

Evan Halquist - Episode 759

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SPEAKERS

James Geering, Evan Halquist



James Geering 00:00

This episode is sponsored by a company I've used for well over a decade and that is 511. I wore their uniforms back in Anaheim, California and have used their products ever since. From their incredibly strong yet light footwear to their cut uniforms for both male and female responders, I found them hands down the best work were in all the departments that I've worked for. Outside of the fire service. I use their luggage for everything and I travel a lot and they are also now sponsoring the 7x team. As we embark around the world on the human performance project. We have Murph coming up in May, and again, I bought their plate carrier, I ended up buying real ballistic plates rather than the fake weight plates. And that has been my ride or die through Murph the last few years as well. But one area I want to talk about that I haven't in previous sponsorship spots is their brick and mortar element. They were predominantly an online company up till more recently, but now they are approaching 100 stores all over the US. My local store is here in Gainesville, Florida, and I've been multiple times. And the discounts you see online are applied also in the stores. So as I mentioned, 511 is offering you 15% of every purchase that you make. But I do want to say more often than not they have an even deeper discount, especially around holiday times. In fact, if you're listening to this in the months of April or May 511 days is coming up between May 9 and may 16, you will get 20% of all gear and apparel. And that applies both online and in store. But if you use the code shield 15 That's S H I E L D one five, you will get 15% off your order or in the stores every time you make a purchase. And if you want to hear more about 511, who they stand for and who works with them. Listen to Episode 580 of behind the shield podcast with 511 Regional Director will airs Welcome to the behind the shield podcast. As always, my name is James Geering. And this week, it is my absolute honor to welcome on the show fellow firefighter and foundation training instructor Evan hallquist. So in this conversation, we discuss a host of topics from Evans journey into the fire service, training the tactical athlete, his own back injury story, how foundation training helped him not only return to duty but be stronger than before kettlebell training, breathwork cold plunge therapy and so much more. Now, before we get to this incredible conversation, as I say every week, please just take a moment go to whichever app you listen to this on, subscribe to the show, leave feedback and leave a rating. Every single five star rating truly does elevate this podcast therefore making it easier for others to find. And this

is a free library of well over 750 episodes now. So all I ask in return is that you help share these incredible men or 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 Evan Halquist Enjoy



03:36

wherever I want to start by saying thank you so much for taking the time and coming on the behind the shield podcast today.



Evan Halquist 03:43

Thanks for having me, James. I'm happy to be here.



03:45

So I can't remember which certification it was that we met was it in California or was it one of the Florida ones



03:51

it was in Santa Barbara



03:55

beautiful so we're gonna get to you know, our our journeys into that particular amazing movement practice. Where are we finding you right now on planet Earth?



Evan Halquist 04:04

Right now I'm in actually snowy Southern California. You don't often think of that but I live at 6000 feet elevation and this year, we begin worked over with snow which has been fantastic. We just had a storm that gave us eight feet so I'm in Lake Arrowhead.



04:21

Brilliant. Yeah, so how what were you seeing as far as to the news and everything because I remember when I lived out there having come from Florida where we have torrential rain but we have sand obviously so it all drains the hilarious coverage of news anchors in LA when we had any rain whatsoever like it was going to be the next you know



04:41

oh yeah, I know a lot of people will be listening to this will laugh because they were calling the storm Snowmageddon and I mean the system was was breaking down but the system in Southern California is not designed to handle this much weather. It never has been but it was for us. And in regard to most storms are pretty intense storm like He said eight feet of snow at higher elevations. I don't know what that equates to and rain. But it definitely caused some trouble for the system.

 05:08

Yeah, cuz I know when Texas had their ice storms a few years ago that that was a real thing. And they just weren't equipped for that level of cold. And one of my friends is a physician literally had to, I think it was part ATV journey and part walking just to get us to his er, because he physically could not get on in a regular car, it wouldn't make the journey.

 05:28

Yeah, I had a, I have a few friends, because I worked up here for a few years as a firefighter locally. So I still have contacts up here. And they set up a whole emergency management system. And he was telling me they were running in certain divisions, and they had branches that they had broken out. But 200 calls a day. There was I think they had 12 structure fires in a small community of 20,000 people, which is not, you know, that's not a lot of people. And having that amount of structure fires a lot in taxes, the 911 system, and they were helping people shovel out to get out of the house. You know, unfortunately, some people passed as a result. So it was a pretty significant event.

 06:08

Absolutely. Well, thank you for that perspective. So I would love to start at the very beginning of your timeline. So tell me where you were born. And tell me a little bit about your family dynamic, what your parents did, and how many siblings.

 06:20

I was born in Riverside, California, which is about an hour away from where I live right now and like arrowhead. My father was a LA City firefighter. And he completed 35 years there. My mother was a schoolteacher, so very blue collar family. And I had two older brothers and one younger sister.

 06:41

So what do you remember, as far as the fire service when you were a young child growing up in that family?

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I remember visiting my dad at the fire station. And one of the significant events was in LA City in 1990, or 1991. I remember I was in first grade, and I got pulled out of school, because they said there was an accident that happened with my dad. And you know, at that age, you have really no idea what takes place when your dad's a firefighter. And you just know that he's a firefighter, you think he just fights fire all day. And what ended up happening was that they were responding to a call. And there was a police chase simultaneously happening in the car, what I was running from the police was like a 15 year old kid with a little Honda Civic, I think what it was, and they ended up or he ended up T bone in the fire truck, pause the fire truck to roll launched everybody out of it. And then as a result, you know, I got pulled out of school because you know, they wanted to make sure that I could spend some time with my dad and he was fine. He was in the hospital just to get checked out and got released, but he was at home so that's probably one of the biggest memories that I have of thinking about my dad and the fire service and growing up obviously the riots in LA in the early 90s That was something significant that my dad talked about and then my father in law is a retired Long Beach firefighter and he also was in Long Beach in LA during that time so he's talked a lot about it so yeah, those are kind of two the the big memories that stick out for me

08:13

the driver the Civic I'm assuming was killed to roll a fire engine or a fire truck with a sedan that must have been a hell of an impact.

08:22

Yeah, it was wild they have if you can you can go online and look up pictures of the fire truck in fact I think it was three or four months ago in our magazine for LA County Fire Department they had the picture of it and so they still kind of use it as an example of what can happen in you know driver operator classes. And yes, unfortunately the driver was killed but it was I want to say 90 to 100 miles per hour impact that he hit the fire truck at the intersection

08:48

horrendous and this is one thing I talk about a lot I would argue that most of us if you ask what are some of the worst calls that the car accidents yet and we're going to get into a lot of proactive you know health discussions I've been in this country for 20 years now I have never heard any conversation about increasing the the the level that the driving tests are you know making them harder and making you know having to take longer having to study different sequences so that you when you finally get behind the wheel you understand the why of driving you know why do you use your blinker Why do you keep back from another vehicle way even further back when conditions change? And you know, you see such blase driving people are on their phones. And it it angers me that you know 2023 It's getting worse people are in a more distracted than ever. We lose 40,000 people a year die on our roads. So probably 1020 times that are really badly injured but survived. And there's never a discussion of that yet. Most of us it's not the housewives where we see the most gruesome things is the car accidents.

 09:54

Yeah, I couldn't agree more. It's interesting because most of us are so are essentially today most of us a lot of people are scared to fly. You know, I had I had a little bit of anxiety when I first started flying. But, you know, as we've come to learn flying in comparison to driving is actually really safe, and how dangerous driving can be and like you said, it's probably some of the most gruesome calls that we go on with the most Carnage and damage that you can see to vehicles and unfortunately, the human body. And as a result of cell phones, and people just being distracted, it is just getting worse. And unfortunately, it's one of the things that causes the most harm and damage and death to first responders. You know, it's it's up there with mental health with cancer with heart disease, and it's really something that should be addressed. Like you said,

 10:46

I just shared a video literally, moments before we sat down and record someone had sent to me and it was in New Jersey have a semi plowing into what was one of three police cars. Now, by some sheer miracle, no one was hurt, even though it was a cordoned off road, I think probably from an accident, I'm assuming. But yeah, I mean, this is just one lapse of concentration, whether it was fatigue, or them staring at the phone, but this, there was no brakes. I mean, it just plowed full speed into this car.

 11:13

Yeah, we had a captain or a firefighter in our battalion, where I'm at in Baton 11, and LA County Fire. And he unfortunately died as a result of driving back from the incident because he was so fatigued and exhausted. And so it's something that really hits close to home with us, you know, not only in LA County, but with the fire department itself and in our battalion, because all it unfortunately takes us like you said, just to a millisecond of just being too tired. And you know, for those of us that are fatigued too often, because we're up all night or for whatever the cause is, because you're on the fire or whatever it is, you know, it's such a dangerous thing that, you know, needs to be paid attention to more.

 11:54

Now, what shifts schedule you guys on when I was at Anaheim, we were on the 56 hour work week, which was like the one on one off four times. And he had a four or six at the end of it. But it was still 56 hours a week before any mandatories. What is your department's schedule?

 12:10

Them call them modified Kelly schedule. So it's one on one off one on two off one on one off one on four off. So still 56 hours a week, and still 10 days a month.

 12:20

It's amazing. I mean, I've obviously got a unique lens having worked east and west coast, but you hear people discuss the work week, which is a you know, a dead horse. I flogged whenever I can, because it needs to be changed. But I always use the analogy of a Rubik's cube in the fire service. When we talk about the work week, people like oh, we'll come in at 7pm instead of 7am? Or do you know 4896? Or do the Modify Kelly. But that's just spinning the cube changing the colors, no one's talking about making the cube smaller. Now you have a very, you know, unique holistic lens when it comes to wellness in the fire service. What has been your personal perspective on how we're worked? And maybe what we should be doing?



13:08

That was a really good question. Because I exhaust myself with the station that I'm at my perspective on it is it depends, number one where you work at right, I think that's going to dictate a lot of how you end up feeling as a result and kind of you know what you're doing to your body as a result. And for example, you know, I work at 30 threes, and I'm not saying this to promote myself or say like, you know, self congratulate, but we're the busiest station in LA County. And it runs over 12,000 calls a year. So that's, you know, roughly around 30 calls in a day. Because of that you have to be so Cognizant I feel of the other things that you do in your life, for health and recovery. And I know I'm not answering your specific question, but kind of will bring me kind of back to it. So number one, you have to be aware of that. Because if I if I'm working there, then I gotta be really I got to really pay attention to, you know, making sure that I'm eating right, making sure that if I can take a nap, I take a nap during the day making sure that I go to bed at night early. And these are all unpopular things at a busy station with all these alpha males. But it's something that you just have to do to take care yourself right to do foundation to do appropriate strength training to do all these things that can impact because the number one thing that you need in health and wellness is sleep. And if you don't have that, well then you gotta line up your other things. But if you work in a slower battalion, right, if you work somewhere else that is not as taxing. I don't think it's as much of an issue, but it's still something that needs to be addressed. Because the driving back and forth. The being at the station, you know, even if you're running five to 10 calls a day can still be taxing depending on the person so I really think it depends on the person, what they have going on in their own personal life, what station they're at, and how they're aligning their other health. issues that they have going on. So it's an important question. And I think, right now, I've heard about a schedule before where they do one on three off, I think that was in Finland. And to me, that sounds like enough time to recover because I can tell you personally, you know, after working one shift 30 calls, take a day off, going on shift again and doing a 30 calls. I'm not recovered the next day. In fact, it takes probably into my, for my second or third day, my four day to get fully recovered and back to normal. So I definitely think it needs to be adjusted. I just don't have really the right answer right now. Well, luckily, I do.



15:43

After six and a half years of talking to people. So here's the here's what's crazy. So when you said Finland, you don't have to go anywhere near as far away the northeast, a lot of them FDNY, they work 4042 hour work weeks, the rest of the country doesn't realize that we hold them up to this high standard. And the question that, you know, I mean, I was a union member my whole career, but then you take a step back out, especially when you leave the fire service, and you're like, wait a second, I all I heard was chsp. And about what a great union we are.

What is the most basal thing that a union does is the work week. Why is it that this department over here is working 40 hours, which is probably what we should. And then the rest of these are working 56, which is Anaheim when I worked there, which is Orange County, you want to work there in Florida. So most of my career, I did 2440 days. But we are so indoctrinated from the firefighter level all the way up, that we all believe our own lives are a myth. So when you think about how we describe the shifts, we say, are one day on two days off, or you only work 10 days a month, nine days a month, when you actually look at it. A civilian workday is eight hours in a nine hours with a one hour lunch. So we're not working one day, we're working three days compressed together. So if you kind of take the complication out and just do a 2448 pattern just for this description. The second day, I've already worked eight hours from midnight to 8am. When I get relieved, and I go home, so that's not a day off. So actually what it ends up being is three days on one day off when you extrapolate, or 30 days a month. Interesting, you know what I mean? So when you put it that way, doesn't sound so great, now does it and it's this is a job that we all adore. So the problem is will show up regardless. But what I want to do is reprogram the way people look and be like, Why is the person bagging your groceries working typing out 40 hours a week. But Evans work in, you know, on a busy busy rescue truck engine, running 30 calls a shift being awake all day, all life all night, may have to, you know, save lives through extrication or primary search or pediatric mega code. And we're fine with him working 56 Or if it's a mandatory week, 80 hours that week, you know, we've we've, we're so far from where we need to be, especially in the human performance world. And the answer is always, oh, when you're off shift, you need to sleep. Yes. But also, why are we not talking about creating an environment for our responders to thrive? You know, in the work week itself?



18:17

I think it's such a good point, because you brought up a good topic that you know, don't believe your own lies, or don't believe your own myths. And you know, we are so guilty of that in the fire service. And I'm talking to myself when I'm saying that out loud. Because, you know, I'm the first one to try to just push through no matter what. And I think it's important to not do that because it's going to be a detriment, not only one to your health, and longevity, but it can be a detriment to your decision making, or, you know, God forbid something else happen when you're at work, and you're just too fatigued. And as a result, somebody gets injured, or killed. So it's a topic that we really need to I'm glad to hear that you're kind of bringing light to it. Because it's important, because a lot of us, you know, have a hard time saying these things because we just want to be the tough guys, right? We just want to push through and persevere. But sometimes it's okay to not be the tough time. And sometimes, in fact, it's better just to be smarter about the situation.



19:14

When we talk about it's for them, you know, this is a big phrases used in the fire service. Oh, you know, we're training for them. Well, if we're training for them, then we need to operate at the highest level. So for example, I mean, I hold this as a just a simple example. But you look at the American fire helmet, especially, you know, I mean, I wore the West Coast one for several years, so much better than the one I wore out east because it was lighter, smaller and more functional. But then you look at the ridiculing of the European helmet, which is even the better if you actually look at it and you get your ego out the way it's about a helmet. But you look at that that's if it's for them, then you can't worry about vanity and looking like Kurt Russell,

maybe we should move forward in our technology and progress. If you think about the mental health, oh, I'm beating my chest, I don't need to be a pussy. No, if you have a clear mind, you're close more than likely to get into the flow state and operate at the highest level working, you know, with your drug calculations or your critical thinking or your search. And it's the same with the workweek, if you want to operate at the highest level, and you don't want to injure yourself, because you take your job seriously. And you work out on shift and you pour hose and you throw ladders, but you don't have the time for your body to actually grow from that. Then again, it's the work we do so if we truly do care about being the best version of ourselves to serve, serve the public, go home to our families and make sure our brothers and sisters do then we need to be beating the fucking drum when it comes to the work week as well.



20:45

Yeah, we can't we can't ignore that. And you talked about people just saying, you know, well just go home and sleep well. Unfortunately, that is not a reality for most people for you know, people like myself where I got two young boys two and six, I got a wife, I have other things and other passions that I need to do and take care of. So just going home and sleeping is really not an option. And like I said, You're not recovered if you're having a tweener day is what we call it. And by the time you come back, you're going to need much more than that. So yeah, we just need to make sure that we talk about it more. So happy to hear that you're you figured it out. So looking forward to you changing the schedule LA County soon.



21:22

Yeah, I have. So I mean, like I said, it's not me, it's me collating all these great minds and applying it to our profession as well. And then, just as a as a add on to this for people listening who haven't listened to the podcast before. The pushback is always like, well, how are we going to afford it? Well, when you look at the fiscal cost of the way we work, our responders, the medical retirement, the workman's comp claims, the overtime covering when we're off the lawsuits, or when we make a mistake, we hit someone on intersection, we push the wrong drug, you will also save money hand over fist if you invest in your people and create a fourth shift



22:02

that touches on a subject as like near and dear to my heart, which is health and fitness in the fire service. Because just like you're saying, you can fix this problem and as a result, save a lot of money. And it's the same issue with people being on AI and being proactive about their health and wellness, which I actually consider what you're saying to be that and there's a lot, right, that covers on the umbrella of health and wellness. But if we can be proactive about our health and wellness, and we do have some things at LA County that I'm sure we're going to touch on right now that do that. But if we can be better at that, as a fire service community as a whole, the money that we're going to save in the long term with people going off on injury or having to get surgeries are retiring out on AI, you know, is billions of dollars, you know, let's be honest, in the end, you're going to save so much money. So it's so important to be proactive about these things with your health and wellness. And as a result, everything gets better not only your decision making and being in the flow state, like you said, but also you're saving the

department money. So then you can spend it on things where you don't normally get to like you know, better equipment, or, you know, we have a real issue up getting newer rigs. So, stuff like that. And it's just so important that we just make sure that we are doing it before it becomes a problem and reacting to it.

 23:19

Now, have you had any stations that were closed down or browned out?

 23:23

No, we've been really fortunate our Union did a great job. With staffing and issues with financial crisis in the last couple years, we've had a hiring issue. So we haven't had to, we haven't been able to hire as much people. And now that problem has been solved in last couple years. But before that, as a result, we were understaffed. And because we were understaffed, then we call recalls, which is force hires, you know, depending on where you're at, you call it something different. But people were getting forced hired, oh, man, sometimes 40 to 60 times a year. So on top of their normal schedule. Now the problem is not fixed, we are still at depending on the level that you're at, in the organization. So I'm a captain. And right now the captain rank is suffering as a result of that. So we're still having recalls, and captains are still getting recalled 40 to 60 times a year now. I appreciate that. We haven't ran out of station, but it's still an issue that is, you know, working itself out as a result of some financial budget issues years before.

 24:25

Now what also, I'm going to rephrase the question. I've heard other people saying that they're struggling to even find firefighter candidates. I know when I tested for Anaheim, it was a lot more competitive out there. I sat and tested against the 1000 certified firefighters EMTs a lot of whom had experience elsewhere. I had experience elsewhere. And then, you know, now in Florida, I mean, you could almost walk up into a department throw in your resume and then you know you're in so what are you seeing as far as the pool or the or the is there a lion out? Besides doors, there been a change in the amount of people even trying to become firefighters with you.

 25:07

Yeah, we've experienced the same thing. So when I got hired 20 years ago, it was 1000s 10 1000s people, you know, that would take the test for LA County. And now it's 1000s. But as nearly not as much, and I don't know, if it's a cultural shift, and the amount of people that are going into the tech world, you know, there's nothing wrong with it. But we are getting a lot of people that never thought about being firefighters before. And as a result, they never thought about being firefighters before they show up to the station, I have a story where recruit firefighters do recruit, ride alongs in our academy, so they make sure that they know what the experience is like being in the station for 24 hours, they showed up. Number one, they didn't know they needed to bring their gear, which I would think would be obvious, but that's a kind of maybe a failure on our part for not explaining it to them. But number two, they didn't realize

that they were going to sleep at the station, they have no idea that, you know, firefighters slept at the station. So they that just shows you that they never prepared where it's like the world that I came from, it's you know, you probably had a family member in the fire service or a new friend, you studied for years, you turn in applications at any place that was hiring, you tested, you know, countless places, you became a pay call firefighter and explore ambulance operators. So you got yourself around it. So you can you know, give yourself the best chance possible. And now it's the pool of people that we're getting have never thought about it. And they're not prepared for it. Both mentally, and I'm really seeing it because I do a lot of fitness in the department. Not physically prepared. So again, people that didn't realize how taxing it is. And as results, you know, we have 50 or 60 people per Academy. There is a lot, you know, there's a few people per academy that quit, and they don't realize what they got into and how strenuous and difficult it is. So yeah, I can't put my finger on exactly what the causes, you know, cultural shift, but it's definitely happening.



27:11

What a couple observations that I've thought of myself is, firstly, that pool of healthy individuals is getting smaller. I mean, you that's just not anything other than you walk outside the door. And I think that Southern California maybe as a skewed perspective, because a lot of those cities that are on the beaches, I find tend to have healthier people, a lot of the people you know, the, the states in between, you're gonna see that a little bit less. But so you've got a smaller pool, but also, I have to give credit to the younger generation, I think there's there's more information about what this job actually looks like now, whereas we kind of bought into the, again, the Backdraft mentality, the heroism and the, you know, the lights and sirens. Now people are like, Oh, well, you know, I know X amount of people and his dad took his own life, and his dad's an alcoholic. And it's not the doom and gloom, but it's just the other side is now visible. And I think we've done a horrible job as a profession of branding ourselves, not firstly, like I said, owning and even changing these things that are negative, because they totally are within our power to actually address and fix. But secondly, not, as you said, not explaining to the world what we actually do, why is there a fire engine in my heart attack call? You're asking me that in 2023, that tells me that we've done a fucking awful job of telling the world who works, how we're worked, and what we do and what we're responsible for.



28:37

We always laugh and you know, think about, you know, because we're a public entity as a fire department. And we always wondered, you know, what would the fire service look like if like a private organization came in like Apple or one of these, like, top tier companies came in and tried to run it? You know, what things would they fix, and you bring up a good point, because it's, you know, we've done a horrible job of branding ourselves, people really, you know, still don't understand what we do, and why we're there. Every time we go on a medical I should say, every time a lot of times we go on a medical call. People always ask why is the fire department here, I don't need you here. I need an ambulance. Because in LA County, for LA County Fire Department, we don't run ambulances, you run an engine and a squad to the call or truck in a squad depending on the area that you're at. So when we show up, people tend to get mad and they're thinking, you know, I want the paramedics and you got to explain to them we're in fact we are the paramedics the ones that are on the ambulance or the EMTs. So we're here to help you. So you're right, like the branding has, has not been the best and you know,

and especially to with the 911 system. We're I don't think we've done a good job of pra what the 911 system is for and as a result and I would say nine one wants this and now has gotten oversaturated with the amount of people that used it for non emergencies.

 29:55

So do you have the same system the Anaheim had where The medics are on the rig. And then if it's als call you right in with the EMTs in the ambulance, and then you get that from the hospital on your rig.

 30:08

Exactly. And, in fact, are most of the engines in LA County, which is this is something that's a little bit different. Most of the engines are BLS basic life support, and the squads are the ALS squads. You know, it's like a ram truck with a converted bed that you allows you to put equipment in it. And those so there's always an engine and a squad that respond and the squad will cover two to three engine areas. And it's getting less because we're getting busy, and we're getting more squads, and they'll meet up on the call. And then like you said, if it's als squad, he's jump on follow up the other squad, he goes to the hospital because the phone call picks them up goes back, you know, and the cycle repeats itself.

 30:49

So I love that we didn't have squads in Anaheim, so we just had trucks and engines, so you would, you know, I wasn't a medic, then I became a medic after I wanted to be but I just wasn't there long enough to actually go to school. But um, you know, you'd have an ALS call, the medics would be two medics would jump in the bag. So the two firefighters on the engine or the truck would then go to the hospital, they pick them up, boom, you're back in service again. And you didn't get the same burnout because if it was a BLS call, the private ambulance guys would just take it, and then the rest of the guys would go back to the station. So I thought that was a great kind of happy medium between what I did a lot of my career, which is the rescue where you just get murdered for 24 hours straight. And obviously the other side of the coin, which is we're not doing any EMS, which I think is a very outdated mentality.

 31:35

Yeah, I've got to see both perspectives. The fire department I worked at before we were on an ambulance. And there was no differentiation between ALS or BLS. When you're on that ambulance, you're going no matter what, because you work through the fire department. And so when I went to LA County, and I've been a paramedic for seven years and I reactivated there, it was a foreign thing for me to immediately try to discern if this is ALS or BLS, and then send it with an ambulance or you're going and so it was something that I had to you know, learn quickly about but through the years I really appreciated that system because it seems to function so much better. And like you said, you know, but the aimless guys, those guys are still getting robbed because they're going to the hospital left and right and hole in the wall all the

time. But then the squaddies are still gonna rock and depending on the area that you're at, the engines are still getting rocked, but it's probably a little bit less if it was the other way where we'd be following up all the time. But it's not to say that the wear and tear on the rigs was



32:31

seen as well with care who's the ambulance company that we had that it was all young guys, too. So they were not people that were getting beaten up for a decade like you do in the fire service or two decades. So you know, they Yes, they do. You know, we're we're getting the shit kicked out of them for two or three years. But hopefully then they got hired by a fire department. They moved over there. And then a new group came. So I think it was a different dynamic as well. I never saw, you know, 40 year old care ambulance operators.



32:59

We have a few. Like you tell them you got to go in a different field do something else. But there is a few but yeah, for the most part, they're all younger guys and girls. Well, one



33:08

more topic I want to hit before we get back on your timeline. You said your dad also responded the LA riots. I know some of the AMA Anaheim guys I worked with that were my captains by that point were there as well. What did he tell about? What stories did he tell about that event through a firefighters eyes?



33:27

Like, from what I remember, and I should take advantage of talking to my dad more because he's got so many stories he got hired, you know, just as a backstory in the 70s, late 70s. And things were so different in LA City and the amount of fire that he got to see in his 35 plus years is something that I will you know, none of us will ever get to see to that level. So it's pretty impressive. You know, the amount of times that he tells me like, oh, yeah, I was trapped here or this building collapse there. And we nearly made it. But his experience in the riots, you know, from what I gather is it's it was like Armageddon, you know, it was them just going out, you know, with, hopefully a police escort, a lot of times, that did not happen. And sometimes you will respond to a fire, it'd be too dangerous, and you just have to take off and then watch whatever was burning burn, you know, so a lot of it was doing the best that you could in a situation but things were too saturated. And things were so dangerous as a result, that there was no way that you could perform in a normal function that you would think today. You think today if you saw this house on fire, you'd stop and put it out. But in fact, you know, that's not going to happen. If it's too dangerous in a situation you might have to retreat back, kind of like when you're in a war zone, and then preserve yourself and the equipment. So hopefully you can make a difference, you know, in the coming future. So I just kind of I'm bringing it up to him again after this conversation because I want to understand more about it, but I just really understand it from that big perspective that it was just kind of just chaos, and they're just doing the best they could with the little that they had.

 35:05

Now what about the gang activity back in the 80s was exposed to any of that as well.

 35:10

He was here he was in South Central as a as a boot firefighter as a probie firefighter. So he just, he just talks about, you know how dangerous it was, and you know, going into work and, you know, him just making sure that he had like a weapon in his car, not because he's trying to look for to hurt somebody, but in case something happened to him, nothing thankfully happened to him, he never got assaulted or anything like that. But it was it was pretty significant amount of shootings and the amount of stabbings and the violent things that they went on. And back then they were single function. So they weren't paramedics. And they would kind of respond with the ambulance company. And then they became dual function later on in LA City. They didn't do as much EMS, but it was still a significant amount.

 35:58

Must have been crazy. And it's the thing with there's a lot of chess beaten today. And I see a lot of people taking selfies in front of burnt out houses to try and remind themselves where the courageous firefighters they are. But when we look at our forefathers, you know, like you said, there's a great thing there buildings are safer, less people are dying and house fires. I think someone's died in a school fire for like, seven years or something, thanks to the protection systems that we have there. So it's beautiful. But we have to remind ourselves that no, we're not we're not matching, you know, the war years in the Bronx or anywhere like that, that we have to embrace the other things that we do, and we do very well. extrication and rope rescue and of course, EMS.

 36:38

Yeah, I always tell guys talking about this whenever as cool as we think we are. Check your ego. You're not that cool.

 36:44

Absolutely. I mean, there's there's a million of us doing this job. It's not that night unique. It's amazing. And I love it. And I adore the people in it. But yeah, I think when when you become a narcissist in uniform, you need to look in the mirror.

 36:56

Yeah, you got to remember why you're there. And you know who you're there to serve?



37:00

Absolutely. Well back to your journey. Then before we get to your journey into the fire service itself. You are to this day, like you said, you're you're in great shape, you understand your wellness element, what were you doing and playing when you were in school age,



37:15

mainly basketball, was my sport of choice was helped out significantly for the Forest Service, because the amount of endurance that you build up was really important. And then in high school, I got really into weights like kind of every young guy because you want to put on some muscle and you kind of want to look steady. And so this, you know, helped later on, but I played high school basketball. And that was you know, that was really a sport that I mainly focused on before that as a kid I did like everybody's soccer, baseball, basketball, and then later on just fixed in my focused on the ball itself.



37:50

And as far as career aspirations, were you already dreaming of becoming a firefighter in high school, or was it something else?



37:56

No, I remember being in high school. And my dad mentioned that I should be a firefighter. And I looked at him like he was dumb. Why would I want to do that? No, I don't want to do that I want to do something else. I think in high school, I wanted to be like a fighter pilot, or I forget what else but that was kind of the thing that was on my radar. And then I became kind of like a dumb high school kid later on in life, and got into some trouble in my sophomore and junior year and got into the wrong crowd and was doing the wrong things. And did not my set myself up for success. And that's kind of when my dad came to me and told me that I should go to the fire service. And I looked at him with that stupid look. And he likes to bring that up still today to make fun of me. Yeah, I had no aspirations. But luckily, I got in trouble. And it kind of scared me straight realizing that I needed to figure out what I was going to do. So in high school, my senior year, we had this phenomenal Fire Service basically wreck program. So it was a class that you could take and the teacher that taught it was a former firefighter that retired in one of our local cities that was busy. So he had a lot of good experience. And then that same year 911 happened. And that was kind of enough for me to realize, yeah, this is something that I want to do. And this is my calling.



39:18

What was the incident that scared you straight?



39:21

I got caught drinking and driving. And then as a result of my license taken away, I got what else? So my license was taken away from my junior and senior year of high school. So that's fun. You're really cool. When that happens. And I had to go to meetings, I had to do community service, I had to pay a fine you know, I had to tell my parents go see a judge all of that. And I quickly realized that's not the life that I mentally nor want to live you know, I gotta get my my stuff together to make sure that you know, I provide a decent future for myself. So it was enough. I know other people have, you know, other stories, but for me, that was enough and I had gotten away I was in pretty stupid stuff the years before. So I'm lucky I did not kill anybody. And I'm lucky. That happened. And I'll never forget the sheriff that that pulled me over that night. He was a younger guy. His name is McKay. And the reason why this hits close to home is because, you know, he gave me a break that night, he only gave me a public intoxication as a result that the, the sentencing was not as severe and the punishment was not as severe. And I thought it was like a cool kid at the time. And like all that guy's a dick, you know, he didn't really take care of me. But years later, I see him unfortunately on the news, and he had been shot in the line of duty. During the whole Dorner event that took place in southern California. He was one of the sheriffs that was in Big Bear when Dorner was burning down his house. And, you know, unfortunately, he was shot and did not survive. And I'll never forget that because he did not have to cut me a break that night. And he really did. And he spent time talking to me and telling me kind of what an idiot I was and what I was doing to my life. And he could have easily just just been a dick and just wrote me a DUI and then sent me on my way, but he spent the time and that made a huge difference. And always remember that and and as a result when I come across kids, you know, on calls or other people that need help, you know, I won't jump down their throats, I'll spend the time with them to try to make a difference in their life.



41:34

So that is such a common denominator when it comes to people that have a checkered past that found themselves into first responders, military wherever they were when when we were talking. But it's that that mentor that maybe a momentary mentor or like a you know, a police officer that took the time and saw them, which has happened in numerous times. And here, the mentor ship in a class like the fire service class. I mean, there's a great program here in Ocala that offers mentorship to kids, you know, and the there's no barrier to entry, as long as you can be at that station at that time. They have equipment training, you know, scholarships for fire academy, and it's incredible. But the number of people that were on that way would pass, they just needed that person to see them just to steer them a bit. So that is, you know, incredibly powerful stories. Thank you for sharing that.



42:23

Yeah, my pleasure. And one more point on that it's so important that we don't lose ourselves, you know, when we're so busy, you know, for those of us that are running, you know, 30 plus calls, or you know, whatever it is, that's busy, because we can easily come across so many people through the day, and make a positive impact. But I know some of us, and I've been there myself, succumb to being tired, succumb to the bad side of myself. And don't realize an ordeal. Remember that you can make a difference with these people that you come across, you know, be your best self try to make a difference. And you never know what it's going to do. I know he didn't do that. Because, you know, he was trying to Pat himself on the back. He was doing that because he was he was his best version of himself that night.



43:06

That's such a horrendous end to the story too. But I mean, I'm glad we're able to tell that positive story about him. Maybe someone that knew him will hear this. While we're on that subject, one of the craziest aha moments that I've had in six and a half years now these conversations was the realization of how many of us experience certain levels of trauma before we ever put the uniform on. And in the mental health conversation, the fire services, oh, Evan saw there. So James had to go on this call. And we'd never talk about those formative years, you were having some some behaviors that maybe were exhibiting some sort of, you know, angst when you look back now with this mature lens, were there any elements of your childhood that you think would contribute to that?



43:52

Yeah, I think at the time, this is another thing kind of like for me into where I've gone in my career path with health and wellness. You know, my, my father, being an LA City firefighter, you know, gave his all and as a result, he had some pretty significant mental and physical issues. And he had and still does have, but it's getting better, some serious back problems that caused him unfortunately, to, you know, become too reliant on prescription prescription medications. And so like, kind of during these years that I was rebelling, was during this time, that these things were happening with my dad. And you know, just seeing him in the in that amount of pain and just seeing him too reliant on the medication. It definitely contributed towards, you know, where I was out of the period of my life and then, you know, where I'm at now in my career in wanting to help firefighters and first responders never experienced that sort of level of mental health issue and that sort of level of physical back pain because it was heartbreaking to see your loved one experienced in that. And then it's also heartbreaking to see somebody who's given their, you know, their all for 35 years. And as a result, you know, they do get a good pension, but they can't enjoy it as much because their body's so broken down. And so it really became my mission. And you know, and I'm sure it's because of this, to not let that or try to impact that as much as possible in the fire service. And that's kind of where, you know, foundation training comes into play, and kind of all the other stuff that I've done with LA County.



45:32

So walk me through that, then your dad, you know, finally steers you towards a career that he loved. And again, what a powerful parallel to what we're trying to do now is like, how can we work someone? How can we create an environment for a man or woman to work an entire career in the fire service, and come out the other end physically and mentally intact to therefore enjoy the retirement that they've earned. So walk me through your kind of onramp experience, that first department and then how you found yourself in LA County.



46:04

So I decided to be a firefighter, I went to a local college to get my fire service or fire science degree, and my EMT, so I got those I applied to a small two station department up here on the Mount was called crest forest fire for pay call got accepted, and got a cool pager. And then I

mountain was called crest forest fire for pay call got accepted, and got a cool pager. And then I just remember, like waiting for that thing to go off. And then when it would go off, I'd rush to my car. And, you know, I wish shouldn't have but I was hauling ass to the station. So I could be on the rig so I can make it to the call. And I still remember my first call, which was an over the side rescue. And I thought, Man, that was intense and amazing. You know, I'm definitely hooked and want to do this. And subsequently, the next month was this was in 2003 was the old fire, which was the biggest fire that we've experienced brush fire in our local area in a really really long time. It ended up burning over 100,000 acres over 500 homes. And I remember going to the station I was going to my furniture job used to deliver furniture during that time, they paged us out, I went to the station to provide backup to our reserve rigs, while the other guys were down in the canyon because of kind of where we're at and like arrowhead, you got you know, transverse 50 miles up the mountain. And at the very bottom of the mountain in Waterman Canyon. This brush fire started and it was primed. It was October the Santa Ana is the fuel had been dry, so it was ready to rock and it rock it did. And as a result that evening, I remember getting toned out because there are then another brush fire that had broken out on top of the mountain. And then going there. And then when we got there because resources were so drained, everybody else was on the main part of the fire. But then there's this four or five growing six acre fire that are threatening these homes and it's just as pay call firefighters. And we get there. I remember the whole world looked like it was on fire. And then there's just I look over my left. And then there's just house after house after house on fire. And two weeks later, it was an experience of a lifetime. You know, it was unfortunate to see your local community burn. That was, you know, really hard to see. I just but I fought so much fire then. And then I thought that's what it was like. Everyone's like, kid, that's not what it's like, you know, people normally don't get fires like that for the rest of their life. But I knew that impact that we made was something so significant. And you know, I felt like I had done something of service. And so that was another thing that kind of really hooked me. And then from there, I started I got hired at that department as what was called a limited term firefighter. So worked full time hours, you don't get benefits. I was working on the ambulance as an EMT. And then I went to paramedic school when I was 20. Before that I went to the fire academy at Crafton Hills college, got my firefighter one, then went to paramedic school and then when I graduated paramedic school, I got hired as a full time firefighter paramedic with that department and then I was with them from basically when I got hired as a pay call in 2003. So when I left really County in 2011



49:16

Beautiful. So what were some of the idiosyncrasies about that first department that you didn't find in LA County, if any?



49:24

A lot one it snows a lot of mountains. So we had to you know, deal with that. But I know it's no big deal for most people out there. They're not from Southern California. If we had 26 full time people so this was like your immediate family that you were dealing with day in and day out. Parallel that with LA County most days that I work I probably meet somebody new that I've never worked with. It's quite a contrast situation that you're in. So being in that situation where you know you're you're so close and still a lot of these people are my close His friends that I worked with doing less with more because a structure fire at crest forest, you know, immediately we would get two engines. And you know the next and engine was maybe a pay

call engine or neighboring department which could be 1520 minutes away, again parallel that with LA County right now structure fire response we're getting four engines one truck one squad one BC, and we're getting that probably everybody's arriving on scene at the exact same time or within 60 seconds of each other. The overhaul that you had to do as excuse to station department fires would last so much longer. When I went to LA County and we were leaving within 45 minutes or a half hour after a structure fire because of the amount of amount of hands that we had to work on it was it blew my mind. Also, being up there being on the ambulance, you know, transport times to the hospital were long. And you know, being in a different topography because it was a mountainous type terrain. So very different, the fires were very different. A lot of times we get there and the houses were more well involved versus when I'm at LA County, now we get there, and we have a better chance of saving something. So yeah, it's quite a different experience. And I'm really appreciative that I've got to see both sides of the coin with that.



51:21

Did you have vertical ventilation in your first apartment having so few people and see?



51:27

Good point? No, yeah, the I cut on one roof. When I was there, you know, from 2003 till 2011. You know, we did not have trucks up there just because of the terrain you could not fit and there were there were probably some buildings that could have benefited from it, but not for the cost for the you know, the one chance that that place might burn down. So we did not have vertical ventilation. So when I went to LA County, in in the West Coast, we are, you know, so aggressive when it comes to vertical ventilation that was really something that I had to, you know, up my level and catch up to.



52:01

So I had the same problem when I came from Florida and I worked just shy of a year in in Hialeah, thank God, I had an excellent, excellent Academy, what happened, they hired a whole bunch of us as non service, half of the group were already certified. So they put the other half through Fire School in the anti school and just kept us on the program for three months and beat the shit out of us. So by the time we were she went on the line, I would argue that we were extremely fit extremely well trained. But vertical ventilation just wasn't a part of that, that culture really. And so when I went out west, even the way the through ladders was different, like I've never spiked a ladder before, you know that I hadn't worked with all these different ones as this is your bread and butter like it is out west. But it was interesting work for Anaheim ended up on a truck company until a truck absolutely loved it. It was on the roof. You know, most fires if it wasn't self ventilated. Saw how well a well trained, well coordinated interior, excuse me interior and truck crew together could put the fire out so quickly. I got to see it inside. I got to see on the roof numerous times. And then I go back to Florida, and I have a little boy, we want to go back to Florida. And I hear the guys on the East Coast going. Oh, it's so dangerous. We don't put people on the roofs here we have lightweight construction. Well, first, the whole fucking building is lightweight construction in California at least you have cinder blocks as your walls over here. Secondly, so you put two companies under the roof, but you

won't put someone on the roof to cut a hole, they basically make a chimney. So it was so weird to have actually seen it work with my own eyes and then come back to this kind of textbook naivety. That was the way I was trained when I was first in the academy.



53:46

Yeah, it's I'm assigned to a truck company now as a captain. So, you know, like you, we do rotate at the station. But you know, we've recently had a lot of fires and the importance of vertical ventilation cannot be overstated. The impact that is had on interior crews that I've seen is life saving. They know we ventilate for two reasons we ventilate so we can make the conditions better for survivability for victims to something that's really important that we forget. And I know that by doing that we introduce oxygen to the environment. And that's why we are so aggressive when it comes to vertical ventilation that we have a coordinated attack in LA County. So we are not we're cutting the hole but we are not popping the hole through or going through the drywall until we have a line until I'm in communication with fire attack below us that they can check that fire so we make sure that doesn't grow. And the second reason is, so we can improve the fire behavior. And by releasing all those, you know, hot unburned gases, we're going to improve that environment for our firefighters and for those victims. So it is so important. And again, I understand, you know, the hesitancy by some people with lightweight construction. But that's why and that's where training comes into play. You know, that's why we are really aggressive when it comes to our training especially with Trump. company operations because it's a specialty skill that we want to make sure that we are dialed in when we're, when we're doing that operation. And then on the flip side of that coin, I've been on a hose line inside of a structure fire, where they ventilated, far too early popped in. And that was the hottest fire that I was on, or inside of, because I remember sitting there and I was behind my partner. And we could not see anything, it was one of those fires where you show up and it's just pumping thick, black, heavy smoke out of the office side door, and then we go in and we're pushing the line, we kind of make a turn right hand turn down a hallway, and we're trying to make a turn or push and he has the hose line opened up completely wide open 150 gallons, shooting into the roof, that's probably an eight foot ceiling. Nothing, there is no return coming down. So you know, there's some significant heat and v2 overtaking that, that water. And so where I'm like, Hey, man, can you go a little bit more and he's like, No, it's too hot. And everybody that knows the front of the hose line is like the hottest part and everyone behind us trying to push you and how annoying that is. And it just got all of a sudden, it got instantaneously so hot, that we could not, you know, think about anything else other than backing out of that fire. And that's exactly what we did. Like guys, we gotta get out of here right now this thing is about to flash, you know, there's those signs of flash overs, high heat, you know, thick, dark, heavy smoke, starting to bank down, decreasing visibility, all these things were happening. And so we backed out and sure enough, it did flash and this was you know, as a result of uncoordinated attacks. So yeah, I do understand you know, the concerns of some people but if you have dialed in crews, where you make sure that you are again, like any fire communication is so important. If you make sure that you communicate what's going on and over communicate, you know, the impact that you can make, you know, far outweighs the risks in my opinion.



56:56

So I saw kind of two sides in a different way I went on to a structure fire it was an abandoned house but it was an Orange County and it was one of those things where if it can go wrong it will so we were only three man on that engine. Everyone else in the alarm is held up by this

train that would cut through the one of the artery roads in my area. So it is on the radio engineers at the pump panel and this is one of the like the long tracks that goes to a house so I'm having the hump you know the the two and a half and then go back and get the bundles and you know doing all this on my own which is definitely a real wake up moment for me of how good my fitness was because I literally wouldn't be able to do it had I not train the way I do. But because they are so averse to getting on the roof. It was ultimately it was an attic fire but it was a conventional construction house really well built so they couldn't even reach the ceiling because it was six by one, you know, slats. So the no pipe pole was going to end up I think with a chainsaw on a pole, kind of half assing it but the hope that he holds the perfect example. And they had the kind of cocked loft openings on each side. So instead they just had a crew shoot from one side the fire would just fuck off to the other side of the attic. Then the whole the whole the hose all around was like Laurel and Hardy. Shoot it from outside it would come back the first side. And it was like Why the fuck are we just not going to open just open the frickin hole, open the roof. But then, like you were saying about the bad side of his coordinator. That's exactly what it was in anime. We had radios we'd never open the actual, you know, heat hold until they were ready. But you almost felt like a fraud when you were an engine fire fire inside because all the heat and smoke would go and all your training of being low and below your knees. You're like, oh, I can stand up. Oh, there's the fire and you just kind of walk over and it almost it's like an anti climax because it works so well. And then you add foam into it, which they introduce for a bit. Now it goes out immediately. We now learn though that it's probably carcinogenic. But regardless, you know, it was like, it was too easy. You know? So I wonder sometimes that's the aversion is people kind of want that fight a little bit like a car fire. You want to put a car fire out, just put Class B foam on it. And you know, yeah, dose dose the thing and it'll go out straightaway. So it's interesting when you've actually seen it works so well, like you said with the training and we cut all the time in the academy, we studied mitten door from cover to cover, you know, you have to do the work but when well trained, well coordinated teams work together. It is by far the most effective structure fire operations that I've ever witnessed.



59:32

Yeah, I can't agree more. And you know, we recently had an attic fire I was on the engine we show up, you know, there's the smoke going out of the gable vents, you know, it's an attic fire based on kind of how it looks and how it's pushing. So we go inside and inside is completely clear other than at the roof. It's a little bit hazy. And there was a vent that was kind of you know, accessing the attic right there. And my firemen and I are in there and I'm talking to them and we're not masked up at this point. And the truck gets there and I tell them hey guys, you know, this is in the attic, I need you to cut a hole. But before they had the chance to do that this fire when smoke got completely filled that you know spot in the attic and decided that into Flash and then push down all those products on top of us, I've never put my mask on so quick. As a result, you know, my firearm is dropping, the other foreigners dropping, I'm dropping, we're putting the mask on. And then we're quickly getting suited up. And there was so much fire and smoke in that environment. And it happened in a second. But as soon as the truck company got on scene, and we got some great video of these guys doing it, and there happened to be this firefighters first time cutting on the roof. So he's got like phenomenal pictures of it. But soon as they got on scene, and they cut that heat hole, and they did a double center after louver cut, it was perfect, everything lifted, and it cleared. And then we got control of that fire. So I couldn't agree more when it's coordinated. And when you're well trained, there is no better tactic out there.



1:00:55

So with that, obviously, you need a high level of fitness, whether it's interior, whether it's on the roof. Talk to me about the your the bars that was set as you started entering the fire service, whether it was your first apartment, or the second one, where were those standards held, and what was the culture in those departments as far as maintaining your own fitness.



1:01:17

It was one physical fitness test, I think everybody's probably done where it was like the host stack, followed by the host drag followed by like the dummy carry, ladder extension, sledge hammer hit, and I forget the other thing, but it was a combination of that. So you know, that was the standard that you'd get you take when you go into an academy, or you're going into an academy when you're going through college or Academy when you're going into a fire department, which I think is great. You know, it's a good starting point. But it was hugely missing the mark. And you know, I'll tie this in with what I'm talking about later. Because as we know, with those types of tests, that is primarily endurance based, that is like one component of fitness. That is important. But not, does not hit the whole entire health and wellness spectrum. So that was kind of like the standard. And you would take that every year. And then going into LA County, it was the same thing. Yeah, did have the C Pat for the bill to access it. But what we're kind of trying to do now and what I'm trying to do now is kind of bring a better focus on a more well rounded approach of health and wellness. And, you know, what that is for me is through the years of being in charge of PT at the academy, through the years of being fortunate enough to work with foundation training, Dr. Goodman, Jesse Salas film and some programs for the fire departments, and talking to all these high level people. And then you know, doing battalion drills or foundation training, filming a kettlebell and barbell and bodyweight program, we're lucky enough at LA County where we have a film unit so I can access them and put all this stuff on an app that our firefighters can access. And what I'm getting at is like it's really compressed for me down to kind of four areas that are important for firefighters health. And like any thing in the fire service, it's an acronym, which works well for me, because it helps me remember it. But it also is easy for firefighters to remember. So and I know I'm kind of going beyond your question, but please, it's important to hit. The first one is R so it stands for rest. With acronym is rest. And you know that stands? Overall, we all need to work on a rest and recovery number one, because that's that's so important. I don't think we get enough of that. But the first aspect of it is respiration. So are you breathing like a professional? Are you doing some sort of breathing practice breathing control technique are you using and incorporating your respiratory muscles with your workouts using something like foundation training to work those respiratory muscles because when you work those respiratory muscles in a direct way that decreases limb blood flow, which increases athleticism, which will improve your overall performance later on. So a huge component of foundation important, but also, what's your plan? If you're in a stressful environment? How are you going to breathe in a stressful environment? Are you going to up regulate yourself? Are you going to down regulate yourself to preserve your air preserve the bottle than to preserve your mindset to make sure that you are focused I know for me, humming, humming works the best and I got a funny story later on. It'll tell you about how I mean when I was inside of the burn box during the fire behavior. The next component is E obviously which stands for endurance. So we know that you know cardio respiratory endurance, which is the thing that firefighters probably have harped on the most in the fire service, which is important, but not the only thing. And that's you know, kind of Max anaerobic and Max aerobic fitness. And there's various ways that you can tackle

that but one of my favorite things is swing kettlebells in fact, there's an easy protocol that you can do where you grab a kettlebell that you can easily swing 10 times, and then you swing it twice, excuse me set a timer for three minutes, you swing it twice, then your buddy swings it twice, you swing it four times, he swings it four times, you keep doing that for the full three minutes, you rest, you repeat for three minutes, or you rest for three minutes, and you repeat it three to five times, it is a phenomenal conditioning and doesn't get to glycolytic, it doesn't tax the system too much, and improves your over all aerobic capacity. This is actually a direct protocol I got from Pavel sat Sulan. And I took a strong endurance course, it's he mentioned that it's a quick deployment of the aerobic system. So around four minutes normal people's aerobic system kicks in. But that three minute mark, you're starting to bring it down. So you can use oxygen for fuel so you can burn a more efficient fuel. So that's the endurance aspect of that II. The other endurance aspect, which we know is muscular endurance, I would say is probably over prioritize with firefighters, because they don't focus on enough strength. If you focus on a max, pull up Max, like rep pull up or five rep pull up probably better. And then a max rep benchpress for five reps, you can get your pull ups up to 20 reps by doing that, and you can get your push ups up to 50 reps by doing that. And for me, that is enough for endurance that you need. When you go beyond that you start to specialize. So muscular endurance, you should focus on strength first, because there are other benefits. And I'll talk about that when we get to it. But make sure you have it in the capacity that you're making sure that you're strong enough. And the most important part about this E acronym is the torso endurance, if you want to perform athletically. And if you want to reduce your risk of back injuries, you have to have a stable and durable core, which in foundation is anything that connects to the pelvis or torso. So I'm talking about the front, the sides and your back, your six pack, your obliques and their QL is in the back. You have endurance. And this is going to reduce your risk of back injuries. And this is one of the biggest things that I preach to firefighters that they should do. And the biggest impact that I can make in the fire service is by building endurance in these muscles. The next thing is stress, you know, the S for stress? How are you handling stress? You know, do you have some sort of practice that mitigates stress that fills your vessel? Is there a meditation, I personally meditate? I think it's phenomenal. If you want to really challenge yourself go on a meditation retreat, I did one for seven days. It sounds really hippie dippie. But the things I learned and how difficult that was, that was far more difficult than anything physical I've ever done. Because I was just sitting there every day, no matter what meditating, you know, was it 12 hours a day. And it was hard, but the insights and the ability that you get to train your mind, and you talked about the flow state, you can get yourself into the flow state better. And you can have a better decision making process your brains like anything, you have to learn how to train it, and you have to train it, if you want it to perform better, just like your body. Also on the stress thing, you know, are you introducing some sort of healthy stress to your system saunas, cold plunges. We all know the benefits of that. And the importance of that, that is something that cannot be overlooked, especially for firefighters. And then lastly, the T part stands for tension, which means strength training. This is something that I didn't focus on enough when I was new to the fire service that I wish I would have. So every young firefighter out there that's listening, or any first responder or military or any civilian should become strong first. And there's a reason for that is because as you up your strength that builds your vessel of health and wellness, or increases your vessel size of health and wellness. If you want more muscle mass, you'll get more by being stronger. If you want more conditioning, you'll get better at condition by being stronger. If you want to live longer. The correlation between longevity and ability to generate tension is out there. And there's many studies that prove this. So at the end of the day, they focused originally, you know when I was first in the forest service on that endurance element, but what I've learned is use that rest protocol. And that kind of covers your bases of what you need for a firefighter. And if you do that, you're gonna be far ahead of the game.



1:09:17

Beautiful. Well, I want to deconstruct that a little bit. So firstly, with the tension, when we're talking about strength, you're talking about strength to weight ratio rather than hypertrophy and muscle growth.



1:09:28

Exactly. And to put numbers on it. Every firefighter should be able to two times bodyweight their deadlift, and I know that sounds like a lot for some, but especially with those with back injuries. I've had a back injury. I've sat in an office, I've been told by a doctor that I would never be a firefighter, again, that I should stop being a firefighter I needed surgery. I can tell you that was 10 years ago, I'm better off now as a result of doing foundation other things and I can deadlift three times my body weight. It's important. You should also be able to Press standing press about three quarters of your body weight. And then you should also be able to, and I'm gonna get flack for this, but I'm going to say it because I think it's important squat, I think should be able to low bar back squat one and a half times your body weight. And the reason for that is because you're taking the body through the longest range of motion using the most amount of muscle. So if you want to gain some actual serious functional muscle squat, and do the low bar box was so yes, it's the ability to generate tension. And we did a study with our fire department, with the recruits and in the field. And we took the grip dynamometer. So that's the thing that you can squeeze as hard as you can a grip strength basically tests. And we did foundation training. And not weirdly enough, because I knew it was going to happen. But interestingly enough, everyone's strength improved as a result, their grip strength, because in f t, it teaches you kind of how to build a balanced area of tension or balance, stability of tension. And when you're able to do that, everything else, you get better at everything else. And like I said, then you have this correlation to longevity that's so important for firefighters.



1:11:11

Yeah, so I think that's a misunderstanding. I wrote a book a couple years ago, and one of the chapters, it was almost like a bunch of short stories. And each chapter was a story for my career. And then there was a takeaway, it might be strength conditioning, there's one on foundation training and my personal injury, which we'll get to in a sec. But one of them was my very first exposure to a hiring, like a mass testing. So you test one time, and they send it to a whole bunch of small departments, where these two bright orange bodybuilders that were not I mean, there's no better way to describe it. They were cockerels, they were walking around with their tiny tests and beating their chests about you know, and I watched both of them fail at exactly the same third story landing of the very first part of the empty hose carry that we're talking about. And it was a real aha moment, because I watched a lot of guys built like me or smaller, you know, or bigger, but in a normal, like farm boy strength, crush this, this, this combat challenge style event. So understanding, like you said that that strength to body ratio, rather than probably when you and I first got hired, there was still a lot of that body building mentality. You don't have to be on a calendar, you have to be able to actually work and move the implements, which is why I think is an important thing. When it comes to testing and the fire service to oh, you know, it's, it's not fair, there's only one fair thing, move that hose, move that ladder, climb those stairs with a high rise strip, you can't tell me that's unfair, if you're

black, white, gay, straight, male, female, whatever, you either can, or you can't. So it's the ultimate equalizer. If you can do that, well, then you're gonna be, you know, physically a great firefighter. But if we start messing around with deadlifts, and you know, vertical leaps, and all that stuff, now you're starting to get away from the task in hand. So watching these people that probably could bench you know, triple my body weight, but physically couldn't even carry empty hose three floors up.



1:13:02

Yeah, it's good point, probably one of the biggest things that I've had to I want to say untrained, because it sounds bad. But that's kind of the best way to describe it, is the way and like, what how firefighters want to work, right, there's that like three sets of 10. And I want to do pull up per muscle group. So I can build size. And that's it. But you know, and that's fine if you want to incorporate that periodically, but you have to focus on your strength. Number one, because that is the first thing when the second thing actually that you lose when you age. So the first thing is power, which is bring ton of the importance of kettlebell swings into play. So you got to focus on power, you got to focus on strength, these are the first things that you lose when you age. So if you want a fountain of youth, stay powerful, stay strong, and work on it. And when you do these two things, you're gonna build enough muscle mass because like you said, those two bodybuilder type guys, you know, they will look good, and it'll look strong, but that's a lot of muscle to oxygenate, you know, the bigger you are, the more energy requirements that you need to move that body and that is really taxing on your heart on the rest of your system. So kind of try to understand that you have to be athletic. And I describe this to guys, you know, like how should we train as firefighters and it's kind of like an athletic power building, you know, there's there's power building that are that is out there, where it's like a form of powerlifting where you're strong enough and you can, you know, do a little bit of muscle mass building or armor building, as Dan John says, but for me, I always tell guys, you got to keep it athletic at first, right? You got to do the things that make you feel athletic because that's the things that are going to make the biggest impact. When you're on the job when you're on an incident loaded carries foundation training, single arm kettlebell swings, you know, double arm kettlebell swings, get ups things like that, that make you athletic need to be incorporated in your system. So yeah, if you want to be prepared? You know, with your physical body, you're gonna have to do things other than just build muscle, you're gonna have to get strong, you're gonna have to get powerful, and you're going to have to maintain a high level of conditioning. In fact, Peter Thiel has talked about this before, not specifically for firefighters. But I think it's really relevant and important. If you want to the two number one, things that you can make an impact on your longevity is number one, VO two Max, which is obvious, we kind of known that. And the other thing is strength, the thing that we're talking about here today, so you continually work on those two things, you are going to significantly reduce your risk of all cause mortality and dying early as a firefighter. And he broke it down this way. He said, and I'm paraphrasing, because this is, I can't remember exactly. But if you have diabetes, like you have a 25%, increased risk of death, if you smoke, it's like a 50% increase risk. If you're not strong enough, it's around a 200%, increased risk of all cause mortality. So if that doesn't like shine light on the importance of being strong enough, and your VO two, Max, you know, I don't know what else does?



1:16:09

So how is the the whole strength and conditioning element viewed in your department? And

how much support do you get? And the reason I asked that, I've worked for four departments I went, started the East Coast and the West Coast for a while and then ended up with two different ones in the East. And what I saw more often than not, was actually an opposition to wellness training by a lot of these unions. And the sad fact is, a lot of them, the union board would never have failed have never passed a physical test if they'd actually been told to themselves, so it was more self serving than it was actually serving the men and women that were paying the dues. So a lot of times I hear that from other people in the outside that want to train, they're like, No, it's the unions are actually the biggest barrier for us, which again, is ridiculous, you know, and the same thing I point out with our union, with the workweek, like we should be advocating for things that not only allow us to perform at the highest level, but then give us longevity and our retirement just like your dad. So talk to me about the support, you know, and if there's any resistance that you get with forging strength and conditioning and overall wellness, for men trying to raise that bar up to maintain performance and longevity.



1:17:23

And we're fortunate LA County, our union is very supportive of health and wellness. And one of my good friends is on the union board. So him and I interact and talk a lot about the subject. And LA County has a long history of being on the forefront of the development of the pure fitness program with the ifs, so we've had a lot of pure fitness trainers, and the focus on fitness has always been an important part. And in fact, we have a dedicated position, you know, the Fit for Life Coordinator, that's a captain position, and an Exercise Physiologist that all they do is focus on this. But with that said, I still get so much or it's getting better now, you know, at first, when I came to LA County, you know, I was beating the drum about all this stuff that we had just talked about, especially foundation training. And I would go out and I started teaching it at the academy or at the tower or I go out to a battalion and teach it. And the looks I got man people, you know, looked at me like I had two heads and I get it the way things you know, when you're doing FTF first the way it looks, because you're not used to it. It looks really strange. But every single time after the drill, and we gave 60 battalion drills, myself, Dr. Goodman, and Eric, I'm sorry, myself, Dr. Goodman, and Jesse, we gave her out of 60 of those drills. And I did foundation training over two years in the academy. Every single time afterwards, people would always come up and say, Where has this been? Thank you so much for introducing this to me. And that's when you know you got him. And that's when you know that they really understand what they've been missing out and what they need. And Foundation is a perfect starting point to all the things that I laid out in that rest protocol because it teaches you how to breathe. It teaches you how to build endorphins in your torso, it teaches you how to relieve stress and it teaches you how to generate tension. So then from there, I have this nice building or this nice foundation, no pun intended, and frame from which I can then build the rest of the stuff that we talked about. The kettlebell swings, the breathing protocols, the deadlifts, the standing presses, all this correlates so well with that and then builds off of it. So Are humans great. They support us. And it's just the guys and changing it as a culture has been the most difficult part. But when you're getting out there and you're introducing it, guys are really accepting Welcome to it. And then like I said, now we have an app, a wellness app that I developed through our association that I can download videos and people can have access to so that now I can reach it out to our 3000 members.



1:20:04

Beautiful. Well, about nine years ago, I think probably almost to this month I think was February

March. So I did this. Ironically, I was quite new with this last department but I ended up just picking a hybrid, excuse me a hyper vent patient look probably 165 pounds up on the stretcher, our rigs back then the ambulance slash rescue didn't dump. So that was on a weird slope, it wouldn't quite go in. So I had to go up on my toes and arch my back. And I felt a pop and ended up completing the transport even though it was hurting like hell, offloaded the patient and then said, Hey, I need to go get this checked out. I don't know what the hell I've just done. But I've never tweaked my back before up to that point. And very long story short, I turned a bunch of ligaments to the lumbar spine and had the the bulging discs and everything that everyone has. And one that was interesting, because when I first went to the clinic, I got the whole surgery opioids muscle relaxers speech, and I'm like, No, I want to start the journey to PT, right from the get go. So I ended up going like literally having to get a second opinion in this clinic with the very first doctor I saw and go back to him and be like, Look, he just told me the ordered me, I don't know where he thinks he gets the authority to take these pills. And I was like, Well, I'm not if I can take these pills, I want to start working on it. So very long story short, they, they're actually there workman's comp group were excellent. And so they authorized a bunch of physical therapy sessions, but I paid out of pocket for Cairo, I think it was three or four times a week. And when I was there, he had this dis TV that when you do attraction and stuff it was playing. And there was a funny looking muscular young dude doing this weird looking pose. And I asked him about it is that oh, it's called foundation training. You guys, actually, this is free on YouTube. Before you see me every session, I want you to do this. So I started doing it. And prior to that my recovery, if we're talking about geometry was probably 5%. After I started doing ft, I mean, a handful of days, it went from five to more like 45% It was it was crazy, to the point where in my physical therapy, I ended up telling them, hey, I want to change out some of the shit that doesn't seem to be working with this. So I would do ft every day at my PT session. I was so blown away at how well it worked. I went to my department actually went to the whole department above the fire and said, Look, I've just found this thing, I got her I'm back, I'm gonna be fit for GE I want to teach everyone this thing. So I spoken to the guy that you know, created it. And he said he will, you know, if I get over there that can do the certification and they'll give us X amount of DVDs. So I ended up going over there and certifying. And then coming back and teaching everyone in my fire department that was there at the time. And it was the same thing that you were talking about a few. And I think it was like two or three months after I came back. We had a we do a fundraiser vehicle, the 343 hero challenge that Orange County guys put on. And one of the words of that particular event was to 25 deadlifts. 10 times and you do a burpee over between each rep. So like you're talking about, I wasn't just like, and I think I'm okay, it was like better than ever. So I was so blown away, I ended up getting certified, again, got a lot of Pooh poohing from the guys that basically weren't hurt yet. And some amazing feedback from guys that were like, Oh my God, this shit works. And then that started me down the journey for foundation training and almost 10 years they are still shouting from the rooftops about it. So it sounds to me like you have a similar journey. So tell me about your injury. And then, you know, how did that journey lead you to foundation training? And what were your results?



1:23:52

Yeah, I've always been hard on my body, pushed it hard, not paid attention to technique or form. I mentioned that I deliver furniture for years, I played sports. You know, I was really into CrossFit. And it's no, you know, knock on CrossFit. But I I personally wasn't making sure that my technique and form was dialed in first thing. So I'd beat my body up. And then I've been a firefighter for, you know, almost 10 years at this point. And I remember I was in the garage, and I had done a squat clean, and I caught it at the bottom and I just remember feeling this

radiation and pop of pain at my lower back and I knew what I immediately did. You know, I mess my backup. And so I kind of stood up and I kind of did that thing. I tried to shake it off like Oh, I'm okay, I'm okay. And I try to like move around and I knew something was wrong. So I made an appointment with my Cairo see a same day drove down there. Saw him and then he's kind of like, you know, touching me doing his thing and then he's like, Yeah, you know, everything feels okay, but you could probably get an x ray and he's like, you probably herniated a disc. And then you know, for me I was like, oh, no, I destroyed myself, you know, what am I gonna do? And at this point, it was really stiff, it was really tight, and I was in some serious pain. And he had his book on the table. And he pointed out this book, which was Dr. Gibbons first book, The Foundation, and he kind of like you just do that. And then I really that's it, I just need to do that, isn't there something more that I need to do? And then so he let me borrow the book. And then I remember looking at the book, and I tried a couple of the poses, and I said, This thing doesn't work, I know better. And then I put it down, you know, and that was my ego, you know, at the time. And luckily, I learned my lesson because I was still continually in pain. In the meantime, I went to an orthopedic surgeon, I got an MRI, yes, I had herniation Li, this one, multiple levels of degeneration. And he says, Yeah, you should stop being a firefighter, your backs are really messed up. Also, I'm going to need to do surgery on you. And I was 28 at the time, and I asked him Is that really the only option? You know, like you, the guy ordering you to give medications and like, there's got to be something else. So then I just, you know, I didn't realize that I stumbled on, you know, what I needed to do. So I scoured the internet, looking for everything, trying everything. And that brought me back down to foundation training and the book. And so I started to really invest my time in it started to really try to understand it and what was happening, try to really be diligent and deliberate with my technique and my practice, and dedicated to a daily. And I started to see improvement. It wasn't overnight, that I was better. I was, you know, or completely better, I was better overnight. And the fact that the pain was less after the first time I did it, and I'll kind of explain why that is in a little bit. But I progressively got better. It was like two steps forward, one step back, my pain started to decrease, I was able to work out a little bit more, I started to pay attention to how I worked out a little bit more my technique and my form and dialing it in. And I really want to understand more about it. So I went to the FT cert in Santa Barbara, a different one than we met at. And it just blew my mind. I thought where has this been? And why is nobody talking about this in the fire service. This is so important. So then I like you brought it back to LA County, and St. Guys, we have to do this. And I wasn't annoyed about it. I kept telling everybody to the point where people are like, fine, fine, fine. Yes, you can start doing it here. You can start teaching like the low level people here, start teaching the recruits. It doesn't matter what you do them, you know, and started teaching the recruits. And sure enough, guess what, they started not only feeling better, but their performance was better. So it wasn't just, you know, a rehabilitation type exercise, which it was for me, because I got better using it. But it also increased performance for these recruits. And they kept kind of coming up to me and telling me like these four areas that would improve number one, they're like, just I just feel like I got better wind, I can take a bigger breath. I'm not as out of breath. I'm like, okay, yeah, that's something I felt before. And then number two, they told me, my back obviously just feels better. You know, I had a little bit of, you know, aches and pains here and there. You know, it's a long day in the academy in our academy is usually 20 weeks, it's a long, hard duration on the body. But by the end of it, they were feeling really well. And in fact, a lot of the recruits had been to other academies and mentioned, you know, this academy, I've never felt better. And then they also tell me, like after doing foundation training, I just feel like the stress is gone. And then they also felt like man, I could just feel like just I could generate this tension. So I started paying attention to this, I reached out to Dr. Goodman, and Jesse at the time, and I said, this guy's we're seeing some serious improvements and results of using this product. I really want to push this to the masses of the department, we should film a program. And we were lucky

enough and fortunate enough to film a program with like I said, our LA County Film Unit, and then put it on one of our training platforms. And then from there, I wanted to test what foundation training is doing because everyone kept telling me those kind of four areas, I kept hearing it over and over again. But when you don't have actual objective evidence, people tend to brush you off, especially in the first responder community or military police or whatever it is, you know, because we're very hesitant, you know, because you know, snakes, you know, snake oil salesmen. So we want to make sure that we're not getting sold a bill of goods. So I really wanted to find out so I can explain what's happening. So we were able to perform beta test with the help of foundation training. And then one of the Cairo's who's really involved in doing testing for athletes came out and we took volunteers and we taught them foundation training. And then we also took measurements for 10 people of all different ranks, age groups and sexes that wanted to be part of the group and they were taught eight movements and they followed the online for room that we had filmed five days a week for 10 minutes a day for eight weeks and the things that we tested, were number one, like we talked about respiration. Is that improving? Well, we did the lung spirometry testing where you blow into that as hard as you can. And sure enough, on average, after doing that, for eight weeks, we had an increase in 4%. So I talked about the benefits of that. Number one, you're reducing your fatigue of your limbs and you're increasing your performance as a result of doing that, and you're taking in a bigger breath. As a result, you're accessing more of those muscles in the ribcage. And then the second thing we tested was, we all knew that foundation training, reduce your risk of back pain. But how did it do it? We've all experienced it firsthand, with our buddy, that's done it with our friends that have done it. But how is it doing that? And I wanted to test it out. And we use them the guild torso exam. So Miguel, for those that don't know, is another expert in the spine. And he was a professor for years up in Waterloo and did some phenomenal work and studying the spine and kind of what to do to get out of pain and into performance. But the McGill torso exam is you measure three things an extended position. So imagine that your feet are anchored, and you're bringing your torso, your head in line with your hips, and your hips is the only one that's supported. So if it's like a GHD machine, you kind of bring it up everything in line, and you hold that for Max duration. We also tested a side plank, everybody kind of knows that that is right and left side and then a 45 degree sit up position. So that covers the core like we talked about, or that 360 degree area of your torso. So what did we find? Well, on average, everybody improved their time significantly by doing foundation training. And I'm talking from like 15 seconds to around 40 seconds in the side playing from 20 seconds in the extended position to 50 seconds. And then the same for the flexion position. And what's happening and why that's important is Dr. McGill breaks it down really well in a lot of his books. But what he says is, when your spine when you when you've caused, when you don't have endurance in those muscles of the spine micro shifts are occurring, causing the spine. So if you can max deadlift, 400 pounds, that really has no correlation to your reduction in basket back injuries, what does is your body's ability to have endurable muscles in that area to support it and hold it. So what foundation training is doing is building up endurance in those muscles, the front sides and the back. The funny part was we didn't even do any side plank work. There was just doing eight point planks. And you know how hard those are. And it makes sense that that would improve it. But it's pretty impressive that it was so you're building up endurance in the back. And that's where I talked about way back in, in this conversation that's so important for firefighters and why ft does it. And the other thing that we covered was stress. So we all know that it feels like you get better, it feels like you have a little bit less stress. And you're more focused after doing foundation training. So we had people measure it, you know, they just took a simple straightforward like psychological exam before doing foundation training, raising their stress and after. And no surprise it dropped 40% Which is huge. And the last thing was tension, we did the grip dynamometer right and left side, doing foundation training for that eight weeks increased their grip strength on average of 4% on the right is 6% on the left. So



1:33:30

this testing was so important to us because we finally had tangible evidence of what foundation training was doing and it does do other things. But if there's one program out there that has such a wide range that covers such an important area of health, it's foundation and like I said, it builds that foundational layer of health and wellness that complements the other things that you need to do then to continually lead a healthy life and then into retirement. So again, like you can't stop talking about it or shouting from the rooftops and how important it is.



1:34:02

Well for me personally as well when I was doing it regularly and I'll be the first to admit like I have periods where I'm more diligent and periods where I fall off the wagon a little bit but when because I had meniscus tears in both legs so after I rehab my back you know I think it was two or three years later I got one tear and that led to the opposite side and just you know just trying to just fight I guess all the all the beatings that I got from stunts and fire service and martial arts and everything caught up with me. And again, when I say quite a bit me it was poor movement patterns from previous it wasn't that you should be able to do those and still be absolutely fine. Otherwise, most indigenous tribes wouldn't have any older people that will be dead and falling apart. But the the actual movement of my squat, I guarantee if you measured my squat, just with the change in hip mobility, there were probably 10s of pounds you could add on to the bar movement of my deadlift, the same thing so the plains of motion that it allowed my joints to go back to, in turn added more efficiency. So therefore more strength and more endurance as well. So there was so many different areas initially it was to heal back pain. Later it was telling other people Oh, you can avoid back pain. But just like you said, you start seeing all these other areas are improving. And then breath as well, whether it's the Wim Hof spin on here, Dr. McGill's been on here, but he talks about the breath work. Why do we not talk about that in you know, widely in a profession where we're one of the only jobs on the planet where the only air on planet earth you have access to is a little bottle strapped to your back. So whether it's deregulating the nervous system, whether it's you know, breath control, whether it's the efficiency of respiratory system, this should be like Paramount from day one, like, hey, heads up, this is all you've got. So we're going to make sure that you're able to operate at the highest level, because this, this is the only thing and God forbid you get trapped, a fit firefighter is going to be able to survive a lot longer than an unfit firefighter, firefighter is going to be able to get to a person who's trapped, whereas an unfit one might have a turn around. So between the the actual motion and efficiency of the human body, but also, as you said, the the the change in anatomy and the framework around the spine and the opening of the lungs. That element in a profession where we rely on our breath more than anyone else is so so important.



1:36:34

Yeah, it's I've seen it over and over again. The more I do foundation training, the more people I teach foundation training, the more access they have to the ribcage, the better they breathe. Like I said, there's there's a saying there's a class I given foundation that describes is that respiratory muscle fatigue, reduces limb blood flow, and as a result, causes the fatigue and retire out more quickly. So proximal stiffness, and I know McGill says this, and it's so important proximal stiffness equals distal athleticism, when you're taking care of the center of your body.

When you're building that endurance, and you're accessing that ribcage, like you do in foundation training, what you get as a result of that, and the increase in performance, and athleticism cannot be understated. And this is also something that I didn't mention what it does is when you talk about it, you know, you've had all the tears and wear and tear on your body. And I probably would too, if I you know, took an MRI, my knees and my shoulders and my neck is probably messed up as well. You know, because I got aches and pains there from from years, the foundation helps with that, because it's not just something for the low back. It's something for the entire body because it incorporates movement patterns, right is not an isolation type exercise program. It is something that improves your movement quality. And that is something that is really important, because we don't want to go around throughout the day having to think about moving correctly, because that can be really annoying. But when you do foundation training, it teaches you how to move correctly. So you're building these habitual patterns, you're teaching the body to absorb force in the muscles. And then as a result, when you go out through the rest of your day, whether it's on the job on an incident or you're with your family, and you're doing something fun, you don't have to think about it. Your nervous system has already recognized that you've already built those plans in and then they can just respond naturally. So again, there's so many things that you can do and the importance of it, and it just takes 10 minutes a day. That's the wild part. And you got to be diligent and like you I kind of fall off, you know, up and down periodically, but 10 minutes a day is kind of the minimum standard. And that's why we did the testing to show people how easy it is.



1:38:41

So I've had a lot of people talking about breath work on here as well. I think one of the grandfather's a lot of the things that other people talk about as Patrick McCowan who has been on but a real aha moment for me as far as performance and I really applied this initially in the CrossFit space, but I used it in a wearing a mask as well, but his breath excuse me his nasal breathing. So talk to me about not only the breath book, but have you leaned into that or had success in that side



1:39:08

completely. I've read his book, I've read breath by James Nestle. I've read Wim Hof stuff. I took a day Wim Hof course, which was a blast. It was hilarious and fun. And we did one in LA and I took a couple I dragged a couple firefighters down. And we did Wim Hof breathing for 30 minutes and followed by ice bath. Everybody was high on their own supply as he likes to say and had a blast and it was like running around hugging people. It was kind of a fun experience. But yeah, so Nasal Breathing is so important. You know, we know that it obviously filters humidifies the breath can decrease your heart rate, oxygenate all these important things and the incorporation of that into your training. And that's why I talked about that and the rest protocol. The first thing is so important. So when you're doing that long, slow duration work, and for us in SoCal cuz we got a lot of brushfires. I would like to go rock, right we'd like to put a hose pack on and like to, you know, walk for 30 minutes, you should be able to do that by breathing through your nose only. For me, it's a self governor. If I'm pushing the on that, and I'm having to mouth breathe, then I'm pushing too hard. And another way I like to apply it to is in that protocol, I talked about three minutes on three minutes off, that we talked about where that you can do kettlebell swings, you can do Airdyne. But any kind of powerful time movement, where you're kind of sprinting, resting, sprinting and resting is number one in

between those Sprint's trying to really focus on trying to breathe through your nose if you can, and then exhale out your nose, and then prolong it as much as possible. And then especially when you get into that three minute break, period, applying that is so important and bizarre Horton, I think who's been on your podcast before, who is a my SSG one instructor gave us a great kettlebell breathing ladder, which I think every firefighter should do, because it teaches you how to use your breath and teaches you how to nasal breathing. And unlike most workouts, we're trying to get it done as fast as possible the goal of this workout is every time you do it, you're trying to increase the time that it takes you to do it. So how it would work would be you got to be proficient one and kettlebell swing. So you swing a kettlebell with your right arm, you swing it with your left arm, you take one breath, but you take the slowest breath that you've ever taken in your life. And you really try to prolong the inhale and the exhale, and you do two on the right, two on the left, same thing, two breaths, now, you try to prolong it. And as you work your way up that breath ladder and that rep ladder, obviously, it starts to get harder, and you're wanting to take a bigger breath, and a shorter breath. But the more you can prolong it, the better you are in this situation, and the better you are at controlling your system. So again, like breathing is not talked about a lot in the fire service. And like you said, it's probably one of the few things and professions out there over reliance on this little body and just or this little bottle with a short period of time, especially when we're working hard. So we should be experts in this. And we should be applying it. You know, in our training, if not every day, at least once a week. So you're making sure that you're kind of greasing that groove and practicing it. So that's kind of how I incorporate it. And the final thing is, is I think this is free training. I take my mouth shut at night, because it just teaches me to breathe through my nose. And I don't have to worry about it.

 1:42:28


Have you noticed any improvement in your sleep when you started doing that? Oh, yeah.

 1:42:32

Huge. I sleep better. I don't wake up at night to go to the bathroom. James Nestor talks about the rationale why behind that I feel less fatigued. And as fog, fog rain. I just feel like a general overall sense of a better sense of well being and a better increase in performance. And the funny thing is, I can't do it at the station. Because I've done it and I slept through calls too much. Like a deep level of sleep. Everyone's like, added we got a call. Come on. Let's go. Come on. So I had to unfortunately not use it there. Because we're up so much that it just it didn't work out. But yes, at home every night I do it and it's hugely beneficial.

 1:43:13

Do you use a special kind of tape or just regular medical tape? medical tape?

 1:43:17

Yeah, no need? Yeah, just a small strip, right on the mouth. And at first don't get me wrong is you feeling like you're suffocating. You know, oh my gosh, which just tells me that I wasn't breathing right for a very long time. But you know, you'll fall asleep eventually, and you're not

breathing right for a very long time. But you know, you'll fall asleep eventually, and you're not going to suffocate. And I was fine when I woke up. And like I said, I felt all those benefits.



1:43:39

Brilliant. Yeah, that's something I've had loads of people talking about, and I still haven't actually tried that particular thing. Yeah. So I, I need to do it. You'll love it. I need to. Alright, well, the talks about kettlebell training. Yeah, Zara has been on here twice now. I'm trying to see if he's can help get Pavel on. I think that'd be an amazing conversation. But with that, for me, personally, what I have found in my career is what's worked really well as CrossFit when you're moving properly, with good coaches, with strong, excuse me, strongman training, so I like strong fit. Julian pinos work. And those two together worked really well. But obviously there are kettlebells woven into CrossFit. But when I'm talking to Zara, I mean, all these protocols, you've talked about whether it's financial constraint, I mean, most departments should be able to afford, you know, for kettlebells for people that kind of work through in those mid ranges. So talk to me about your perspective of kettlebell training in the fire service.



1:44:35

Well, it's a must I that's the other thing I preached from the rooftops and the other thing that I've seen so impactful in the fire service other than ft, and when I took the FT course I talked to you about how in important it was and how much it made an impact on me. And it was the same when I took the SSG the level one kind of course for three strong first it was like the the same theories that they were talking about the same subject it was all Almost like and they didn't, that they created them to combined with one another, it was phenomenal. So my progression with firefighters is I teach you foundation first, because I build that foundation for all those reasons that we talked about. And then I add kettlebells into it. And kettlebells for firefighters are so important for various reasons. Number one, I talked about power, right, we lose power. As we age, our job can be power based, depending on what you're doing. Right, if you're forcing a door that's very power based, if you're pulling a hose, that's power base, especially if you're if you're sprinting, if you're using your axe That's power based. So the ability to generate power is so important and it comes from the hips. And if you can generate power from the hips to kind of like everything else, the rest of your body falls into play. Also, when you use a kettlebell swing, and you're doing especially a single arm kettlebell swing, and like he talked about having Pavel on here will be phenomenal. But his book, a simple and sinister, which is single arm kettlebell swings and get ups is the best. The best well rounded program there is for general physical preparedness, the unilateral strength that it builds through those single arm kettlebell swings, almost make you injury proof. You know, I know that you're not quite injury, proof of things can happen. But it prepares you for anything that you have on the job. You know, if there was one thing that I could teach firefighters to do, on top of foundation, it would be swinging a single arm kettlebell, and you're doing it powerful. And not to mention, you know, all the mitochondrial effects. And that's like diving deep into the weeds. But it's really important because you know, you can better and bigger mitochondria, which gets you better endurance when you're swinging these things powerful. But the power that you build, the grip strength that you build, as a result of it is next to nothing. I know when I do single arm kettlebell swings, and I do some jujitsu. Sometimes my grip strength is so much better. And then my grip strength when I'm on the job, whatever it is that I'm grabbing is just, it's next level after doing that kettlebells are cheap, and they will outlast you, you can buy a decent kettlebell. And you can do everything with it from squatting from pressing from swinging. And

you have a gym in a five by five space. And that is something that I've preached to our department. And as a result, you know, a lot of our guys got kettlebells. And then we filmed a three level kettlebell program, a beginner and intermediate and an advanced program that people can have access to, because a lot of times one, you don't have space. So you know what, depending on how big your station is, so having a kettlebell, you can get conditioning and you can get strength and you can get power and boom, right there. No problem with one kettlebell. Number two, it so you go on deployment, whether it's overseas or you go on deployment, because when the strike team for a fire, you can take a kettlebell with you. So they're easily transportable. I talked about the fact that they're cheap, they're indestructible, and they make you they make you tough, there isn't really nothing else out there. That makes you feel that structure, fire feeling where you're, you know, when you get a structure fire, and it's one of those hard fires, where you're pulling a lot of line, you're sprinting to the door, it's on a hot summer day, or you're on a roof and you're just cutting and you're just working your ass off. There's nothing else quite like that feeling. Like kettlebells I have found can mimic that feeling, especially when you're doing things like the snatch test. And if you don't have the shoulder mobility, you can just do a swing test. You know how many kettlebell swings you can do in five minutes, or doing kettlebell complexes? Yeah, they're just, they're just phenomenal. And I've seen huge results for all the people that I've worked with as a result.



1:48:45

Brilliant. Yeah, I think that has helped me a huge amount. The other thing that I always I think, give credit to for my grip strength and insurance in jujitsu, Julian per node does the sled pull. So you've got like, 150 foot rope, and you anchor yourself up again, hinged like you're in a founder, but then you're pulling it to you the number of times that you do that, especially if you do two or three rounds of it. That's one comment that I get. I'm not big, I'm not strong, but people like how are you so strong three rounds in and it's because you've got that endurance. So whether it's a kettlebell, whether it's some of the strongman movements, and or you don't get that in, you know, barbell work or some of the other things because you just you just let go away too soon. So it's interesting seeing both of those work.



1:49:29

Yeah, there's a lot of stuff too, that just gets better as a result of doing kettlebells. A lot of times if you try to improve your pull ups, your actual your pull ups will decrease or your elbows will start hurting. You know, we've all done that probably before, especially those of us that are over 35 But when you do kettlebell swings, it's pretty amazing. You won't touch a pull a bar, and you'll start doing kettlebell swings. And then you know, three months later, you'll go bust out 20 Pull Ups, and you go, you know, where did that come from? So there's that thing in the kettlebell community, the What the hell effect, they talk about that. That areas that improves. Another thing is a vertical jump. It was funny, I was doing one of the strong endurance protocols for a while, which focused on doing a really heavy two handed swing power, like 10 reps as hard as powerful as he could. And my wife likes to tease me. And we were at a zoo with our kids, and there was like this high wall, and she's like, You can't show up on that wall. And I'm like, Man, I can't let her get the best better me. So then I'm like, watch this. So then, and I didn't think I was gonna get it. But But I have confidence. That was what counted. But I did it. And I actually jumped and I surprised myself. But I looked, I was like, Well, you know what happened? I haven't been doing any jump work. But it's kettlebell swings, heavy, powerful

kettlebell swings, works the same muscles, and it's no surprise. And so you know, it can improve your vertical jump without actually jumping. Flawless. It builds endurance in the back. It's easy on the knees. I mean, it's just all around a solid product that, you know, is it's just really, really something that's important for firefighters.

 1:50:58

Beautiful. Yeah. Ms. After I had my surgery, I think. Yeah, it was I think it was soon after my knee surgeries. But as I was saying that it was the the swings that actually fixed his meniscus. I think he's actually kind of suffering from it again, now years and years later. But yeah, I think the you know, basically, the posterior chain work and evening out the balance in the knee joint is probably what took the pressure on

 1:51:20

stability work. It's so important, especially as we age, you know, broken down firefighters, we have such high mileage on our system. And the things that we can do that build us up rather than break us down are things that we should gravitate to. And for us, and for me, it's a kettlebell swings, and kettlebell and get ups and all these other things that we talked about, and he could do loaded carries, which are phenomenal every firefighter should do. And there's just so many variations that with this one Bell, you have years upon years of programming, you know, with it, if you just do it the right way.

 1:51:55

Absolutely. And that circles around to our beginning conversation, which is you have these men and women that take the job seriously, that train, they do strength conditioning, we now need to give them that piece that allows them to grow and recover and repair from all these things. So they can thrive 1020 30 years and there, excuse me into their career.

 1:52:16

If I could get every retired firefighter to swing a kettlebell, I'd be so happy if I get I mean, I'm working on firefighters, and we're making good progress. But, you know, one of my goals is to get my dad to be swinging a kettlebell, he's not quite there yet. But the confidence, like I talked about, it's not about performing the job for them anymore. It's about just feeling well, and the confidence that, you know, looking at this object, and most people think like, oh, man, and they look at somebody do it, and like that's gonna mess me up. But when you do it, the confidence that it gives you to interact with life, and then to be able to, you know, play with your grandkids or still be active is nothing like I've you no experience before, because it is such a dynamic movement. And it is really straightforward to learn. It is not that complicated. It is a hinge. And if you learn the foundation training, and you do that for a period of time, you've built up that endurance, and you've built up that nervous system, and then all you got to do is just add that kettlebell into the hands. And you 510 minutes later, somebody's swinging the bell, and it's

making a huge impact in their life. And you know, StrongFirst always talks about this, that strength has a greater purpose. And this is definitely one of those applications for those retired that for those retired people.



1:53:33

Beautiful. Well, I want to just start some closing questions that you quickly before we let you go if that's okay. Yeah. Sounds great. So the first one, I 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?



1:53:50

I would recommend endurance by glancing I think, is his name. It's the book about Shackleton and his journey to the South Pole. So just to give it a brief synopsis, if you're, you know, in the fire service, military police, first responder, obviously, leadership is so important. I think he was one of the best leaders of that timeframe. And it reflected with what he went through with his crew during this and I'm not going to do anything for you, because kind of everybody knows that he survived. But they went to the South Pole to try to be during the World War one because it was kind of something that they needed to build up national pride because everybody was down during that time. And he was trying to find the fastest route to the South Pole. And he took a crew down there. And they got stuck in the ice immediately. And they had to survive the entire winter in darkness with lack of food in the ice. So if you can kind of just imagine the worst conditions possible. The closest the cramped is where you're the most irritated, you know, and he kept this structure and order and then guess what happened their ship got crushed by the ice Some saying so then they had to take their boats, their little lifeboats that they had, and then take them across kind of these ice caps and search for open water. And this was like, months upon months journey and they kept setting up camp. And you can imagine going out in the water, then having to haul everything out and out of the water. And then your home was just, you know, crushed by ice. And now he was left at the open. And so he brought him to this to the open sea. And then they sailed to this island, Elephant Island that they made it to. And then all the members were there, and there was nothing on that island,



1:55:30

no elephants,



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no elephants, unfortunately, food, they would love that. They were starving by that point, you can imagine. And so they realized, like, this is not a place that we can survive. So we got to make this decision. So Shackleton, you know, up to this point, again, phenomenal leader kept structure, kept order, kept discipline. And he said, You know, I gotta go with three other guys on our 20 foot boat across the Blue was the South Pacific sea. Yeah. And try to make it to this whaling outpost. Well, they did over like, they did an 800 mile journey across with some of the

biggest ways. I remember reading the book and talking about 8090 foot waves. And they're in this little boat. And they did this over a course, I don't know how long it took, it must have taken four to five weeks. And they arrive on this island, the outpost, but they're on the wrong side. So there has to transverse this like Arctic Mountain, which people have tried to replicate today with with modern gear, and they can't, you know, in the fact that they had fear of 1914. And they were able to do it. And then he goes the whaling outpost, and then rescues his entire crew, nobody died. And nobody, you know, suffered any long term health effects as a result. So that is like, to me, the tip of the spear when it comes to leadership, and if you want like the opposite, in what not to do, read a book called Madhouse at the end of the earth, about the Belgica. And same concepts, they went down to the South Pole to try to get to the South Pole, and everything went wrong. Everything people died, people starved, people got scurvy, there was it was the complete opposite of what Shackleton did in the leadership style that he had than what this captain did in a leadership style that he had. They ended up making it out, but barely by the skin of their teeth. And the interesting part about this story is there was a young man on the Belgica ship. And everyone's gonna recognize his name, if they're familiar with kind of a polar expert exploration was Amundsen and Amundsen was the one that ended up going to north and south pole. So he learned all these lessons as a result of being with this leader. That was the worst type of leader. And as a result, what not to do. And then as a result, he was able, you know, to take from that and succeed. So yeah, I would definitely recommend insurance. It's a phenomenal book.



1:57:51

Brilliant. Thank you for that. I've had it mentioned before, but never described that way. So I appreciate it. Yeah, it's



1:57:56

phenomenal.



1:57:57

So what about a movie and or documentary?



1:58:02

Movie and or documentary? I like I'm really into Christopher Nolan's work. I think all of his movies are phenomenal for various reasons. But a few of my favorite are how he did Batman, The Dark Knight series. I think that is phenomenal. I think Interstellar. I think inception and Memento one of his earlier works. And he does such a great job of storytelling, but also making it so in a way complex that it's very interesting and and, and grabs your attention the entire time. So if you haven't seen any of his work, I would recommend that documentaries. I love watching documentaries. And I can't remember anyone that's sticking out to me right now. I have to get back to you on that one. I can't remember.



1:58:55

That's okay. Good. Christopher Nolan, do Tennant Yes. Okay, that won't give us a shout out it still didn't get it even at the end. But that was coming out of COVID though. So I know.



1:59:03

You know, what's fun with his movies and I have been doing recently is there's so many people online that break down and they're like 20 to 30 minutes, and they break down his movies and exactly what's taking place, all the hidden messages, all the things that are that are happening that you get, you get so much more out of it and you go, wow, that's what he was talking about. So yeah, I'd recommend doing it. You know, it's a good movie. When you have to watch a show about what happened.



1:59:27

Good or bad movie, depending on how you look at Yeah, I guess there's the other side of that, too. All right.



1:59:32

Well, then next question. Is there 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?



1:59:41

You people that come to mind and they're kind of close friends. I have one a buddy Dave Tebow, who's going to LA County firefighter, phenomenal person. Black Belt, just kind of like all around on Captain American guy who has done a lot in his career and and just recently went to Turkey with a deployment of our use our team. So it's just one of those guys that you you go, how are you doing everything? And how are you so good at everything. So he'd be a really good person to have on the podcast, I would definitely recommend him. Yeah,



2:00:18

beautiful. If you're able to connect us, I'd love to do that. Yeah,



2:00:22

they will send you a number. Brilliant. Thank



2:00:23

you. All right, within the last question before we make sure people know where to find you

you. All right, within the last question before we make sure people know where to find you. What do you do to decompress?

 2:00:32


Meditate, I talked about that huge every morning, I have to do it. And if I don't do it, I can notice the effects of it. Number two, sauna and cold lunch, when I do sauna and cold plunge. I'm a busy dad, and a busy guy at work. But everything rolls off my back so much better. It's so important to do these things. And the number three is strength training for me the ability and that's working out of course, but like this morning, you know preparing for the podcast, it was my heavy squat day heavy deadlift day that just decompresses me and makes me feel so much more resilient and strong as a result. So meditation, saunas, cold plunges, working out, and then obviously, being in nature is huge. I love to be outside. Whether it's right now, in snowy Southern California, weirdly enough, I still go outside and try to snowboard or if it's in the summertime trying to just take a hike or paddleboard or mountain bike. So important. And it's one of those things you don't have to think about doing. You can just go out there and enjoy the moment and it just it just draws you into it.

 2:01:37


You love it. All right, well, then, if people want to learn more about you reach out to you, where are the best places online?

 2:01:45

You can email me, I got two different emails. So he howqua 04 at gmail.com have a foundation email, Evan at foundation training.com. And then I don't post a lot of stuff on Instagram, but I check stuff in case people reach out to me. And it's Evan underscore hallquist.

 2:02:06

Beautiful wherever. And I want to thank you so much. I mean, it's been a great conversation. I think we met both of us who were returning like tuning up our foundation training. We were in Santa Barbara and we met but it's interesting seeing the parallels between our fire service career, our back injuries about the same time and then you know, both of our exposure into strength conditioning and wellness in the fire service. So I want to thank you so much for being so generous with your time today.

 2:02:31

Thank you and thank you for what you do. I appreciate it.