, but a lot of areas.



25:50

Yeah, well, I've seen that a couple of Schwartzberg, mainly because I interviewed chili Palmer who worked on extraction extraction to and then with Chris Hemsworth. And Chris Hemsworth, did a thing in the elevator with it, which was, was really funny. But um, no, for me, it's quite positive, I think, which is nice to see. Most, I always say, actually, every one of my jobs has been for my body, like, I did the blacksmithing. Because I was strong, I could do that. I did the person I got asked me a personal trainer, because I was a champion. I got into the military. And

I thought I did quite well, because I was fairly, physically able in this visual force and so on. So I think it's been pretty positive. But yeah, I'm glad I identified it a year at a young period that, you know, you don't have to be a deacon, you can go into these other things.

J

James Geering 26:46

I had a guy on our covered law who got into personal training a long, long time ago. He's one of the guys now that got heavily into the calisthenics side to see, you know, the bar stars and the human flag and all that stuff. And he's about our age two, and still in great shape. But one of his observations that was very interesting, was back in the day, he was amazing. He got the job because trainers were all bodybuilders and now we'll get into the tactical athlete versus the bodybuilder but, you know, when you look at a bodybuilder, the skill set is bodybuilding. It's not understanding the slightly overweight businessman how to adjust his diet and get him moving or you know, it's a very specific thing. How did how was your transition from bodybuilder to personal trainer? We working with potential bodybuilders? Or did you have a kind of aha moment where you realize that you had to broaden the horizons a little bit for some of the clients that you had?

i

27:41

It great question. In most of my clientele were businessman or business people and an aspiring sportsman I was lucky enough to train some it wasn't professional at time, but trained elite rugby players and small blacks and trade this will work as well. As I look back on them, the one I trained the most Gosh, as teaching in bodybuilding exercises, to get better for rugby, and it got better for him. It was better than what he has done before. But compared to say, Professor Nick Gill trainer now it'd be like, Oh my God, what were you doing? Look, I was open to learning. I was a sponge all the time. I think that's what certainly well, we, we were the first personal trainers in the world. Les Mills, Jim started franchise personal training. back then. And I was there was about eight to 10 of us. I was the bodybuilder there was another bodybuilder there who was University at university doing PE physical education. And then all of them were either champions in their fields, there was a runner, there was a boxer and and then there's some PE students because in Dineen, our target University was the premier Physical Education, University. So I got to learn from these people at the same time, you know, I'd ever run a catalog to me say, David, I want to get better for for this. I like you, because James Dean, do you know what then I've given away but the number one predictor of success and a client is nothing to do with the with the trainers skill, you know, blonde, bimbo trainer over there? Why does she get so many clients she knows nothing. That's because the number one predictor of success and weight loss or fitness training is rapport with the trainer or importer mentor, so that the runner would come to me and say, you know, I want to I want to train with you and I want to get better and I have to go to the runner and get it running burger. So yeah, I didn't try and run bodybuilding down the throats at all that the dieting was was definitely helpful. But it was about learning about being open to learn from everything and, and I myself we Due to University and did as much as I could to learn, where I learned the most dangerous communication, I specifically remember, we had education seminars every two weeks, from the people that started this personal training, and I was on \$27. As a personal trainer, I've gone for seminars, but you now have worth of self worth to 27. That was hard. Why would I charge that? And I remember asking this question, like, I've got a millionaire client. Why would I? Why would he listen to me? He's a millionaire. He knows all this stuff about business. He's amazing. He's

clever, self made, while we're at chatter \$40 I don't feel good enough, essentially saying those questions. And she realized to me, she said, Hey, he's that skilled. He's chosen you. And what I had to realize was be able to communicate from a dustman man, that was what they call them high day, trash at a trash can driver, to an all black to a millionaire and communicate almost different levels, and also realize your own worth. So I guess the answer your question is just open to learning and trying to apply that tool like we said, to the right person at the right time.

 James Geering 31:13

It's amazing how many people in our space first responders military have that impostor syndrome so loud yet from the outside looking in, people think that we've got all our shit together.

 31:26

Yeah, isn't it better? Would that not come from humility as well? In a good in a good way of embosses?

 James Geering 31:32

I believe so. I really do. Well, speaking of the tactical space then so your personal training walked me through to the first time you enlisted?

 31:43

Yes, great. So I think I was 27 years old. I've got a number of my head. But I was training a younger guy. He was at university. And I don't know, I think I was training for him to put on a little bit of muscle. And he told me he was in the army. What do you mean, you know, you're a university. And long story short, he was in the territorials and for the other countries, that's the reserves is the part time army, the National Guard, whatever you want to call it. So he was in the Reserves. I thought I was too old to join the army because he obviously did it when you're young, straight out of school, like I was supposed to get in the Air Force. And he said, No, no, you can come along. And I went along to a familiarization evening, it was great. I pretty much came on to the next one and sign on the dotted line. And I joined the territorials got my uniform went away to basic training that was, that was my transition from being it was cutting the cord, from self centeredness to team. So personal trainer, you're not part of a team there. I remember going to basic training and I had my I was totally not allowed to bring anything really of your own. And I bought a can of protein out of the year, and I headed away in my locker. Because I thought that's gonna keep my muscle on because, you know, that's my identity. And very soon, within about a week, I realized that's not good. And you need to cut away this the self mentality and work on the team, which is often what the military does. So yeah, that was my my start in the military was switched to the territorial sign on the dotted line went to basic training.

 James Geering 33:25

James Geering 33:12

Now Now you get exposed to the role of the tactical athlete a little bit more, was there a shift in the way you view training from the bodybuilding world to the application of maybe some different philosophies?



33:37

Do you jeez again, looking back, we're 2023 Now then it was just paying. We didn't know what was happening. We ran up to the gymnasium and you know, military gymnasiums, wood and ropes and things and the sky was yellow. These guys are yelling at you. What's going on? I hadn't run. James, I wasn't really a runner, but I had to get into running to pass this 2.4 K's under 10 minutes or 1.5 mile under 10 minutes. And I didn't know what the hell it was, but I just I ran hard and I lifted hard and we did a setup competition of basic training. I did 1000 setups that hit very sore hip flexors. Didn't know what a tactical athlete was, but I knew you had to turn up and just do these things and try not die.



James Geering 34:24

When I was little, my dad actually took me to the TA just for one time and I'm assuming there's probably like, like everything in the world. There's a spectrum from elite tattoo, Territorial Army groups to Dad's Army and everything in between. I think I was in the other Dad's Army one because it was very much you know, I mean, no disrespect to them at all. But but they were not fearsome warriors. They were regular people that had signed the dotted line wanted to serve in some way, but there definitely didn't seem to be you know, a regimented element, there wasn't a fitness element. So you know, Like I said, there's a spectrum same as the volunteer fire service in America, you have some departments that are, you know, arguably as good as any career firefighter, and then you have some, you know, that when the gun goes off, they're gonna put it together. What was what was the group that you were with when you compare it to the regular full time army?



35:20

Half and half, really, you know, we had one guy from the Paris for the British parents had been in the Falklands. And God, he was scary to us. Many young young guy, and I'm young, in the military sense, because I'm a baby have just joined. And looking back, he was just a normal soldier who was middle aged, there was a mix, you know, you'd have a university kid, like I said, and you'd have a dad and you'd have a young officer. raring to go. But yeah, a whole bunch of different things, different people, and you'd have some sort of, I was always tried to be the best. So I was a net Kevin personal challenge. I would always want to challenge myself to see if I could be the best not because I wanted to sort of be number one. But can I do that? So always, always trying to win things and do those things? So? Yeah, actually mix of them, James.



James Geering 36:18

So, while you're doing this, you weren't full time. At this point. It was full time when you went Special Operations. Is that right?



36:25

Yes. So um, if I paint a picture, I was territorial, or part time, East Timor happened. Indonesia, essentially, invaded East Timor, when the separation happened. And they the absolute carnage through that place massacre, Australia and New Zealand and in some British or sent over, we went over, I got offered a contract to go on a six month full time military tour. So we made in 2000, just after the combat operations cease, were with the UN. So I was full time army. Prior to the build up training. There was exciting I got to leave the civilian life and go and be a soldier. I wasn't playing anymore. Literally. It was life as a soldier. And you were looked down on as a territorial you know, you you're a part time guy, you're not a career soldier. But I wanted to prove myself to them. So I was doing that I made some great friends with on the on the operation team or who was a brilliant time as a man forming time. And, and then a few of us we got a bit disenchanted with the military, I was offered the chance to resign a full time contract. And I turned that down. Some of the guys even left their full time military career and come back into New Zealand in 2001. Of course, I've got my life to go into so 2001 I became a civilian again, for two years, did exercise rehab, Excel that that helped build a business up and realized now I know which side the grass is greener on. And I I re enlist in the Army in 2003 in the full time, and the first New Zealand royal Infantry Regiment, and it was brilliant. It was the start of my, my, my new career path 2003 into the infantry. Infantry actually.



James Geering 38:29

So East Timor is a conflict that you don't hear a lot about these days. You get there right after, you know, the fighting has ended. And I remember being a young boy watching BBC and you know, it's so many of these genocides and atrocities. It was just all these innocent people just you know, preyed upon by the few as happens over and over and over again. What was the ripple effect of that that you saw through your own eyes?



38:53

Year to look I was lucky enough to be to go to some of the places one of them was a massacre that I mean, what happened was east hip. These people in the east of timber want a separation from they wanted independence and Niger finest come and when they did that they they led all the prisoners out of the jails or the mental people out there have to silence got military groups and special forces to become militia groups and they right to pillage the country. They live in nuns and civilians. I think they shot about 100 of them in this church. Just host them you know you had Special Forces soldiers, and some regular soldiers just going broke and wanted to go kill us. The recolor feet literally we've been told this Indonesian Army sergeant had gone AWOL and was going to kill a kiwi soldier. We would do five days of looting COVID patrols different date different day lives, but we do code patrols up to five days through the jungle. Then we come out with a five day over patrols going pattern mine's, and then five days in camp. But when we do this cover up, Charles, we knew this guy's out there. And he wasn't in our area, we didn't know where he was. And the guys in another area, they're in there were laying up, they've got one guy and century and in the day, it literally looks out like this is looking Holy shit. And then he just hoses because the guys put a guard these guys snuck up on them in jeans and a gun and found them in the sky. This can be soldier open up on him put a belt of, of

4562. And yeah, the record fit was was was still ongoing. You know, we saw the carnage that had happened, we were trying to help them get back to normality, there was no power anywhere it was, I saw a five year old girl carrying her two year old sister on her head and carrying a full liter jug of water down to the river to get water and that was normal life. So we were there. And we I think we did a lot of good. A lot of good the beautiful people these memories. And yeah, really taught us a lot.

J James Geering 41:11

Why didn't preface the question like I normally do. But this is so important for the average person to hear the civilian of obviously, I'm a firefighter, but I'm not a member of the military. Because we get such a polarized view, maybe not so much in Australia or New Zealand, but certainly here in the US, I would argue that the BBC gives a very objective view to most things. So that's my normal go to. But you know, it's either very pro war, very anti war, so we don't hear, you know, the horrors that our men and women on the ground have to deal with and the threats that they deal with, but also the elements of kindness and compassion. So you talked about the little girl and I'm assuming that you were you were helping some people like that out what were other moments of kindness and compassion that you remember whether it was from your fellow soldiers or the East Timorese, that you were helping.

o 42:00

I've actually got some photos of their real photos. Look, we are over patrol. So we'd go into a village and we stay overnight there because they feel they feel safe there because the militia, I'm going to come and attack them and try and kill them. Sometimes we put up within the eternal militias house because these people came from those villages. One day, we were staying the school overnight. And we got there about three in the afternoon to get ready for for bedding down. And there was a little watering hole. It's like 45 degrees, almost 50 degrees. And these kids is down to the kids, James, they come along and go on as you're a watering hole. And we're trying to do the language here. And what we've got, I've got this photo of us with these kids. Well, first photo is me sheared off in my Kenny's holding two kids on each arm, they're swinging off my arms is beautiful. And then got another photo down the watering hole. One guy and sent me with a gun, and the rest of his are all jumping in this, this waterfall into this watering hole with these kids. And it was beautiful year, those you know, they had nothing but that was life they were happy. And I'll tell you one thing about war, you know, it's not right. It doesn't do anybody any good. I'll always fight for you beside me. I don't, I won't agree with what's going on half the time, but I'll fight for you. Because other people shooting us you fight for me. But nobody wins. I mean, that country is destroyed. I don't know what's going on with Ukraine and Russia. But the country is destroyed as hell it is not a good thing to do that. soldiering. It's, it's a it's a calling, you're there to help others, essentially. And I'm here to help you, the guy beside me most of

J James Geering 43:44

what they say, you know, the history is doomed to repeat itself. One of the the lenses that I had, from all these conversations from people, you know, a lot of whom more uniform, is that the one common denominator is the few tyrannical oppress the masses. And yet that's the

lesson we keep missing over and over and over again. You know, if you look at, you know, the symbol for example, you look at Nazi Germany, you look at slavery, look at all these things. It wasn't the whole of Germany saying, Oh, we all hate the Jews. Let's go do this. You know, it was a few psychopaths, that then, you know, used propaganda to start leveraging some of the German people and the slavery, a lot of people did not benefit in any way shape or form from slavery. But some became, you know, I would argue billionaires in that currency back then. So I wish we as an as a world could take a step back and the moment someone starts climbing that ladder with ill intention that we just set fire to the fucking ladder and get rid of it at the beginning.



44:46

I would wish it to but I just don't think it's possible with the media or the communication age. And I say that I'm listening to Damien Lewis's book on the SOA and I've listened to in at weights as well, her auto biography, which is phenomenal. And, you know, I'm listening to a raid that the special rating forces done on a on a habit. And then hearing what the, the Germans are saying, like one of them was the Veda liberated this boat, the British forces had literally stolen a boat, a civilian ship, a huge cruise liner, actually, from a harbor, they, they, they, they cut the the anchor chains, and they settled this thing out of the harbor. Well, what they had actually done before that was they got all the Italian and German officers and people on board the ship to go to a big party, and they got pissed as hell at another place and even got them. There was an unlimited budget, they may have gotten into brothels or things. But they got no way. And the German report came out. Yeah, these British came on board, they've killed all the officers, they killed the whole crew. So the communication, it comes down to that. And that's what one side saying is now how do you know who to believe? How do you know who to believe? So I would love your ideal, James, but communication and now I can jump on the internet and get told something immediately? How do I know what's what's right, and it comes back to my policing. I firmly believe from being a police officer. Nobody knows what happened at that time, unless it was you or the offender. Because the judge doesn't know that the lawyer doesn't know that jury doesn't know, the offender and the victim are the only two people that really know what happened at that time. Because you're hearing third hand reports. So yeah, communication is key. And it's always been that way, isn't it?



James Geering 46:48

Yeah. Well, I think that's that's trust, isn't it? You know, if you demand a new station that literally just delivers news, I think the opportunity for propaganda is a lot less if you allow two new stations that basically are flagships for two polarizing political parties. You're never gonna get the news.



47:09

No, but I'm in even going back to, you know, the 1600s through hundreds 1000s. You know, what was your your communication back to Nancy wake in 19 9040. She'd heard that. I can't remember the exact story. She'd heard that the British had done something. No, she heard that some people had died or some some some soldiers had killed a bunch of people. And they didn't believe it until they heard firsthand from one of those people that were there. They'd

heard reports through the Bush Telegraph through this and communication, it's trust and also be able to get it out there who puts a message out so yeah, it's, it's a communication will win will win the war, I think at the end of the day.

 James Geering 47:58

Yeah, absolutely. It's funny talking about the Falklands War, I was just doing some research for a book that I'm writing actually got one of the the powers who ended up becoming shs who was on the screen at that time as well. And I'm interviewing him next week. But the misinformation and some of the the excessive information, sometimes they were telling things on the news, the Argentinians then adjusted their strategy and ended up killing more British people he knows. So you got to be careful with that, too.

 48:27

Oh, into further on that. I remember one time being pulled into the New Zealand into our secure Briefing Room in the special forces. And normally, when you get pulled in there, something's happening. You're gonna go on a job, somebody's done something wrong. Because you're all put in we put it as a unit, and I'm thinking oh, okay, what's going on? Long story short, the enterprise because they got up went, Oh, no, we're someone's in trouble. Intelligence guys got up. And they were giving us an example of how easy it is to prosecute someone and get their identity. And prosecute means something different in this context. And what they did was they showed up and they got in here for sky in New Zealand Air Force guy in Afghanistan, with a photo of himself that he posted on Facebook. So total public, and they were right now, we spent 20 minutes just delving into things. So they got his photo from the Facebook, and then they saw some of his friends on Facebook. And long story short, they went through some photos of the years. Okay, they they we think they live in this city, because I can recognize that sort of place or they did a Google industries. And now we go to the something called the telephone book. Page in the telephone book, they went through all there's only 20 of them in that in that city. Right? Which one of them's the Okay, good. Now, we go to get we this is the Taliban. We get the the photoed of the house from New Zealand and we go and give it to that guy, the Air Force guy in Afghanistan. Here If this no do what we want, it's that easy. It was it was an eye opening that one is an example.

 James Geering 50:06

I gotta say I've got pretty good at internet creeping trying to find guests. So use the same techniques Yeah. All right well then you've mentioned them as Special Forces So walk me through your transition out of the TA and then your your journey not only into the full time military but how you found yourself with the SS

 50:29

Yeah, thank you look, 2003 rejoined the military strategy. Routers and infantry I got posted to accompany the vector company and and then I was into part of the Support Company, which was radios signals. And I was teaching in teaching new radios teaching to CEOs RSMS down to

privates. I was only a private but as relatively good as geeky stuff was really cool. And, and going on operations trying to strike going on exercises, being pretty good at that being fairly fit. And getting off the guys and then 2005 There was a recruiting poster for New Zealand so yes, counter terrorist team or counter terrorist Tactical Assault group was called at the time it's a bit of a mouthful they went on to become commandos are known as commandos and it was the selection for them as a new thing, I'd always wanted to be in a special forces and what had happened the reason that that squadron was stood up was all the guys were going to Iraq all the news, RSS guys were getting the money and go to Iraq as contractors. So we're losing our black role you're losing literally the hostage rescue guys. So um, that team has stood up. Myself and a whole bunch of others did the original go selection for that was lucky enough to pass on train, like a absolute media for and your past and within, like anything and military, when once you are in something, you're, you're gone. So within passing, that Sonny has picked everything up and straight up to the unit training, and I was on the training course for the year and you just didn't look back, it was straight on to roping and shooting and blowing stuff up and doing all those all those fun, manly things. And it was, it was a dream come true.

J

James Geering 52:25

And when I think of New Zealand, I don't think of a high up tempo when it comes to the kind of calls that you would call in a team like that. I mean, obviously one of the ones that were you know, dropping on mine would be the embassy in, in London, you know, one of the first times that we ever saw the SS in action. But you know, we do have arguably a fair amount of extremist attacks in the UK, you know, it was the from the Irish and then it switched to, you know, some of the more extremists from the Middle East or Middle East roots at least. Were you having a high frequency? And if not, how do we what was the training philosophy to keep you ready if you weren't going on a lot of calls?

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53:05

It's a great question. No, we weren't having a high frequency of calls. Our job was domestic counterterrorism, which then got extrapolated to offshore recovery, and some other things. The reason these countries need full time counter terrorist teams is because of the Munich massacre. The Israelis were killed there because the German police shot each other. The Snipers were shooting each other or running away because they're police officers. And then obviously the the the, the terrorists I blew up the the the helicopters on the airport with grenades. And they realized, hang on a sec, these police officers aren't trained many people are ready to go now. So that border had to freshen New Zealand and Australia stood teams up when there was I think was the 19 1970 Something Hilton bombing. There was a bomb outside the Sydney Hilton here and in the border to this hemisphere. You're right. It wasn't in this hemisphere terrorism. But terrorism at that time was going worldwide, the passenger plane bomb, hijackings were all over the place. And so New Zealand stood up a New Zealand SS started the counter terrorist role the hostage rescue stuff. And that was a directive need from the government. So no matter what the the New Zealand Defence Force had to supply there, and the training philosophy, which was the second party question was just we were going to be the best all the time. And it was an unrelenting year that the team is a unit one of them is unrelenting pursuit of excellence. And you do your job and you'd be always trying to do better the guys who pick holes on what you Did you pick up on what you did because of someone else. And and when guys came from tutu, we had a government effort to to, to slot in perfectly,

we will do the same stuff we do the same as two tutors and as delta. I interviewed Pat Mack and Johor tight together, Joe Otto passed the assess selection cycle was removed. And I interviewed him on that through a he got in a fight outside but he went on to to join the Australian UCs and said they're just as distinguished Korea. I asked Pat and asked him this question, you know, who's better and we all say we're all the same, you know, grab a Delta diagram but the sky is a sky and put them into a tutu ESA is counted, here's 10 and go and hit their building and and you speak a different accent, but you do all do the same sort of drills, and you know what's going on, just like you and I gotta fire James. It's not that different, even us in an American, there may be different teams doing it with things but we, we both all understand the same concept. So here the philosophy was just be as outstanding as you as you could be your own best challenge yourself and, and work together as a team to achieve the best outcome and achieve the mission.

J

James Geering 56:17

So what made you decide to transition out of that unit? And then where did you find yourself next?

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56:26

Money. Four of us left the unit came to Perth for money. Big money over here. We were not paying that much over in the unit. And I came here just for a year to make some money and go back. The specific answer that is one of my friends was over here. I didn't know his mining. It sounds silly now, but he said he was over here as a scaffolder making \$150,000 a year. Now that to me, sounds like your son's gonna give you a Lamborghini. Because I was on \$810 a fortnight I was in the squadron hangar sitting on one of my boxes. I got lockers, locked boxes. And as I was watching really my payslip, I got a text from from him. So I came here for a year, I fell into policing. When that to lift policing and went back to the unit straightaway, I didn't want to be a cop, but I made my money. And and then I ended up coming back here for personal reasons, come back to back into policing as soon as police officer for a couple of years and that was me in Perth.

J

James Geering 57:32

So a lot of people I think Pat even years and years ago said the same thing. It's amazing how many people in the Special Operations Special Forces community have said we hold police and fire to the same standard as ourselves. And when you look at it, when our when our you know, elite warriors are all fighting in foreign lands, who's protecting their family, we are pleased fire EMS. So I agree 100% That's how I've kind of viewed this when you are in a profession where lives are at stake, you try and make yourself the very best version of yourself. There's going to be better people in every field. I'm juggling 1000 skills, and I'm only going to be the best version of James Geering. I can be when you come from this higher level of performance and training. And I would argue I'm assuming equipment as well. And you find yourself initially in law enforcement. Was there a paradox? Or did you find that same level of professionalism and drive in your police agency?



58:34

You've asked them amazing questions. Very insightful. Um, no, it was, it was bad in the fire brigade way worse. Holy cow. We'll get to that. So I was scaffolding here for a couple months and eventually got into police academy, mainly because especially in the SWAT team as soon as we finished, but they moved their intake. So look, there was myself there was a group about 32 people I think in our squad, our learning squad at the police academy, please can't even actually crack up because it was used to make me think of the movie. And there was a guy from Iraq one. And there was another soldier there. And there was a Scotsman who was a city but he was a hard man. There wasn't any sort of grown up, me and what we had generally because of mining here. It's not assaulting it's factual that we had some housewives, middle aged housewives, they'd obviously the kids gone off and they can now do another job. We had young, young white males or maybe a bit of females, but um, no, no, no life experience. And then there was some some grown ups in the middle there. And no, the it was hard, man. I mean, I won the awards. It wasn't hard to do what they asked you to do the technical training and all these other things, but it was a I love the law. It was a real challenge learning the law language, just like the the hydraulics and engineering you're learning and fire. But I'm the technical side was super easy. You know, I was straightaway friends with the instructors. I remember I remember shooting so we should on a face in New Zealand so yes, we should on a face we have a we aimed for the mouth because you want to bro it blow the brainstem. So somebody can pull a trigger or step on or press a button on it, it didn't need it. So we always put two bullets in the mouth. There was our job when it came to place, a place is so PC hear that you can't shoot on a human target. And you must, you must shoot on him entirely if you want to shoot a human because you won't do it. Otherwise, it's physically almost impossible. So we shot on the sun, there was a white, white piece of paper and a head a grayish outline of like a hexagon I think shape. Anyway, I couldn't deal with that. Because where am I going to shoot wasn't even bullseye. So what I used to do was find a line of where that gray meet the white. And I shot there. And I've been shooting for a few days. And this this instructor which was a big overweight female. And she's I'm just shooting just put them all in the same place on that line. But she said she said some something like are you sort of missing the target? And the leader stratigos? No, no, he means to do that. So I saw a smiley face in the target for it. It's it was a different world, James that the game was okay. The police academy was was interesting. The people around you I was I was voted most likely to kill someone to shoot someone as soon as we get out of, of police academy. But the bottom line is, it's so easy to sit down once you have that level. And what I mean by that the first my first job was suicide by cop. I was the only guy he would talk to a person sorry. I'll be talking to him as a mental guy, obviously, and then some other cops have tried to talk to me and he go nuts at them like barking at them. No, no, no, look at me, you can do this, do this. And it's so easy to step down. And I love the job I loved using the mouth hardly ever went to the other thing, sometimes you have to immediately if you're into a melee, but yeah, it was a different world as a culture shock into the civilian world. The the standard of discipline was was much lower, self discipline was much lower. And I didn't look down on them. But it was hard to come to grips with it. Nobody else was at that level that US soldiers that were the were aspiring towards



James Geering 1:02:41

something I heard a lot from people who were either, you know, high level in the military side and or just great martial artists and you know, behemoth of a physicality as well. Male and female is they hardly ever had to put her hands on people because someone would look at that person. They knew their athletic, they knew Looking in their eyes, that they were calm and

collected and could rely on their training if they needed to. So was that something that you saw that your confidence in your skills almost became a deterrent a way to de escalate a lot of times?



1:03:17

Absolutely. Look, what I saw was you had a bigger bandwidth. I'll give you an example that paints a picture and it would have been many other jobs. We done when the main street on Friday night, and they've been a bit of a scuffle. Down the road, a couple of younger guys had had altercation with an older guy. And these police officers dealt with that we weren't there were at the other end, the police officers dealt with it just move these two young guys on, they should have done more, they should have actually locked them up. Because at the other industry we were they found him again, they found the old guy and they punched him and we've come in, they've run off. Me and my partner have come across this guy who's got blood across his face. He's like 65 and ex soldier I didn't know. And he's a bit of a homeless guy. So on the face of it, he's angry. You know, his he's been humiliated. He's angry, spitting blood literally. Please don't put that on me. And he's kicking off. Now. Like I said, it could have stopped if the other guys have done their job they hadn't. Well, I've come along and you know, I don't want someone to spitting blood on me. I don't want him and I don't want to play him down. He's the victim. Right? But he could definitely turn into it. I'm going to lock you up for disorderly conduct. And he's I was trying to get a grip on things. I just caught that he was maybe military and I pulled it in my my vest. I've got a yellow vest over my shirt, and then my middles. I said listen, Mike Look, I get it, and I show them Brian middles. I said I get it. And immediately boom he was down. Because the last thing I want to do is was lock out the victim. And it's happened on many occasions in different ways. Obviously not just the needles I use my mouth I given report. And and sometimes you gotta go hands on. But I'll never forget this other one. There's a good story. I think I told on another show. This big moldy guy, I think he was huge grab 120 kilos. He wasn't used to doing something I hate to go up to him and stop him to change his mind from what he was doing. Didn't want to lock him up. He started to archive a little bit and I pulled the handcuffs and we listen to jail. No jail. No jail, no do up to you. No jail was alright, do this move on audit, you can move on or handcuffs. I mean, they're being a bit funny with it. And why not? You know, you don't know. You don't want to ever say to someone, we can do this the hard way or the easy way because they're gonna smash you and it's gonna be a fight.



James Geering 1:05:49

Now, how was that because when I think of New Zealand, I got to visit there. About 20 to 23 years ago, I've absolutely beautiful island and I did so many amazing things, from skydiving to caving on the ground and the rivers and, you know, climbing glaciers and snowboarding. And one of the last days of winter was sheer ice. You should never put a snowboard on an ice. But anyway, now the story, but you know, beautiful people, but also when you look at some of the countries that the British went to, they really were horrendous to the people but I always joke they must have got to New Zealand and then you know these monsters met them at the beaches and they were like, Hello, do you want to share this island with us? So you know, but I think of the Maori the Pacific Islanders. I mean, these are just giant human beings. So with that kind of defensive tactics, lens and the combative lens, you know what what were the

challenges when you have some of these incredibly huge human beings that you needed to detain? Obviously, we talked about de escalation, but you know, when you did have to go hands on



1:06:56

I don't think it really gets to that state if you're if you're face to face them, it doesn't really get to that state. The reason why that population tends to have some kind of respect they had they were taught respect so if you show respect to them in some kind of logic short if they have to hit on drugs that's that's very different. And you just you smash them straightaway and it's it's all in everybody's all on the first crack it I took down was a skinny white guy. I took five plus I put a I put I put a greatest rest I thought no problem with the movement. Oh, and five us to put them down the stream for him was phenomenal. But a taser does wonders, my friend is the answer. A Taser can do the job. But yeah, I didn't have to put any big guys down so much. Or if you're getting into the melee, I just choke someone out straight away. From behind that I know you can. One time I've come around this corner, I've heard this noise. My partner and I with three up a planner, I've walked around this corner, chatting to some people, we hear this noise back we would come from our other other guy was still around it. I've come around. And this this cop has got his nose plus across his face and he's pointing at some Tool Guy. This guy's like six foot three, I'm not this guy. The first thing he knows is I jumped on his back and then choked him down. But when he's gone to the ground is not resisting. I didn't check him out. I just said listen, I don't know what's going on. At all. Don't resist. I'm restraining you for your safety and safety. Everybody else around you. You're not under arrest. If it turns out is not you are unrestrained. He has no problem was talking to him like that. It is here. But if he you know the first thing he knew was I was on his bed check in with you in the melees. It's an easy one. All it takes, like I said does wonders as well.



James Geering 1:08:47

So you have you know, some experiences wearing a law enforcement uniform. What made you decide to transition to fire?



1:08:55

Or the hours? You guys do? Ask guys now, the hours I heard were amazing. So we were on subpart Bendis hours. And that was it. I didn't know what a fireman did at all. Let seriously and I just kept on going through the process of applying with busy and police. Yep, I've done it test online. And we go back to locking people up into it. And then it turned out oh, you've got a spot. Okay, well, a bit of find out what you guys do. And then I went to the training school.



James Geering 1:09:24

So you mentioned a little while ago about the contrast between the fitness and professionalism versus fire. I'm sure you work alongside some incredible humans. But culturally what was the difference?



1:09:38

Yeah, at the training school was different. I mean, we're all the same mindset. Now. Fire does a better job of filtering in place way better. Because we're all the same mindset. We're not the same people. But that same mindset. You know, when I joined the Fire School The the heat of it was eex X minutes. regard he sat me down on like Week Six of I think 12 weeks. They said oh, Damien you know we thought you were in a topless course you know what's going on and I was just having struggles because there was a it's a bit paramilitary run over here but I want to be instructors a bit shouty is changed now, and not be able to back it up at all. And I just wasn't, wasn't figuring out and then it's a slower pace that the fire is literally you're not running into the fire, you don't copy don't run to a fight either. It's a slower pace, it's a different thing. And when, when he sent me down here to chat, I sort of realized I could just sit back a bit more, don't try and and be that bullet. So much. So it was very difficult to deal with because of the training standards. And, and also the training was nowhere near what it should have been in the military and in the police as well. So first thing is demonstration here, watch this way for demonstration. I mean watch for guys in black, go rushing up to a building, place a charge on the door, blow that boom, okay, right, you see that right now this is the I'm going to do it slowly for you this show and tell. Okay, now we're going to break it down and do this part of that over and over my first time with breathing apparatus on you probably horrified by this. Because I know that British trained so much better. My offside was from Barnsley. We got thrown into a building and said, right, you got to go do this. And this cumulating on the building of your left hand surgeon can go and we've never shown what to do and the instructor is barking in the middle, what are you doing Porter? What are you doing there, and it didn't know what was going on. And I understand some of the things they were trying to achieve, you know, put them under stress and, and make you learn but it was not a learning environment. It was it was it was silly. So I found it difficult to deal with because it wasn't didn't come from actual sense of professionalism. But that said those officers were teaching us that was how they were taught back in the day was very, very unprogrammed. And they were taught on the job they learnt on the job those guys.



James Geering 1:12:09

When I went through my fire academy years later ended up working with some of those people. And it was amazing how the biggest peacocks were actually the worst firefighters in real life and the calm guys that I found myself kind of drawn to the way that they did teach the way, you know, obviously they're not gonna let you screw up. They're gonna reprimand you but it's not like you said shouty drill sergeant ask. Those were the great firefighters. So it's funny, can you fast forward 10 years you've been around, you've seen them seen something not as much as them because they were teaching you they've been firefighters longer. But you know, the reputation of a couple of these individuals in their own departments was not the stellar superhero that they were masquerading on the drove around



1:12:54

your ego I say with how not to die or you know, ego get you killed in same thing in one of those officers was an officer at my fire station, not on my shift this crossover so one of the times we did attend a job with him two times, I'll tell you the story. Because he always learned from your mistakes and successes. And we will call to a private alarm and what that means people is it's

not a like a business alarm. A private security company is monitored and alarm. And we would go into this and he didn't put the lights and sirens on because it has experienced rightly so in his experience perhaps a private alarm didn't mean anything. So why put the public at risk with the Big Red Machine of Death hammering through the streets. We get there. And what it is, is an old woman has had a fire on her kitchen bench and tried to put out flyspray A flame for ya went out but also it could have not went out it could have gone horrendous and we look back ahead and we just went nah man you need you should have made a better decision here because this could have gotten fucking right up the right up the curtains there was right next student who would have been horrendous we would have been dealing with something very different. And you know, he's he's he was too eager. He's out there. He's retired. He's too egotistical to to say it at a time but he sort of realized in a reason he was bullies at one of these there really is a bit of a want to be bullied. And yeah, he he had a piece of humble pie there. And you're right that they're not the best people because they're throwing their ego out there which we there's another 10 of the universe in one already. The next one of the 13 is human acumen humility.

J

James Geering 1:14:44

Yeah, absolutely. The last place I worked at protected a theme park here in Florida. A very famous one. And so have you

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1:14:55

I've been to Orange County Fire Station just around the corner from that feedback,

J

James Geering 1:14:59

though. Okay, yeah. It will be three car what is it? 32? But yeah, yeah, so I know exactly way so it's funny, we would actually drive by them to go on calls because they have this weird annex system where their drive through our park to go to some of their calls and we drive past their streets to go to some so it was it was so bad password but but um, but yeah, so they would have alarms go off but it was I mean the safest place their their fire prevention system in the parks is excellent. So get canceled or the alarm would say it's no longer an alarm, and they would still send us to go in a Rio Gil, to stand there and go, there's no alarm, you know what I mean? So So you have complacency. But I understand the other side. You know, you can't get complacent if it's a simple alarm. But if you've got a well monitored system where there's security guards and all this stuff, no one's seeing any fire smoke anything, then yeah, that's not the time to go lights and sirens, you know, tearing through the streets, as you said in the red death machine.

o

1:15:59

You gotta be clever. I'll tell you, I went to one alarm call. It's in a university and the universities are so big, you always get an East that the security guards no security guard vehicle goes to the alarm, activation point. And then a security guard Scout vehicle lead vehicle goes to the main gate to guide you when and when you go flight. So the alarms gone off, we go flying to

this thing with under lights and sirens. And there's no, there's no physical vehicle. And we've got a map, we figure out where we're going very quickly, we get to this location. And the Escort vehicles sort of or some security guy turns up and here's what's going on. They hadn't even had the alarm. And I've driven the truck. And my two guys have got out to go investigate with the boss. And I'm thinking I'm just sitting there the ISIS alarm, whatever, they'll come back and tell me one of the guys come running back and he gets the whole whole thing of bottled water which is in the fridge and take it goes running out and see what's going on. She's there's been an explosion. I'm like what and long story short, some workers they're working on the high voltage head have blown it the one of the guys have blown yourself up with massive amount of voltage. And so we've got to stop calling anybody an ambulance, anybody else and I jumped out I know my first day pretty well. And this guy's blocked. He's like a social skin he's blown is a hard Viking guy. He's blown a lot of skin off. But yeah, that was from an alarm call and we're dowsing is burns down. The medic comes along, we get a line into his ankle of all places because the only places had skin on. But you know, an alarm call can go from what you said, standing here, there's no alarm to literally life and death. And you've got to treat it as such. But what you got to be able to do is be able to step up when it isn't that that 100 Times has been nothing you got to be able to step up. And I think I've learned from other people's things. I've lucky that we've done it right at the time. But um, yeah, I hope that helps someone else that that needs to listen to this right now.

J

James Geering 1:18:09

Yeah, complacency kills 100% I've been on one we were we were absolutely ready for this, but we went to a car fire. So again, you're thinking alright, you know, pull the front jump line. And you know, you just knock it down. And that's it, mop it up, and you're good to go. But no, it was a car fire, along with four other cars actually three other cars on fire in a carport underneath a wooden apartment complex building. So you know, you're talking again from from transitioning, but I've also seen the other side where I've been with a medic, and he's like, Oh, this is a frequent flyer. We don't need anything. And then you get in there and I'm carrying something and it makes I'm not, you know, not going to ignore. I'm still going to hold myself to a standard. And then they're scrambling for other equipment because that one person like you said that you've been on 99 times the 100th time it was the real deal. So yeah, I mean, there's a huge cautionary tale there. Yeah, absolutely. So you mentioned obviously the electrocution, you are in Western Australia now as a firefighter What have been some of the other career calls Have you have you been pulled to any of the the wildland fire side or you specifically municipal?

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1:19:15

Yeah, that's why I've got the league with our biggest fire of of anytime, about two years ago. And that was full on it was actually awesome. We found out later on. I came into the specifics. Now that was hundreds of houses last. So we do work career firefighters were not volunteer firefighters or volunteer firefighters a 90% bush only but our job at that was to go and we our job is to protect the buildings really by having to put out the fire in the bush but we're on the roads. Because when skin is we're on the roads, protecting the houses trying to put out what you can We roll with a skinnier Two Guys and a skinnier fire truck and a four drive light tanker behind. Do crews actually in the Met the forming crew all up? So yeah, going on we do both bush and everything has made rescue cat rescue car crash even in there is it's funny you say what are we doing? Which ones do you do? We're out getting lunch one day about 11 o'clock

and early lunch. And we've got a data terminal our jobs come through on the data terminal, and sometimes on the radio, but they hit the data terminal first. And this data terminal comes up with a list of about 10 Fire trucks. So you know, it's a big deal. But it was to the sun, like a GPS place three and a half hours away. And like, we look at, is this your real job? What's going on a ring up on the radio? So you know, we think you've seen us through a wrong call here. It's obviously for three and a half hour drive away. What's it going to go? No, it's actually a real call, we need all UTM fire trucks to go format at this fire station, which is about 30 K's away. For a strike team, there's been a massive amount of lightning strikes up near that in the in the middle of nowhere. And the winds pushing it towards this, this, this township and the coast that we've never been done before as a stunt. So we it's an army of fire trucks under lights of sirens going to this format point of this fire station, we will get together a quick five minute warning audit. The bosses even don't even know much they know kind of what I told you. And then we all go in the form up again. And as we're going up, we see this, like mushroom clouds of smoke. And it was amazing as we've gone from in the city, we've probably responded to a couple of little little calls, getting lunch to three and a half hour drive into lights and sirens to protect this, this township from this thing, and we had, we had a Hercules coming in dropping our fire retardant with every asset known to man and it assumed that we would push the fire around that township somehow. And it went to the coast around it was really interesting job.

 James Geering 1:22:24

Now what was the ripple effect of that? I think I forget who it was I had another Australian firefighter a while ago and I apologize if they're listening. I'm just blanking on the name at this moment. That's what happens when you have 800 conversations. But you know the magnitude of the fires, you know, the the devastation the fires caused, I had that one of the dispatches from the paradise fire in California and the devastation the loss of life there was horrendous, but in Australia, you also think about all the wildlife that was killed. So with you going to look in through an Australian firefighters eyes, Did you witness a ripple effect on the responders themselves after that?

 1:23:03

That one that one specifically was easy, like it went past every structure so nobody was hurt, no structures damaged and it was just just bush that he needs to burn and be regenerated. And the wildlife can can push out left and right fairly well. The whole town was evacuated, they freaked out. There was a lot of fear in the civilian population, that no damage, but the one earlier that the one where I roll, well it turns out I broke my ankle. There was a massive amount of devastation. And I saw that firsthand because we went back to that area two days later, and we're doing our damage assessment and we saw people waiting us on the driveways waiting for the insurance assessors to come through. It was a rendus we saw a little kids there with their their prams and their little little kid bikes and things gone, it's it's destroying with the wildlife. Our wildlife has not as the same as overreach, who you've probably interviewed. The wildlife is right next to the city. whereas ours is just bushes not a lot of wildlife for the kangaroos and we're not full of koalas and endangered species over here. It's very sparse. We're the most isolated city in the world Perth surrounded by literally what you saw on Crocodile Dundee. But the the desert part of it not all the beautiful waterfalls and things here. So not much ripple effect on the one I said but a lot of ripple effect on one where it destroyed hundreds of homes. And it was here. There was a hairiest Hamza ever been in there as well?

 J

James Geering 1:24:39

Well, I kind of skipped over this a little bit. And I think it's actually pertinent because if I remember the conversation that you had on the spot or up podcast, it seemed like it was a somewhat recent thing for you. A lot of us in these professions there's there's a cumulative effect of multiple elements. You've got childhood trauma that I meant Shouldn't a lot of people do have, then you have the actual position that you go into. So now you you're seeing and doing some horrendous things depending on what uniform you're wearing. You have, you know, in good organization support Bagna organizations, you may have stress or even betrayal. You know, you've got sleep deprivation, which is huge. I mean, one of the real elephants in the room in the mental health conversation. Now, at 49 years old, when you look back, did you have any kind of mental health struggles? And if so, what were your negative coping mechanisms? And then what were the tools that you found the to heal yourself? Or to keep healing yourself?

 J

1:25:38

Yeah, great question. And I did touch on the spotter app versus specifically because of what he was trying to achieve there and help others with mental health. I'm pretty open talking about as particularly with the people I've had on the show and relating it especially with or secure foundation, it was amazing. And Eric Eric organization to help Special Forces, veterans that are going to kill themselves with mental health. Cumulative is the word, one word I could take out from what you said. Now, knowing how mental health works, and having done a lot of work around that, you essentially got this, this wall. Imagine a wall of resilience. And you got all this stuff coming in the wall, like imagine, like a dam. And it's just putting on the dam or putting on a dam board. And putting putting putting in the demo is just as high the whole time. But it's getting, it's getting weakened. Just putting into it, those shots are being fired. And that's cumulative through through your life, and you deal with it fairly well. And maybe you build up, build up some of that putting egress out and back. But when that damn wall breaks, and you don't know what it's going to break from, it can break from literally the straw breaking the camel's back. And it's it didn't happen on that day. It happened from all that pitting even in getting more and more and more, and then suddenly, the world falls away and you're in that hole, for me would have been transitioning. I never, you know, you asked that question What made you decide to, to I can't remember, quite you're perfectly move on or transition and I never transitioned out of the military. I was in Australia, not by choice by sort of circumstances, I never chose to leave the Special Forces is okay, I've done my time, I want to leave my dream job. So for years that drilled on me, things that helped me with it, physiologically was was using ketones that helped my mental health, because it drops anxiety down so much. But pretty much every day, James for about five or six years, everyday wanted to get on a plane, get back home and want to throw chop someone because you're a bit angry in you want to go back home. What helped me deal with it, the most would have been he getting some help. So for work back from the positive thing, getting some help work in a psychologist working with veterans, interviewing people on the show. And talking it through. That talking realization is super important. negative coping mechanisms, using alcohol withdrawal. All of those things, my demo was bursting was from betrayal. Or a sense of betrayal, a sense of moral injury, that you naturally use cope with negative coping mechanisms that's natural to do that same as in combat, it's natural for you. In France the other day, it's natural to freeze. I don't blame people for freezing. There's natural ways you protect yourself as a human. But I'm educating myself on

mental health, working with professionals, all those things with it the right way to deal with it, and talking about this as well. And talking to different people who've been through it. I found, you know, talking with my firefighter friends was helpful in ways but because they're in the job, also slightly unhelpful.

J

James Geering 1:29:19

Absolutely. Well, you mentioned France. So that's a good segue to How Not to Die and some of the perspectives that you're offering the world now. That was such a horrific video to watch. And for people listening that didn't see it, there was a just a psycho basically running around a French playground and stabbing children and parents randomly. So talk to me about how you decide to get into the world of educating and training whether people are in uniform or civilians to just be more resilient and more capable out in the real world.

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1:29:56

Yeah, look, I haven't watched that video yet. That I can't watch the video, I don't want to until I have to watch it. For educational purposes. If someone asked me, specifically, hey, he did this move, what should I do? It's terrific. I've got a real thing for kids and babies. I've been teaching self defense for 22 years and it's military unarmed combat, what we learn in the Special Forces and use your military have converted to civilian self defense. I've been teaching it for 22 years. Terrible marketing. A lot of people don't want to know about self defense, and they probably don't want to learn what I want to teach them. However, when I taught him how not to die, and I realized that showing someone to how to lock their door in their car, and avoid a carjacking, and that's not scary, then and he sort of took off. So I I, I'm How Not to Die guy. It's all over the interwebs. And I really love being able to help someone save their own life or not get hurt. I've always been against bullies always want to empower someone, if they didn't have to go through what I did when I was 13. And could actually step up. So my boy is seven years old. He's done jujitsu for a couple of years. A confrontation not a thing to he's been exposed to it, he didn't get flipped around by black belts in judo when he was that age. So um, yeah, I've been teaching for quite some time successfully. But I want to teach it as a business around the world. And I get messages each week, not through arrogance that I'm saying this but the literary side, you say my wife, or I showed this to my wife, and he turned out she had to do it. On the interwebs, I show the simple things like here's how to hold your keys, here's where to look, here's how to how to leave a place safely. Here's how to get into your car. Here's how to approach your car in a car park. In the day, here's how to get out of your car if you go to a crowded car park and so on. And like I just love it. Really, really do. And it's it's based on the old World War Two SOV, Commando things that you have to learn immediately. It's not jujitsu, it's not martial art. So my boy is 70 years old knows. He could kill me in jujitsu if I wanted to do that. But I'm not going to. If I'm in a confrontation, a surprise, violent confrontation, isn't you and I James agreeing to to fight each other. A surprise, violent confrontation takes two three seconds. And, and it could be multiple attackers. I mean, look at the two MMA fighters in USA, they one of them got put on a kind of by some, some cracking woman with a two by four, when they decided to try and fight two people, there's too many fighters. And it turned out to be seven. So there's no such thing as a fair fight. And I will teach you how not to die. That's what I do.

J James Geering 1:33:03

So where can people find the website to sign up for the courses that you offer?

 1:33:08

Are you literally how not to die.com today you Google How Not to Die guy that will come up straight away. And there'll be links to that from Instagram, How Not to Die go on Instagram, and it just reached out. You know, I was just talking to someone yesterday. Happy to answer any questions in the France one that got me so I just shot a video on it. I cut a video on it. And I didn't touch on the specifics. But I did talk about if that freeze is normal, all those women did exactly what the human instincts have told them to do. Unfortunately, I mean, the babies got stabbed, unfortunately that they couldn't even grasp the baby run up to them like you and I are trained to run towards danger. But you need to be exposed to it and I cut their videos passion and then I've just seen Nottingham, Nottingham two people, three people stabbed. And then then the vehicle, same thing so it's not just it's boarded to the playground has brought it to a night out. It's boarded it to a delivery driver that night and Nottingham vibe violence. Bad people wish to do us harm. And I hope never to have to use violence. I hope you never have to use violence. But I want you to know what to do if it visits you.

J James Geering 1:34:27

When you see the video, I'll be intrigued to get your perspective because you know you see some of these attacks. I mean, I guess the 911 is a perfect example they were practicing with knives they were making sure they couldn't get disarm while they were taken over the cockpit. The French one for some reason looks extremely clumsy and sadly if someone had been rushed that guy I got a strong feeling that would have been nipped in the bud straight away. I mean, you know, obviously he's still carrying an edge weapon you could still get stabbed, but compared to some of the other attacks machete attacks that you see You know, other perpetrators carry out that particular one, I can't help feel that, you know, he, the moment he was challenged, he probably would have been taken down, which was I think it makes it even sadder if just there'd been that right person with the right mindset, it probably would have been over as quickly as it started. But, you know, instead of seven people were stabbed five of which were children.

 1:35:20

You said that exactly right. I think I was interviewing, someone interviewed me on that, or someone commented on something about it. I watched the video, for about a minute, I didn't watch the stabbing. And I watched a man monitor with a backpack. And then I watched this guy that the the attacker, he even changed hands with a knife, which is actually a skill and in the person, that I just must have been a person who was interviewing me. He said, Why didn't someone just do something? I said, Look, you were brainwashed in the military to run towards the sound of gunfire. You know, if a car crashes through your, your, your building right now, James, you're gonna actually turn around to it and see what's going on. Everybody else when a car crashes through the side of your building is going to run away. So there's no way in hell if those women would have thought to been Russian, the man with a backpack, he went towards them. And but then he backed off. He stopped at then in the end, and good on him. But also, I

don't blame him as well. But I do wish now everybody knows it can happen on playground and it's not put a hidden sin. Now, when I used to go to the playground with my boy, I'm looking for the weirdo. You know, everybody looks out for that weirdo. And I will push the kids away. And we look out for our kids. Is our kid playing okay with the other kid? Is the other kid not leaning? I could play on this on the swing? You know? That's what we're thinking? Or does our kids need an EPI? We were never thinking about the gigantic come sterben. But now it's it's in there. We have to think about it. So we have to take ownership. So or every mum nanny dead? Please. I sent him a video. It wasn't a sales pitch. I said, Do something, lose something so you can actually take action. And then you're more empowered, because it is a reality. Yeah.

J James Geering 1:37:19

We'll just while on that subject, someone's going to kind of throw at you as well. Obviously, you are in Australia, so a different country, even though the perpetrator was from that nation. The Christchurch attacks you originally, you know, from New Zealand, you're proud to be of that country. Just talk to me about that through your lens.

i 1:37:36

Well, I can and again, if condition wise isn't inside your mosque crying? I don't know what condition White is. And for those listening, look up the Cooper's color codes. Look, I was actually messengering, New Zealand SS guy at the time and when it happened, we're having a chat about something unrelated. And he said I've just heard nine people been shot in in Christchurch. And what I loved about that story was, you know, he's going into the mosque, he's going to do three mosques. He's going to the initial mosque and and shot all those people. And then he's got it his vehicle. He's going to the next one. The police response, the SWAT teams just use what is the generic term, they're going to the first mosque. They fly to their first mosque as they should, because they don't know what he's doing. The call goes out. You're looking for a one male in this Subaru Forester. I think they've been at the license plate. Well, these other police have been training normal police duties not doing they're not a specialist police. They were training to do to go into a house and clear it during route combat or CTV. What do you want to call it? Clearing a house because sometimes the first guys on the scene are virtual cops. The normal general duties cops. Well, they've been training in this area. And they every cop in the unconscious was being called. So they were flying to the first location. And they're flying from this other direction. And they drove past him. And the partner in the passenger seat went, Hey, is it the one and they've done a YouTube and pulled them at gunpoint out of the car, pulled him out of the car and not shot him and locked him up. I'm raising my voice I'm excited because I'm so proud of those general duties everyday police officers. Most people would have hosed him right. This guy's the killer. They were hosing through the windscreen. They he saw him be took action c took him out of the car. And D used this skill to put cuffs on him. And I'm so proud of them and they stopped him and he said to learn from the secret of Free Moxie had targeted. So that was my take on it. James from a pretty there's more go into that was a positive outcome of such a horrible thing but again, reality is it can come to anywhere, anywhere.

J James Geering 1:40:14

Yeah, I think that's circles around to what we were talking about with the diligence of training

when you were in SES versus some of your experiences in police and fire is I've worked for arguably one of the best fire departments in the States and one of the worst. So I've got pretty into interesting spectrum to kind of bridge and then two great departments in between. One horrendously under supported by the city, and the other one was just so big, you had some great people, some terrible people because it was 1000s of people in that department. But the bar from the hiring process through to probationary year through to the rest of your career was so so high in the good department, they protected Disney, it was Anaheim's they protected Disney land on the West Coast. And, you know, we would do drills they worked well with with PD, they worked well with surrounding counties. So there was low ego high performance. And it was amazing. And so had an Anaheim police officer be in that situation, I know they would have done the same thing. Now you contrast that not picking on a particular area or agency that some of these videos that we see of these police officers that clearly have not done any physical training, any defensive tactics training, probably fired six rounds and arrange once a year, what would have been the outcome there? So in lives were in professions where lives are truly in our hands. It might be a playground, it might be a mosque, who knows where it's going to be, but in a, you know, 30 year 2530 year career, you will have your day. And the question is are you ready? Are you not ready?



1:41:53

Beautiful question to other people's lives in your hands. You got to take responsibility so, so carefully, and yet, you have nothing, nothing nothing and then it's gonna be the worst. Yeah, you've got to you got to realize and take a minimum level of capability and maintain that.



James Geering 1:42:14

Absolutely. Well, I want to just throw a few closing questions at you if you've got time. All right. So the first one love to ask, is there a book? Or are there books that you love to recommend? It can be related to our discussion today or completely unrelated?



1:42:32

I love the book that the Peaceful Warrior by Dan Millman. I guess it's related to us in a way. He teaches a lot of things. The Peaceful Warrior. Yeah, that's a great one. You've mentioned it, you know, it is definitely a bit of a debt. But Arnold Schwarzenegger is Encyclopedia of bodybuilding that that started me off well, and I think I interviewed some other awesome dude on that as well. You know, he had a lot of good things in Drive, vision, visualization, all those things. But the way that Peaceful Warrior was definitely one Arnold Schwarzenegger's encyclopedia bodybuilding maybe. And yeah, tough question, James. I listened a lot of audiobooks now. I'm really loving it next few weeks. What are your biography? He sat next to the originator dinner as well. That was a pretty interesting and yeah, you know, probably the ones that come to mind straightaway. You're thrown on the spot



James Geering 1:43:38

who was the last person you said?



1:43:40

Nancy wake. So she's a very famous SOA agent in in World War Two. But she's got an autobiography cannot audiobooks as well. And I'm going to be listened to her biography as well. So if anybody just Google ninty awaken you have some amazing stories come up.



James Geering 1:43:59

Beautiful well thank you for that. So the same kind of question What about a film and or documentary that you love? Apart from Tonga



1:44:12

My mind was straight to top your metric sequel film I Prego TV show love I love Vikings I loved I love that one that was interesting documentary know very tough questions, my friend. Thinking of those. And I don't have a lot of spare time to do a lot of those things as well. No, I would have just had to go straight to to write now. Last book in the end of the Vikings TV series. That was interesting. It was very well done by by the History Channel. And yeah, it was really interesting to watch.



James Geering 1:44:57

Brilliant. All right. Well, then speaking of great people is They're a person that you recommend to come on this podcast as a guest to speak to the first responders, military and associated professionals of the world.



1:45:09

Yeah, I think a couple of people actually hear of me Aries is one here in the areas is literally, his job was Jason Bourne. I've got a book here offers that he sent me thankfully, beautiful man. Called Killer Elite. So maybe that's one you want to put down as a book Killer Elite. It's the only known book about his unit. And it did. I think he did the first podcast of me, but like, say Jason Bourne, single machine operator. It's so real. And his one role in life now is to prevent veteran suicide. He had two friends kill themselves within a couple weeks. And it changed his purpose. That's beautiful. And I mentioned all secure foundation. And I interviewed I was lucky enough to interview Tom and Jen subtly, husband and wife. And Tom told us powerful story maybe slightly end on that gave someone chills for sure. When I say that, to them, we'll say this to them. Tom was tell me I didn't know the story. Tom's Delta Force, if you're going to be exact keg or whatever you want to call it, the fancy names, but he's Delta Force operator. Jim was some kind of producer. And they were, he was tasked of taking him around doing some promotion, filming, for recruiting for them. And they've been together for a couple weeks during this job. He was like your minder slash fixer, whatever. And they're basically at our hotel. And they've been out filming all day, and he was just a bit off. And he dropped her off at the hotel. And he, she goes, Are you coming in? And he goes, Are you just gonna make a phone call? I'll be with

you too sick. And something doesn't sound right to her there. And long story short, he was going to kill himself. And he packed the car up and and she's she's texting him to go no, no, come on the Okay. And he wasn't responding to the text, which was, was rear of very inconsistent of him. And she knew something was wrong. And he had a gun in his mouth. And she's gone. See the flashlight, but Feshbach moment, hey, we're all at the bar, because it will go to the bar every night. You're at the bar where we're all about your life. And he had the gun in his mouth, he looked at the text message. And he's never laid mine his life to anything. And then God took his gun in his mouth. And by training and default in programming, he didn't want to be late. So he went down to the bar. And without that text message, he would have had a 45 grand through his through his brain. And and now he's in a much better place, he helps others and I would recommend you stick to Tom and J settle.

 James Geering 1:48:03

Well, I've actually I wanted you to finish the story because it needs to be heard again. But I had them on about two years ago now. And the sad irony is about a year ago, a retired Greenbrae who was working with a mental health organization here in Ocala. He had tried to rally up this mental health convention and all the local first responders you know, police and fire and EMS were going to be able to go and it was going to be this amazing event. And Tom and Jim were to come and talk. And when it came time for the people that said they would support them for this conference as simply write the check. They were like, Oh, actually, we don't we don't have the money. So so many times when it comes to Oh, yeah, we love our veterans, we love our first responders. It's great. Well, they call that virtue signaling, it looks great until you're actually asked to put the rubber on the road. And that time and time and time again is what I see is when it comes to actually making the difference. You look around and you're like What the fuck did everyone go? So it's so sad because I would have known not only works talk, excuse me talk to them on the podcast, but I would have got to actually finally meet them face to face last year. And so I hope one day it comes to fruition but yeah, they're phenomenal human beings.

 1:49:17

They really, they really are and yeah, all these people are in. I'll just finish Can I finish my story,

 James Geering 1:49:25

please say as many as you want.

 1:49:29

Because chatting on Messenger with a former GM from my squadron from the counterterrorist Squadron, and he's in New Zealand. And you know, typing away isn't exactly chatting. But we're chatting away about some subject. You know, I knew he'd been through some mental health issues, but you never know, really know from socials. And and I say to me, if you ever need anything, just reach out, you know, and into the conversation In about 20 seconds later, something clicked in my brain. Holy fuck. Hey, no one says no, you are reaching out. I'm so

sorry. You did reach out just the Hey. And we started a conversation again, reaching out for males, please, if you'd listened this far on this show, please listen. Guy reaching out doesn't mean like a woman to a woman, hey, I'm having a really hard time with a chat. That's not the way it goes with us. Be Hey, James, hey, you're going that could be reaching out. So if you get the chance to connect with someone from your old life, or maybe you haven't heard from for a while, that is the as a male reaching out from my limited experience. But that was my personal experience. And I kicked myself and I fixed it immediately. And it turned out to be really cool. So please, if that's helped someone again, then then I like to think that I've done my job.

J James Geering 1:50:57

Yeah, no, I love that. Because I think that's the kind of brush off comments, sometimes even from organizations, you know, the chief saying, Oh, I've got an open door policy. If you're struggling, I'm here for you. Well, that's empty until you've connected with that person, you know, so I would argue, you know, creating an environment for someone to feel comfortable was a very, very important thing. But also looking around, you know, Steve is normally pretty jovial, he just just seems off. I've got this gut feeling act on that gut feeling. And another huge one that this is again, not the awakening, I've had this last seven years of doing this has been just phenomenal. But one of the reoccurring things with Tom and everyone else who's been on here that's had the rope around their neck, the gun in their mouth, speeding towards the motorway pillar, whatever it is, is that feeling of burden. And so that old school Oh, suicide is selfish, you know, it's, it's cowardly. We've got to understand that their brain is so miswired at that point, that you've got someone who's signed on the line saying they would die for another for a stranger in a military uniform or police uniform. And now they're so miswired they believe they're a burden. You say, Oh, just think about your family. I am thinking about my family, they will be better off without me. So that is one thing I wish it would be on a lot of these kind of, you know, posters and things. If your friend is saying or you ask them, Do you feel like a burden? That is another huge red flag saying, Oh, here's a helpline for you. I'm here for you reach out, you know, like you said, firstly, check yourself did they just reach out absolutely love that. And secondly, you know, be the person asking someone don't ask them once. How you doing? We all say I'm good. Now, how are you really doing that? Second, how you doing? It's amazing how powerful that is?

 1:52:47

Well, Rick hog woolhope.com. And I put it out there because his Instagram got canceled. Rick Hogg who worked with them. Pattern everybody else. He said that thing he said actually, I'm doing so I'm good. That is a replay. I'm good. No, no, no, no, no. And he might be a great person to chat to as well. Great guy. He said immediately if someone says I'm good. From a min holy cow, he just goes What's going on man? What? Because you should go like today I got I was awake at 320 to sleep till four and I did and then I'm up with paint. I'm great. I'm really enjoying this this this conversation. I've been moving my photographs. I'm graded. I'm happy you know, but not I'm good. That's that's like I'm fine. You know, any he picked up on that? And he would you know you got to dive in. So I love that you you brought it up as well. Yeah. So

J James Geering 1:53:44

when you ask your wife what's wrong? And she says nothing. You know that there's everything

but nothing. It's the opposite. All right. Well then the very last question before we make sure everyone knows where to find you online. What do you do to decompress?



1:54:01

Oh, gosh, I've never been interviewed like this. You know, most amazing questions and I'm not I don't blow smoke. I would love to see if someone knows where they're saying come from blowing smoke up someone's eyes. You ever cash from



James Geering 1:54:16

a prison somewhere? probably I'm guessing.



1:54:20

Was the treatment for someone drowning? Or for someone who drowned these to get they used to get a baffles full of smoke and blowing up there.



James Geering 1:54:34

That's how I got fired as a lifeguard for that very thing.



1:54:39

What do I do to decompress? Look? This this social layer then? Dr. Dain. Pronk Special Forces doctor. He wrote a book called The resilience shield. Actually, that was one that was phenomenal. Talks about the layers and this is a social a You know, I've got to have great communication with you but I'm getting my, my social effects as two hours of communicating with someone. This is one way to decompress, but actual decompressing so after a tricky job, self care you know, that might be me. I had to learn what is self care to develop that in my brain. And I started off with simply an upset on one show I think I like chocolate. I like the outdoors don't have much outdoors here in person. I went to a bakery and I get a chocolate a clear and I go to the lake it was rocked by the bakery and sit down by the lake and eat this chocolate Eclair and it was learning my own self care. Now it might now have developed that it might be having a bath and watching a TV series episode that's mindless, but self care. Self care isn't what my my special forces psychologist Alia Badillo over, taught me self care isn't Damien going out in 30 more minutes to run, but it's not self care. You know, might be listening to Pet Pet mech and CJ on on a Friday, or decompressing a coffee with a friend. A surprise coffee with a friend could be one as well, but trying to do some form of self care. Sometimes it's the ice bath as well. That gives my head straight. But you've got to find something you enjoy. And if you don't know what then just just just start something. It's got it's got to involve getting outside. And it's got to be not exercise related. I suggest



1:55:00

 James Geering 1:56:43

beautiful. It's funny that recently I mean, it's amazing seeing so many people enjoying the ice baths but it's kind of made me you know, tongue in cheek say if a person takes an ice ice bath and don't film it didn't really happen like the wood in the forest. Because all my friends taken but they film every single time they take an ice bath and it's like, is it possible you could do it without your camera just try it that might be even more extended self care leave your fucking phone in the house.

 1:57:11

I can I'll tell the story about ice buffalo screwed this up. Because I love but I love baths. I love a hot bath. So I I did a hot bath one day and it was was hot. But I went to get in the in the ice bath. But it was quite hot in the ice bath, right? And normally only handled three or four minutes. And it was oh, this is quite warm. It's no big deal. I've got about five minutes. And I moved around a bit and got the cold water back onto me. Anyway, I'd screwed myself over because I started shivering in the Okay, no problem, I'll just get out. And I stood up and I started uncontrollably shivering. Because my temperature regulator gone off. And I thought oh, this is not good. And I started to get out of it. And I was involuntary shivering starting to get nosiest puky I managed to use my mental strength to be able to go to water, learn to the house and get back in the bath. But I just get myself sick and stage hypothermia. And I was one of the my cuts like I couldn't move. There. rynders Wherever you

 James Geering 1:58:18

look at the contrast therapy, at least the kind of prescription that I've seen, which makes a lot of sense to me, you know, you cause vasoconstriction you cause vasodilation I would add it's even better than just the cold bath alone. But usually it's several minutes in a sauna. And then it's only like 60 seconds or two minutes in the ice bath and then you get out again so that might be why now we know why

 1:58:41

even try and push yourself it was eight minutes of near death experience with a nice bar

 James Geering 1:58:48

so I'm sure people you know would love to follow you. You talked about the website already where on social media can people follow you and communicate with you.

 1:58:57

Your Thank you How Not to Die guy on Instagram I think is the easiest one I learned from another Instagram guy was really cool. Video doesn't lie. And I can put out a saying a quote or something but you might take the wrong way. But I put out short videos there all the time that

are hopefully helpful. And you get the idea of of how I am. It's just how I am. But How Not to Die go on Instagram will get you everywhere.

 James Geering 1:59:23

Brilliant. Well, Damien, I want to say thank you so much. I mean, yeah, as you kind of alluded to in this conversation, you just had foot surgery, you've obviously had a sleepless night last night, it's your morning, my evening we got a thunderstorm raging out my window here. But I want to thank you so much not only for being generous with your time but also just leading us through your story. Every single one of these conversations, you know sometimes people are going to relive some of the you know the worst memories in their mind, but I know that the takeaways for people listening you know will be worthy of that momentary sacrifice. So thank you so much for being so generous and come on the behind the shield pocket. today.

 2:00:01

Thank you so much for having me. Thank you for being such a great interviewer. It's been an absolute pleasure