

Jason Kasper II - Episode 785

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SPEAKERS


Jason Kasper, James Geering



James Geering 00:00

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it about me. But I want to start with thanking you. And we'll get to that in a little bit. But secondly, we spoke almost exactly five years ago now, which was only like 18 months into the the genesis of this podcast. So I know there's a lot happened on my end, but a lot has happened on your end. So firstly, I just want to start by welcoming you back onto the podcast.

 Jason Kasper 03:53


Thanks for having me. I'm glad the writing pointers helped. But you know, it was really my pleasure because it's it's really rare. I get to meet somebody who's, you know, just as passionate as I am about healing from trauma and even more rare that that person is the fellow white author who married an Asian optometrist. So we have a lot in common we are a second grade.

 James Geering 04:16

So well, very, very first question then I kind of want to do is just a recap but not drag you through the whole thing. So firstly, where are we finding you geographically today?

 04:26

Cary, North Carolina. The National Capital of soymilk, I think pretty, pretty yuppie town. The police drive Tesla's and surrounded by hybrid vehicles in all directions.

 James Geering 04:38

Is there an inner turmoil based on the fact that you were from Wisconsin with the dairy industry and now you're dealing with the soy industry?

 04:46

You know, I got over it pretty quick. I think that's when I really realized I had converted to like, full time suburban dad is when my wife asked me to get the milk out of the fridge and I was like almond or soy. At that point, you know, I just have to tell didn't have any links I have to the dairy industry are growing up. You know, on a farm in Wisconsin, when I was six years old, I had incredible like cold tolerance, that I would send us out to go chop wood in the snow. And then I moved to Kentucky when I was 10. lost all of it six months later and never got it back. So quite happy to be down here where it's more.

 James Geering 05:18

Yeah, absolutely. It's funny because if I open my fridge now, my son drink soy milk, because he's always had a dairy allergy. And then I went from dairy to almond and and ultimately, oh, and I gotta say, the moment I went plant based and non dairy, the IBS that I'd suffered with for

40 plus years, that no medical professional to figure out, immediately stopped. So thanks to medical industry for that. Support.

 05:44

Yeah, I certainly I actually went to a plant base to and I haven't noticed any real medical benefits, although I do tend to be, you know, slightly less of an asshole, which is a plus.

 James Geering 05:55

So you have had quite an awakening the last few years. I want to revisit, not anything specific. But when I listened to our first conversation, which for everyone listening was episode 86. We did back in April 2018. You talked about not being haunted by triggering memories that you were definitely having issues with asleep and then hyper vigilance as well. Then you kind of move forward, we were discussed about the the Woodford Woodford Reserve when you are writing and a lot of times, you'd obviously post the bottle when we know that you're writing something else. When you look back again, before we get into the tools that you have found more recently, since that conversation, so five ish years ago, you had a certain perception through your eyeballs back then with this five year plus maturity that you have now. What was Jason Casper in 2018? Missing?

 06:52

And I think Jason Casper from 2018, we last stock up until really 2020 Plus I wasn't really doing any work to kind of healed myself. I think I was getting a lot of self therapy through writing. It's always been very cathartic for me very therapeutic, which probably kept you know, keep my head on straight. But, you know, I was I was basically greasing the rails with alcohol at all times. And it never got to the point of being a problem as a very high functional drinker. I will say without a doubt it helped kind of supercharge my creative career. So but you know, I think the alcohol is just such a buffer, you know, if anything ever got sufficient uncomfortable or I'm getting too stressed too hyper vigilant to sleep deprived, I could always push the easy button of alcohol and get by just fine. And then I kind of hit a point. first really big awakening try to fix myself was when I did clinical ketamine, back in January 2020. I just happen to run into a doctor. And, you know, he noticed that a bruise on my neck from the stellate ganglion blocks to one of Mitty PTSD treatments, I tried with varying degrees of success, usually temporary, and he was like, Oh, you gotta go down, you know, my buddy works at this clinic, go do ketamine. So I went down there did five days of treatments. And that was kind of my big awakening that, like there's something better beyond just drinking all the time. So that kind of got me by but I was still I had to go back every three to four months to get it. And if I went five months or more, you know, wall to start closing in, and I had to run back to a treatment. And then kind of late last year, so late 2022 I kind of decided to try psilocybin, which is, for anybody who's unfamiliar, it's probably not too many at this point, because there have been a lot of strides made at Johns Hopkins and everything, using it to treat treatment resistant, PTSD, depression, OCD, pick your cliché. So I decided to just to try that and I started doing some low doses, just a test my tolerance. And keep in mind, I did have a lot of experience kind of tripping my balls off in a supervised setting with ketamine. So I felt comfortable starting low, in kind of going up in dosage over a period of time, until I was doing basically macro doses where, you know, you go

under for four or five hours and, and see God. Now once I started doing that, I didn't really need ketamine anymore, and it was a more permanent, long lasting effect. But one of the things that came out of that to somebody I met in the psilocybin community, so to speak, was recommended ayahuasca and in particular illegal place down in Florida to go do it. So I signed up for the retreat, and I was getting ready to go in January of this To 2023. And you in between that I tried micro dosing LSD. So microdose is 1/10 to 1/20 of a psychedelic dose. So it's a tiny, tiny amount, you generally take it every three days and do that for a month as a cycle. So 10 doses or 30 days, in my drinking drops 95% with no willpower, no effort on my part whatsoever. And the government says it's addictive and illegal, and you jump off rooftops, which means it's probably awesome. But that was my experience, like drinking dropped to almost nothing, I just had no interest in doing it. I occasionally had a few drinks in the weekends. But when I was getting to go do the Ayahuasca retreat, you have to get off alcohol two weeks before in two weeks after as part of how the how the medicine works. So I was kind of looking at my calendar, going through this process is a few other foods you have to cut out and I was like, okay, because I could start drinking again here. And I just kind of stopped and it was like, I'm done. Like, I can't get anything else from alcohol. And kind of in the meantime, my writing experience progressed to the point where, instead of it being an enabler, and kind of helping me punch outside my paygrade in terms of pros and creativity and constructing story events, I just kind of outpaced it to where I had enough experience after you know, 18 books where it was more it was holding me back more than it was helping push me forward. So I just did. I was like, Hey, I'm gonna quit. I did one last day went to my favorite hole in the wall bar did one last writing shift there, a few IPAs came back. And I had like, a drink of like my six top favorite bourbons, and then put it away. I haven't touched it since like, I've got 100 bottles of bourbon at the house. And you know, my friends are thrilled that I've quit drinking, because it's all belongs to them at this point. But yeah, since then, I've had just no desire to drink, no reaching for a bottle, no emotional dependence on it whatsoever, which I think is a testament to psychedelic medicine more than any willpower restraint on my part, because I certainly had none before.

J

James Geering 12:07

So I want to kind of unpack each of those modalities, because I've had guests on for talking about literally all of them, including the ganglion block. Before we do though, you and I are sitting down five years ago, we're talking about this. We're also talking about, you know, the the social element of drinking, so neither of us kind of found ourselves binge drinking, because we had that introduction through my English life, your kind of farm life, where it wasn't stigmatized, either. So you weren't held back and then all of a sudden, you're doing for beer bong. And beer ponds and everything else it rhymes on. And so you know, it, it never became like a way to escape for me, however. And we're hearing it more now the human podcast and some other ones that are coming out that there basically is no real upside to alcohol. We're trying to justify it a lot of times. And by the way, I'm drinking ginger beer. You see me swinging from a bottle. Now judging me. So. But yeah, so we're, we're doing the kind of social norm, but my realization is that I try and write in the morning now. So if I drink the night before, it totally fucks up my my mind, you know, I'm foggy, I can't think I'm not very creative. So that was the trade off for me. When you look back now and you're using this, you got this hyper vigilance is allowing you creativity through all these experiences you've been through, what was some of the, as they call the thing beneath the thing? What was some of the things in the back of your mind that were actually causing these, these hyper vigilant states that you were using alcohol to try and damper?



13:41

So I think at the core of it, you know, it's, it's easy for me to point out post traumatic stress. You know, I certainly have a well earned diagnosis, I think, do most members of the military have served in combat, and I can't even begin to speculate what percentage of police and first responders have been involved in life and death situations, just exposure to trauma. So that's the that's the quickest thing to point to. I will note, however, that to date when I've almost every time without exception that I've done high dose psychedelics from ketamine psilocybin ayahuasca, like combat in my time at war has not even been on the table. And, you know, Ayahuasca particularly took me back to childhood. So since since then, I started I came back from ayahuasca and I also just started doing psychotherapy. Like one of the guys I met down there, told me his therapist is amazing. And I started working with that guy who specializes in vets so I can spit out a few, you know, facts from him without charging you what I pay for it. So he basically said a dark secret of psychiatry is that you They had to bifurcate alcoholism from functional alcoholism, largely because of the post 911 generation of that's. Whereas alcoholism is what you'd normally think of somebody needing alcohol to live their life. Functional alcoholism was largely like veterans. And I would assume that the same applies to a lot of the first responders and police who are in that same kind of category of exposure to trauma, but they're using it to solve a problem, right, they're not as functional due to the PTSD or the trauma, whatever they have going on. And alcohol helps them be more functional, but they're not in any way, like limited by using it so to speak. But I think for me, it was kind of buffering me from like, doing the actual work of trying to like, dig down, get my shit together. And, you know, thing, my, my therapist said, Well, I hate using that line, but it's true. He said that a lot of the problem that vets have is they go in certainly my experience when I went in for EMDR, CPT SGD, all these different treatments, that kind of, for me treated the symptoms temporarily, if not making things worse. He's said that you go into a provider to get fill in the blank treatment, that provider may not be equipped to handle any of the fallout. So they, you know, you go through EMDR, which I did, and it brings up a lot of, you know, horrible shit, and trauma to the surface. And then there's no bucket to catch it in. Because there's, you know, that person's not a trained, you know, psychotherapist or anything. So all this kind of emerges, that gets angrier. And then in the meantime, the person administering that treatment, who may or may not be qualified to use these tools that bypass the minds, defense mechanisms, is telling you that, or the patient, like stopped drinking, you need to stop drinking, but they're not fixing the problem. And in his experience, again, specializing in vets is that they're using it to fix a problem. And I think that was certainly the case for me. And the root of the problem is either PTSD, the standard things from growing up, you know, everything, Freud and Jung detail or some combination of the two.



James Geering 17:19

So I was listening to this conversation five years ago now, and was, you know, analyzing my questions and the way I was thinking and all the things that I missed, but this is, you know, five more years worth of conversations like this that I've gotten now, the childhood trauma element and trauma can be, you know, a wide spectrum, but still traumatic to the child from sexual abuse to being a middle child and feeling unloved and everything in between. But so many of us in uniform, as I have learned 800 episodes later, so many of us have some sort of significant trauma that definitely shaped us, I would argue, probably sent us into a uniform, for a number of reasons to to for the the kind of the cycle to stop, to become the protector to stay busy and

be able to bury things down. You touched on childhood just for a second, when you look back, were there any elements of your upbringing that you would consider now contributed to some of your struggles?



18:17

Yes, I think so. To be perfectly clear, I don't I don't know what they are yet. So I definitely got from ayahuasca, everything I saw was we you know, it generally exposes your, your blind spots, what you need to work on what needs to be healed in for me, it was straight back to childhood, I saw everything in kind of union psychology terms of, you know, shadow self repressed inner child. So I kind of saw all of that. And I came out of it knowing like I needed to do therapy, I've since started therapy. And so I didn't have any incidents in childhood whatsoever that I remember of anything that would be state or government definition of trauma in the sense that, you know, a child would be like, put in protective custody removed from the parents. I have nothing in my past that qualifies as like trauma with a capital T. Unless there's something I've repressed that I'm completely unaware of right now. But I know from talking to my therapist, he basically said like, the stuff I hadn't childhood, which is a very happy functioning childhood. He said a lot of that constitutes trauma, not in the state definition, but in the clinical definition. So I know everybody's very quick to to point to what I didn't have it as bad as XYZ or, you know, this never happened to me, but it's been explained to me in no uncertain terms that in terms of the traumatic factor it plays into your psyche, in childhood and then repeating those patterns growing up. It doesn't have to be sexual abuse, physical abuse, or anything else. It can just be part of Growing up that's traumatic to a childhood psyche that creates patterns that manifest in ripple effects later in life.



James Geering 20:08

Well, it seems like it's when it challenges the hierarchy of needs. So you know, you can feel like you're not stable, you're not protected, you're not safe in a number of ways you can feel like you're not loved in a number of ways. One of my guests, Ishmael Bay was a boy soldier in Sierra Leone. And on these, these children are forced, they don't have a choice, you either fight or you're executed. So that's it, and his parents were all killed. So I mean, that's about the as far on that one side, along with sexual abuse that you think of as trauma to a child. I've had guests that were fostered, adopted, or even a middle child, as I touched on a minute ago, that the parent wanted a boy and they had a boy, then he wanted a girl and they had another boy, then they had a girl, or my friend was that middle boy. And in that particular family dynamic, whatever it actually looked like from the outside looking in, he felt extremely unloved, almost disliked by his parents. So you know, you have all these spectrums. And if he looks at Ishmael, he goes, Well, you know, what have I got to complain about, but as you said, it doesn't matter. trauma is trauma, and it's not a comparison game.



21:14

Yeah, that's the that's the lesson that's come up for me, in professional therapy with the Ayahuasca facilitators. With integration specialists, I've talked to that just in the psychedelic community. Basically, everybody says, like, stop comparing, stop trying to like, figure out

exactly what's wrong with you, and like, just start doing the work of kind of unpacking whatever it is that's holding you back, regardless of anybody else's definition.

J

James Geering 21:38

So you talked about EMDR, bringing up some of the emotions that they weren't able to deal with. And it's something I've heard with people with meditation and mental health. You know, if you meditate, and you've got this, this bucket that's brimming over, it may calm the bucket down, the bucket may start to empty or it may explode all over your face. And now you're dealt with, you know, you're trying to deal with other things. So this is what's so important with the toolbox, everything that you've mentioned, I've had people on here that it's worked for the ganglion block block has worked for some of my friends EMDR, you know, talk therapy, all these things. But I've also got stories of people where it didn't have any, you know, make any difference whatsoever, or, as you touched on made it worse. So with your personal journey, it's not demonizing the modalities. What were some of the ones that seemed ineffective or temporary or even made it worse? Apart from obviously, the EMDR? I think you touched on.

o

22:33

So yeah, and I'll be the first to say is, I've, I've said this before, like I don't, I don't think there's any one size fits all solution, if there was we wouldn't be having this conversation, right, it'll be fixed. I think a lot of it comes down to the individual for me personally EMDR dragged up a lot of issues made me extremely angry, and I basically gutted it through you know, 12 sessions to quote unquote, give it a chance. And I got like, worse during that time, I was just furious angry all the time. So that didn't work. For me, that's not to say it wouldn't have in the hands of a better practitioner that might have had, I don't know more experience maybe a better patient than I was cognitive processing therapy where you kind of like write down in detail these things and what you're feeling also didn't work for me and I just the therapist frustrated I was frustrated because you know, she was like oh and don't drink like Don't drink so I had like cool don't drink or write about and I'd have things like cool it's three in the morning perfectly sober I'm gonna be non functional tomorrow but you know, I'm sober I'm not drinking so it was actually like worse for me than drinking to get five six hours of sleep, bad sleep and sleep nonetheless and then being function with my kids the next day stellate ganglion block did work for me but it was temporary it kind of diffused all of that hyper vigilance that constant muscle tension that constant like expecting something catastrophic to happen in the possible second when you're living in you know suburbia next to a Trader Joe's. In then the you know, the symptoms would come back you have to go and get another shot in to be clear, like SGD is not like a casual saunter in and get a needle in the arm like they're using an x ray to put a needle into your neck while you hold perfectly still so they can inject this, you know, medication into a nerve bundle, to just to temporary to transient. Ketamine, I think was certainly a step up, I could get once I did the five days and different practitioners have different protocols. So it will vary clinic to clinic based on what they've seen work. But I did five days of high doses, right, so about an hour each, each of the five days just to kind of reset a bay Slide. And then after that, it'd be about every three to four months. That's what it came down to. For me where it would last me that long, I'd be the most functional I'd ever been. And then I would have to kind of go back and get another one

J James Geering 25:10

that was sorry to interrupt that was that ketamine with the counseling? So you weren't just having an infusion you having someone talk to you through the experience? Or was it simply a infusion?

 25:19

It was simply the infusion. And it's pretty shocking that that worked for me, and that it works for people. Because to be clear, all these studies that are going on Johns Hopkins, all these centers that are doing the MDMA studies of PTSD, that are having these incredible success rates, like sharing 70% of PTSD in like three high dose sessions, where, you know, a year later, the person is not diagnoseable as having that, that symptom whatsoever. They're all psychedelic assisted psychotherapy. So there, it's not just the psychedelic, it's doing this talk therapy, unpacking everything before and after integrating, you know, whatever you get during your psychedelic journey. So I didn't have any of that. And in fact, there was no coaching on even just basic psychedelic trip shit, like preparation, navigation, integration, none of that it's like sit down in the chair, take a needle like, oh, it might help to have an intention of some kind, good luck, you know, and then they walk out of the room. So I kind of navigated that stuff on my own and kind of get used to that state. And the one thing I learned, which does apply, I think, for any psychedelics is like, you just have to surrender. The only time I've ever gotten to trouble on a trip was early on in his first five days of ketamine where I started seeing a bunch of horrific war imagery and stuff. And I started resisting it, right, that inner contraction, I don't want to be seeing this, try to pull your mind out and take it out somewhere else. And you know, the psychedelics will not have that shit. So it becomes like physically punishing, like difficulty breathing. And that's what goes into like a bad trip experience. And I thought I was odd. And the nurse came in, and is a two shot procedure. So I'd had my first shot at sort of going like really downhill when I was coming up with my second and she came in and I was like, Can you check the dose? Like, I think I'm doing I think he got the dose wrong. And she said, I'm sure she's seen this before. She's like the medicine. It's working through something like do you want the second shot? I was like, Yes. And she gave me the second shot. And the instant I like surrendered to it, I was like, Okay, what are we going to show me, you're gonna show me all the physical symptoms lifted. And then I got all these crazy revelations that it was trying to break me through to, if not for my own resistance. So since then, any type of psychedelic in my experience, it's all about surrendering to the experience, don't resist anything, in kind of going with an attention, but let it let the journey take you where it takes you. So it was pretty remarkable that I had great success like that ketamine is that good in that context for whatever I had going on, that I was getting three to four months of relief off just a medicine, and it probably would have been infinitely more effective with therapy occurring in conjunction.

J James Geering 28:06

Well, that's what I've heard, you know, whether it's MDMA led counseling, it's the ketamine it's the psychedelics, you know, if you had or recreationally taken psychedelics, which I wonder how many Vietnam vets that actually helped when they came back to the hippie culture, and be an interesting statistic to study, but having that, that, you know, whatever Charmin counselor, whatever it is guiding you through, because if you're talking about the ganglion block, or some of these other things, that's the Princess and the Pea, you haven't addressed the P, you know what I mean, you've maybe removed a mattress or added a mattress. But with

the psychedelic gene to use another analogy would be like opening the cupboard. And you walk into Narnia, and I don't come in with you, and you come out going fucking hell, man. And you're clueless because you stayed in the bedroom. You know what I mean? So I think you have to marry those two, you're trying to get to the nucleus of what the problem is. If you just send someone down that journey, they don't have that person holding their hand metaphorically to guide them through. Okay, I saw this, this and this to write down what they saw. Tell me about this, you know, is this a good feeling? Is this a bad feeling? And I have no idea what they would do. But I'm assuming it would be trying to get you to solve some of the puzzles while you're in this state. So that when you come out now you're more aware now you've unlocked some some boxes in your mind and you're a couple of rungs on the ladder closer to getting to that origin.



29:29

Yeah, I think that's exactly right. And I haven't done any high dose psychedelic since starting therapy. I started right when I came back from that Ayahuasca retreat. But from everything I've learned, and, you know, that I've experienced in therapy, which it's not easy, you know, there's emotional outbursts and, you know, things coming to the surface like randomly I'll have, you know, very strong, almost psychedelic great emotions associated with like a childhood memory. Read that I haven't thought about in years. And that comes out is a part of the therapy process, which is normal. But, you know, lately I've been I've got an alarm set for, you know, 415 in the morning, and I don't even make it that far, because I wake up at two or three in the morning and a cold sweat. And I had some crazy dream that I write down. And then the therapists like dissect said, and it according to him, gives them a roadmap for you know, what are the issues we need to go down and touch into later in therapy, and it's coming like directly from your subconscious directly from things that you either wouldn't give a voice to, or don't even consider because it's been repressed in your mind for so long. So, like right now, I would say I'm, I'm doing worse, physically throughout the day, like energy levels, emotional stability than I was eight months ago. But it's because I'm, like actually doing the work. And going through that process, which is not an easy process. Rather than just buffering myself with alcohol, which I know I could have continued doing for the rest of my life. And I kind of made a decision to step away from it and try to actually get my shit together. So it's not been easy. And one of the things my, you know, that my therapist also said, he's like, basically, with all the, all the extreme trauma stuff. He's like, it's particularly with regard to PTSD. He's like most civilians don't understand, it's not possible to just stay alive. And things get better with time. He's like, it's not how it works. So people with, you know, strong PTSD. They either have to grind through life with coping mechanisms, alcohol, or whatever, or check out of the ride and kill themselves. It's like one of those two, and the only way out, he's like, there aren't many good. There aren't many options out at all. And they're all grueling, right, like I'm doing the therapy and psychedelics route. And he's like, it's grueling. It's hard work. But he's like, there will be reprieve throughout the process. And eventually, you'll you reach a place where you start healing kind of the core wounds that are, you know, to use your analogy, like the pee under the mattresses, but getting there takes time and a lot of work and effort. And I'm, I'm hoping it's worth that I know that based on the years I spent since leaving the military, or just using alcohol to get by, you know, I didn't want to continue doing that for another 40 years. So I try it out. Now. Maybe in five years, we do another podcast, I'll have better answers for you. But that's been my experience. So far. No, but



James Geering 32:39

I think this is this is what we want to hear. Because the the modern day American way of thinking is Alright, tell me the thing that worked. Oh, well, I did this, I went to the ceremony. There's this dude, he had a mask on, he was shaking things, there was music. And then I woke up and I was fucking awesome and haven't looked back. The reality is, like you said, decades of life, I mean, trauma, happiness, love loss, all these things. You're not going to unpack that in a weekend, you know, so when you said about doing the work, this is what the phrase that I hear from so many people that I know are actually doing better, because it's an unpleasant thing to address all the things that happen to unpack it, to relive it to maybe have a revelation that, you know, your parent maybe wasn't who you thought they were, you know, or, or suddenly discover that something happened to you that, you know, now you've got guilt and shame, I didn't realize that, you know, I was taken advantage of this way, whatever it is. So yeah, understanding that it is going to be you know, it's a work in progress, you're never really going to have an endpoint, because you're still living to, you're still, you know, having financial issues and relationship problems and family illnesses. And so you're trying to heal while life still kicking you in the face. So, yeah, I think this is an important perspective that you're going through it at the moment.



33:56

Yeah, I mean, I, I agree.



James Geering 34:00

Well, another thing when I was listening to our first podcast, it's funny because I just kind of did a self experiment. And it was exactly what you talked about. So we did the 7x. Project around the world event in February. And I'd say the pinnacle event was we got to skydive over the pyramids. Now, when I've done two sky dives on my life the first time it was in New Zealand, and I will put my hand on my heart and say I metaphorically and literally ship myself before the skydive terrify me before I was a firefighter. A girlfriend of mine Zoey kind of booked us in I was like, Well, I guess I'm not getting out of this. So yeah, McDonald's bathroom before and then, you know, but we jumped out of the plane. It was amazing. But what I hate is that sudden drop. What I didn't realize when you skydive from an aeroplane is that it's doing 100 And whatever miles an hour so you kind of drift out you don't plumb it. Beautiful. So go through the fire service come out the other end do this podcast we have these conversation questions. And I have about a year ago, I have a realization like nothing really gets my heart rate up anymore. It's almost like the opposite of hypervigilance. You know, everything is kind of dull but not not in a negative way. It's just there's no acute event because when you've been through the things that we do in uniform, life is pretty tame in comparison. So even like, you almost get hit by a car or whatever, it's like, you know, I didn't, did I. So anyway, I'm telling myself, okay, is this a fictional thing that I'm seeing? Or is it physiological? So this was seemingly adrenal fatigue? And I heard someone say, that's not a real thing, what you know, it's a depletion of the response if nothing else. So we go to 7x and they say, Hey, we got the whole team, a skydive over the pyramids, and I'm like, oh, okay, brilliant. They go outside of a helicopter. I'm like, Oh, shit, I hate drops. This is going to be a test. This is something I know I really dislike. I'm going to do it because it sounds amazing, but I'm probably going to shoot myself again. Mate 00 adrenaline, not just sat there leapt out the plane with the dudes strapped to my bag. And then we landed and I was just so my cheeks were sore from smiling but it was craziness what you talked about with your journey into skydiving and then BASE jumping and then having that

realization that you didn't even have the elevated heart rate now the reason for this long monologue prior to this question when you hear stories of heroism when you hear you know some of these fearless men and women that we have amongst us there's of course a courage component but I now with that what I'm learning and seeing is Is it also a diminished a rien adrenal response to diminish value for your own life. So just random kind of observation. But what is your perspective of where you found yourself with no elevated heart rate after a base jump? Again, through the eyes now 2023



37:02

A, that's a that's a great observation. I would guess that Adrenal Fatigue is real. I'm not a scientist, but you know, your experience and mine is certainly like you need more of whatever it is like okay, a skydive is not giving your adrenaline now you start BASE jumping and a base jumps like giving adrenaline a start taking a lower lower free falls of antennas. With regard to combat now when I say this at the risk of trying to you know, make it sound like I'm self promoting, and I'm not trying to but they were very, very few times that I was ever like scared in combat, it's just generally like almost a zen like focus. For me personally, which is notable because I was frequently like scared shitless and like training like your you know, 19 year old private with 100 pounds of equipment strapped to you and about to bail out a bird or an aircraft to you know, assemble into a 20 mile road march to a live fire range it's gonna be like horrendously horrendous endurance event. And I I remember, many times and trainees can like five photographer fuck, combat typically was was very zen like focus. I think. I certainly had a Okay, I'll put it to you like this. After one. Once I got into like, special forces. My team Sergeant like, you know, we frequently this is my second you know, there's, there's a team leader, Team sergeant, you've kind of they call you work lives, like you are married, you manage everything with the team, like I'm dealing with headquarters, he's dealing with making it converting all the orders into, you know, actionable guidance for the guys. So he, you know, we were having one of our closed door conversations after a mission and he was like, Jason, you don't you don't give a shit. If you get killed? Do you know, it's like, no, like, No, not really. He's like, Yeah, I saw it here, here. And here. He's like, I'm the same way. And we have one other person on our team. He's like that, like, Do you know who it is? And I guess it was wrong to can other guests and I was wrong. And then he told me who it was and what action he saw. That demonstrated that this guy indeed did not give a shit whether he lived or died. And, you know, I was never in a position to find out what I would have done in some, you know, Call of Duty valorous circumstance, but if I did anything positive in that situation, I think for me personally, it would have been just out of, like, apathy like No, almost no bravery required. It's kind of like, you know, when you're exposed to enough that the warfare I don't know, I certainly got pretty ambivalent about my own survival and Even like having a wife and kid towards the end of my career didn't really factor in because it was so compartmentalized. You know, like, when I went on mission, there was zero, like thoughts of family, none, none whatsoever, just total focus, like until I came back. Like none of that really played a part. Yeah, he bring up an excellent point about does it matter to you at that time, whether you live or die?



James Geering 40:29

Well, I think what makes it even more haunting, is because I had that too in the fire service. When I look back, I'm like, I genuinely wasn't scared on fire that would put my hand on my heart, there were a couple of times, actually, in lesser fires, where I got disoriented for a

moment and was like, Oh, shit, and that's certainly got me for a second. But overall, going into this burning structure or got, you know, whatever we're heading into, at that point, there was a shooting or whatever. It's just you're relying on your training, they do such a good job. And if you're diligent in your craft, and you take this profession seriously, and you train, you keep your fitness up, I think you have the ability to kind of relax and let your body just do the things that it's rehearsed 1000 times. And so I think it you know, it takes the myopic focus off the skill, and you do kind of find yourself more in that flow state. The scary thing, though, that abandonment of self worth, and not deliberate, but you know, that seeming shift towards that you marry that element with a profession that is already signed on the dotted line, I'm willing to die for a complete stranger. And then you add some mental health struggles in there as well. And then you look at the definition of suicide, not from what we all thought, when we were young and naive, like, oh, it's cowardly, how could you do that? It's selfish. But now understanding the mind of someone in crisis, they truly believe that they're a burden to the world. So you add this kind of lower fear, you know, this acceptance of death, almost the selfless service that you're willing to die for someone else. And then this lower perceived view of yourself this this self burden element. I think that's a super dangerous cocktail that leads to so many of our people in uniform to take their own lives, because I believe that my child and my wife are better off without me, even though it's a fucked up way of thinking, because my brain is all miswired from all the trauma and all the other component elements. But now I'm going to do the courageous and selfless thing. And I'm going to take myself out. So my child and my wife will be happier. It's we never hear of it that way in suicide prevention conversations. But that's what I've kind of discovered the real people this is this is what they think this is how they feel. So you marry that selflessness. With that feeling of burden. And now you've got a deadly combination for self harm.



42:52

Yeah, you certainly do. And I think the like that line of rhetoric about suicide being selfish and cowardly. It it's always pissed me off. Probably because, you know, I spent a decent amount of years being like actively suicidal, very high functioning depressive, and that drove all my interest in adrenaline sports and getting back into combat. However, I could. You know, in speaking for myself before I was married, like having dry fired a revolver in my mouth, like, go ahead and try that, like, make sure it's unloaded and try it and then come back to me, let me know how like, how cowardly you felt when you did that, like cowardice not doesn't enter the equation. I think you look at the populations of people that are killing themselves at two to three times the rate of their, you know, civilian counterparts. It's our nation's best and brightest and bravest. It's the people who've been screened for service as first responders, firefighters, military, special operations are leading the charge. I think we're the we're killing ourselves in greater numbers. And these are people who've passed like selection on top of selection on top of psychological assessment on top of psychological assessment. And I mean, you I don't know what what your experience is, like, obviously, we all know people if you're anywhere near any of these communities, we're talking about, you know, plenty of people who've killed themselves and in my experience, like it is the best people. It's not like, I don't know, personally, I've never had like a mediocre guy I've worked with like ever killed himself. It's always like the absolute gangster stud who you want, like leading the way into a building. So yeah, that that line of rhetoric has always kind of upset me, particularly, you know, and you get these comedians like Dane Cook, he's like, Yeah, I tried feeling sad, and you know, but then I just ate a piece of chocolate. I was happy so if you're suicidal, you're selfish fuck and like, Dude, you need to show Got the fuck up? That would be like me saying, maybe I'll get canceled for this that would be like me saying like, yeah, sure when I see Ryan Gosling you know, I feel something but, you

know, I don't go out and fuck dudes or anything. Right? It's like if you don't have depression, like say thank you and move on. Because I'll tell you this this'll sound like I'm bragging. But then hang in there and I'll take it real dark. You know, I've done some things that would be considered like difficult, certainly. Okay. marathons, 50 milers, 100 mile races, you know, Ranger Regiment selection, Ranger School Special Forces selection combat, fill in the blank, the hardest thing I've ever done is depression. Like there's not even a close second. Nothing I've ever experienced or heard of comes even a close second to the experience of like, true depression. So the people that suffer under that have my utmost compassion and empathy, because I've gotten a window into how hard it was. And, you know, if I hadn't been pulled out of it, through, you know, seemingly miraculous interventions, meeting my wife and the right things happening at the right time to kind of prolong my existence before I you know, frankly, if I had the balls to kill myself, it would have happened years ago, when I was at my worst. And I think I can say as long as I like, I don't mean any disrespect to families, sue people who took their lives by suicide. Honest to God, like you and me talking here. Like, I don't have the balls to kill myself. But I think I would have gotten dumber and dumber doing stuff based jumping to where, you know, my sport did me and for me, because I didn't have like the physical and literal courage to do it myself. So yeah, look at the populations that are killing themselves, like coronation glorifies with, you know, we glorify the military, we glorify police, firefighters, first responders, the people that keep us safe and let you know, peaceful men sleep in their bed at night because of these pipe hitters that are out there on the front lines. And you can't go from that, in turn around when those people are killing themselves and meteoric numbers due to, you know, a lack of better options that should be ideally available and ideally available while they're in the profession of service. You can't turn around and start vilifying those communities is cowardly. And I think anybody who does that just has no idea what they're talking about.

J

James Geering 47:29

Yeah, well, firstly, Dane Cook is one of my wife's favorite comedians and I fucking hate. Like, I just, he may be an amazing human being who knows. But as far as comedy, I love comedy. That's definitely not someone that I and again, I get that comedians venture into places. I mean, you know, the South Park series and GOD WHAT THE HELL daniel tosh, Daniel Tosh him and he'll go to some, you know, super triggering places, and I do understand that but as a comedian, not a fan. Gotta say Anyway, moving on. We got that out. Yeah, there we go. See, obviously now now I'm healing see that. But the other thing I think that is so sad is you know, we talk about the mental health element in the first responder, a military community, and we go, oh, it's what Jason saw in Afghanistan in Iraq, I was what James saw, you know, and I've seen seen some horrible shit. And you have seen and done some horrible shit. That's the one thing about firefighting versus say law enforcement is that we don't have to take a life. If we're doing that, then obviously, we push the wrong drugs, and we probably end up in handcuffs. But um, but it's the compounding elements. It's the same with the school violence conversation. Well, there's just divide, everyone will argue about guns for two days, and then fuck it, we'll just go with the Super Bowl, and everything will be fine. You know, we're not fixing anything focusing on that one area, but you educate someone who is a high performer in uniform, and you start telling them about that we discussed the massive impact childhood trauma has on your foundation, your ability to cope with things later in your career, the effects of sleep deprivation, the side effects of psychiatric meds, organizational stress and bullying. I mean, there's this massive list of things that all create this perfect storm, then you throw in the transition out, for example, how many of our men and women take their own lives when they've left the military or the fire service? You know, so that loss of tribe. So when you put all these pieces together, now you've educated someone on all these red flags that are happening,

and if you look at your life, and you're a firefighter and you're going through COVID So you're getting mandatory all the time you don't 72 hours without sleep, and your relationships crumbling and you take in a bunch of meds, you know, these are all things that are going to push you and an alcohol is a perfect one, push you towards that point where that invisible hand that saying hey, you're a human being were designed to thrive and reproduce and protect our children. That that hand is stopping you from doing anything to yourself, but with all those compounding elements that hand now is behind And you pushing you into that, because that's how miswired you are. So until we have this multifaceted conversation the same with the school shootings, they're all the same elements the the Create suicide or homicide, we're not going to fix this, we're not going to fix this with say, Hey, bro, if you're struggling call me or here's a number or pin it to the fucking, you know, the HR front door, we have to actually understand the holistic elements that contribute to someone who was a fearless warrior, ultimately, you know, surviving all these things were enemies or trying to kill them, and they end up dying by their own hand, which is the ultimate tragedy.



50:37

Yeah, die by their own hand in far greater numbers than the enemy or any fires or, you know, police shootings can account for far greater numbers. Yes, it's certainly a complex issue. And one thing I'll throw at you that, you know, my therapist put them in it says he's kind of a subject matter expert specializes in vets. He's very, very good at what he does. He said that all of the effects of PTSD like the very nature of PTSD down to how it manifests in all the symptoms, changes, largely based off the conflict that caused it. So from a military perspective, he said, what you have is PTSD is very different than what a world war two that would have had from PTSD. He's like, PTSD shifted from like, 1945 to 1995. It looks very different for the 911 generation of war veterans. And he's like, in large part, the PTSD gets worse when the logic system in the reasoning you have behind making sense of everything you had to do and see crumbles. So speaking from the military side, right, if you were in World War II, or World War Two, that and you were not on the access side, like you were part of the most just war that we will probably ever see in our lifetime that our children's will say in their life, right, there's a, there are countries trying to take over the world to enslave and kill as many people as they can. Right. Pretty clear cut. But as time marches forward, the reasons for war become increasingly convoluted. And we have, you know, memos from the White House at three in the afternoon on 911 saying, how do we link this to Iraq to use it as a reason to invade, right you have 911, like, a lot of people think was the conspiracy, because it looks so from a geopolitical standpoint, but it was actually like a pre loaded agenda. That that was, that was an event that happened that they could use to push the media to bang the war drums, wave the WMD flag, get us into whatever countries you know, they want it as part of the geopolitical agenda. So is war goes on it the reasons for it become more capitalistic, more like growth, the military industrial complex, more geopolitically motivated, and then you end up with, you know, again, in the military capacity, you have a generation of people who are watching the fall of Afghanistan, go back to the Taliban erasing, you know, for the Taliban, they waited for 20 years, they knew we would leave and they inherited, By most estimates, somewhere to the tune of \$800 million worth of military equipment, pretty good, pretty good deal. Not most of that equipment, a lot of it is going to be paperweights because they don't have the logistical chain to service it, you know, unless another country steps in, which is entirely possible to help them with it. But you know, if you're looking at that, from the perspective of somebody who's rationale was, I was defending my country, post 911, making the world a better place, stopping future nine elevens. And then you watch all that crumble. My therapist said that that creates like a true like when you start if you unravel the reasons and the justifications, and it won't no

longer make sense to you. It causes like a true psychic crisis, because the foundation of your entire morality and ethics structure and self with a capital S is invested in this warrior protector mentality. And when that rug gets pulled out, it puts you in such a dark place that getting out of it takes a monumental effort. And I think that's certainly what we're seeing on the military veteran side to a large extent. And it's probably emblematic of all the myriad factors that are reasons in modern society for an average civilian, to feel disconnected, isolated, depressed, swept up in the 12 hour news cycle of shit and horror that's, you know, Doom scrolling, much less, you know, the police, firefighters, first responders in the middle who are undergoing all the trauma that is similar to the military. Not killing people, ideally, but just the same and then in the military, we have the advantage of like we go to war and then we come home You know, whereas you're a first responder, you're a cop, like you are living in the area where all these traumatic events occurred. And you have daily reminders, you don't need a trigger of it's just this warm out in this day and the breeze hits you in a certain way in the sun setting and you think you're going back out on mission, but you don't you don't constantly think about all your hyper vigilant cells up, like the people who work in America and accumulate that trauma here. Like they're exposed to that every hour of every day, which I would imagine would be infinitely harder. But again, I don't want to get into the these people have it worse than these other people like we've we've all got issues. We're all I think all that before their first responders, military civilian issues, they are human issues. And that's, that's at the center of it all.

 James Geering 55:46

So when we spoke last we were still in Afghanistan. Now obviously, there's been the withdrawal. And I've had it's been it's been an amazing we've had a lot of people from all branches that have talked about him and their whole life story, but also their perspective on that have had Afghani and Iraqi commandos and interpreters that have come on that were, you know, I wouldn't say rescues the wrong word but but emigrated to the US after their service. I want to get into that. But also, even when you talked about the pre loaded thing, that's what I saw as a civilian. We were all you, we now have and I've moved to this country, we're attacked by a Saudi Base in Afghanistan. And our knee jerk was we're going to Iraq. Now I not a geography major, but I'm pretty sure those are two different countries. So it wasn't the fact that hey, we want to go back to Iraq and finish this thing that my dad didn't do properly. What pissed me off is it was literally packaged in a way like this is a response to the war on terror. So the to me, I had the same perspective, as you at the beginning, that makes perfect sense that whatever the next thing is, this is what we're going to do with it because it was clear, you know, then you, you fast forward 20 years and Afghanistan and now I think it's that organizational betrayal or some moral injury of like you told us this was going to do a thing you told us this was gonna get them make the world better. 20 of my friends are dead because of that conflict. And now we're just leaving. So through your eyes, things, it's been five years talk to me about you know, yourself as a veteran who's who served in both countries that we withdrew from, on that impact on you and or some of the crazier decree, some of the incredible men and women that you serve alongside.

 57:35

Me and so I, I was hoping I could just unplug during the withdrawal. And I was like when it started happening. In everything started going to shit in August 2021. I remember thinking like, Alright, I'm gonna follow the news until the last American is out of Afghanistan, and then I'm

going to unplug from it. Because to do otherwise would just be too fucking painful. That was my native response. And then I got an SOS from an interpreter I used to work with to drag his feet on the Special Immigrant Visa. And then he's in Cabo with his, you know, his wife, and his three kids, one of which was, you know, a one year old. And he needed help. So I got roped into the, like, you read those news reports of like, oh, there's all these veterans that are living in their office, and they're not sleeping for days at a time trying to figure out like checkpoints and getting people to the airport. And what's the process for getting these people out of the country? Like, that was very real. And I got roped up in that. And I lived in my office for two weeks. That was, you know, spent 50 hours a week at one point. Trying to do damage control on this, as you know, all these veterans are trying to help these Afghanis Who are you know, still there? It the time. It was It was horrific, because the things that we had to do trying to help these people that ideally would have been done by I don't know, the government that fucking started it, or, you know, somebody who's still working for the government, which is a dangerous line of thinking, because that's, you know, when I was 18 year old, private, I was like, Yeah, okay, we're going to Afghanistan. Great. We're going to Iraq, great. Like, I just assumed that, you know, there were adults in the White House that knew what they were doing and had, you know, the best interest of everybody at heart and now looking back, I'm like, Okay, I was dumb. So I could have read a Wikipedia page and Afghanistan and reasonably concluded that trying to occupy and convert them into 21st century is not going to end well. Because the historical precedent is pretty predictable. So it was, that was incredibly like emotionally damaging. Going through that process. I remember you Five different chat windows up with these different encrypted apps and you're cross loading information from other groups of veterans and whatnot, where the Taliban is and how to get around the checkpoints. And, you know, I just remember seeing like snippets of conversation like, Oh, my God, what have we done, these different people are out of the military. They're not responsible for this. But there's that human connection with the people you worked with. And like one of the most emotionally gutting things has ever happened to me in my life is I was I was helping, I was gonna have my interpreter make a run for the airport, we'd mapped out, you know, where the checkpoints were headed app on his phone, so you can navigate around them. And I was like, alright, like, at the time, there was a British ratline through a certain gate in the airport. And I was like, I need you to take a picture of your family for me, so they know who to identify and whatnot. And he sent me like a selfie of him and his family. And just the looks of sheer, like hope in the eyes of his wife, three sons, one of which was, again, a one year old boy. And seeing like that family, just totally at the mercy of what we could try to hash together is, you know, cynical veterans who are now lost our faith in our government, and probably our country. broke my heart. And we sent him to the airport, the ratline got shut down before he got there. His comms went dark for like four hours. And I thought they got killed, like executed by Taliban on the way. And then he popped back up. Okay, he's alive. And by then you have the V that going off? Like, where do we move these families now? And then as soon as the airport closed down, it turned into Okay, how are we getting them across the border? How are we getting everybody across the border to Pakistan. And without going into too much detail, one of the most descriptive and fitting comments I saw was by Yvette I don't know who he was, but I'll never forget this. He was like, I like how our government's policies have have turned all US veterans into coyotes and human smugglers. Because some of the ways to get people in Pakistan were less than savory. And you're talking to people who are mercenaries and all kinds of smugglers, like you name it, trying to get people across. So yeah, I think the whole withdrawal is pretty emotionally scarring. I will say that. I probably shouldn't say this out loud, but I will, it broke my faith and my country. It totally broke my faith in my country, my government, it cured me of a at the time, 38 year ailment where I would get goosebumps every time I heard the national anthem. The shit doesn't happen anymore. Like, I don't wear American flag ball caps. Like you can see me I'm wearing a Ukrainian flag ball cap, you know.

That was that was a major shift. For me. I think it was a major shift for a lot of veterans in the guys. I know. It was kind of a tipping point of like, we believe in this volunteered our lives and serve this cause. And then I think that withdrawal, kind of peel back the layers on like, this was Vietnam, part two, like everything that we railed against Vietnam, like we did part two and part three with the knowledge of Vietnam, in recent history. So one of the things I think I'm, I can tell you this categorically because when my therapist dissects my dreams, because you know, as you build trust, shit starts coming up in dreams, that means nothing to you. But when he starts peeling it apart, it represents what you're subconsciously repressing. For the deep injuries you have and where I'm at right now. It's, it was like disgust with military industrial complex. That that deep, that deep loss of faith and trying to come to terms with the morality of how I live with myself, having been a willing participant in all this stuff, because I can look back and I can judge it with everybody else. But when I when I go back in time, I was 100% willing, I was thrilled about the prospect of going to war. It's all I wanted to do when I was in high school pre 911 was reading books about Vietnam, Mogadishu like combat combat combat, how do I get there? How do I go to war? Nobody could have talked about it. Everybody tried to talk me out of it. There were three of us in my high school that didn't go to college because they joined the military and the other two were like Navy nuclear engineers. So you know, I got ridiculed for it. For going to enlist in the Rangers. And like, fast forward now I'm 40 years old. I have two kids, I live in a beautiful house and one of the safest towns in America. And I'm benefiting from everything that this country has provided, while still in contact with this family who's stuck in Afghanistan, others that made it across to Pakistan, that are suffering in the most extreme terms possible. While I'm living in comfort. I think there's a deep, there's a deep moral issue that I have with that, that I think I'm gonna have to figure out how to come to terms with and the only way out because I can't change past actions, the only way out is going to be self forgiveness, like just forgiving myself. And, as I sit here, before you I have, I don't know how to do that. I don't know what the road looks like to get there. But I know that's the only way. So that's the road, I'm gonna keep following. Because, you know, it goes back to that Be the change you want to see in the world, right? Everybody wants to rail and judge and point fingers, but the people who are actually making a difference work on themselves first and change their inner state, and then they start having greater effects in the outer world. That's what I'm trying to do. I'm trying to unfuck myself. But yeah, I think that's probably the deepest moral issue, which I'm aware is my willing involvement in the actions of my country for 20 years post 911?

J James Geering 1:06:22

Well, I mean, you definitely mirror not just our combat veterans, but I think a lot of people in a lot of professions in this country, and it's something that I discussed quite a bit, I am so grateful to be an American, I mean, I consider myself a citizen of the world. So you know, I'm also British, and also all the other beautiful places that I got to go to. But like yourself, I wore a uniform with an American flag on my shoulder and consider that I did some good things. And that's the thing that the fire service is very fortunate is we don't have the same kind of moral challenges that maybe law enforcement, certainly a military member would have, sometimes you put in the place where you have to do things that a firefighter would never be asked to do. But when I look at the absolute fucking failure of drug prohibition, and all the deaths that that's caused, when I look at the industrialization of our food, and all the deaths that that's caused, I look at the horrendous chronic disease, pharmaceuticals and all the deaths that that's caused. And then they look at the wars that we didn't need to be in or which I'll pick your brains on the minute, maybe we needed to be in for a short time, and then get the hell out. That's not America, to me, America are these fucking amazing human beings that I get to talk to like

yourself, like your wife, like my wife, who were just out there in the world trying to give back be good people being kind to their neighbors. That is America. But the problem is, and I get this a lot from the UK, they say, oh, what's America like? Because they see fucking Donald Trump and Joe Biden, and Rumsfeld, and all these fucking cartoon characters that find themselves at the top of the pyramid. I mean, that's not us. You know, there's not shootings in every school. But we have an immense problem with that there's not gangs in every neighborhood. But we have an immense problem with that, yes, 70% of our population is obese or overweight, we have an immense problem with that we have a suicide epidemic. So when you adore a country, whether it's the one I came from, that I still adore to this day, or the one that I've served now for 20 years, you want to make it better. You want to question things you want to improve, and you want to strike down the people the selfless or selfish, excuse me, tyrants that are destroying a country. And this is what I've asked a lot of veterans, if you go into war, with a world war two mentality, wanting to do good serving, the mission is completed, people come home. And overall I'm sure I'm kind of dignifying it a little bit. But overall, it was in a successful mission. And most people felt good about what they did you they may be haunted by the things they did, but they knew it was just like you said, now we have the industrial or the military industrial complex, where there's no checks and balances, to stop a war as short as quickly as we can. Because if the war stops, all my friends aren't going to make billions and trillions of dollars. So this is what I struggle with so much as the America that you're talking about. isn't America. It's this fucking greed ridden cancer of this small percentage of people that are profiting off the deaths, illness or service of the real American people.



1:09:42

Yeah, I'll add to what you said. That notion of this isn't America. You know, it's about these these people, the men and women and children you see every day like these, these wonderful, amazing, beautiful people. I see that as well. As the world, right, because I've seen those same people, I see them in my neighborhood, I see them in my community. I've also seen them in Iraq and Afghanistan and Africa, places where there were horrendous terrorist groups and in attacks, but, you know, the things we're talking about are not perpetuated by those people. Right? It's the government's the military industrial complexes, the extremist groups that find is I just put it these willing volunteers like I myself was. I agree with everything you said, the issues that you mentioned, you know, the war on drugs is, it's telling that we're having this conversation in which I just opened the conversation with spelling out all of the illegal drugs, I've done all the psychedelic drugs, which, by the way, are practically free and available everywhere and have since then, since I was born. The difference is, you know, well, first off, there was a giant body of medical research showing how they could be used and were used up until Nixon started the war on drugs and shut down research in America and then pressured other countries to shut it down worldwide. That's all resurrected now. So now we know that there are such great things that psychedelics can do for us in the right circumstances, and now there's enough research institutions operating entirely with volunteer contributions. Thank you very much United States government that are showing all this and helping to change people. One of the issues you you failed to mention was, you know, the US incarcerated close to 25%, it's over 20% of the world's prison population are US citizens, a large amount of them nonviolent drug offenders, and predominantly minorities, you know, as a result of these policies. And I also, yeah, to the war on drugs, man, one of the things that really fucks me up about this is like, I have to research this for my books, you know, and I wrote everywhere I write, or I write a book set in a country, I have to research the background, the extremist groups, and then I get into the, I always inevitably find the history of like US intervention and things that have gone terribly Orion, there's always US military equipment in use by extremist

groups, because it was this huge military industrial complex, like defense sale deal. And then they sell it on the black market, their government gets overthrown. And we kind of go to the cycle of arming the world over and over and then fighting conflicts people in armed the one of the things that really threw me off is I made the mistake of writing a book set in Colombia and had the deep dive the war on drugs. And it's, it's pretty horrifying. Like, you know, we had planned Columbia in the 90s. And we sprayed roundup militarized, like industrial grade Roundup, like the same thing that there's all these math lawsuits. So we basically sprayed that it was Monsanto is the company and they were using junk science to show how safe it was and had scientists on the payroll, signing ghostwritten papers. So we sprayed that over coca fields and water supplies rainforest, everything else. And now there are untold numbers of children being born with horrific birth defects that will never see a dime from the US government or anywhere else. And by the way, we only spread that over the left wing extremist fields while the right wing paramilitaries endorsed by the government were perfectly free to engage in equal amounts of carnage. So they never put a dent in cocaine production and cocaine production in fact, increased and has been ever since. You know, and every time you see a Coast Guard, hurrah, like look at all the kilos we seized, the most optimistic estimates are that they see is maybe 10% Most likely much lower. And then the drug dealers will literally load up a ship with that send it to get captured dropped hints through their known informants, so Coast Guard or whoever, customs can interdict this so they can run their main load undetected. So nothing's put a dent in it, nothing's ever going to put a dent in it. And this, you know, it's been a half century running failure where no politician will say, Oh, it's been a success or even say it's going okay. In the most credit, I can, I can, is, you know, I talked to somebody, I, I'm lucky to have some subject matter experts in different areas, where I consult when I write books and like, help me get the facts straight helped me like show me what side am I considering? When I read that book on Columbia? I talked to a guy who's pretty well placed in intelligence and has a lot of experience operating Columbia and I was like, Alright, here's the way Don and I laid out everything I've just told you more nose like it might like what am I missing? What's the positive side and he was like, You're not not missing anything, you're right about all that. And by the way, that was considered like a US foreign policy success and became the model they used in Afghanistan, because we essentially threw a bunch of money at Columbia solved the real problem, which is preventing the FARC from marching on Bogota, like marching on the Napa national capitol and taking over the country, and toppling our biggest ally in Latin America. He's like, there weren't a lot of good answers for that. And the answer that came up with Plan Colombia, they threw a lot of money at it, it stopped the FARC. And taking over, you know, they basically use Counter Narcotics authorities to to facilitate an anti communist agenda. And he was like, that was the model that they use for Afghanistan, basically, like we can keep pumping money at this thing. And it's going to go away. Obviously, to not

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James Geering 1:15:54

where you talks about the prison population? The documentary 13th, I think is something is a film that everyone should watch. But yeah, I think that you said it's like 20 something percent, we have 20 something percent of the world's incarcerated men and women, but America actually makes up 4% of the world population. We actually just fucking horrifying Yeah, we consume 75% of the world's opioids, yet, we're only 4% of the world's population. You know what I mean? So with, with this whole chsp in greatest country, in the world, we should be it's not a competition, but we are a nation of great people, but we've allowed these few tyrants to, to, you know, just take advantage of so many people, like I said, their money, their health, all these things. And it's this vicious circle, because my you know, person as product makes me ill and it makes me fat gives me diabetes worse, okay, person based products has gotten

metformin and, you know, cholesterol meds, and hypertension meds, so I'll just take care of them. And so you know, you've got this, these people that it doesn't matter if I get so and so sick, you know, cigarettes, made them have COPD, that's fine, I got a CPAP machine that I sell will sell on that, you know, so it's this vicious circle of people, creating customers, rather than getting to the root cause, like we're talking about with the mental health thing. And when you look even further back than Nixon, Harry Anslinger, in the 30s, was the real genesis of drug prohibition. And he kind of forced it on the UK and Australia and some of these other countries. So now we're looking at almost 100 year, longitudinal study on the success of the war on drugs. As a firefighter paramedic in America. I've pulled yellow sheets over 15 year olds that were fighting over turf in an apartment complex that the parents you know, fucking rented. In I found dead prostitutes in dumpsters have dealt, you know, interacted with so many homeless people. They've seen, like I said, the violence and the overdoses and all these things. That's all a mental health problem. That's the the, the group that if you had put it in a legal medical arena, a lot of those men and women would never ended up in that place. But with us being such a huge consumer of these illicit drugs, we've empowered the underworld and created these problems in Colombia. We've created this horrendous things happening at the Mexican border. And what's our response? Oh, we'll build a wall. Yeah, you fucking nailed it. Donald Trump think that's amazing genius. Why don't we fucking think of that? Well, how about we cut their head off the snake? We stop demonizing the drugs that our own people are using that we're forcing into the shadows. We model of Switzerland or Portugal or some of these countries that have done that was a huge success. That's how you address the war on drugs. But when do you ever fucking hear anyone talking about this? It's always you know, slamming their fists on the desk. This is your brain on drugs. We're tough on drugs. We're tough on crime in it, but it's bullshit. Because behind the scenes, they're making money hand over fist with all these operations.



1:18:59

Yeah, somebody's gonna be profiting. Yeah, one of the most mind numbing things I came across is, you know, in researching the war on drugs, like every 10 or 20 years, the government Commission's like a major RAND Corporation, think tanks study on how to effectively combat drugs, and every single time they come back with the cheapest, most cost effective, and indeed, most effective option is to treat it at the source of demand to provide rehabilitation programs for people and it's done at a fraction of the cost of what it would cost to, to keep somebody in a prison for a year, right? Prison cost for a year is something that ranges from like, it's somewhere in the 25,000 to \$30,000 range, if I recall correctly, those programs can be run for like \$3,000 a year per individual, which you know, mirror with some of these other countries you referenced are doing where you sign up, you basically get legal injections where they taper you off your dose off over time, but in the meantime, is a part of that you have to be undergoing social so ervices to find employment find a place to live. So then the drug dealers can't sell drugs because everybody's getting it free. None of the junkies actually want to be a junkie and they're getting weaned off with professional help. So that's the most cost effective way to do it indisputably is established through these constant studies. The least cost effective way to do it is targeting at the source, foreign intervention overbroad and then in between is trying to stop it at the border, which stopping at the border is like eight times more expensive, and then trying to target the sources like 25 times more expensive if I'm remembering these figures correctly, but it's in the ballpark. So to deal with the fact check me have a field day because I'm in the neighborhood. And we make this conscious decision as a country or rather the government policymakers make this conscious decision to continue doing things the way we've done it, which prohibition took, what 12 years and to realize it was a complete disaster. And by the way, you want to you want to take out the addictive substances that kill 1000 times

more people than all legal drugs put together. It's tobacco and alcohol. Right, indisputably until I will throw this in their favor until fentanyl came along. And opioid addiction came along, which is resulted the Big Pharma model. So, yeah, I mean, the information is all out there. And none of this is being perpetuated by the the quote unquote, people. We're talking about the people you see every day, these wonderful human beings that are in countries around the world, it's perpetuated by governments, military industrial complexes, private prison industry, the people who have the lobbyists to influence the political system and legislation at this point, it's just become a self licking lollipop, politicians, you know, getting higher or getting elected or saying there'll be tough on crime. If they're on one party or another party, there'll be tough in foreign policy abroad. But the same thing happens regardless. And every administration continues doing business the way they always have. And we keep going down the same road.

J James Geering 1:22:08

Yeah, I agree completely. And this is the other side of this conversation, as well as how many people walk out of a place of worship. And yet, about as far from Buddha, Jesus, you know, whoever their their prophet is, in the how they view the homeless, the prostitutes, the addicts of the world. You like you just fucking walked out of a church, where I'm pretty sure Jesus would have been out amongst those people trying to help. And you're saying this is your brain on drugs? Those people need to be I've had people say, Oh, wait, why are we wasting money on Narcan? Why don't we just let them die. And these are the same people that came out of a place of worship, where it's all about love and kindness and compassion and gratitude. So there's another disconnect there. Ethically, people are saying one thing, you know, hashtag thoughts and prayers, but then they're walking out the door and are disgusted that this person in front of them doesn't have a home anymore. So this is another thing we got to do and look at look in the mirror, not only question, the prohibition which by the way, came immediately on the heels of the failure of the prohibition of alcohol. But it was Harry Anslinger, who was a screaming racist had his own mental health problems because those two definitely go together. And it was job justification. He walked into an office where they were closing down the very thing he was employed to do. So he created something else to demonize. So when we actually look at it at a place from a place of kindness and compassion, you help the people who are hurting you don't chase the people who are selling the drugs, the people that are hurting heal, and it's not going to be everyone this is what I hate to people like well that guy over there still Natick okay, but those 100 aren't anymore. So that's what we got to look at you do you help most of the people. Now all of a sudden supply and demand basic economics. If you're a drug dealer, as you said, and you have got hardly any customers in the US anymore because it's legal. It's we've removed the globalist the word decriminalized we decriminalized addiction. Well now you're going to have to start doing something else so to me if a dumb ass fucking English firefighter configure this shit out, why is it that the people that have trillions of dollars aren't doing the things that are playing as data so many people that have come on the show?

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Yeah, it never can. You got big pharma creating opioid epidemic and then setting a limit Demick and then they create the product that helps taper the deaths of products that they are also producing and profiting from. So yeah, it does become this endless cycle. And I think it all comes down to like, Are you helping yourself? Are you helping others right? The people that figure you just mentioned trying to stay in a job, I'll be self there's, there's politicians who are

interested in how within themselves, revolving door politics with these, you know, companies that they are sit on the boards of after they get out or whatever. You know, all the lobbyists working to influence policy to all keep the money flowing among policymakers and power brokers. And meanwhile the everybody else suffers in the hope you see are the people who are trying to help others. And they're doing it without much assistance from the government, no matter what country they're in, and it comes down to, you know, you can't make money off of certain things, right. Like, if I were big pharma, I would be publishing you know, as many IV sponsoring as many studies as I could to show that micro dosing is ineffective that psychedelics don't work, because if I'm Big Pharma, I can't patent a mushroom, right? Same as they couldn't patent a marijuana plant. Right.

 James Geering 1:25:55

So they had a big war on the CBD industry and a big war of CBD.

 1:25:59

Yes. Do you see like the junk science and arguments and Oh, watch out the dangers, but I think the public is waking up. And in fact, well aware that, you know, they've been misled. And one of the one of the good things about it. Speaking of the psychedelic revolution that we're in currently, like, 2.0, right, we had the 60s obviously, that that went great. I'm sorry, I missed it. We're in currently, where all this stuff is on the brink of becoming breakthrough therapies like we're even the FDA is like, poised to make these things breakthrough therapies is that people are kind of taking their own health into their own hands, right? They're going away from the western model of medicine, which is, I show up to the office, you tell me what pill to take symptom goes away, I'm not treating the root cause I think I've definitely been seeing more and more people taking an interest in their health and what's actually going to make a difference, and pursuing whatever means that they deem right for themselves, regardless of what legislation says. And the ease with which I glided seamlessly into the psychedelic community shows that it's like it's been going on for a really long time. You know, like, I didn't understand all the people freaking out about weed becoming legal, because like, it's always been legal. Okay, like, if I could have bought a dime bag of weed off any given sixth grader, from the time I was born, until now, like, it's not that illegal now is it? It's a convenient excuse to target certain communities, or people or add on trumped up charges, or meet quotas of arrests or whatever else you need. But it's never been hard to find. None of this stuff has been hard to find. What's been missing is the data and the research on how to use it effectively, how to heal from using it, how to use it responsibly. And now that data is all coming into the public light because enough academic institutions have taken it upon themselves, to run their own studies. And even then, they're doing it with psilocybin. They're not touching LSD, not because it doesn't have the same effects, which is known to us from the 50s and early 60s research that establishes clearly, LSD comes from the ergot fungus, it's a synthesized plant component. Same with psilocybin when they goes to Johns Hopkins, they are using synthetic solution, which is the active ingredient psilocybin because they need to precisely measure the doses. So now, all this research is coming out. They're curing it like MDMA, they found like 70% success rate in curing people with treatment resistant post traumatic stress, not just because it's MDMA, that's just MDMA community has been focusing on PTSD. Psilocybin has been focused on depression and addiction, but I think there's a lot in and nobody's touching psilocybin because of the stigma, because they know they can get approved for psilocybin studies, but not LSD. Because

the government stigma and the junk science and the urban legends that have been perpetuated for, you know, since the 60s, but like, even the MDMA thing screws me up, because, okay, they've, they've shown this, they can cure, you know, and that was the result of one particular guy getting his PhD and dedicating his life to the study of MDMA, in concert, you know, in contravention of all the bureaucratic loopholes to legally do it. So one guy named escapes me at present was responsible for all that to get us where we are today. And now they say unequivocally, they can cure PTSD with psychedelic psychedelic assisted therapy, in conjunction with high dose MDMA. But we've got 22 vets killing each other killing themselves every day. God knows how many firefighters first responders policemen killing themselves every day. How long is it going to take before MDMA is legal? I don't know the answer to that. But I know it's not going to be tomorrow, which it most certainly should be like, it should have been a long time ago. The data has been out there but it's still going to be this process of well how do we change the legislation because we are so like over regulated that it's it's insane.

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James Geering 1:29:58

I have a guy from I'm Bristol, which is a next town over in a city over from where I grew up. Dr. Ben Sesa, who's done MDMA load counseling in the UK. But again, because of prohibition, it's medical trials only. And it's really, really sad because I got a friend who's just battling with horrendous alcoholism. And I know damn well that that would probably be game changing for him. But I can't say, hey, go to this doctor. Because it's purely studies and unless you happen to get in the right time with the doing the study, then you're shit out of luck. That was extremely available. When I was younger, I grew up in the rave generation. You know, when I was in, it's funny, I said, I had a friend last time we recorded because I was still employed. Now I can say it. So when I was a stunt man in Japan, we did that a lot. Had the fucking time on my life, hug the bunch Japanese people danced on speakers. And that was it. Now I don't condone it. You know, I don't suggest it recreationally. Because I could have everything with alcohol in there. The next day or two is a very opposite effect. And you feel very gray for a couple of days. But it certainly wasn't something that was going to make me stab someone. You know what I mean, it wasn't the kind of drugs that are completely legal that firefighters and paramedics and police officers respond to every single day. But that was demonized. So now you've got Ben, having amazing success with people with you know, as you said, with PTSD, and this prohibition is still a barrier to a drug that actually initially started off as a marriage therapy, to pharmaceutical. So they gave it to couples that were struggling, or the kind of barriers came down, they were very physical with each other. And I'm sure at some point, it worked for a lot of people and it was probably actually helping with their mental health struggles that were causing the trauma that was even creating that friction in that relationship in the first place. So yet another layer to this conversation, not only is prohibition causing so much death and destruction in our country, but it's stopping our veterans, firefighters and civilians from getting a therapy that is clearly extremely, extremely successful.

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Yeah, and I, that's one of the things I constantly butt heads with, you know, in a respectful way to some of the people that I seek for advice on my book. So these are well placed government intelligence military circles. In one of the, one of the arguments I have with them, and we always agree, respect, disagree, respectfully, we have great conversations. But you know, one of the main things I hear against it's like, oh, well, it's gonna be crazy. There's like addicts

everywhere without and they don't understand. Well, first off, psychedelics are anti addictive, right? You can't you do a dose of mushrooms today, you try to do the same thing tomorrow, you have a much diminished effect or do feel nothing. So you have to space it out. You build up tolerance so quickly, with psychedelics, it's impossible to get addicted. Nobody has the money to do ever larger doses, or the supply to do ever larger doses. So it's completely anti addictive. Second off, we do have addicts everywhere, right? We have nicotine addicts, caffeine addicts, alcohol addicts, by the way, nobody. Nobody is is taking psilocybin or LSD and trying to get in their car and drive home from the bar, right. Like, people are generally doing this in safe contained home environments, you know, because they respect the substance. But addicts of these other substances, alcohol in particular, killing each other, and civilians in horrendous numbers and always have and I'm a huge fan of alcohol. It worked great for me. I'm not trying to bad mouth it but it is irresponsibly used more than anything else that gets other people killed. In third, like, I've gotten the argument, well, you know, would you go to I was talking to a guy who spent some time in Yemen. The last book, the book I'm finishing now is set in Yemen. And he's like, Look, man, I don't know anybody that's gone to Yemen, myself included that thinks legalization is a good idea. Because you go to Yemen and they're chewing cop right leaves this shrub. It's also common Somalia across Africa. It's legal in some countries, not in others, but in Yemen and Somalia, in particular, everyone's addicted. They're constantly chewing leaves. They're spending a huge part of their income on these leaves, which you basically chew a giant wad with vigor for an hour or two and get the buzz of like an espresso. And I in there like you go through Santa the capital city or prior to the Houthi is taking it over and by the way, thank you very much inheriting a bunch of US military armored vehicles that have been sold to the international market and taken over sold on the black market. So in that capital city prior to being taken over by the Houthis and I'm certain still to this day, they there's little plastic deli bags you see like a deli to bag your vegetables and stuff. They call that the national bird of yen because there are flocks have been coasting across the sky at all times, day or night. Because everybody is on this substance And I did the legwork to look into cops to integrate into my book and surprise, it's not fucking addictive. It's not physically addictive. It doesn't even make the top 10 with caffeine, alcohol, nicotine, cocaine, fill in the blank. It is it best, some people would argue psychologically a different psychologically addictive. And by the way, it's illegal in a shitload of African countries where people just chew it recreationally and have no problems. So why is it crippling the economies and the infrastructure of Yemen and Somalia where arable land is not being used to grow food, but to grow caught? Because it's more profitable. People are, you know, breaking, they're breaking their, you know, not bank account, but they're spending 25% of their living wage, which is almost nothing on this substance. The answer, I would argue is that Yemen and Somalia are failed states in every sense of the word and people are living in such dire states of poverty. Some of the most intense human suffering on the planet occurs in those two countries, and has for decades. And they're, they're using what they have available to them to try to escape or overcome or cope with horrendous fucking circumstances that could be rectified with proper governance.

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James Geering 1:36:20

That reminds me of I think it was Sea Sparrow, see that documentary. And this has been verified by other sources too. But you think about special operations, think about the the SEAL Team Six and the Somalian pirates and the rescue of the naval captain. You know, these Somalis? Are these these horrendous people? How dare they, you know, take over the ship. Well, when you learn the origin story, again of how Somalia got desperate, I mean, not, as you said as a multifaceted thing. But one of the contributing factors was that international, massive trawlers were coming in and overfishing the coast of Somalia. So these fishermen that would go

out and prepare to provide for the families and I'm sure sell by catch. Now, they weren't able to catch anywhere close to what they were. So as with prohibition, as with so many of these things, it's so easy to say, you know, Mogadishu, those those those, you know, horrendous savages in this country. But what world were these people brought up in which again, goes back to my gratitude of this country, aside from the shitbags that we see on a fucking screens, whether it's some dipshit extreme, hyper triggered shithead, with pink hair screaming or holding a sign, or whether it's some fucking bright orange turd with a toupee, talking about building walls. The actual human beings in this country are amazing. And as you said, I've traveled the world. And they haven't been a lot of the, you know, the more that the lower income nations as much, but you see the same people and I asked the question, you know, what was the kind of some of the savagery that you saw that justifies some of the things that you did overseas? And some of the conversations now but the other side of that that question is, talk to me about the kindness and compassion. And it's always the same this afternoon of the Afghani families, the Iraqi people, and the kindness and compassion because again, in their countries, a few people have oppressed the masses, whether it's slavery, whether it's the Nazi regime, it wasn't a German farmer, it's like, you know what, I don't like the Jews. I'm gonna go, you know, go to the Cuban another. No, it was these fucking lunatics that managed to use propaganda and poverty and desperation to sway some of the people and the rest, were just probably oblivious the whole time. So, you know, again, with this addiction, you fix the suffering, you fix the addiction.



1:38:47

Yeah, going back to your point about the Somali pirates, and there's gonna be savages over there. But you look into what goes into them doing it the same situation, I'm sure it's going on many places in the world. But in Nigeria, in particular. On the on the Niger River, the oil companies have come in and sufficiently polluted the river that it's killed almost all the fish and the ones that remain are inedible. So all these fishing communities along the river, they turn to piracy, kidnapping, whatever they have to do much like Somalia, and to me, it all comes down to the question you don't even have to give me an answer. But what would you do to feed your family? Right? I know your answers same as mine, same as everybody's you do fucking anything. And if I had no means to make an income, no matter where I live, no matter how I was raised, and it came time to feed my family, I would absolutely turn to piracy or kidnapping or whatever else the fuck I had to do, as with any human being of sound mind. And yeah, a lot of these issues come down to there's not the functional infrastructure. The government's not serving the people. You know, in Nigeria, it's a national sport. The politicians openly drain billions every year from the National Bank to pad their pockets. And you see less extreme examples all over the world. So, yeah, it it comes down to the governance issue like, okay, let's say I'm trying to start my, my marauding band of pirate extremists or whatever, I can drive 15 minutes down the road to North Carolina State University tell me how much success I would have trying to sell them to come join my movement. Fucking not they go fuck yourself dude. Like I'm wearing boat shoes and chinos like, I got a date tonight, like life's going pretty good career Atomy. You go to Yemen, Somalia, Nigeria, any number of countries in the world with with zero infrastructures zero effective government, you have no problem finding those people. In fact, that's where all these extremist insurgent like movements spring up from all the things that defy explanation like ISIS, like they come from giant masses of disenfranchised youth with no opportunities, no way to feed their families there have families no future if they don't have families. And that creates the breeding ground, you know, the ineffective governance creates the breeding ground for everything that we're trying to rid the world of.

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James Geering 1:41:09

We'll link in that to your writing then because I want to make sure that we get to that and we talked for an hour and a half already. You've had this journey with your own mental health, for lack of a better word, your kind of healing journey that you've been on the last five years. We've also seen the COVID You know, the pandemic, you've had the withdrawal, you've had some other real powerful issues that have happened that there have been some incredible people involved, but also, again, some horrendous things with government and there's something I've underlined recently, great leadership is going to unify a nation when they're struggling, poor leadership is going to divide a nation and that spans both sides of the aisle. So know anyone who's staunch Republican or or Democrat, you both fucking suck, just so you know that because we haven't had someone in a red or a blue tie that's done anything good. That's unify this addressed a PC, this address a mental health issue, this talks about the multiple elements of the violence in our schools. So that was just a fucking segue for me to throw in about leadership. But anyway, but now so you had all these things I blank for a second there? How do these things that have happened the last few years? How has that shaped you as a writer and the stories in the the scenarios that your protagonist has found himself in, in later books?

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1:42:33

Yeah, so as much as possible, I try to shine the light on it. With my books, I tried to shine light on everything we just talked about, right? One bulk of the War on Drugs heavy one book will be you know, having something else depending on what part of the world. But what what I never do in my books is that savages abroad concept. In fact, that's one of my favorite things to play with thematically and writing is how the two sides of the warriors on the ground fighting each other, have more in common with each other than they do with the respective political parties that sent them to go kill one another. And also the notion of the the people pulling the strings that never see the battlefield that can make these decisions, you know, to send people off to war without ever setting foot to themselves without considering the human costs. Or if they've considered it like not caring because it achieves whatever aim they want. While the guys on the ground who have more in common with their enemy than the policymakers in many cases. They are witnessed to the human devastation despair, and that the people who suffer most of all are the innocent civilians who are trapped in these battlegrounds, in these combat zones that span the world over in varying degrees from major armed conflict to low grade insurgencies. That is something that is I found again and again in my research, and I try to portray the human cost as much as possible like in my genre, the smart thing to do commercially would be you know, right an American patriot figures wrapped in a he's wrapped in a flag and patriotic, loyal moral to a fault knows three martial arts, you know, is the ultimate badass and if it weren't for these corrupt politicians, and these evil savages abroad, you know, he would make the world perfect. It's kind of that Western movie mentality of you know, the hero rides down from the hills, fixes everything, fights the bad guy and then rides back off, which has not been how it is in my experience. So I like to show actual human beings in these situations witnessing the civilian carnage, witnessing the carnage they're inflicting in their enemy and vice versa, while respecting them as fellow warriors and worthy adversaries. I'm and then also I like to play around a lot with the moral gray area involved in that in terms of what are they reporting at the headquarters what are they not reporting in order to continue their mission their differences with the with the bosses were sitting back in the air conditioned headquarters sending them off to fight and die for geopolitical aims. And I also like to do I like

to touch on the the healing process. So my whole first series The American mercenary series is basically one six book long protracted metaphor of like my transition out of the military and trying to regain humanity trying to find whatever shred the soul you have remaining, and build a foundation and finding threads of hope. Through exposure to other people and children and kind of building your life back up and finding meaning again, in the current series, in the shadow strike series, job writing now, I like to, I like to work with those themes of like getting right and staying right and the people are affected by PTSD. And one guy admits, you know, he's on antidepressants, or somebody else trying therapy, and this hasn't worked, or that's work. Most recently to the credit of the guy who was arguing me about the war on drugs. Great, great guy, good friend of mine, but very, very much a rule follower. You know, who was talking to me about Yemen, why it shouldn't be legal in America, as everybody will be strung out in the streets. When I disagree with him, this is to his credit, he actually came to me after he was reviewing my last book, and he was like, Hey, man, you need to bring up microdosing. Like, you need to have these guys microdose because I've read everything you've written. And you always when something works for you, you put it in the book for the characters, right? Like you make that it works or doesn't work for them. But you, you kind of show that this way to deal with things and cope with things and like microdosing has been a huge pivotal thing for you. And you need to include it in your series for like, people who are hurting and read this. And this is to this guy's immense credit because he doesn't agree legally or morally, with microdosing. But he knows it's worked for me. And he's seen that change. And he's like, I know what you're trying to accomplish. And you need to do this. So I just in the book, I'm finishing now minor spoiler like I have this scene where the team leaders like talking is awkward conversation, or he discovers like the, you know, everybody else on his team has is micro dosing and has been, and the medic is supervising it. And it's gotten one guy off antidepressants, and another guy off drinking another guy sleeping well, for the first time that you know, six years. And he faces kind of this internal shame that like when they kept it from two that they kept it from because they knew that he would react negatively, because he has this old school mentality of drink your feelings and you go to war, you put it away, you don't bring it home. And he's seeing how much that has kind of eroded his humanity. So those things definitely progress. book to book, but that's been almost that's been the best part of writing for me is emphasizing those human factors. And when there are great tragedies like the Afghanistan withdrawal, or things I uncover my research about the war on drugs or suffering in a certain area. I like to inject that human narrative that it's unifying, it's not us versus them, even if these two sides are closing with each other to kill each other, even if one is a terrorist, like he believes in what he's doing. And here's his background of why he believes that. And here's why it's the only option available to him. And he's in fact very fucking good at what he does. I just love the unifying aspects in a genre that should be anything but

J

James Geering 1:48:37

Well, firstly, I think it's amazing to break that mold. Because it's kind of like when I talk about this a podcast, you know, if I video myself, and I had guns and Bibles in the back of the video shot, I'd probably get more likes and views on social media and all that stuff. But that's not what this is about. This is about having real conversations, and not that's done well by certain people. But my particular thing is, it's about the actual human beings and you got to take off all that shit. Those are just things, it's uniforms, its tools, its books, but yeah, this is the human conversation. I wanted to ask you as well, there's a lot of people in the creative space, specially with alcohol that was scared that if they became sober, or you know, at least stopped drinking nearly all the time, that it would stifle their creativity. Did you have that fear prior to any of this journey, and then talk to me about what was actually on the other side.



1:49:33

I definitely had that fear earlier in my civilian drinking career. So after I got out, I knew it worked and, you know, to make a living by writing fiction is a survival sport, to say the least trying to break in with zero industry connections. Like you know, nobody in Hollywood, you know, no other authors. And you're just hitting self publish on Amazon. That book you have no idea how people react, and you're not using a pen name using your actual pick. troopers, you're trying to burn bridges behind you. Which is what I did. It's extremely stressful. And I wouldn't have dreamed of like attempting sobriety because whatever keeps the creativity flowing in the books coming was the law for me. And I've been in a position more recently where, you know, I had 15 books out or whatever, and there's enough of a foundation, my readers and support and wherever my writing goes, I've got these amazingly supportive readers. Whoever's not weeded out in the first book of any of my series, leaving a one star review and wishing I was dead, which is a lot of people, they follow, and they read everything in the series, and they read all my other books. So I knew they would support me. And I saw that over the course of a few years, I was in a better position with more books out to test the waters on it in by then, I don't think I had that much of a fear of it, because my writing process is so streamlined. Because I did have the readers where if I, if it did take me a few months to get back on my stride, they would support me, like their family. They're incredible. But when I started doing psychedelics, I was like, Holy shit, there is so much more to creativity than loosening up your mind dropping some inhibitions and kind of getting out of your own head and letting the words flow. There's a place for that. Certainly, that's how I got started 100%. But since starting to do psychedelics, I Case in point, I recently read the dune, like the science fiction book dune they made, they're making a series of graphic novels like hardcovers They're unbelievable. It's two volumes out, and I read them both with my daughter, which is really cool, because I can't give her 1000 page book and like figure it out. But we could sit there and like read it together to talk about the story and the plot points. And she's really interested in that stuff. So we were reading together, and I hadn't read the book for years, but reading it recently, I was like, Okay, I'm gonna look up Frank Herbert, this author's name, because he's touching on these deep themes of human redemption. And these epic, epic level. mythologies, where I was like, this motherfucker was either on psilocybin or LSD, which one literally, and I pulled up his Wikipedia page and scroll down, and it turned out to be psilocybin. But like, I can recognize and work now, when I see something that is so like heartbreakingly beautiful, or touches on these deep, deep themes of humanity that are far more profound than what I could touch on with alcohol. And not in every case, in some cases, they're totally sober. And in some cases, it's they've done psychedelics, not that that's an easy ticket, but it does certainly make you aware of so much more in the depth and breadth of life that you don't see in your day to day existence. So I kind of saw that for me is like, wow, that's the way ahead. For me trying to take my writing to the next level, I know where I'm at, I'm coming up on, you know, I'll be at like, 20 books next year. And I, I think I've gotten as good as I'm gonna get doing things the way I've always done, which is one of my decisions that factored into quitting drinking. So since I've quit, what I have been doing is LSD microdose, twice a week, while I'm producing a rough draft. So I do Monday, Thursday, you have a day to effect the day after you get you still have some effects. But for me, it's been very cleans and like focus, and has elevated my I don't want to say my writing, it's elevated my consciousness so much more than alcohol ever did. It kind of puts me in the best place possible to write the best work of which I'm capable right now. And at that point, the way I see it now, like the only limiting factor is my experience. And I'm working on that by producing like, you know, producing books pretty rapidly writing across multiple series, doing first person only doing third person only doing first and third person only series,

trying to build my skills to the point where for my next series, it's something I'm incapable of writing now, but I know what I want, I'm just not good enough. And I think 20 books should be a minimum threshold, even begin plotting it, but like, I see where I want to go, and I'm willing to do whatever work is required to get there. And the work that's required in my mind is like, getting my shit together, doing the therapy like finally rooting out a lot of deep held issues that I've been suppressing for years and years, and trying to make myself a better human being in the interest of elevating my art in the future.

J James Geering 1:54:52

So I've been writing my second book now when we when we spoke I was telling you I was hoping to write a book one day wrote the book, you're In COVID, the first one working on a fiction now so I'm in in your realm, completely different genre, just as a standalone story that I'm right off the bat hoping to make it into a show or a film. Huge, huge ask. But for me, it's, it's a specific message in the story that I think a lot of people need to hear. And if you could illustrate it through the screen, now you've hit the most amount of people that, you know, I think the the number of people that pick up an actual book has obviously diminished over the last few decades with the devices and screens, etc. But if you want to fake really get an idea of how busy your mind is, try and write fiction. That's what I found. Because Holy shit, when I wrote my first one, I'm using anecdotes from my own life. And I fictionalized, some of them just to protect the innocent, etc, etc. But I could close my eyes, kind of relive that memory and then try and articulate it in a way that was, you know, as palatable on paper as possible. But creating these people from nothing, and still telling the story. And I heard Jack Carr talking about the post it on his on his screen with the theme as a theme of a strong theme, but, and I'm using a lot of real life events. Because, you know, for me, there's so many amazing stories out there in the world of facts and in real lived experiences. But I just did a hypnotherapy session with someone about five days ago, through one of the guests that that I just had on, and it was not so much oh, I've got trauma I want to address but it was like the opposite. Like I wanted to use it to get these walls down to allow me to be creative have lived a pretty amazing life yet. I'm feeling like, you know, I'm in a weight room. Nothing's coming to me. So, so yeah, so I think, actually, for anyone trying to be creative, is a very interesting barometer on how clear your mind is. And as you're talking about, then you're like, Okay, it's absolute fucking chaos, that gives you something very positive to go. Okay, I'm gonna start, I'm gonna start doing some housekeeping. And here, because I know where I want to be. And I've just seen now I'm, I'm far enough here. So it might be binge drinking. It might be, you know, suicide ideation. Or it might be the opposite. It might be. I don't feel terrible, but I'm certainly not creative. Like it wasn't, I was eight and I could run around with a stick and create an entire world. How do I get back to there?

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Yeah, you just, you just highlighted it. You said you're eight years old. Like you were creative, then like everybody's creative as children. Certainly. And I think the creativity is there within all of us. I don't think that there's anybody who's genuinely everybody will say they're not creative. But I don't think there's anybody that genuinely doesn't have that what happens is it gets obscured with the thoughts, minutia obligations, overthinking things, whatever personal issues we have going on in our lives. And the the point or the the exercise becomes to get that stuff out of the way and touch base with your creativity. So it's similar in my mind is similar to

meditation, right? Like, I meditate every day I have for years. I'm fucking terrible at it, right? Like there's days where my timer goes off like holy shit, I'm just in a thought loop the whole time. But enough times you know, we you catch yourself thought spinning off and you bring yourself back to your breathing. That's kind of what I think creativity is the impulse is there right like meditation we all got that inner peace there. It's just so clouded with all these other thoughts and issues and you know, the hamster wheel of our brains going all the time that we're conditioned to from modern society. But it's that's all clouds in the sky like the blue skies beyond so getting to it, I think becomes a matter of like, clearing your mind touching base to your inner creativity and like there's certainly things I do to get in the zone. You know, I do noise cancelling headphones, I do high tempo like dark techno music, which everybody's got their own preference, but that for me works to like, get me kind of energetically focused and it becomes whatever you can do to get yourself in that zone with varying degrees of success everyday but but continually coming back to it in the meantime leveraging the obstacles right like that expression like you know the obstacle is the way you're doing it now it sounds like using your past experiences and also you can use your current experience like the stresses you're you're undergoing the stresses your friends are undergoing all those issues you think you're keeping from creativity can become to put it bluntly, the character points they can become characters threads of new characters, subplots within existing characters. So very quickly for me, because I had no writing experience, no training and I was just like, I'm gonna do this right. Never let fear or common sense stop you. I'm just going for it. Get out of the military. Nice. I put my name my face on it, so I couldn't just dial out. But I quickly learned I had to cannibalize everything, like stories I had, from previous experiences, things I was witnessing, and people around me thoughts, fears, nightmares, all of that. Like when you're desperate to get books out, and you could be a month away from not having a job at any given time. And wanting desperately to stay in this profession, I quickly started using finding inspiration everywhere. Because you know, in the end, like, it becomes that art imitating life concept where all that stuff is out there and it becomes How are you drawing on it? How are you feeding off it? How are you parlaying it back into the work? And I've certainly got stuff in my work, you know, I had to write a domestic scene with my hero and whatever I've seen were minor seems like a small setup for later in the book. But like, he's like doing the dishes in the morning, his daughter wants, you know, cookie or whatever he like, gives it to her wife comes down, like catches on and like, quietly comes up to me. He's like, are you okay? He's like, Yeah, yeah, just doing the dishes like, whatever. It's like, you drink a lot last night. And it becomes this really awkward and he's describing like how complex women are. And, you know, if she, if I went over one night before, this is when she lets me know, like, first thing in the morning. It's always like this moment of like, okay, how is this going to turn out? And then you know, questioning, like, How committed is she? And how much am I fucking up and all these insecurities that husband or father would have? Like, that scene came from, like my wife saying that to me, you know, when I wrote it, I think the same day. So events like that. You can just continually I would cannibalize everything thoughts, fears, insecurity, stories, people, you meet personality traits. And the more you do that, the more it starts to come to you organically, where you can work with a blank slate. And think of how you would twist that how you would come with a new character that's counter pointing those things that came from your actual life. And then a little bit of research and you're off to the races, but the creativity is always there.

J

James Geering 2:02:05

Beautiful. It's gotta get out of his way. Yeah, that's what I'm trying to do. Well, you have three series, the shadow strike spider heist, and American mercenary series. But then you have heard dark silence a standalone book. So talk to me about, you know, why that particular book

and if there's any kind of story behind that particular route that you took with that one?



2:02:28

Yeah, there is a story behind that. It's funny because that's it's an unsellable book in a premise concept. And the fact that the standalone it's unsellable. So like shadow strike book one has got like 11,000 reviews, spiders like 6000 reviews, you can see like a lot of people have gone through these. Her dark silence. It's funny that it always comes up because nobody reads it. But the book came to me after it was when I did that five day ketamine trip, right, I went down to Charleston, got a hotel, and I went to this clinic for a couple hours a day and one hour was spent just soaring through the cosmos on ketamine. And it was like this semi experimental treatment at the time, there wasn't a lot written about it. Not a lot of data. Nobody knew exactly how it worked. I was desperate. So I try anything. And there's doctor and he's like that maybe it'll do this. Maybe it'll do that. And then there's a nurse who like sticks the needle like alright, here we go. We're stepping out of the room. And you just go through this voyage, right. So I did that for five days. And it's while I was down, and then I was like, this would make a fucking outstanding thriller, right? You've got the themes of post traumatic stress, drama, Incorporated, good mystery, I had some personal revelations that I was like, Man, if I like this would be such a great story. So I kind of used it, I was like, I just needed to get it out to me. And I, I, you know, I knew it wouldn't sell but I'm like, I have to do this like a passion project. So the premise of the book is a female combat veteran. Because I it was so close to home for me that if I wrote it as a guy, it would be way too emotionally raw, too emotionally centered, it would be too triggering to me, for lack of a better word. So I was like to get some distance to work with the thing creatively I made it a woman and it fixed all my fucking issues. So I made it a female combat vet who left the military to become an author was having some success, not huge commercial success, but had made a lot made a living out of it. It was dealing with, you know, they're all their author friends who are making money hand over fist. They were all like, lawyers or accountants, and you know, they have social media expertise from their previous professions. And kind of the same situation I was in where I was like, Wow, I'm like, I'm like the black sheep. You're like, I don't belong in this and I'm still trying to get like four hours of sleep at night with alcohol is like a big deal and and figuring out how to write, figuring out how to manage kids to it's emblematic where I was at the time. And she, instead of ketamine, it's the experimental drug called Central failing, which, like ketamine is a surgical anesthetic, but like they don't know the data. They don't know how it works. But there are people having success. And she goes in and has some revelations. And some of the revelations make her think about that her former military platoon she was in that has had a string of suicides. And she starts realizing like, some of these might not have been suicides, and starts following this thread. And following her revelations, and the kind of it's largely a psychological thriller. With a heavy heavy like mystery subplot that kind of leads her to following this thread confronting her own past and in doing so under what we'll call extraordinary, psychic duress. And the other thing I'll throw out about that book is I used a lot of horror techniques, and I was kind of fast at horror genre, and I don't have it in me to like write a pure horror book. But I will say it's a very dark psychological thriller, that nobody is read out of my readership and not even all. I don't know how much of my readership has read it. I don't think it's a lot. However, I received the most profound correspondence on that book. And I get pretty profound correspondence on my other two series as well, from veterans ranging from Vietnam to modern day from police, victims of trauma or like, you know, childhood trauma first responders or like you've captured like post traumatic stress, like the essence, we're truly alone, I get these profound emails where it's just like a piece of fan mail. And the last line is like, your books have saved me more than you'll ever know. I'm like, God, it like that's what I'm writing for, like the people who struggled. But I get,

I've had people that have read everything I've ever written that have said, that is my best book. And then I've had people who've read everything I've ever written that say, That's my worst book. So I don't know to what extent it comes down to personally relating or expectation management. But for a book that hasn't sold anything, I get a lot of very polarizing responses. And the profound ones are like, deeply profound, like people with serious post traumatic stress our like, you nailed it, like this book did so much. For me, it was so cathartic to read this. So for what that's worth, not a top salary, though,

 James Geering 2:07:36

I'll tell you Yeah, but I think that's that's an important point that you said that book was in you, and you had to write it. It wasn't about the money. It was about putting it out there. And there's a phrase that I use a lot on this, you know, if if an episode helps one person, then for example, this two plus hour conversation was worth it. You know, will it have Joe Rogan numbers? No, he won't, you know, not, not today, at least, maybe one day, but um, it's not about that. It's about you know, putting the out there in the atmosphere. Because I do believe in in the crazy interactions of the universe. And if you've written that, then the right people are going to see it.

 2:08:15

Yeah, I agree with you on that. I agree. helping one person like makes it worthwhile 100%. And then just strictly from the creative standpoint. Even if that book never sold, like everything I've written since then, was dependent on me writing that book. And I think that goes for like artists and creative types in general, right, when you have something that needs to get out, even if it doesn't do well, like, that becomes the foundation for everything you write after that there's certain things you just have to get out of your system. And you have to do. And for me, I think part of that book was like, at an intuitive level, I sense like, I needed to get out of what I was currently writing in deep dive into this topic of post traumatic stress, psychedelic therapy, and, and produce that piece of art. And once I had it done, it was off my chest and I finished my series in progress that I'm still working on with more determination, more focus, more clarity, and certainly more experience.

 James Geering 2:09:18

So one last question before we got some closing questions. When we spoke last you were self publishing, I noticed that you got in the indie genre. So what has been the journey that you've been on as far as publishing because with my book I did Amazon as well. The self publishing initially saw the exact thing that you told me about easy to publish very hard to promote. But then I hear I forget the term now but there's another one maybe you told me about it, where you basically buy a bunch of books yourself it they kind of help publish and print it, you buy a bunch and then you ship into everyone. And then obviously you have the traditional publishing. So what has been your your journey through all those different options?

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The reason I chose To go independent publishing, I didn't even seek out a publisher for my first book. Because I was kind of had that the immature artist mentality of like, I don't want anybody

book. Because I was kind of had that the immature artist mentality of like, I don't want anybody touching my work. This is my vision, it's mine. Like, I don't want anybody changing this to make it, you know, commercially malleable. And now with the experience I have now I can go back and state 100%, nobody would have touched that book, nobody would have published that book. It's if you wanted to publish a case, like the perfect case study and everything you could possibly do to alienate readers, to not establish a likeable protagonist to take your readers in the most uncomfortable, dark moral quandaries and produce a book that violates every genre, trope and structure that I didn't know existed. I don't read fiction. Like that would be the case study, like it's did everything wrong. And yet, I started a readership with it. And I built a series off it and it gave me the foundation to like, stay in the business. So the right people found that book. But I also published it at a time when organic visibility on Amazon was not a punch line. Shortly thereafter, actually, while I was publishing it, they introduced like their advertising platforms. And then very quickly, like, you can't look up a book you want on Amazon without scrolling past eight different ads. So isn't as an independent author, I had to play the advertising game, which I only had marginal success with because much smarter authors than me, treated me like a man cub being raised by like a pack of wolves. Like they were like, Alright, man, like, look, here's what you got to do. And they all had experience in marketing, Excel spreadsheets, search engine optimization, like the successful independent authors, most of them have my acquaintance had a previous career that lends itself very well to it. I didn't learn any of that in the army. But I had like the meat, I had the story. So I limped along like that. And then the ads just got more complicated, I had to spend more and more time going through Excel spreadsheets and adjusting bids. And fortunately, in that time, the main author who took me under his wing, his name is Andrew watts, he was a successful thriller author. He's all over the bestsellers list at the time. And he's a former Navy pilot. So I reached out to him like cold calls, like, Hey, man, like, got two books out, my shits not selling. My wife's saying, I have to get a job. Like, what do I do? And he's like, Yeah, your reviews are great, like, what? What kind of advertising you're doing because you're doing it wrong, you should have way better sales. And I was like, Dude, I don't do anything. I just write books. Like, that's it. That's all he's like, holy shit, like, stop what you're doing. Like, get in, like, watch these videos, start these kinds of ads, start adjusting this, like ask me for feedback on your bids, and you need to adjust it. So I did. And he's like, You need to change your cover, you need to do this, and you do cross pressure other authors. And at that point, I was desperate, much like with ketamine, so I was like, I will do whatever you tell me to. And I did everything he said, and then started selling and then started, you know, making decent income, then note that nothing in the story changed. So it comes like the commercial success or lack thereof, is not an indicator of the work. And my experience is, there's so much marketing that goes into it to make money. However, I did everything you said, sales took off, then I could, you know, write my next book and get the series off the ground. So that guy, Andrew watts. In the next couple of years, he started a publishing company called Cyber river publishing. And he started it initially, it was just veterans and veteran spouses. Who were his initial employees, he started this company, like bounce ideas off me and stuff. And he said, I was kind of like his testbed if he was like, change your cover to this, change your book description of this or doing these type of ads, and I like I took off. And he was like, Yeah, that was kind of like the testbed that gave me the confidence, like, oh, shit, I can do this. Like, I can do this for other authors. So he started the company. And then for me, the ads were just getting so out of hand, and I didn't want to spend time with I just wanted to spend all my time creating. And one day I came to him by then he had, at the time, I think like half a dozen authors. It's still a very small company at the time. And I was like, Hey, man, like I want to get out of the indie game. How about I give you all my books and everything I ever write. And you guys take care, all that and I just write. So we did. And I've been writing like they've been publishing my books ever since. For me, the advantage of a publisher is one I can't do the marketing stuff on my own. It was just getting so complex. You see my social

media, I didn't start doing social media until 2023. When my publisher has a team for that now, you know, that's like get get me this content. We're going to publish on this schedule like get us this will format it we'll do the graphics. So the advantage of Publisher though is I can just write and give them the manuscript you know, I do all the work back and forth the editors get some drafts the cover design, but they handle all of it all the advertising and just send me a check. And that's exactly what I need. So my productivity my out Put his taken off, the complexity of the plots I can write has taken off. Because I have so much more mental energy available. It's not go to clock's ticking to where I have to shut this down and then go mess with ads. In sadly, for anybody looking to get started the last I heard when I was in, and I think it's only gotten worse since then is it's getting so hard to make a living as an indie author, if you don't have an already like established audience and a mastery over the complex, you know, principles required to run Amazon ads, which are an ever changing landscape of algorithms. And they make it harder and harder and they take more and more money back from you, in the form of their pound of flesh for advertising fees you make less than less. It's it's really tough now. So for me publisher has been a game changer. And I'm looking to keep it that way. But I was also in the fortunate position where I had a readership. They don't dictate anything I write at all. They're basically like, cool, keep writing books, you want to start a new series cool. Like, here's how we can position it to market it effectively. But they know the readers are there because it established that when I was an indie for new authors trying to get in, I think it would, I think there is value if you can't find a publisher, initially, I think there's value to self publishing, getting traction, getting initial reviews, working on your next book, writing a killer book one, and then writing in a series. That's what publishers are able to pick up now. Because you can point advertising at book one, and make money you can lose money advertising to book one, and then make money on the read through as people go through your series. That's what a publisher can work with. I always advise new authors, like right in a series like that's the only way to do it right now. And if you look at the big standalone authors like Dean Koontz and all this, that right, Stephen King, that right stand alones they were successful with that way before the landscape shifted to what it is now.

J James Geering 2:16:56

Beautiful. Well, thank you. I mean, I was obviously taking notes myself, because I do zero marketing in my book. In fact, I'm overly humble where I'm like, oh, people don't want to hear about my book. I wouldn't put it on my social media we'll talk about on the podcast. So yeah, probably the world's fucking worst marketing strategy ever. But anyway, I might

 2:17:13

have you be right there with you, brother, believe me.

J James Geering 2:17:17

All right, well, then the first of the closing questions, we've talked about your books, or their books written by someone else that you love to recommend. It can be related to our discussion today or completely unrelated.



2:17:29

Man, so I don't like reading fiction. It's a grueling experience for me. I'm just too I see it, how I would want to do it and I overanalyze everything. It's not enjoyable at all. I do like reading nonfiction. And one of the most beautifully written books that I read when I was a teenager, and actually like, I read on my first deployment to Afghanistan moved to there was like this guy with a master's degree. He was like a published astrophysicist to join the army. And he was like, You got to check this book out. And I haven't had it recommended or even heard about it from anybody else since but the book is called my war gone by I missed it. So by Anthony Loyd, and it's nonfiction and in real life, he tried to chase his family lineage of like, you know, war heroes, and during the British military, didn't see combat finally went to Gulf War, it was anti climatic. And then he found himself kind of dejected and stranded, which I think a lot of, you know, transitioning vets can certainly empathize with. So he just became a war correspondent and flew over to the Balkans and documented the war and the atrocities and would come back to England and alternated between a smack addiction, like he was addicted to heroin in England, and getting an assignment and flying back over and going completely clean and kind of feeding off the war. And then he would come off a sonic attack and heroin said that it is some of the most beautifully written prose probably the most beautifully written prose I've ever read in his prose as it relates to both heroin use and the horrors of warfare are equally gobsmackingly. Beautiful, compelling, rich, vivid. It's an absolutely unbelievable book, a dark read, like if you get triggered you don't want to read about war, certainly stay away from that one. Other than that, I would recommend that is like, that's my favorite nonfiction book. Hands down. No questions asked.



James Geering 2:19:40

Well, it's amazing because that ties in so well with some of the things we talked about in the you have that void, and it might be an Opia it might be the thrill of war, but you're still filling that void.



2:19:54

Yeah, funny I think circle back like that. But yeah, very timely to our conversation. That book recommendation



James Geering 2:20:00

beautiful thank you for that. I haven't heard that before I'm going to put it on my list to read myself. So what about a movie and or a documentary



2:20:12

and heat heat 9095 Michael Mann I probably said this last time I wanted your podcast. I have seen that movie probably triple digits by now it doesn't age. It doesn't get old. Some of the best storytelling that has come before since masterfully done unbelievable casting and acting realistic firearms usage which is almost impossible to find in Hollywood and if you if you watch any of the director's commentary or any the behind the scenes stuff at Michael Mann, like he

had those poor bastards out on the range for weeks, like eight hours a day with Special Forces instructors to give them one that realism in handling but also just the attitude like there's a there's that early scene in the diner where, you know, Robert De Niro smashes wingers head into the table, you know, in like a crowded diner and like some big redneck looks over and like Tom Sizemore just tilt his head over and like, has that like dead fisheye stare of like, I'll kill you. And the guy goes back to his best Tom Sizemore leaves. And he's like, Michael Mann points that out is like that moment like that. Look, is the attitude I want these guys to have because they know what they can do. And it's something that you can't just tell an actor to do. You can't have them practice. They have to have the skills to be able to do that. And I don't think many, many movies go to that level or have the time or capacity to go to that level. But Michael Mann did and he created a masterpiece, and I thank him for it.

 James Geering 2:21:47

Beautiful. Yeah, that mirrors, platoon boulder brothers, they'll die when he was putting some of those guys receiving Private Ryan. They kept Matt Damon away from the rest of the crew during most of the bootcamp they did prior to filming. So they actually created that, you know, you're outside the tribe mentality for that scene.

 2:22:04

So Oh, that's awesome.

 James Geering 2:22:06

Beautiful. What about documentaries, any of those springs to mind?

 2:22:10

Yes. Also timely to our conversation. On the topic of psychedelics, destigmatize just actual facts and data from past scientific studies, current scientific studies, real life vignettes. on Netflix, there is a mini series called how to change your mind by Michael Pollan, who read a book by the same title. I hadn't read the book for being honest. But that mini series gives a no bullshit deep dive look. It's very watchable. And that kind of that was one of the factors that pushed me into getting into that area myself. For the better as it turns out,

 James Geering 2:22:54

brilliant. Yeah. Watch that myself, as each week is like a different drug. Isn't it set aside and ketamine, etc? Yep. Beautiful. All right. Well, then the 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?

 2:22:12

Yeah, I can actually throw my my buddy under the bus here. So my college roommate at West Point, name's Mike Rogers. I call him Mikey, he was in the Ranger Regiment is a Fire Support Officer. So he was basically the guy calling in the airstrikes, mortars and everything. And making sure everything landed with pinpoint precision, very complicated job like telling the aircraft where to land talking. All those pieces on the radio is like combat situations are unfolding. But the key to how he did it the kid out of the military does it is called the Georgi, a grid reference graphic. And it's got all the buildings numbered, and there's these quadrants. So it's a universal map for anybody on the objective. So when you go into like complex urban terrain, you can say like a we're pushing the strong point from building 65 to 68. So you can adjust plans on the fly, a simple tool, but very, very effective. And when he got out, he noticed like, nobody was doing it for first responders. So he created a company called CRG. Started doing zc GRG is gridded reference graphics in the private sector for first responders. His business, he hired like his former platoon sergeant, a special or a Silver Star recipient, from Ranger Regiment, who's also got an incredible story and hire and now he hires almost not exclusively he hires a lot of college kids and everything on the map production side, but his sales team are almost exclusively former Special Operations guys that are transitioning. And he's like, some of these guys come without a purpose. And they're like lost and I he cut him loose. He's like, Okay, where do you want to live like this day, okay, your job is to build a network there. Start getting contracts and getting connections. And it's resulted in now, like, entire states are passing legislation that every school in the state has to have these coded reference graphics. So the way it works is they send their team and they map buildings, all those out of date blueprints or blueprints might not even exist. They create current grid reference graphics, interior and exterior for corporate facility schools. And what it allows them to do is like these first responders, if you have EMTs, firefighters and police, three different organizations responding to a mass shooting, or any kind of natural emergency, they all have like an app on their smartphone where they're looking at the exact same picture since in and they can get real time reporting from people talking to 911. And when they're saying like, Oh, yeah, the shooters like, go past the go pass the old library down the hall, take a write down the blue Hall, and it's in there describing these things like, they can convert that to, like, room to be like, that's where the shooter is, and start managing a coordinated response. So he's had tremendous, tremendous success building his company CRG. And he's kind of at the forefront of that, that space for putting that technology which special operators have been using overseas for two decades of warfare and bringing it to America, which nobody was doing before him somehow. And he's he's had incredible success and like real world incidents, you where first responders are using his his company's technology for unified coordinated response during actual emergencies.

J James Geering 2:26:45

Well, that sounds amazing. And you look at a lot of these, these horrendous things that are happening in our schools, especially, you know, that's one of the problems. I even got an insight, a robot in the book, like I dropped my son off after a medical appointment one day, and we had a code read the first one that school had ever had, and I got locked in the school with my child, and saw how vulnerable they were the complete lack of communication at that moment between the teachers. And you know, the principal, I'm assuming was, was interacting with the outside. But yeah, I mean, I can think of my whole career, there was nothing that would do any sort of kind of 3d mapping of anything we were doing. We were just kind of relying on Google Maps. And, you know, the the MDT, so that sounds phenomenal. If you're

able to make that connection, I'd love to get them on. of you, too. All right. Well, then the last question before we make sure everyone knows where to find you and where to find the books. What do you do to decompress these days?



2:27:41

What a great question. So I know last time we talked, I remember you asking me like, What do you do to decompress and relax? And I was like alcohol, like, that's it? To be honest with you, I still don't have a good answer, because I've been off alcohol for five months now. And I'm still kind of sifting through that landscape of how to how to decompress without it. And I haven't found a good answer. What helps me though, is, every morning, I get up, either with my alarm, or more recently earlier than my alarm. But I have like a little morning routine. And I know that that keeps me in check. Because if there's days I'm traveling or something, where I'm not able to do it, I just feel so much more mentally busy. I feel like I'm falling apart like I'm not in control the day. So I basically get up early. And the first thing I do is meditate for just 10 minutes, sit center, my breathing. I got started on that with a headspace app. And once I learned the methodology enough, they're like how he gets you into the meditation, the steps you go through before you focus on your breathing, and then how you come out of it once I got used to that. So that was second nature, I just do it now. It's just a timer. So I meditate 10 minutes. Then I sit in my old shitty recliner and I read something for about 15 minutes. Usually, it's like a self improvement type book, just I'm always making progress on something in that space, something spiritual self improvement. Somebody tried to help me get my shit together. And then I journal and that takes maybe five minutes. I've just got like five by eight or six by eight like a little notebook. And I just write one page. It doesn't sometimes it's nonsensical, random thoughts. I picked that up my book called The artists way where she's like, she recommends doing three pages and I did it for a while. But she says like all those thoughts swimming around your head are like in the way of your creativity. So you basically write and get them out and clear your mind for the rest of your day. So now I just do one page because it forces me to be more concise and get important issues out takes less time. But just that that aspect of journaling, and I mentioned it as well because that always comes up if you get into like microdosing circle everybody's like You do your meditation journaling, like exercise sleep like those in conjunction, you have that dialed in like microdose can be really powerful amplifier. So I just journaled for one page just really helped me get my thoughts out, it can be about something happen the day before or what I have coming up that day, whatever's bothering me, really helps clear my mind. And then I just do like a little five minute like bodyweight workout like pull ups, flutter kicks, push up push ups, like ankles, the bar and little pull up our My office is five minutes gets blood flowing, get endorphins going, and then I sit down and write. So that little morning routine, meditation, reading, journaling, and just a quick few minutes, bodyweight workout really puts me in the right frame of mind for the rest of the day. And the more the more I've had experience on traveling without the more I realized, like, I think that's holding me together. And I think that's like the decompression process that's working for me now, that alcohol is has been left behind.



James Geering 2:30:56

I do almost an exact replica of what you do. The meditation in the morning headspace, I still use headspace I kind of still like Andy guiding me through because I'm not very diligent with it. So it gets me there. Because it tells you, you know, yeah, you miss three days, you know, get

back to it. But so I'll do that I'll fill the kettle or meditate, and I'll make the coffee or sit out there, I just bought another copy because I use the entire one last time of the five minute journal. So I'm not journaling so much. But I think that's a good idea, I probably should write a page as well and get the stresses off. But between that and there's a productivity journal. So I do the gratitude journal. And then the productivity is basically listing out what do you want to get done, which I think does kind of get a lot of that, that bingo ball, you know, bouncing around your head. And then I don't do the bodyweight thing I do the the foundation training, which is the kind of back health system. But I had a guy Dr. Chatterjee, who's a very successful English doctor and podcaster and author. And he does what you're saying when he's boiling the water for his coffee, he does just a simple five minute calisthenics workout in his kitchen, then pours his coffee and then gets about his day. So it's interesting, I think that's the one thing you can control when when you're stressed later is hard to whine back down again. But when you've just woken up, it's very hard to resist putting on headphones and just meditating because I like it because you close your eyes, it's like you're going back to bed. But then you know that in turn definitely has a ripple effect on my desire to drink at the end of the day.



2:32:35

Yeah, and I have to tell you one more thing, because you were the one to recommend foundation training to me. And I haven't had anybody else recommend it to me since I wouldn't have even known about it but I've recommended to probably 100 people since then. So that fix like all my chronic pain African out of the military. And then if I don't do it long enough, like chronic pains come back, I can just do a foundation workout and it all goes away but read this year I kind of got back into running. And I had I got an IT band injury went to these like super specialized running physical therapists, oh, they're the best for running and they fix the acute issue really quickly isn't dry needling. But then as I continued physical therapy with them I developed like chronic bilateral knee pain, which you know, they're used to dealing with like 5k Road Runners or marathon runners or whatever and like not broke military guys. It's like partial MCL tear or whatever from military time that you never got operated on because it wasn't that wasn't that crippling. But I just bilateral chronic knee pain or like hurt to go obsessor to get and then eventually I couldn't run and they didn't know I didn't know why like Okay, cut the exercise in half to every hour of the day. And it's still persisted. So I was like okay, what would James Geering do physical therapy and I just did foundation training knee pain protocol every day for like a week and was perfect. Back to running picked up right where I left off zero issues whatsoever. And it didn't require me to drive down to an office and go through all their drills. So yeah, foundation training to very enthusiastic thumbs up



James Geering 2:34:12

beautiful. That's so good to hear that we're going to make a bracelet now WWE JD what would James do? Because I'm sure the Christian community would be drawn to that for some reason.



2:34:21

They would love it. They love bracelet they



J James Geering 2:34:24

love the love James is in the Bible. But they'll be joking apart. It goes back to again that origin that pee under the mattress and not the urine, the vegetable. If you are dry needling and all these things, of course that makes a difference but you're dealing with an imbalance you're dealing with torque on a joint that's been created like we sat for two and a half hours talking to each other. We're both gonna get up and feel pretty tight and sore after this. And so that's what I love about foundation is it understands like, this is this is going to undo that imbalance is going to put back Instant strength and length back into your body. So if you look at the CTE of Eric Goodman, the founders back, it's still fucked. These discs are still looking terrible. But he's created that balance around the spinal column where it's not compressing, it's not pushing. So that's why I'm a staunch advocate, you know, and I tell people, subways airports, if I hear someone say back pain, I'm Excuse me. But it does, it just works so well. And you're addressing the actual underlying problem, not the symptom.

 2:35:31

Yep, yeah. I've had a ton of people that have reported back and been like, that was an absolute game changer for me. Like I know, but I'm so glad you told me about that, because nobody else ever has.

J James Geering 2:35:42

Beautiful. All right. Well, then the very last question, if people want to learn more about you online or social media and or find the books, where are the best places?

 2:35:53

You just go to my website is Jason dash casper.com. You can just search Jason Casper on Amazon. All my social media handles are at Casper author, that's Casper with the K. And if you're going to read, please throw a dart pick a series but start with book one. Nothing I readers are conditioned to have these read in any order formulaic installments, it's not what I do. Like you wouldn't jump into breaking bad at season three and try to figure it out. So nothing hurts my heart more than other than the war on drugs. Then like hearing for readers like we I picked up, you know, books, book five, but I didn't really understand like what happened? Yeah, I know. That's how it works. Everything builds on each other my series flow like long form television series. Start with start with Book One, for the love of God. And if you need a series to start with, go with shadow strike enemies in my country, your military thriller reader, and the series gets better as it goes as a new release about every six months. And it's been super rewarding to work on that one.

J James Geering 2:37:05

Beautiful. Well, Jason, I want to say thank you again. It's crazy because these conversations, these relationships that we build through this podcast we've never actually met face to face, but we've remained friends since the very first time. But the journey that you've been through and the the transparency and vulnerability that you brought to this conversation. And I've

underlined this many, many times, we get people from your community that are saying the things and telling the stories that you've told today that debunks the men should be bodybuilders with no emotion bullshit that we were raised on. So I want to thank you so so much for coming on yet again and telling your story.



2:37:44

And in thanks for having this outlet to actually promote unity and healing modalities and erasing outdated stigmas that no longer serve us. Your social media is one of the few bastions in my day are like it's actually some fucking positivity and highlighting our shared humanity, which is refreshing and I'll also say for you as a human being the more I've either had to interact with different influencers or talk to people who've interact with other influencers like everybody's social media is all Oh, they're great positive brand and he's great people everybody shows how fucking wonderful they are. I like that you showcase vulnerability few people do but sometimes I meet these influencers or talk to people who met him there like he's just a great guy and met some phenomenal human beings are generally genuinely trying to help other people and make the world a better place and setting the example by trying to try to work on themselves and then they meet some of them are just like that guy's a dick like he's just in it for money and this is all completely false pretenses. So I I'm super grateful for what you're doing. And thank you for letting me come on your your podcast yet again, to to rant along with you. Because I think you're doing you're doing phenomenal work, man. I love everything you're doing. And I wish there were 100 James Geering is out there promoting the same message I really do. My wife



James Geering 2:39:20

would disagree with on yourself.



2:39:24

Our wives at all. That's not the point.