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I'm extremely excited to announce a brand new sponsor for the Behind the Shield podcast

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00:00:04,220 --> 00:00:06,540

that is Transcend.

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Now for many of you listening, you are probably working the same brutal shifts that I did

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00:00:10,560 --> 00:00:12,520

for 14 years.

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00:00:12,520 --> 00:00:18,840

Suffering from sleep deprivation, body composition challenges, mental health challenges, libido,

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00:00:18,840 --> 00:00:20,540

hair loss, etc.

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00:00:20,540 --> 00:00:23,800

Now when it comes to the world of hormone replacement and peptide therapy, what I have

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seen is a shift from doctors telling us that we were within normal limits, which was definitely

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incorrect all the way to the other way now where men's clinics are popping up left, right

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00:00:33,160 --> 00:00:34,560

and center.

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00:00:34,560 --> 00:00:40,120

So I myself wanted to find a reputable company that would do an analysis of my physiology

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00:00:40,120 --> 00:00:45,320

and then offer supplementations without ramming, for example, hormone replacement therapy down

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00:00:45,320 --> 00:00:46,460

my throat.

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00:00:46,460 --> 00:00:50,780

Now I came across Transcend because they have an altruistic arm and they were a big reason

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00:00:50,780 --> 00:00:56,800

why the 7X project I was a part of was able to proceed because of their generous donations.

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00:00:56,800 --> 00:01:00,820

They also have the Transcend foundations where they are actually putting military and first

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responders through some of their therapies at no cost to the individual.

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So my own personal journey so far filled in the online form, went to Quest, got blood

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drawn and a few days later I'm talking to one of their wellness professionals as they

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00:01:14,720 --> 00:01:19,140

guide me through my results and the supplementation that they suggest.

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00:01:19,140 --> 00:01:23,640

In my case specifically, because I transitioned out the fire service five years ago and been

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00:01:23,640 --> 00:01:28,800

very diligent with my health, my testosterone was actually in a good place.

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00:01:28,800 --> 00:01:33,320

So I went down the peptide route and some other supplements to try and maximize my physiology

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00:01:33,320 --> 00:01:37,760

knowing full well the damage that 14 years of shift work has done.

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00:01:37,760 --> 00:01:41,680

Now I also want to underline because I think this is very important that each of the therapies

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00:01:41,680 --> 00:01:45,080

they offer, they will talk about the pros and cons.

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00:01:45,080 --> 00:01:49,520

So for example, a lot of first responders in shift work, our testosterone will be low,

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00:01:49,520 --> 00:01:54,360

but sometimes nutrition, exercise and sleep can offset that on its own.

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00:01:54,360 --> 00:01:58,680

So this company is not going to try and push you down a path, especially if it's one that

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00:01:58,680 --> 00:02:00,360

you can't come back from.

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00:02:00,360 --> 00:02:07,760

So whether it's libido, brain fog, inflammation, gut health, performance, sleep, this is definitely

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00:02:07,760 --> 00:02:10,880

one of the most powerful tools in the toolbox.

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00:02:10,880 --> 00:02:17,800

So to learn more, go to [transcendcompany.com](http://transcendcompany.com) or listen to episode 808 of the Behind the

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00:02:17,800 --> 00:02:22,280

Shield podcast with founder Ernie Colling.

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00:02:22,280 --> 00:02:28,080

This episode is sponsored by a company I've used for well over a decade and that is 511.

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00:02:28,080 --> 00:02:33,520

I wore their uniforms back in Anaheim, California and I've used their products ever since.

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00:02:33,520 --> 00:02:40,120

From their incredibly strong yet light footwear to their cut uniforms for both male and female

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00:02:40,120 --> 00:02:44,680

responders, I found them hands down the best workwear in all the departments that I've

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00:02:44,680 --> 00:02:46,160

worked for.

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00:02:46,160 --> 00:02:50,440

Outside of the fire service, I use their luggage for everything and I travel a lot and they

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are also now sponsoring the 7X team as we embark around the world on the Human Performance

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00:02:56,680 --> 00:02:57,680

project.

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00:02:57,680 --> 00:03:01,840

We have Murph coming up in May and again I bought their plate carrier.

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00:03:01,840 --> 00:03:06,800

I ended up buying real ballistic plates rather than the fake weight plates and that has been

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00:03:06,800 --> 00:03:10,640

my ride or die through Murph the last few years as well.

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00:03:10,640 --> 00:03:14,600

One area I want to talk about that I haven't in previous sponsorship spots is their brick

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00:03:14,600 --> 00:03:16,440

and mortar element.

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00:03:16,440 --> 00:03:21,160

They were predominantly an online company up till more recently but now they are approaching

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00:03:21,160 --> 00:03:23,880

100 stores all over the US.

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00:03:23,880 --> 00:03:28,940

My local store is here in Gainesville Florida and I've been multiple times and the discounts

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00:03:28,940 --> 00:03:32,200

you see online are applied also in the stores.

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00:03:32,200 --> 00:03:39,080

So as I mentioned 511 is offering you 15% off every purchase that you make but I do want

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00:03:39,080 --> 00:03:44,720

to say more often than not they have an even deeper discount especially around holiday

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00:03:44,720 --> 00:03:45,720

times.

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00:03:45,720 --> 00:03:55,480

But if you use the code SHIELD15 you will get 15% off your order or in the stores every

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00:03:55,480 --> 00:03:57,360

time you make a purchase.

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00:03:57,360 --> 00:04:02,640

If you want to hear more about 511, who they stand for and who works with them, listen

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00:04:02,640 --> 00:04:11,120

to episode 580 of Behind the Shield podcast with 511 regional director Will Ayres.

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00:04:11,120 --> 00:04:14,320

Welcome to the Behind the Shield podcast as always my name is James Gearing and this week

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00:04:14,320 --> 00:04:21,160

it is my absolute honor to welcome back onto the show firefighter, podcaster and now author

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00:04:21,160 --> 00:04:23,040

Jim Bernica.

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00:04:23,040 --> 00:04:29,200

Now in our first conversation which was episode 488 Jim led us through his battle with cancer

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00:04:29,200 --> 00:04:31,740

ultimately returning to work.

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00:04:31,740 --> 00:04:36,400

In the second conversation he discusses the mental health challenges he had after his

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00:04:36,400 --> 00:04:42,920

diagnosis, his time in the center of excellence, the save a warrior program, the Brothers Helping

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00:04:42,920 --> 00:04:49,400

Brothers conference in exotic Beaver Creek, his new book overcoming Tuesday and so much

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00:04:49,400 --> 00:04:50,400

more.

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00:04:50,400 --> 00:04:55,520

Now before we get to this incredible conversation as I say every week please just take a moment.

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00:04:55,520 --> 00:05:00,420

Go to whichever app you listen to this on, subscribe to the show, leave feedback and

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00:05:00,420 --> 00:05:02,480

leave a rating.

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00:05:02,480 --> 00:05:07,480

Every single five star rating truly does elevate this podcast therefore making it easier for

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00:05:07,480 --> 00:05:14,400

others to find and this is a free library of well over 900 episodes now.

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00:05:14,400 --> 00:05:20,160

So all I ask in return is that you help share these incredible men and women stories so

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00:05:20,160 --> 00:05:25,480

I can get them to every single person on planet earth who needs to hear them.

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00:05:25,480 --> 00:05:31,320

So that being said a welcome back onto the show Jim Bernica.

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00:05:31,320 --> 00:05:32,320

Enjoy.

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00:05:32,320 --> 00:05:55,540

Well Jim I want to say welcome back to the Behind the Shield podcast.

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We sat down almost three years ago now however I saw you late last year in your incredible

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Brothers Helping Brothers conference so thank you so much for the invite.

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We'll get into obviously what that was like and then we'll talk about 2024 as well but

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00:06:10,320 --> 00:06:14,200

I want to start just by welcoming you back onto the show.

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00:06:14,200 --> 00:06:18,120

Well thank you James it's great to be back and I'm glad you had a good time there in

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00:06:18,120 --> 00:06:20,680

an exotic Beaver Creek Ohio.

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00:06:20,680 --> 00:06:24,880

It was I had such a tan when I left the Floridians were jealous.

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00:06:24,880 --> 00:06:25,880

Yes.

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00:06:25,880 --> 00:06:32,160

All right well very first question today where on planet earth are we finding you?

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00:06:32,160 --> 00:06:36,120

I'm in that exotic Beaver Creek Ohio.



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00:06:36,120 --> 00:06:43,920

Where it's you know all four seasons hit in the same week.

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00:06:43,920 --> 00:06:50,720

So when we spoke last you had led us through I mean so much your journey into the fire

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00:06:50,720 --> 00:06:54,800

service you know all the the positive you know calls and some of the successes that

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00:06:54,800 --> 00:07:00,000

you had your cancer diagnosis your journey through there the creation of your podcast

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00:07:00,000 --> 00:07:06,560

some of the mental health side too and then we concluded around June 2020 yeah around

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00:07:06,560 --> 00:07:09,360

June 2021 when we went out.

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00:07:09,360 --> 00:07:16,240

So before we hit record you had talked about kind of where you wanted to pick this up and

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00:07:16,240 --> 00:07:18,960

I think it's a really powerful perspective.

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00:07:18,960 --> 00:07:22,880

I had been talking obviously for years and years and years about the impact of sleep

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00:07:22,880 --> 00:07:30,920

deprivation and to this day I still vehemently believe that anyone who has you know mental

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00:07:30,920 --> 00:07:35,360

health you know kind of challenges on that side but certainly if it's a medical issue

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00:07:35,360 --> 00:07:41,600

and cancer that getting them off shift work a known carcinogen is incredibly important.

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00:07:41,600 --> 00:07:46,600

However I have also talked about a lot of our people that promote or go to days because

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00:07:46,600 --> 00:07:50,740

they got hurt there's a kind of loss of tribe element too.

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00:07:50,740 --> 00:07:58,280

So walk me through your on shift work you're kind of coming out of your you know your cancer

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00:07:58,280 --> 00:08:04,800

treatment at this point walk me through from where we picked up to you know as you said

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00:08:04,800 --> 00:08:12,720

before we hit record the the pros of seeking you know that 40 hour day and some of the

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00:08:12,720 --> 00:08:17,120

cons that were very very detrimental for you personally as well.

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00:08:17,120 --> 00:08:23,920

Sure so it was it was right after we talked I still at that point I was still off work

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00:08:23,920 --> 00:08:33,680

recovering from the thyroid cancer surgery and I remember being asked to come down to

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00:08:33,680 --> 00:08:39,200

headquarters and participate in a news story about a peer support team because at that

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00:08:39,200 --> 00:08:44,240

time you know still just a firefighter paramedic in the street but I was the health and safety

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00:08:44,240 --> 00:08:49,680

guy for the union and also in charge of the peer support team and so I ended up doing

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00:08:49,680 --> 00:08:54,120

this new story with the fire chief we did kind of just a labor management thing we're

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00:08:54,120 --> 00:09:02,000

on the same page and it was during that you know that conversation after we filmed the

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00:09:02,000 --> 00:09:06,960

TV spot that I just asked the chief straight up like what do you think you know you have

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00:09:06,960 --> 00:09:12,120

a health and safety lieutenant I know I'm not an officer but I'm certainly qualified

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00:09:12,120 --> 00:09:18,680

to do that job and the chief said you're absolutely right you know it's I'm not really worried

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00:09:18,680 --> 00:09:26,420

about rank I'm I want to put the right person in the position and when that lieutenant is

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00:09:26,420 --> 00:09:33,600

done in a few months like you know you're next and so at that point in June I was kind

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00:09:33,600 --> 00:09:40,940

of told just give it a few more months and you'll be on 40 hours and I ended up going

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00:09:40,940 --> 00:09:48,440

back in the street in mid-July and it was believe the beginning of October that chief

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00:09:48,440 --> 00:09:55,840

reached out and asked if I instead of asking about the health and safety position he said

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00:09:55,840 --> 00:10:03,880

do you have any interest in being a 40-hour wellness coordinator and I said absolutely

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00:10:03,880 --> 00:10:09,560

not even really knowing exactly what that meant but I said sure let's let's do it because

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00:10:09,560 --> 00:10:17,200

I was I was ready to move on and do something different it felt even in a few months that

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00:10:17,200 --> 00:10:23,320

I came back on the street I got tell you it was really odd like you know here I am going

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00:10:23,320 --> 00:10:28,040

back into fires wearing all my fire gear doing all that stuff the same stuff that got me

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00:10:28,040 --> 00:10:34,160

sick to begin with I'm doing it again and I couldn't help but feel like this just isn't

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00:10:34,160 --> 00:10:40,320

logical this doesn't make sense you know why am I even doing this but you know luckily

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00:10:40,320 --> 00:10:45,940

I was I was taken off the street and I began at the end of October that wellness coordinator

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00:10:45,940 --> 00:10:54,280

spot and that was that was definitely different it was a brand new position I got to answer

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00:10:54,280 --> 00:10:59,760

directly to an assistant chief so I got to skip all these the chain and go directly to

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00:10:59,760 --> 00:11:06,160

an AC which again was something that has never happened on my department and that that was

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00:11:06,160 --> 00:11:13,440

good but I also found out that was bad in the long run as well

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00:11:13,440 --> 00:11:20,480

so well let's walk through that then so there is no disputing at all that sleep is a superpower

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00:11:20,480 --> 00:11:24,720

and when we're on shift and we come off shift I've never met a person yet that was like

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00:11:24,720 --> 00:11:30,480

oh you know I stopped a lot better at the station no one has said that so we know that

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00:11:30,480 --> 00:11:37,400

is healing however it is very very apparent to me that and I think this is one of the

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00:11:37,400 --> 00:11:41,840

reasons why I think we have some issues with suicides with the officers apart from all

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00:11:41,840 --> 00:11:46,360

the other compounding elements is up until that point you were in a station you were

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00:11:46,360 --> 00:11:50,160

with you know an engine or a truck and that was your kind of ride or die men and women

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00:11:50,160 --> 00:11:54,520

at that point and then you promote and now you're a BC and now you're in an office maybe

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00:11:54,520 --> 00:11:57,960

still in a station but you're in an office now you promote even higher now you're not

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00:11:57,960 --> 00:12:03,000

in a station at all and even though you're still wearing the same uniform you don't have

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00:12:03,000 --> 00:12:08,000

that sense of belonging and I think that can be very very detrimental now it can be navigated

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00:12:08,000 --> 00:12:13,360

if we're talking about it but if it's ignored that person who you know worked in a busy

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00:12:13,360 --> 00:12:18,320

house for 15 years and now all of a sudden they're working on staffing in some corner

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00:12:18,320 --> 00:12:24,680

office it can be you know a very very strong subconscious loss of tribe and you know we

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00:12:24,680 --> 00:12:29,080

are a tribal species so that's very very kind of detrimental to the human psyche

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00:12:29,080 --> 00:12:39,520

yeah you know I was still out and about I really took the role of like my role was just

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00:12:39,520 --> 00:12:47,720

to take care of my members period that's all I cared about that was my my job and I was

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00:12:47,720 --> 00:12:54,440

given a lot of freedom at least initially to to really do that so I was constantly in

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00:12:54,440 --> 00:13:01,720

the stations constantly going around I still wanted to have my fingers on a pulse and and

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00:13:01,720 --> 00:13:08,200

actually the first really thing I did and I think it really actually helped and I would

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00:13:08,200 --> 00:13:13,120

recommend this anybody who's starting in a wellness job to do something similar is I

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00:13:13,120 --> 00:13:23,480

conducted a survey for the members so 70 questions I mean a lot it was only is all multiple choice

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00:13:23,480 --> 00:13:27,000

really besides the very last one which was you know a narrative like tell me what you

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00:13:27,000 --> 00:13:34,480

really think but it took about 10 or 15 minutes to fill out and I actually was able to take

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00:13:34,480 --> 00:13:40,200

out like go station to station crew to crew take them out of service for 15 or 20 minutes

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00:13:40,200 --> 00:13:45,480

have them do the survey I told them it's all anonymous I'm the one that's getting all the

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00:13:45,480 --> 00:13:50,600

information you know and I'm gonna be able to use this information to try to try to help

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00:13:50,600 --> 00:13:57,280

you guys out and you know my department is a little over 300 members and we had I was

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00:13:57,280 --> 00:14:02,880

able to get over 200 before I finally said all right I think we have a good idea of you

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00:14:02,880 --> 00:14:10,480

know that's a that's a good number of guys and gals to to look at and analyze the data

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00:14:10,480 --> 00:14:18,920

and it was very clear that my members were struggling they were overworked underappreciated

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00:14:18,920 --> 00:14:26,320

there's a lot of them that were dealing with anxiety depression sleep was a big factor

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00:14:26,320 --> 00:14:32,040

like I could tell like that they're struggling that but the thing that that and it was what

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00:14:32,040 --> 00:14:38,000

I was worried about more than anything is we've had we've had two suicides over the

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00:14:38,000 --> 00:14:45,120

last what eight or nine years now and when I looked at the suicide question and I looked

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00:14:45,120 --> 00:14:52,480

at the answer for that it was terrifying and these were again anonymous people I don't

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00:14:52,480 --> 00:14:59,720

know who they were but there was a good amount of members that were thinking about suicide

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00:14:59,720 --> 00:15:07,880

whether it's once or every now and then or all the time it was it was terrifying to see

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00:15:07,880 --> 00:15:12,480

and and those were the ones that were honest with me and again I only got really two-thirds

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00:15:12,480 --> 00:15:19,840

of the department so with that information it was really easy to make kind of the game

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00:15:19,840 --> 00:15:26,600

plan and it was it wasn't dictated by the chiefs wasn't dictated by me it was dictated

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00:15:26,600 --> 00:15:34,320

by the members where I focused you know my time and efforts on and so the probably the

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00:15:34,320 --> 00:15:38,560



really the first thing that followed that is I was actually able to bring in an outside

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00:15:38,560 --> 00:15:45,520

speaker which was the first time in my career we've ever done that I brought in Joe Terry

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00:15:45,520 --> 00:15:51,720

and who is just amazing and she does a really good job of telling her story and her husband's

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00:15:51,720 --> 00:15:58,520

story who you know he committed suicide but really just more than anything just spells

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00:15:58,520 --> 00:16:06,800

out PTSD and how this job really affects our brain and really I think for the first time

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00:16:06,800 --> 00:16:11,200

my members were sitting there looking at this chart and and they all it's like the light

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00:16:11,200 --> 00:16:17,080

bulb hit all at the same time they're all like shit I've got this you know it was it

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00:16:17,080 --> 00:16:23,760

was the first time it was obvious to them and and out of that actually a lot of them

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00:16:23,760 --> 00:16:32,520

asked can we do this and do this with our spouses because they wanted to show I'm not

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00:16:32,520 --> 00:16:36,880

just an asshole because I'm an asshole I'm an asshole because this job has really changed

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00:16:36,880 --> 00:16:42,280

the way I think and function and so we did that too and that went over well I think just

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00:16:42,280 --> 00:16:48,240

doing the spousal stuff I know it saved a couple marriages it was truly effective but

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00:16:48,240 --> 00:16:54,480

along with that with Joe Terry coming in it's all about follow-up we had right after that

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00:16:54,480 --> 00:17:01,340

the very next week we started the annual clinician checkup from the neck up which is a brand

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00:17:01,340 --> 00:17:06,360

new program that we did where we have the clinician come to the firehouse check everybody

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00:17:06,360 --> 00:17:11,920

out give everybody option it wasn't mandatory but if you wanted to talk you certainly could

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00:17:11,920 --> 00:17:16,520

and the idea really was not necessarily I didn't really think that a lot of people would

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00:17:16,520 --> 00:17:23,880

talk to her during that initial setup but what I wanted to do was at least introduce

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00:17:23,880 --> 00:17:28,640

her to everybody and I thought that there'd be people that would as soon as she left or

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00:17:28,640 --> 00:17:33,360

the very next day they'd call her up and say hey let's talk or if something happened later

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00:17:33,360 --> 00:17:39,080

on down the line they would have somebody that would know somebody and they can make

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00:17:39,080 --> 00:17:47,360

that call and make that connection so I wanted to make it just that more accessible for our

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00:17:47,360 --> 00:17:55,280

members and and that went extremely well everybody not everybody but for the most part almost

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00:17:55,280 --> 00:18:01,680

everybody took her up on it and I really think we were heading in the right direction and

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00:18:01,680 --> 00:18:09,440

I would say things went really well for probably the first six months it was a probably a good

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00:18:09,440 --> 00:18:16,720

honeymoon experience for that six months so one of the other things that I mentioned sleep

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00:18:16,720 --> 00:18:22,200

and I actually was able to bring in our friend Allison Brager I didn't bring her in I actually

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00:18:22,200 --> 00:18:28,640

did a zoom with her and we talked about the importance of sleep and and just you know

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00:18:28,640 --> 00:18:34,040

suggestions on how to get better sleep and along with that I also had we have two hospital

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00:18:34,040 --> 00:18:39,280

systems around here and I had gone and made videos with each hospital system at our sleep

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00:18:39,280 --> 00:18:45,840

center to truly discuss like you know how much it costs what it entails to do you know

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00:18:45,840 --> 00:18:51,800

a take-home sleep test so because that was a lot of things too is a lot of people you

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00:18:51,800 --> 00:18:57,160

know needed a CPAP machine had sleep apnea but had never really done anything about it

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00:18:57,160 --> 00:19:01,920

so I kind of opened up that door for those members as well and that there was a lot of

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00:19:01,920 --> 00:19:09,880

them that took took that up and are sleeping better today because of that

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00:19:09,880 --> 00:19:15,320

you talked about the presentation and people realizing that they had PTSD and it's funny

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00:19:15,320 --> 00:19:21,800

because now seven years later that you know that description that diagnosis kind of jars

212

00:19:21,800 --> 00:19:27,440

a little bit just because now we've got a more nuanced conversation and I love the discussion

213

00:19:27,440 --> 00:19:31,780

on firefighter syndrome which is kind of a newer one but most of all just moral injury

214

00:19:31,780 --> 00:19:36,720

I think that's what most of us you know are actually suffering from and it can be moral

215

00:19:36,720 --> 00:19:40,080

injury because of our organization it could be the cause it could be our relationship

216

00:19:40,080 --> 00:19:45,440

dynamic obviously usually a combination of all of them but I think that this is where

217

00:19:45,440 --> 00:19:50,200

where we need to move now you know we talked about the the stigma you know and it's beautiful

218

00:19:50,200 --> 00:19:54,160

that so many people talk to the council I think that's phenomenal and all you what you

219

00:19:54,160 --> 00:19:58,320

did is you reduce you you eliminated that barrier to entry and you put a clinician in

220

00:19:58,320 --> 00:20:03,600

front of the people and you know this this is this all ties into what I'm about to say

221

00:20:03,600 --> 00:20:09,080

all we've heard so far is we got to break the stigma well the stigma is broken you know

222

00:20:09,080 --> 00:20:12,720

that's beyond the stigma is broken there's some people resistant out there but most people

223

00:20:12,720 --> 00:20:17,920

now like I get it yes first responders also have mental health challenges based on what

224

00:20:17,920 --> 00:20:24,160

we do and how we worked so to me the next step is removing the barrier to entry to you

225

00:20:24,160 --> 00:20:28,000

know the tools that actually work and we'll get into some of the ones that you did but

226

00:20:28,000 --> 00:20:31,800

it could be you know save a warrior or the the center of excellence or equine therapy

227

00:20:31,800 --> 00:20:37,880

or psilocybin or all this massive toolbox that we've got but also it's the post-traumatic

228

00:20:37,880 --> 00:20:44,000

growth conversation that I really want to try and get out there to be that message of

229

00:20:44,000 --> 00:20:49,880

hope because a diagnosis of ptsd is that well it's you know it becomes almost an identity

230

00:20:49,880 --> 00:20:54,200

well it's what I've got you know and guys retire out from it and and you know there's

231

00:20:54,200 --> 00:20:58,360

absolute application for that but I think what we're also missing for a lot of people

232

00:20:58,360 --> 00:21:03,840

that can can go through their trauma and heal is that post-traumatic growth and the other

233

00:21:03,840 --> 00:21:10,940

side of post-traumatic growth is resilience you know is is a better version of yourself

234

00:21:10,940 --> 00:21:18,080

so if then that that message is disseminated that then instills hope the very thing that

235

00:21:18,080 --> 00:21:21,480

the people that are struggling are missing it's not like you're going to be able to live

236

00:21:21,480 --> 00:21:26,300

with this you're going to be able to survive you're going to resist the suicidal ideation

237

00:21:26,300 --> 00:21:31,880

you're going to go through it and then the other side because of your your journey you're

238

00:21:31,880 --> 00:21:35,680

going to be more empathetic and you're going to be a beacon of light and healing for other

239

00:21:35,680 --> 00:21:43,400

people that need that message of hope now too absolutely you know and and I think even

240

00:21:43,400 --> 00:21:47,860

when I was in that position I had already at that point in time dealt with a pretty

241

00:21:47,860 --> 00:21:57,760

good amount of stuff and um so it was it was you know it's kind of you know I have it right

242

00:21:57,760 --> 00:22:06,160

behind me the man in the arena I really love that that you know that speech and you know

243

00:22:06,160 --> 00:22:09,640

I was one of the guys that was that had already been in the shit I've been around for a while

244

00:22:09,640 --> 00:22:16,280

I dove a lot of stuff so um it was easy for me to open up and be vulnerable and because

245

00:22:16,280 --> 00:22:22,840

I did that it allowed others to be vulnerable and open up to and then it was my job just

246

00:22:22,840 --> 00:22:28,840

to play matchmaker with the appropriate resources and and I thought I did really really well

247

00:22:28,840 --> 00:22:36,920

at that job and I would say again everything was going smooth until it wasn't and and

248

00:22:36,920 --> 00:22:43,280

I'm going to go into the story and just just um hold on because it sits all over the place

249

00:22:43,280 --> 00:22:50,640

but there's there's a lot to this but um super significant now and it and it you know I had

250

00:22:50,640 --> 00:22:56,240

to get to this rock bottom here before I could climb out and really and really get to that

251

00:22:56,240 --> 00:23:00,520

post-traumatic growth and it took a long time more than anything time was probably the best

252

00:23:00,520 --> 00:23:11,640

thing I needed but uh it would have been may I believe Cinco de Mayo may 5th of uh 2022

253

00:23:11,640 --> 00:23:18,440

I had I just had gotten home a little bit ago and um my wife got home shortly after

254

00:23:18,440 --> 00:23:23,000

that and almost as soon as she walked in the door I got a text from one of our members

255

00:23:23,000 --> 00:23:33,400

saying um one of our one of our other members um had threatened suicide threatened police

256

00:23:33,400 --> 00:23:45,000

um and is basically out on a run and um this is a absolutely beloved beloved member and

257

00:23:45,000 --> 00:23:52,480

um but uh and and he I basically got sent a text message of the police bolo um in which

258

00:23:52,480 --> 00:23:57,720

it talked about him threatening the police and um being armed and this member was part

259

00:23:57,720 --> 00:24:08,200

of the SWAT team um for our city SWAT medic and uh I realized at that time like this well

260

00:24:08,200 --> 00:24:16,160

obviously this is not a good situation and um but I actually and I and I and my my wife

261

00:24:16,160 --> 00:24:21,980

I know thought I was crazy because I tell her what's going on and then I go out looking

262

00:24:21,980 --> 00:24:36,240

for the guy and um I know she was scared but um I really thought that the only chance that



263

00:24:36,240 --> 00:24:45,600

this guy had to live was if one of us found him and not the police um and so there was

264

00:24:45,600 --> 00:24:51,080

probably about a dozen of us because it was still pretty low key um and we we searched

265

00:24:51,080 --> 00:24:58,120

we went everywhere trying to find and I can't make this shit up he's driving a Ford Bronco

266

00:24:58,120 --> 00:25:07,720

and we're we're trying to find him um it's just you know but we and and we we've searched

267

00:25:07,720 --> 00:25:15,920

all into the evening hours and we come up empty handed and we eventually all I mean

268

00:25:15,920 --> 00:25:21,860

after midnight go home and basically first first sign of daylight we're going to go back

269

00:25:21,860 --> 00:25:30,320

out and try to find him um and early in the morning we ended up they they finally did

270

00:25:30,320 --> 00:25:39,160

um they tracked his his car down and it was in an abandoned church parking lot and um

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00:25:39,160 --> 00:25:43,720

there were some members that went out there and then I ended up going to the union hall

272

00:25:43,720 --> 00:25:51,640

and that was basically going to be the um I don't know the uh command post for lack of

273

00:25:51,640 --> 00:26:01,080

better terms um and uh while they're you know this again at this point in time they're the

274

00:26:01,080 --> 00:26:05,840

police for obvious reasons are being really cautious this is basically a SWAT situation

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00:26:05,840 --> 00:26:13,840

so they're taking their time just because of the threats from earlier and um so they're

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00:26:13,840 --> 00:26:17,600

and because there's woods all around this place and I end up getting a drone out and

277

00:26:17,600 --> 00:26:23,160

try to look for him and there's a there's a a group message about eight of us that have

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00:26:23,160 --> 00:26:32,360

been really looking for him and and are really um his closer friends and out of that message

279

00:26:32,360 --> 00:26:46,520

one of the members writes um they found him he's dead and um confirmed and I got that

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00:26:46,520 --> 00:26:54,920

message right when I was pulling into our union hall and I I've done this now I realize

281

00:26:54,920 --> 00:27:01,120

I've done this a couple times to where and I and I think a lot of us have probably done

282

00:27:01,120 --> 00:27:11,960

this in this profession where I I didn't get emotional I immediately switched to more like

283

00:27:11,960 --> 00:27:17,760

a I mean I don't know business um to where I basically said okay what do I have to do

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00:27:17,760 --> 00:27:28,480

next like there was there was no personal time for me to get emotional to mourn to anything

285

00:27:28,480 --> 00:27:35,360

because I felt like I was the guy that now had to take care of an entire department who

286

00:27:35,360 --> 00:27:44,440

lost yet another member to suicide um I I don't know why I was wired that way but that's

287

00:27:44,440 --> 00:27:53,520

how it went down and it was uh about 11 minutes later I believe that somebody else got in

288

00:27:53,520 --> 00:27:59,760

a text message um feed that was on the scene and said I don't know where you heard this

289

00:27:59,760 --> 00:28:09,440

but this is not accurate and so all of a sudden it was a wait a second is he dead or not and

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00:28:09,440 --> 00:28:18,240

so everything kind of got put on hold and about an hour later they actually found him

291

00:28:18,240 --> 00:28:29,400

and he was alive barely so they were able to get him to the hospital there and um it

292

00:28:29,400 --> 00:28:34,400

was just kind of chaos but that that again that roller coaster of he's dead oh wait a

293

00:28:34,400 --> 00:28:40,960

second maybe he's not oh no he's not but he's not definitely not out of harm's way you know

294

00:28:40,960 --> 00:28:46,840

he was he ended up going to the ICU he was pretty pretty screwed up I mean been outside

295

00:28:46,840 --> 00:28:55,320

all night and uh you know I was I was left then with a lot of members that were still

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00:28:55,320 --> 00:29:01,560

uh because this was you know usually peer support peer support is pretty much in the

297

00:29:01,560 --> 00:29:08,680

shadows you know we try to do our best to be low key and this was not that this was

298

00:29:08,680 --> 00:29:14,520

very public not at least not out in like the media or anything like that but it was public

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00:29:14,520 --> 00:29:19,840

amongst our members everybody knew what was going on and there was there's all sorts of

300

00:29:19,840 --> 00:29:26,360

crazy rumors and everything else and um you know there was people thought that he shot

301

00:29:26,360 --> 00:29:33,480

himself there I mean it was just yeah I mean just a lot of bullshit going around and so

302

00:29:33,480 --> 00:29:40,240

um at the union hall I had a clinician there I had a bunch of peer support there and I

303

00:29:40,240 --> 00:29:46,320

remember reaching out to the district chiefs otherwise known as battalion chief about everywhere

304

00:29:46,320 --> 00:29:52,960

else but the the guys who run the actual district and run the day to day like their crews you

305

00:29:52,960 --> 00:29:59,280

know I I put it out there hey if any members need to talk if they if they're because because

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00:29:59,280 --> 00:30:03,760

I knew that I was getting messages of people struggling because they really cared about

307

00:30:03,760 --> 00:30:11,320

this guy and I said come on out to the union hall we've got a clinician here we got a team

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00:30:11,320 --> 00:30:20,000

here like just come on out and uh which I thought was was logical and it wasn't too

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00:30:20,000 --> 00:30:25,000

long after that that I got a call from the assistant chief that said we're not going

310

00:30:25,000 --> 00:30:33,920

to do that we're not going to send crews out of service and go and go there and I really

311

00:30:33,920 --> 00:30:39,160

felt like something needed to be done and so I I pivoted and I said okay well we're

312

00:30:39,160 --> 00:30:46,760

coming to you then and what I did is I I threw up the bat signal I mean I know you know

313

00:30:46,760 --> 00:30:51,920

dayton we had a good good size peer team but there were so many people that were involved

314

00:30:51,920 --> 00:30:58,200

in this that we were decimated and so I needed help I needed help from the outside and so

315

00:30:58,200 --> 00:31:03,920

I threw up the bat signal and we had a lot of our local jurisdictions come and help us

316

00:31:03,920 --> 00:31:10,360

out with their peers which was was awesome you know it's still it was awesome to see

317

00:31:10,360 --> 00:31:15,200

them all in there in one place and really taking care of us because that's not that's

318

00:31:15,200 --> 00:31:20,560

not norm you know usually we can handle our own stuff but not in this situation and what

319

00:31:20,560 --> 00:31:28,240

I did is very similar to what the IFF and the state peer team did in 2019 after our

320

00:31:28,240 --> 00:31:33,440

mass shooting where we went around and went a couple peers went crew to you know station

321

00:31:33,440 --> 00:31:38,940

to station crew to crew and just told everybody what was going on and just checked in on everybody

322

00:31:38,940 --> 00:31:50,600

and we ended up doing that the next three days and and it was it was a couple it was

323

00:31:50,600 --> 00:31:59,240

really like I I had been just completely like overwhelmed doesn't even really do its services

324

00:31:59,240 --> 00:32:06,960

as as bad as bad off as I was as inundated as I was with things you know I think it was

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00:32:06,960 --> 00:32:14,000

the second or third morning I couldn't sleep I was still we were still going around going

326

00:32:14,000 --> 00:32:22,680

to the stations the guy was at the hospital but he still was wasn't with it and that was

327

00:32:22,680 --> 00:32:29,440

it took me two or three days before I finally was able to just get everything out and actually

328

00:32:29,440 --> 00:32:37,720

have a moment of to grieve and just all these emotions to let it out and and it was so it

329

00:32:37,720 --> 00:32:43,440

was it was bizarre it was bizarre how it happened I got up I really wasn't sleeping that well

330

00:32:43,440 --> 00:32:48,840

I was I went down to my basement I started working out and it was mid-workout when all

331

00:32:48,840 --> 00:32:58,800

the stuff hit me and when it hit me it hit me James it I made these weird audible sounds

332

00:32:58,800 --> 00:33:05,440

that I couldn't recreate if I tried to the point in which like it woke up my wife above

333

00:33:05,440 --> 00:33:10,040

and she was like what the hell is going on but I finally had that moment where I was

334

00:33:10,040 --> 00:33:15,280

able to get stuff out and then and I told my assistant chief like I'm not going to be

335

00:33:15,280 --> 00:33:23,840

in next week you know just I need I need time I need I need some space to just get back

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00:33:23,840 --> 00:33:30,440

to some some normalcy and and during that I would say during that time period I got

337

00:33:30,440 --> 00:33:40,840

I got angry I got angry because I had in January I had rewritten the peer support policy and

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00:33:40,840 --> 00:33:48,720

I had included basically exceptions to where if these certain types to calls and it's and

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00:33:48,720 --> 00:33:54,400

everybody knows these calls it's pediatrics it's multiple you know mass casualty incidents

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00:33:54,400 --> 00:33:59,200

I mean certain calls that are just they happen but they're still abnormal and they're still

341

00:33:59,200 --> 00:34:04,200

emotional I had written in there that they would in those type of calls that they would

342

00:34:04,200 --> 00:34:12,480

either be able to see clinician or even go home and that had sat on the chief's desk

343

00:34:12,480 --> 00:34:18,280

and and nothing happened I really thought that that may have prevented this whole thing

344

00:34:18,280 --> 00:34:27,520

if we could have intervened with this individual earlier and he'd had a pretty shitty shifts

345

00:34:27,520 --> 00:34:34,960

the night before as well as I write yes thank you thank you yes the ship before oh my gosh

346

00:34:34,960 --> 00:34:50,240

he oh man so a four car accident with four fatals and he had to write all the run reports

347

00:34:50,240 --> 00:34:57,880

for that and as soon as he finished they heard a fire come in down the street from the hospital

348

00:34:57,880 --> 00:35:05,080

they just left and him and his partner went in and asked to me to grab made a save before

349

00:35:05,080 --> 00:35:13,120

any of the fire apparatus got there and didn't you know was on the medic so didn't have his

350

00:35:13,120 --> 00:35:21,240



gear and made that say but yet got chastised by the district chief you know they got got

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00:35:21,240 --> 00:35:27,760

in his shit about it and so here this guy's already wrote had to had to look and had to

352

00:35:27,760 --> 00:35:33,000

write these four run reports that just suck it shouldn't be one person that has to do

353

00:35:33,000 --> 00:35:39,160

all that but it was and then make a save how many of us actually get to make a save in

354

00:35:39,160 --> 00:35:47,640

our career and instead of being a hero is chastised for it and you know it was just

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00:35:47,640 --> 00:35:54,800

it was way too much and the very next day is he ended up leaving shift early and and

356

00:35:54,800 --> 00:36:00,520

that's when all this stuff went on so yeah thank you thank you for adding that just to

357

00:36:00,520 --> 00:36:05,200

add to that as well you've got and this happened to Danny Dwyer you've got these these horrendous

358

00:36:05,200 --> 00:36:10,000

critical incidents and then we talked about organizational betrayal that tribe you do

359

00:36:10,000 --> 00:36:13,520

the very thing that you were trained to do I mean we when I worked on rescues we had

360

00:36:13,520 --> 00:36:17,720

our gear on so we would never have been put in that position I had the ability to pack

361

00:36:17,720 --> 00:36:22,480

up and go in even though I was on the medic unit but you don't so now you got guys in

362

00:36:22,480 --> 00:36:27,120

you know class B uniform going in making a save and then getting chastised and I always

363

00:36:27,120 --> 00:36:30,720

say this if it was law enforcement they'd be given awards and I don't know what it

364

00:36:30,720 --> 00:36:34,000

is about the fucking fire service but the moment of firefighter does the thing that

365

00:36:34,000 --> 00:36:38,720

is humanly correct even though you have to bend protocols because there's nothing written

366

00:36:38,720 --> 00:36:44,080

about you show up with no gear and no pack and instead of supporting them and and you

367

00:36:44,080 --> 00:36:47,560

know commending them and it might be a yeah but while we're talking about this let's

368

00:36:47,560 --> 00:36:51,680

just go over you did this let's make you know we'll try not to do that again however

369

00:36:51,680 --> 00:36:57,120

fucking amazing job Danny you know gets fired and then you have this compounding element

370

00:36:57,120 --> 00:37:02,200

where the very organization that you wear the fucking patch on your shoulder you do

371

00:37:02,200 --> 00:37:06,840

the very thing that we were trained to do from the first day of fire academy and you

372

00:37:06,840 --> 00:37:10,080

get you know your legs cut from under you so that's a very you know the organizational

373

00:37:10,080 --> 00:37:15,140

betrayal is a massive part of the mental health conversation of first responders because this

374

00:37:15,140 --> 00:37:20,240

is our tribe and when your tribe turns their back on you that is devastating to some people

375

00:37:20,240 --> 00:37:32,280

well you kind of foreshadowed everything that's coming and I'll definitely get into that so

376

00:37:32,280 --> 00:37:39,120

I talked to the assistant chief and he said well let's meet and go over this general order

377

00:37:39,120 --> 00:37:45,040

about the peer support stuff behavioral health and let's meet before we go and sit down with

378

00:37:45,040 --> 00:37:50,840

HR and present it and again I told I told him I'm not I'm off I'm not coming in but

379

00:37:50,840 --> 00:37:56,600

he asked me to do that and it was poor enough to wear all right I came in I came in on a

380

00:37:56,600 --> 00:38:05,600

Wednesday that week and I came in and I was I was disheveled I hadn't shaved I came in

381

00:38:05,600 --> 00:38:12,520

and a t-shirt and gym shorts you know I wasn't on the clock or anything like I just coming

382

00:38:12,520 --> 00:38:17,920

in to have that meeting because it was important and and right away I was met by the deputy

383

00:38:17,920 --> 00:38:26,800

chief who who's new question is this the new your form and and and that that set the tone

384

00:38:26,800 --> 00:38:37,120

I mean I I didn't I and I full disclosure I regret a lot of the way I handled things

385

00:38:37,120 --> 00:38:43,920

but I can tell you at this time I was I was angry I was upset and and I kind of let that

386

00:38:43,920 --> 00:38:49,480

stuff out so he was he was wearing his like I would call Miami vice you know you know

387

00:38:49,480 --> 00:38:54,760

at some point when you become a chief an organization you can you can ditch the uniform and just

388

00:38:54,760 --> 00:39:02,560

wear you know your shirt and your your sports jacket and I said so I said is this the new

389

00:39:02,560 --> 00:39:08,800

uniform so great way to start and then we I went into the my boss's assistant chief's

390

00:39:08,800 --> 00:39:16,960

office and that was a that was our only closed the door kind of meeting and we kind of went

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00:39:16,960 --> 00:39:25,760

at each other and because I really felt like he had let this member down and I think he

392

00:39:25,760 --> 00:39:30,440

he didn't like that I was putting the blame on him and I understand that that wasn't right

393

00:39:30,440 --> 00:39:39,720

that wasn't fair and he ended up telling me that the the district chiefs felt that I was

394

00:39:39,720 --> 00:39:46,120

inundating the department with behavioral health and peer support and it was too much

395

00:39:46,120 --> 00:39:55,200

and I needed to back off which I mean you say I say that now and I just it's so fucking

396

00:39:55,200 --> 00:40:02,920

ridiculous we just had a member try to kill himself a couple days ago but this is I'm

397

00:40:02,920 --> 00:40:14,960

doing too much that's just illogical and we had this heated debate and again I'm you know

398

00:40:14,960 --> 00:40:19,960

I'm a firefighter I'm talking to this assistant chief and I'm talking to him like you really

399

00:40:19,960 --> 00:40:25,400

shouldn't but also I knew with that being said I knew I was also the health and safety

400

00:40:25,400 --> 00:40:30,880

guy for the union so with that with the union I feel like I had some kind of freedom like

401

00:40:30,880 --> 00:40:37,200

I was able to say shit that I probably wouldn't be able to say otherwise but still it didn't

402

00:40:37,200 --> 00:40:44,560

go over well I ended up leaving and I was I was uninvited to the HR meeting which probably

403

00:40:44,560 --> 00:40:53,360

was for the best in reality but I mean we still I mean what we're almost two years from

404

00:40:53,360 --> 00:40:57,440

that meeting and they still haven't done anything they haven't changed that order they haven't

405

00:40:57,440 --> 00:41:05,600

updated at all it was all it was all for naught but I would say that that whole incident was

406

00:41:05,600 --> 00:41:11,840

really the beginning of the downfall and the honeymoon phase was was definitely over and

407

00:41:11,840 --> 00:41:19,480

what I've and then really I started now to fall apart really shortly after that and then

408

00:41:19,480 --> 00:41:25,200

so that that really goes the next part which is in Cleveland the following week.

409

00:41:25,200 --> 00:41:30,840

Let me jump in just for a second because when we get further away from from your brother

410

00:41:30,840 --> 00:41:36,560

firefighter that was in such crisis you said I forget the term you used but he was a beloved

411

00:41:36,560 --> 00:41:42,720

member that's what it was this is I think what we need to really understand when you

412

00:41:42,720 --> 00:41:47,760

have that guy and we've all got him sometimes we've all been them you know salty as fuck

413

00:41:47,760 --> 00:41:51,740

you know always pissed off throwing shit in the morning you know pissed off that the tones

414

00:41:51,740 --> 00:41:56,600

go off whatever it is I always tell people what were they like when you hired him if

415

00:41:56,600 --> 00:41:59,280

they were like that from the beginning then you shouldn't have hired him let's be honest

416

00:41:59,280 --> 00:42:02,920

that was that that slipped through the net that person needed to do some work before they

417

00:42:02,920 --> 00:42:08,160

actually ever test to be a firefighter more often than not these people are phenomenal

418

00:42:08,160 --> 00:42:12,880

human beings they're positive they kept themselves in shape they you know they were excellent

419

00:42:12,880 --> 00:42:17,880

firefighters excellent paramedics or EMTs and then there's this devolution and I think

420

00:42:17,880 --> 00:42:23,200

it's a really important kind of observation to make in this moment you've got a guy that

421

00:42:23,200 --> 00:42:27,440

you know in this case I'm assuming was was beloved so you know was was interacting with

422

00:42:27,440 --> 00:42:32,840

everyone well got to the pinnacle one on the medic side as a SWAT medic so clearly operationally

423

00:42:32,840 --> 00:42:37,920

he was doing a lot of things right I'm assuming his fitness was pretty on point two and now

424

00:42:37,920 --> 00:42:45,120

all of a sudden you've got this crisis so we forget to ask how did you get from A to

425

00:42:45,120 --> 00:42:51,080

B and we just discard all compassion and empathy and go that guy's a piece of shit that girl's

426

00:42:51,080 --> 00:42:57,680

you know she's a fucking waste of space whatever it is versus what happened to Steve, Sandra

427

00:42:57,680 --> 00:43:02,680

whoever like how do we get from A to B and more often than not it's the environment yes

428

00:43:02,680 --> 00:43:09,200

the job we see some horrible stuff and that needs to be handled in a way that we can can

429

00:43:09,200 --> 00:43:14,880

heal from that we can move forward and like I said that post-traumatic growth but the

430

00:43:14,880 --> 00:43:19,160

sleep deprivation the organizational stress all these other things that compound as well

431

00:43:19,160 --> 00:43:24,140

which then impacts our family you know our wives and husbands and children that takes

432

00:43:24,140 --> 00:43:29,540

its toll and and what people don't don't think they understand is that we're throwing ingredients

433

00:43:29,540 --> 00:43:35,800

into a bowl until we get to that perfect storm and that perfect storm can be suicide sometimes

434

00:43:35,800 --> 00:43:40,040

it can even be homicide and then obviously the childhood trauma as well what do we bring

435

00:43:40,040 --> 00:43:44,420

into the job in the first place but unless we look at people who are struggling with

436

00:43:44,420 --> 00:43:51,160

empathy we're never going to fix this and you terminate that so-called you know bad

437

00:43:51,160 --> 00:43:56,200

seed and without going back and go wait a second they used to be phenomenal something



438

00:43:56,200 --> 00:44:01,040

is happening you know then you cast them out and now you find out a year later they took

439

00:44:01,040 --> 00:44:05,440

their own life so I think it's just an important observation before we progress forward that

440

00:44:05,440 --> 00:44:10,080

a lot of these people that you know we see as angry or salty or whatever in the firehouse

441

00:44:10,080 --> 00:44:14,440

what were they like when you got hired with them if they were really great firefighters

442

00:44:14,440 --> 00:44:20,520

and there's been a devolution that is that is the job environment what can we do to fix

443

00:44:20,520 --> 00:44:27,360

that so that we're nurturing our firefighters rather than breaking them down this guy by

444

00:44:27,360 --> 00:44:33,800

the way I mean he is like you said he's a stud I mean he to be a SWAT medic you got

445

00:44:33,800 --> 00:44:38,680

to know your stuff I mean this guy is in shape I mean he's he's literally one of those calendar

446

00:44:38,680 --> 00:44:44,000

guys he's he's on the firefighter calendar like the real one not the chunks of ladders

447

00:44:44,000 --> 00:44:53,160

one that I'm on he's on the real one so he he's he's a specimen and he was wasn't is

448

00:44:53,160 --> 00:45:03,240

but loved by so many people and I'm I'm so thankful that he's still here and you know

449

00:45:03,240 --> 00:45:10,440

so and they kind of continue because his story his story is my story what I realized you

450

00:45:10,440 --> 00:45:17,320

know and and I'd love that he's doing well because I mean that that makes my heart feel

451

00:45:17,320 --> 00:45:24,400

better because I nobody knew for a while you know this you know what's going to happen

452

00:45:24,400 --> 00:45:30,500

with him but he's he's done well he just got promoted actually but a few weeks after

453

00:45:30,500 --> 00:45:38,260

all this I went to Cleveland for our state fire union conference and I really was hopeful

454

00:45:38,260 --> 00:45:47,240

that like I still needed like just a reset I needed a break I needed some distance and

455

00:45:47,240 --> 00:45:54,280

I thought Cleveland was going to be helpful and it was not and and a lot of this stuff

456

00:45:54,280 --> 00:45:59,720

is just timing but so I'm gonna I'm gonna segue from the story to tell another story

457

00:45:59,720 --> 00:46:04,600

and then this is all gonna make sense you know all the time in the world take your time

458

00:46:04,600 --> 00:46:10,840

follow follow me on this so one of the when you're a peer support coordinator you're on

459

00:46:10,840 --> 00:46:20,520

a peer support team you know honesty and trust and confidentiality is everything and if you

460

00:46:20,520 --> 00:46:26,160

reach confidentiality that's that's the end of your team I mean it's it's gonna take a

461

00:46:26,160 --> 00:46:31,940

hit for a decade before anybody will trust it again and we had during all this chaos

462

00:46:31,940 --> 00:46:38,920

we had another member who had an issue and he ended up and we got him help we set him

463

00:46:38,920 --> 00:46:48,480

up and when he but he was in trouble for the stuff and he ended up I think as a last-ditch

464

00:46:48,480 --> 00:46:54,560

effort just trying to throw the peer support team under the bus and say we broke confidentiality

465

00:46:54,560 --> 00:47:01,600

which never happened but what I ended up finding was like you know after all this stuff that

466

00:47:01,600 --> 00:47:06,600

just happened with this other individual and now this guy comes up and he's saying this

467

00:47:06,600 --> 00:47:14,720

and while I was in Cleveland I was I was I was told hey the department is going to

468

00:47:14,720 --> 00:47:21,400

investigate you in the peer support team the union president then says we're going to investigate

469

00:47:21,400 --> 00:47:28,680

you too so that's all that all happened on one day and then on top of that at this point

470

00:47:28,680 --> 00:47:39,240

in time Brandon was at the center of excellence and and when he was like once I got him there

471

00:47:39,240 --> 00:47:50,960

I got to tell you I felt I felt good like okay he's in a safe safe place you know he's

472

00:47:50,960 --> 00:47:58,640

under good care and and everything is going to be you know all right and I got told that

473

00:47:58,640 --> 00:48:07,640

same day that he was leaving and he ended up having to go to the hospital out there

474

00:48:07,640 --> 00:48:16,240

and he was very fed up and just he wanted to come home and and so all of a sudden me

475

00:48:16,240 --> 00:48:21,920

feeling like he was safe and I was I was safe because he was safe that's out the door now

476

00:48:21,920 --> 00:48:28,740

so I had all those like those three things hit me all at once and like I really just

477

00:48:28,740 --> 00:48:39,020

felt like like I was coming apart you know like I I didn't do you know I didn't do anything

478

00:48:39,020 --> 00:48:46,520

wrong all I was trying to do is help but yet now I'm being investigated times two and then

479

00:48:46,520 --> 00:48:53,400

this guy who I fought so hard to get in to that place is now coming home and so that's

480

00:48:53,400 --> 00:49:05,640

in jeopardy and it was it was ultimately it was too much and that night I remember I woke

481

00:49:05,640 --> 00:49:13,800

up and I'm in a hotel room and and that's when and it sounds going to sound fucking

482

00:49:13,800 --> 00:49:23,440

crazy but that's when the voices started that's when I was told or in my head it was hey like

483

00:49:23,440 --> 00:49:31,280

there's a way out your guns and a dresser you know I had you know I was a concealed

484

00:49:31,280 --> 00:49:38,800

carry holder and I made it a point when I traveled to bring my gun and with me because

485

00:49:38,800 --> 00:49:42,600

at FDIC a couple years ago I left it in my truck and my truck got broken into they stole

486

00:49:42,600 --> 00:49:51,080

my gun so I was I just brought it in with me and the next thing you know I got the thing

487

00:49:51,080 --> 00:50:01,600

in my hand and I mean I'm just having this internal debate is the I mean the way to describe

488

00:50:01,600 --> 00:50:13,240

it and I've never had that before and it was fucking terrifying and somehow some way I

489

00:50:13,240 --> 00:50:22,000

was able to to put it down and I didn't sleep the rest of the night and made it through

490

00:50:22,000 --> 00:50:25,720

the next you know morning and I everybody could tell I mean they didn't know it then

491

00:50:25,720 --> 00:50:32,880

but I was I was definitely on and edge and aloof and somehow I made it through the rest

492

00:50:32,880 --> 00:50:40,480

of that conference I think the very the next day I think was the last day and I drove home

493

00:50:40,480 --> 00:50:52,840

and I I text my friend Brian and I text him hey I got something I need to give you and

494

00:50:52,840 --> 00:51:01,000

that James that's all I said and he he fucking knew and he met me like 20 minutes later and

495

00:51:01,000 --> 00:51:08,400

I handed him a bag with the gun in it and I haven't seen it since and I love that guy

496

00:51:08,400 --> 00:51:17,160

he fucking knew I didn't have to even say what it was he knew and and I would say at

497

00:51:17,160 --> 00:51:27,800

that point is when my acting debut started so we're talking I'm in at this point this

498

00:51:27,800 --> 00:51:36,480

is June May or June of 2022 and I would act my ass off for the next few months I would

499

00:51:36,480 --> 00:51:43,960

pretend that I was okay and I was falling apart I couldn't stop those voices I couldn't

500

00:51:43,960 --> 00:51:54,000

sleep every time I try to sleep they'd show up I mean it was it sucked and and I really

501

00:51:54,000 --> 00:52:01,560

like I just oh I was such a hypocrite you know here I was I was the guy that really

502

00:52:01,560 --> 00:52:07,880

parped on everybody like hey reach out ask for help you know just pick up the phone you

503

00:52:07,880 --> 00:52:20,680

know yet when I needed it I really had this just this thought of shame and guilt like

504

00:52:20,680 --> 00:52:26,720

I'm supposed to be the guy that everybody else relies on for assistance what is it gonna

505

00:52:26,720 --> 00:52:34,920

look like if I go and get help like how does what are the optics on that and it really

506

00:52:34,920 --> 00:52:41,800

as silly as it is now and I realized that it held me back and it cost me months and

507

00:52:41,800 --> 00:52:51,360

just inner turmoil that and I was just falling apart and the job it wasn't getting any better

508

00:52:51,360 --> 00:53:02,400

it was it was very term it was a lot turmoil to the point in which they really started

509

00:53:02,400 --> 00:53:09,280

to hamper me with my peer support with my call outs and debating on you know because

510

00:53:09,280 --> 00:53:16,520

again I told you a second ago confidentiality is everything and next thing I know I'm being

511

00:53:16,520 --> 00:53:23,120

told if you need to send a peer supporter to a station you need to let this person know

512

00:53:23,120 --> 00:53:26,240

that's gonna let this person know that's gonna let this person know that's then gonna let

513

00:53:26,240 --> 00:53:32,200

you know instead of you just doing it like why do you have to let all these people know

514

00:53:32,200 --> 00:53:38,240

that don't need to know that when that stuff happens that's when people start stop reaching

515

00:53:38,240 --> 00:53:47,120

out because they don't again it's supposed to be quiet and I really questioned that and

516

00:53:47,120 --> 00:53:54,680

I there was there was two occasions with my assistant chief that I I said if we can't

517

00:53:54,680 --> 00:53:59,680

work this out I'm gonna have to I'm gonna have to get the union involved we're gonna

518

00:53:59,680 --> 00:54:04,280

well and then we'll do it that way and and both those times he told me well that's a

519

00:54:04,280 --> 00:54:10,680

good way for you to end up back on the street so basically I mean it's a fucking threat

520

00:54:10,680 --> 00:54:14,000

you know if you get the union involved that's fine but we're kicking you back out to the

521

00:54:14,000 --> 00:54:21,320

street so all this good that you're doing doesn't fucking matter like you'll go out

522

00:54:21,320 --> 00:54:29,200

and just be you know finish your career as a firefighter medic and guess what that's

523

00:54:29,200 --> 00:54:37,880

what happened you know in the midst of everything and and I not just yeah you know I want to

524

00:54:37,880 --> 00:54:45,560

act like a like I got this big ego but I know that I was doing good things for the apartment

525

00:54:45,560 --> 00:54:53,400



like there was there was tangible items that were happening there was lots of people that

526

00:54:53,400 --> 00:54:59,080

were getting help that didn't have before people were sleeping better like I was you

527

00:54:59,080 --> 00:55:08,680

know it was a good thing and it was despite all that it was no no you're you're too much

528

00:55:08,680 --> 00:55:13,680

of a headache to deal with you're gonna go back out on the street and and I would say

529

00:55:13,680 --> 00:55:18,720

and I think and you know this you've talked to so many guys that are administrative like

530

00:55:18,720 --> 00:55:26,240

I think when you go there like you end up a lot of times you sell your soul you you

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00:55:26,240 --> 00:55:30,360

you want you you have good intentions when you when you start there but for whatever

532

00:55:30,360 --> 00:55:37,320

reason you get you know it's it gets sucked out of you and and you become a company man

533

00:55:37,320 --> 00:55:42,780

and you just you basically a P your your your job is then really to appease your bosses

534

00:55:42,780 --> 00:55:50,840

and HR and I didn't go down there and that I that never happened to me I stayed me the

535

00:55:50,840 --> 00:55:56,920

whole time and which is kind of combative like none of this stuff should should have

536

00:55:56,920 --> 00:56:02,720

been a surprise to anybody you know like I've always been combative I've always had a mouth

537

00:56:02,720 --> 00:56:11,320

I've always stood up for what's right that has always been there but I'll tell you they

538

00:56:11,320 --> 00:56:17,840

when they they kicked me out they said you're going back out on the street that that hit

539

00:56:17,840 --> 00:56:25,320

me hard like that was the last straw that you know that had become that job had become

540

00:56:25,320 --> 00:56:30,440

my purpose and I knew I was good at it and I knew what I was doing and to just take it

541

00:56:30,440 --> 00:56:39,440

away on a whim like it hurt me to my bones like I didn't know I just didn't understand

542

00:56:39,440 --> 00:56:51,400

it and I remember I think it was maybe I had about two weeks notice before I ended up back

543

00:56:51,400 --> 00:57:01,040

in the district and I remember like three days into that two weeks I had a friend of

544

00:57:01,040 --> 00:57:09,080

mine come in my office and we talked and I've got this and I don't know if I've ever shown

545

00:57:09,080 --> 00:57:18,360

it to you or not but I have this tremendous tattoo on my leg and it is it is the IFF Memorial

546

00:57:18,360 --> 00:57:25,600

so it's based off of that and it has several my dating guys and a couple other guys that

547

00:57:25,600 --> 00:57:29,800

I've been friends with that have died in line of duty death and I and I got that tattoo

548

00:57:29,800 --> 00:57:36,320

when I was off with my cancer when I was off you know doing the surgery or whatever and

549

00:57:36,320 --> 00:57:41,680

this guy to his credit he was the first one he was really the only one that saw through

550

00:57:41,680 --> 00:57:48,760

all my shit and he he told me he said I have a feeling we're going to add your name to

551

00:57:48,760 --> 00:57:59,480

your leg and that fucked me up when he said that I lost my shit I just I'm just just crying

552

00:57:59,480 --> 00:58:07,520

just because he was the first one that saw through the facade that I was I had been caring

553

00:58:07,520 --> 00:58:15,200

for months he was the first one that that saw me and called me out on it and I remember

554

00:58:15,200 --> 00:58:19,600

leaving that day I called the captain at the training center which is where I was at and

555

00:58:19,600 --> 00:58:28,080

I said I'm leaving and I'm not coming back and yeah fast forward a week and a half later

556

00:58:28,080 --> 00:58:40,960

and it was fine I finally had enough and I finally picked this thing up and called the

557

00:58:40,960 --> 00:58:46,520

center of excellence and I've made that phone call five or six times beforehand for other

558

00:58:46,520 --> 00:58:57,800

people but making it for myself fuck man that sucked and I remember I called Friday August

559

00:58:57,800 --> 00:59:04,040

19th where my wife and I were supposed to go to Chris Stapleton that night never made

560

00:59:04,040 --> 00:59:11,760

it and the very next day I mean lunchtime I'm on a plane and I'm out there and I'm

561

00:59:11,760 --> 00:59:20,080

I'm in Maryland center of excellence and and I thought I gotta tell you I thought with

562

00:59:20,080 --> 00:59:24,880

everything I knew like I'm gonna be in and out of this place and a record time I'm gonna

563

00:59:24,880 --> 00:59:35,080

be here for two weeks and be back home and and be good and no it was it was 40 days 40

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00:59:35,080 --> 00:59:40,880

days which I mean the average day there is 35 so it was a little bit longer than that

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00:59:40,880 --> 00:59:54,920

but I came home and I ended up doing a stint a 90-day stint on restricted duty they the

566

00:59:54,920 --> 01:00:02,000

department did me solid actually and they put me at radio repair which was out of sight

567

01:00:02,000 --> 01:00:08,000

out of mind in the middle of like the cities like where they have all their street maintenance

568

01:00:08,000 --> 01:00:13,080

and all that so it was wasn't nothing we were the only fire department thing there and it

569

01:00:13,080 --> 01:00:20,640

was it was peaceful and I was able to just continue to work because I continued like

570

01:00:20,640 --> 01:00:26,800

I came home and did intensive outpatient program and still did multiple counseling stuff I

571

01:00:26,800 --> 01:00:38,360

mean it was it was a lot for a long time and I just felt like I needed more time to just

572

01:00:38,360 --> 01:00:47,920

really work through everything and and I think the department the fire department was willing

573

01:00:47,920 --> 01:01:00,480

to work with me HR on the other hand was not and that was really I kind of feel like that

574

01:01:00,480 --> 01:01:06,760

was probably a self-inflicted wound again I told you earlier I was I've been very outspoken

575

01:01:06,760 --> 01:01:12,280

I've been in the newspapers talking shit about the city about how they treated us in there

576

01:01:12,280 --> 01:01:16,840

and our whenever we're diagnosed with cancer and they fight us like so I'm sure when my

577

01:01:16,840 --> 01:01:22,640

name came across HR they were like fuck this guy we're not going to help him and and they

578

01:01:22,640 --> 01:01:31,920

didn't and so I wasn't ready to go back on the street and so I kind of felt like I my

579

01:01:31,920 --> 01:01:40,320

hand was forced and so I ended up putting in for a disability retirement and that was

580

01:01:40,320 --> 01:01:50,880

in January of 2023 and I my last day I clocked in and clocked out was January 11th and it

581

01:01:50,880 --> 01:01:58,200

wasn't till June 21st that I finally got the notice about my retirement and so I burned

582

01:01:58,200 --> 01:02:05,760

up all the time I had which you know was a little but not enough like I basically got

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01:02:05,760 --> 01:02:13,680

to mid-May so I ended up going about a month without any paycheck so that was that was

584

01:02:13,680 --> 01:02:18,520

definitely a stressful time because just I didn't know I didn't know what my future held

585

01:02:18,520 --> 01:02:23,320

I didn't know this retirement was going to happen or if it was going to fall through

586

01:02:23,320 --> 01:02:32,960

I just I didn't know and you know but luckily it all worked out as far as I got I got my

587

01:02:32,960 --> 01:02:46,200

pension but even you know to that time like I was it sounds weird but I was I was petrified

588

01:02:46,200 --> 01:02:50,480

really of that chief that assistant chief it was terrified of him and he's and he's

589

01:02:50,480 --> 01:02:55,040

not just just because of what he could do and for whatever reason I thought in my

590

01:02:55,040 --> 01:03:01,160

mind that he could fuck with the pension he could fuck with my paycheck like he could

591

01:03:01,160 --> 01:03:09,360

do something and so I just kind of shut my mouth and just stayed the course until that

592

01:03:09,360 --> 01:03:18,280

was all finalized and done and once that was done you know now now I feel like I can talk

593

01:03:18,280 --> 01:03:23,880

about it openly and I could talk about you know and I can I feel comfortable you know

594

01:03:23,880 --> 01:03:30,840

sitting down and writing a book about it which I know we'll talk about but you know that's

595

01:03:30,840 --> 01:03:35,680

a lot I know I went on a tangent I'm sure you got 17 questions to ask me I'm gonna take

596

01:03:35,680 --> 01:03:41,040

a break so I can take a sip of coffee and let you go for once yeah no well I mean this

597

01:03:41,040 --> 01:03:45,480

this is your podcast as well as tell people you know I try and restrict how much I say

598

01:03:45,480 --> 01:03:48,960

and some are more conversational and others but you know when you're leading us through

599

01:03:48,960 --> 01:03:57,240

the story I've got you know nothing to interject with at least however going back to you feeling

600

01:03:57,240 --> 01:04:04,840

unable to ask for help yourself that's a great analogy for I think why first responders struggle

601

01:04:04,840 --> 01:04:09,920

to ask for help because when people push three numbers on a telephone we're the ones that

602

01:04:09,920 --> 01:04:15,240

come to help we're not supposed to ask for help we're the helpers and then you add you

603

01:04:15,240 --> 01:04:19,840

know into the suicide conversation this is really heartbreaking but it's true you've

604

01:04:19,840 --> 01:04:24,200

got people who are at crisis and you know I've talked about this many many times that

605

01:04:24,200 --> 01:04:29,560

voice that convinces that individual because the brain is miswired it is broken there's

606

01:04:29,560 --> 01:04:34,160

no other way to say it a healthy brain wants to thrive wants to be here to protect their

607

01:04:34,160 --> 01:04:39,840

family so that miswired brain through all the compounding elements are convincing the

608

01:04:39,840 --> 01:04:44,740

person that they are a burden to their family that the world would be better off without

609

01:04:44,740 --> 01:04:49,560

them complete fallacy complete myth but that's what they believe that's a true reality at

610

01:04:49,560 --> 01:04:54,040

that point but then you factor in that they have already subscribed to a profession where

611

01:04:54,040 --> 01:05:00,080

they will lay down their life for a stranger well that I think is why we see even more

612

01:05:00,080 --> 01:05:05,080

suicide in military first responders is because there's very few professions where you say

613

01:05:05,080 --> 01:05:09,400



yeah I'll go into that building and go and try and get that kid and I might die or I'll

614

01:05:09,400 --> 01:05:13,000

go into a fire or I'll run into the school and the school shooters there whatever it

615

01:05:13,000 --> 01:05:18,520

is it's a very unique set of professions that have already kind of come to terms with their

616

01:05:18,520 --> 01:05:24,160

own death when they when they join it so those I think are kind of powerful observations is

617

01:05:24,160 --> 01:05:29,280

that you know the the resistance to asking for help is because we are the helpers and

618

01:05:29,280 --> 01:05:34,280

then if you want to factor in being a man as well which is you know again I'm not trying

619

01:05:34,280 --> 01:05:40,480

to be too kind of black and white but arguably women are at least able to express emotion

620

01:05:40,480 --> 01:05:45,880

culturally more than men so now you've got the man as the help of the fixer which is

621

01:05:45,880 --> 01:05:51,840

again bullshit we're we're you know soft and and hard you know yin and yang but that compounds

622

01:05:51,840 --> 01:05:57,840

it even further and then just to add another layer and I'll put the mic back to you another

623

01:05:57,840 --> 01:06:05,600

thing that I've seen that is also a truth is we have to be careful not to help too early

624

01:06:05,600 --> 01:06:10,440

when we ourselves are going through a healing journey if you jump on the helping which initially

625

01:06:10,440 --> 01:06:18,480

can be cathartic it can be very there's a pervasive kind of back end where you're accumulating

626

01:06:18,480 --> 01:06:22,560

that trauma and I saw it with bull my friend you know he's helping and helping and helping

627

01:06:22,560 --> 01:06:27,360

which in a way is almost filling his own void until all of a sudden now you're deep in a

628

01:06:27,360 --> 01:06:33,880

well and you didn't even realize it snuck up on you yeah I think being in that position

629

01:06:33,880 --> 01:06:44,400

of the wellness coordinator peer support coordinator whatever it may be I definitely realized that

630

01:06:44,400 --> 01:06:50,080

whatever is going on with whatever member I was helping I was hitching on to them and

631

01:06:50,080 --> 01:06:55,560

going for the ride and they did well I did well and if they did bad you know I went for

632

01:06:55,560 --> 01:07:05,200

that ride with them and I suffer too and man that the whole boundaries that that is a thing

633

01:07:05,200 --> 01:07:12,720

that I really sucked at and I've gotten a lot better at but I was I was invested and

634

01:07:12,720 --> 01:07:17,560

it was you know it's one thing when you're when you're doing the job and you're helping

635

01:07:17,560 --> 01:07:23,040

these strangers you don't there's not that connection yes you want to do the right thing

636

01:07:23,040 --> 01:07:30,160

but having that personal connection actually really complicates it because you just you

637

01:07:30,160 --> 01:07:36,800

you care and you're there for that ride good or bad you know but one I know one thing I

638

01:07:36,800 --> 01:07:43,640

want to touch on and I think this is important and I don't think it's talked about enough

639

01:07:43,640 --> 01:07:54,400

and it's just this word it's just forgiveness forgiveness I was able to sit down with the

640

01:07:54,400 --> 01:08:04,680

assistant chief and to his credit he met me and and I wouldn't been surprised if he said

641

01:08:04,680 --> 01:08:10,080

like no I'm not going to beat him or I'm not going to beat him alone like because it was

642

01:08:10,080 --> 01:08:20,200

it was hostile and but he we met for lunch and I asked him and we sat down I said I like

643

01:08:20,200 --> 01:08:26,760

to go and just talk and if you could just let me talk and just go through everything

644

01:08:26,760 --> 01:08:31,840

I said that would be great and then I'll tell you when I'm done I'll shut up and let you

645

01:08:31,840 --> 01:08:40,240

talk and he said that's fine go for it and I went I I went and I wasn't I didn't come

646

01:08:40,240 --> 01:08:48,480

at him with anger I was I was emotional but I really just shared my perspective into what

647

01:08:48,480 --> 01:08:53,840

and why and how and all that kind of stuff and he took it he took it like a champ he

648

01:08:53,840 --> 01:09:01,640

really did and at the end and I didn't James I didn't I didn't go into their neediness

649

01:09:01,640 --> 01:09:10,160

what I what I needed was for me to forgive him if he if he apologized if he forgave me

650

01:09:10,160 --> 01:09:16,280

then like that was a bonus but that's not what I needed what I needed was just for me

651

01:09:16,280 --> 01:09:22,880

to say I'm sorry I didn't handle things the way I should have either I fucked up I'm not

652

01:09:22,880 --> 01:09:31,080

innocent and all this stuff I have regrets and but but he when it was his turn he he

653

01:09:31,080 --> 01:09:39,760

owned it he apologized and and I got an understanding of where he was at and and since that day

654

01:09:39,760 --> 01:09:47,560

we've been good we've been good and um and a similar thing happened with one of the district

655

01:09:47,560 --> 01:09:52,600

chiefs too that the one that ultimately said we're not coming to the union hall you and

656

01:09:52,600 --> 01:09:58,080

made me pivot and made and and that calls me to end a date everybody with peer support

657

01:09:58,080 --> 01:10:05,320

so I got to do my action interview with him and that was another close the door and a

658

01:10:05,320 --> 01:10:12,200

little fest of this airing of the grievances but we walked away with the hug and and said

659

01:10:12,200 --> 01:10:19,080

we love each other and and so I I got you know it took a while and it sucked I did get

660

01:10:19,080 --> 01:10:25,600

some closure and I and I left I left with some dignity which I didn't think was going

661

01:10:25,600 --> 01:10:33,800

to be possible but forgiveness was I think a big part of helping me move on and I'm not

662

01:10:33,800 --> 01:10:40,600

saying them apologizing to me I'm saying me apologizing to them that's that was a key

663

01:10:40,600 --> 01:10:47,840

factor and actually getting some closure and moving the hell on I know in the past you've

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01:10:47,840 --> 01:10:51,960

done save a warrior you've done the center of excellence and I touched on earlier this

665

01:10:51,960 --> 01:10:56,760

is immense toolbox that actually is available to us it's sad because you know the way it's

666

01:10:56,760 --> 01:11:01,640

presented in EAP is right you've got you know talk therapy and meds which one do you want

667

01:11:01,640 --> 01:11:05,840

you want both okay but actually you've got everything from canine therapy and equine

668

01:11:05,840 --> 01:11:10,440

therapy through to diving and surfing and hiking all the way through to psilocybin ibogaine

669

01:11:10,440 --> 01:11:15,620

you know MDMA led therapy and everything in between so it's a massive you know toolbox

670

01:11:15,620 --> 01:11:20,400

if you allow yourself to actually explore it and you know sadly because of our ridiculous

671

01:11:20,400 --> 01:11:24,160

prohibition laws you might have to go to another country to actually heal from the things you

672

01:11:24,160 --> 01:11:29,720

did serving this one but that aside you know there's so much hope in that toolbox there

673

01:11:29,720 --> 01:11:35,520

really is what were the when you look back now what were the things that you unpacked

674

01:11:35,520 --> 01:11:39,720

and what were the tools that allowed you to go through that crucible and as we talked

675

01:11:39,720 --> 01:11:49,340

about earlier grow from it that's that's a great question and and I think there's a lot

676

01:11:49,340 --> 01:11:56,520

of people that that feel like there's some magical thing there's like one thing that

677

01:11:56,520 --> 01:12:03,940

if I do this I'm going to be healed and be better and that's not the way it worked for

678

01:12:03,940 --> 01:12:10,280

me I would say everything that you discussed to save a warrior got the going to Center

679

01:12:10,280 --> 01:12:18,980

of Excellence for 40 days the EMDR I did the stellate ganglion block you know talk therapy

680

01:12:18,980 --> 01:12:27,760

meds I mean everything all this stuff I would say each one of those contributed a little

681

01:12:27,760 --> 01:12:34,280

bit it was a it was a piece of the puzzle there wasn't one big thing that was bigger

682

01:12:34,280 --> 01:12:39,900

than the other they all helped out and little ways and added up and helping ultimately with

683

01:12:39,900 --> 01:12:45,080

my recovery and post-traumatic growth wasn't it wasn't one thing they all they all contributed

684

01:12:45,080 --> 01:12:54,560

and it was it was just me being pretty damn assertive and continuing to like realizing

685

01:12:54,560 --> 01:13:00,800

that I'm not quite there I'm still off and and continuing to look for those resources

686

01:13:00,800 --> 01:13:09,040

and actually following through with them you know and so and I feel like I mean that's

687

01:13:09,040 --> 01:13:14,200

in a weird way that's that's one of the nice things is you know I'm now on the state peer

688

01:13:14,200 --> 01:13:20,200

support team and I think what I can do probably better than most of the other people on there

689

01:13:20,200 --> 01:13:25,120

is simply say like from experience well this is what this place is like this is what this

690

01:13:25,120 --> 01:13:33,040

place does and just having like actual firsthand knowledge I'm I think really good at putting

691

01:13:33,040 --> 01:13:38,160

somebody with the appropriate resources because that's all we do as peer support we listen

692

01:13:38,160 --> 01:13:43,640

we listen we listen we listen and then we try to play matchmaker with the appropriate

693

01:13:43,640 --> 01:13:51,520

resource and knowing that we may only get one chance to get this right so so making

694

01:13:51,520 --> 01:13:58,240

sure you know your resources and and know that it's appropriate is key because if you

695

01:13:58,240 --> 01:14:04,280

if you screw up and they have a bad experience like you may not get a second chance so that's

696

01:14:04,280 --> 01:14:11,120

why it's paramount to really know those resources and unfortunately fortunately I know those

697

01:14:11,120 --> 01:14:15,440

resources

698

01:14:15,440 --> 01:14:16,860

What about the family?

699

01:14:16,860 --> 01:14:23,440

One thing I hear a lot is you know people will go away to some sort of retreat and they

700

01:14:23,440 --> 01:14:27,960

themselves will have some sort of an awakening but then they come back walk through a door



701

01:14:27,960 --> 01:14:33,180

and tell their wife or husband hey I'm a much better person now but their life hasn't changed

702

01:14:33,180 --> 01:14:39,040

nothing has no tools or or guidance has been given to the family you know the the parents

703

01:14:39,040 --> 01:14:46,120

the children etc so with this lens now what do we need to do as far as a family this one

704

01:14:46,120 --> 01:14:50,480

you know firefighter police officer whatever it is has been struggling obviously it's been

705

01:14:50,480 --> 01:14:54,720

a downward spiral they weren't just amazing and then fell down a hole so that's going

706

01:14:54,720 --> 01:15:00,600

to have a ripple effect on the family dynamic as well so what are you seeing needs to happen

707

01:15:00,600 --> 01:15:03,600

to support the family members as well?

708

01:15:03,600 --> 01:15:09,320

Well you bring up a great point and and they actually I remember they discussed that to

709

01:15:09,320 --> 01:15:15,840

center of excellence and they discussed that I save a warrior too you know but center of

710

01:15:15,840 --> 01:15:21,560

excellence I think I did something that's crazy they tell you in the intro meaning you

711

01:15:21,560 --> 01:15:30,000

have there that you end up doing essentially five years of talk therapy in your stay there

712

01:15:30,000 --> 01:15:36,400

because it's every day multiple hours a day when typically you know you talk to a therapist

713

01:15:36,400 --> 01:15:44,800

maybe one hour a week so you know basically one one week at the center of excellence is

714

01:15:44,800 --> 01:15:51,920

a year something like that but you're right I did all I had all this time all this these

715

01:15:51,920 --> 01:16:01,480

resources to work through but my wife didn't have the same so we did have a weekly one

716

01:16:01,480 --> 01:16:09,560

hour marriage counseling there when I was you know virtually but that that wasn't really

717

01:16:09,560 --> 01:16:16,320

enough and I came home and I had again all this this knowledge and and my wife didn't

718

01:16:16,320 --> 01:16:23,400

really get much of that now we followed up and we continued counseling and still continue

719

01:16:23,400 --> 01:16:30,200

counseling now and the first when I when I went to the center of excellence one of the

720

01:16:30,200 --> 01:16:39,680

things I was open up to was religion and that was something that I had been grew up Catholic

721

01:16:39,680 --> 01:16:47,720

and and hadn't been practicing for a long time and I finally got kind of back in that

722

01:16:47,720 --> 01:16:53,240

groove and so we went to a Christian counselor and I and I noticed right away like I can't

723

01:16:53,240 --> 01:16:59,360

be myself I can't say stuff like shit fuck ass bitch you know whatever I can't I can't

724

01:16:59,360 --> 01:17:04,920

be me with him so that was pretty short and we ended up switching to somebody in which

725

01:17:04,920 --> 01:17:09,960

I can be myself and that's that's been good but you're right like they're they don't the

726

01:17:09,960 --> 01:17:16,200

wives spouses they're not really brought up to speed with this stuff and that's why I

727

01:17:16,200 --> 01:17:22,400

said it's so important to to really when you have your rookie orientation to bring your

728

01:17:22,400 --> 01:17:28,480

spouses there and actually have them gain an understanding from the start of this is

729

01:17:28,480 --> 01:17:34,360

what the job entails and this is what could happen and you are you know the ones on a

730

01:17:34,360 --> 01:17:39,380

home front that can point stuff out before anybody else and get them help you know it's

731

01:17:39,380 --> 01:17:46,020

one of the reasons why I created a QR code for our peer support website and made a magnet

732

01:17:46,020 --> 01:17:51,480

out of it and sent it physically to everybody's homes so their spouses could use it and have

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01:17:51,480 --> 01:17:59,560

it and it was just there so it's it's huge but it's it's very disparate this this appropriate

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01:17:59,560 --> 01:18:03,880

I came to say it but and that's why you know I should say too this would be a good time

735

01:18:03,880 --> 01:18:11,520

to plug the bridge retreat I'm not sure if you're familiar with that but I'm not a spawners

736

01:18:11,520 --> 01:18:21,360

bridge first responders bridge it's in Columbus and it's it's it's ran by a guy named Mickey

737

01:18:21,360 --> 01:18:26,800

Inger who would be great on the show actually a retired police officer from Westerville

738

01:18:26,800 --> 01:18:32,600

which is a suburb of Columbus but he has put on I think they're up to 10 or 11 shows now

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01:18:32,600 --> 01:18:40,440

where every three or four months they they get together in Columbus for a three day retreat

740

01:18:40,440 --> 01:18:45,440

and it's all police it's all fire and you bring your spouses everything is paid for

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01:18:45,440 --> 01:18:52,560

your hotel room the food everything and you just got to get just got to get there but

742

01:18:52,560 --> 01:19:00,820

it's a amazing way of letting your spouses know this is what we deal with with our job

743

01:19:00,820 --> 01:19:06,240

and this is how it can affect us at home and so it's a lot of they do a lot of lecturing

744

01:19:06,240 --> 01:19:10,960

they have Pat Kenny is you know one of the speakers there's there's several different

745

01:19:10,960 --> 01:19:17,960

ones that I think you've had on your show but they also break people away and split

746

01:19:17,960 --> 01:19:25,040

them up as spouses and police and fire and then do our own little breakout sessions but

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01:19:25,040 --> 01:19:31,680

having having things like that I think could really help with our relationships so you

748

01:19:31,680 --> 01:19:36,400

had first responders bridge is something to check out and you just got to get there that's

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01:19:36,400 --> 01:19:42,200

it everything else is taken care of brilliant so but into that but having having having

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01:19:42,200 --> 01:19:49,560

my wife like really just bringing her around and making her aware I think has been been

751

01:19:49,560 --> 01:19:55,240

huge you know because I think she understood that the thing is with her is that we knew

752

01:19:55,240 --> 01:20:03,000

each other when we were kids so she she is fully aware of how I was compared to how I

753

01:20:03,000 --> 01:20:10,400

am now she has seen that that whole thing kind of transfer and it wasn't I think anything

754

01:20:10,400 --> 01:20:17,280

all at once it was just over the years you know the job definitely changed me you know

755

01:20:17,280 --> 01:20:25,600

but but I think having her understand that I'm not trying to be an asshole like that's

756

01:20:25,600 --> 01:20:34,360

not my goal is to be a dick to you but like that's just how I'm wired now as much as I'd

757

01:20:34,360 --> 01:20:41,720

rather not be but if we didn't start if we didn't go to all these places and do all this

758

01:20:41,720 --> 01:20:50,080

work she wouldn't be here with me she would have high tailed a long time ago you know

759

01:20:50,080 --> 01:20:56,000

but I'm blessed that she has been patient and she has worked with me I mean it I think

760

01:20:56,000 --> 01:21:05,440

back James to I mean I called on a Friday and I was gone on a Saturday for 40 days and

761

01:21:05,440 --> 01:21:12,520

she had to run around and take care of the two kids and still work and maintain the house

762

01:21:12,520 --> 01:21:19,320

and and I know friends and family shipped in and helped out but like I really put her

763

01:21:19,320 --> 01:21:28,480

in a shitty spot and and she could have held that against me and she but she didn't well

764

01:21:28,480 --> 01:21:32,640

I mean firstly the the resources for the family from the front door moving forward I think

765

01:21:32,640 --> 01:21:40,960

are imperative but this is also why I fight so hard for the 24 72 to be a national standard

766

01:21:40,960 --> 01:21:49,360

because if you add two equal and opposing elements you have the improved rest of the

767

01:21:49,360 --> 01:21:53,920

first responder so now their mental health is is a lot more nurtured their physical health

768

01:21:53,920 --> 01:21:57,400

and not a lot more likely to or a lot less likely excuse me to get hurt you know back

769

01:21:57,400 --> 01:22:02,160

injuries etc you know you've got less weight gain less problems with hormones you know

770

01:22:02,160 --> 01:22:09,160

all the things you've got a better human being on one side and every fourth day they're now

771

01:22:09,160 --> 01:22:15,560

actually home an extra 24 hours so dad mom is physically present more and then if you

772

01:22:15,560 --> 01:22:19,920

do this properly it solves the recruitment crisis because people want to work in this

773

01:22:19,920 --> 01:22:24,640

job because now we've set up an environment for our responders to thrive rather than destroy

774

01:22:24,640 --> 01:22:30,320

them now you know you're fully fully staffed mandatory will be once in a blue moon but

775

01:22:30,320 --> 01:22:35,520

over apart from that when you say you're going to come home you actually come home so whether

776

01:22:35,520 --> 01:22:40,620

it's the cancer and mental health side that we know sleep deprivation causes is a massive

777

01:22:40,620 --> 01:22:46,560

amplifier of ill health mentally and physically but also you know the family dynamic you're

778

01:22:46,560 --> 01:22:51,440

fixing all of the things on top of the fact that now as I've said on many of these episodes

779

01:22:51,440 --> 01:22:57,080

with my guests that have done this and shown it there is a massive financial savings because

780

01:22:57,080 --> 01:23:01,200

if you think about all these steps that you had to go through when you're off someone's

781

01:23:01,200 --> 01:23:04,840

covering your spot that's time and a half of overtime there's the medical disability

782

01:23:04,840 --> 01:23:08,580

that was paid out you know what I mean there's there's all these back-end payments and it's

783

01:23:08,580 --> 01:23:12,200

insanity and I was actually just talking to Tulsi Gabbard about this I interviewed her

784

01:23:12,200 --> 01:23:17,720

on Sunday and it was the same nationally the false economy of our of our health care system

785

01:23:17,720 --> 01:23:23,400

or disease management system you know we don't invest to where it encourages people to be

786

01:23:23,400 --> 01:23:29,560

healthier it's quite the opposite you know so that courageous leadership to actually

787

01:23:29,560 --> 01:23:35,840

put more rest and recovery into the first responders work week is what we need to see

788

01:23:35,840 --> 01:23:42,000

next and that will massively affect everything including our relationships and I've got a



789

01:23:42,000 --> 01:23:49,680

friend I'm thinking of specifically who I won't name who was an absolute fucking dynamo

790

01:23:49,680 --> 01:23:53,640

like one of those guys that you know just bouncing off the walls the whole time always

791

01:23:53,640 --> 01:23:58,180

happy always positive madly in love with this girl that he met then they have a kid madly

792

01:23:58,180 --> 01:24:03,480

in love with his child and I've watched him just go down the drain and now you know the

793

01:24:03,480 --> 01:24:09,260

marriage is basically over from what I understand like he's clawing you know mentally himself

794

01:24:09,260 --> 01:24:15,000

and he was this person but it was the job in this particular department 56 hour work

795

01:24:15,000 --> 01:24:20,560

weeks no Kelly days mandatory overtime all the time so now you're talking about 80 hours

796

01:24:20,560 --> 01:24:27,320

a week so this is why I'm so passionate is no matter what the conversation we're having

797

01:24:27,320 --> 01:24:31,320

one of the massive things that we need to change is the way that we work our first responders

798

01:24:31,320 --> 01:24:36,440

because the result otherwise is as you talked about you know a SWAT medic running through

799

01:24:36,440 --> 01:24:42,100

the the woods almost dying death by cop or you know yourself almost dying from from cancer

800

01:24:42,100 --> 01:24:48,640

and then suicide ideation these are arguably some of the most resilient men and women in

801

01:24:48,640 --> 01:24:54,100

our communities that stand on that diamond on the drill ground day one why is this happening

802

01:24:54,100 --> 01:25:01,080

year 10 year 12 year 15 etc so unless we actually finally say enough is enough and

803

01:25:01,080 --> 01:25:06,000

we proactively invest in our people it's only going to get worse and worse and worse but

804

01:25:06,000 --> 01:25:11,840

the big you know what makes me excited is that I think that we're at an absolute critical

805

01:25:11,840 --> 01:25:17,440

mass because if the whole nation is struggling to recruit then we're struggling to recruit

806

01:25:17,440 --> 01:25:22,920

but we're kind of barely ish what's happening five years from now now we're behind now you're

807

01:25:22,920 --> 01:25:27,000

actually going to see fire departments literally not be able to exist in the in cities and

808

01:25:27,000 --> 01:25:35,040

counties or which is happening in Florida you actually switch to 2472 and now people

809

01:25:35,040 --> 01:25:39,200

start lining up outside your your department again because they're like oh they actually

810

01:25:39,200 --> 01:25:42,520

they actually seem to want to fix this they care about their people and this is what I've

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01:25:42,520 --> 01:25:47,520

seen from Boynton Beach city of Gainesville Pasco County here is that they were like the

812

01:25:47,520 --> 01:25:53,680

moment we announced that we were moving to it we had lines out the door again so in addition

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01:25:53,680 --> 01:25:58,520

to all the things that we talked about which are very reactive the proactive side which

814

01:25:58,520 --> 01:26:04,760

includes peer support and everything else is that we have to advocate nationally for

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01:26:04,760 --> 01:26:10,080

a standardized work week and the 2472 to me is the I wouldn't say the gold standard because

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01:26:10,080 --> 01:26:15,220

it's still two hours more than the civilian standard and the corporate space is just showing

817

01:26:15,220 --> 01:26:20,200

now that a four-day work week is equally as productive in Google and some of these more

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01:26:20,200 --> 01:26:28,160

progressive corporations but at least for now the 42 the 2472 to give our first responders

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01:26:28,160 --> 01:26:33,320

an environment for them to actually thrive at work and then to have quality time with

820

01:26:33,320 --> 01:26:36,400

their family when they come home.

821

01:26:36,400 --> 01:26:42,360

Well I think what you need to do is keep doing this keep talking about it because it is it

822

01:26:42,360 --> 01:26:47,680

is finally happening I've got a department about 45 minutes away from me that started

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01:26:47,680 --> 01:26:52,960

it and I'm hoping that more people follow suit as well so it's not just in Florida even

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01:26:52,960 --> 01:26:58,680

in Ohio we got somebody doing it and I hope it becomes a norm but it's it's people like

825

01:26:58,680 --> 01:27:04,280

you that keep talking about it and it just makes sense this shouldn't this shouldn't

826

01:27:04,280 --> 01:27:12,080

be that hard of a discussion you know but that is to really truly have better work life

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01:27:12,080 --> 01:27:17,280

balance that's what we need and by the way I don't know if you've realized this or not

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01:27:17,280 --> 01:27:26,720

I realized the key to work life balance is retiring that's it that's like really in order

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01:27:26,720 --> 01:27:31,280

to have it you need to retire and stop doing and then then you can do kind of whatever

830

01:27:31,280 --> 01:27:33,960

you want at your speed.

831

01:27:33,960 --> 01:27:37,720

Yeah but I mean the next best thing is to at least give more time you know what I mean

832

01:27:37,720 --> 01:27:41,840

I think because I agree I mean let's not let's not turn it into fairy tales someone has to

833

01:27:41,840 --> 01:27:46,800

be awake for 24 hours to watch over our city or county while everyone sleeps and that's

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01:27:46,800 --> 01:27:51,680

what we signed up to do but you know there is a middle ground where we can give the you

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01:27:51,680 --> 01:27:57,160

know the more more time off and it's like it's not even more we just we never we never

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01:27:57,160 --> 01:28:03,120

adapted to the transition to EMS and fire we never adapted to the 911 abuse that we

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01:28:03,120 --> 01:28:08,240

see today you know the reliance on first responders for absolutely everything we never adapted

838

01:28:08,240 --> 01:28:13,240

to the terminations from vaccination requirements you know and the voids that those left I mean

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01:28:13,240 --> 01:28:17,920

all these things have put more and more work on the shoulders of the men and women in uniform

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01:28:17,920 --> 01:28:23,040

so it is time now for us to invest in our people and we will I mean there's there is

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01:28:23,040 --> 01:28:27,600

no downside the only downside literally no matter how you look at it and if you think

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01:28:27,600 --> 01:28:30,920

there's a downside you're probably telling yourself a myth because every time someone

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01:28:30,920 --> 01:28:35,080

says oh yeah but it's because they're not actually thinking it through properly oh we're

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01:28:35,080 --> 01:28:38,240

going to lose money no you're not you know when you went to days they didn't cut your

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01:28:38,240 --> 01:28:43,240

salary they just adjusted your hourly rate it's the same thing but the only downside

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01:28:43,240 --> 01:28:47,780

is it requires courage of leadership it requires someone who's not going to look like a rock

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01:28:47,780 --> 01:28:52,280

star that budget year but they're going to be investing and I love this phrase you know

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01:28:52,280 --> 01:28:56,520

planting the tree under the shade of which they'll never know that is the kind of courageous

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01:28:56,520 --> 01:29:01,080

leadership that we need to advocate for a generation that maybe you would have retired

850

01:29:01,080 --> 01:29:07,860

out by that point yeah no you're right on and like I said you need to keep waving this

851

01:29:07,860 --> 01:29:16,400

flag because it is happening it is it is making a change and my hope is you know a decade

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01:29:16,400 --> 01:29:24,880

from now you can take a step back and just have a nice little deep breath and just realize

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01:29:24,880 --> 01:29:31,560

wow I helped really you know implement this change I was I was talking about this when

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01:29:31,560 --> 01:29:38,940

nobody else would and finally it has changed because of that so many lives are better because

855

01:29:38,940 --> 01:29:44,840

of it that's coming for you I don't know when exactly but I hope that you have you know

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01:29:44,840 --> 01:29:53,200

that that you're going to have a moment where you can finally just go I did good yeah I

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01:29:53,200 --> 01:29:59,240

mean I want to see mate I've had the phone calls yesterday I've had emails I had messages

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01:29:59,240 --> 01:30:03,200

it's you know it's it's happening the interest is getting there and then the thing is when

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01:30:03,200 --> 01:30:08,000

you when you actually dive in and you just take 10 minutes to really listen to it you

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01:30:08,000 --> 01:30:12,760

know and again all of us are at fault like I believe that I worked one day on two days

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01:30:12,760 --> 01:30:18,240

off until one day I went wait a second a day in the rest of the world isn't 24 hours is

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01:30:18,240 --> 01:30:23,840

eight hours with a one hour lunch nine hour day so we worked three hours squished together

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01:30:23,840 --> 01:30:29,960

of which the second day our work is from eight midnight to eight so that's not a day off

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01:30:29,960 --> 01:30:34,040

you work eight hours a day so actually it's three days on one day off is what you actually

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01:30:34,040 --> 01:30:39,800

get it's not 10 days a month it's 30 days a month so that's the thing is when we have

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01:30:39,800 --> 01:30:45,520

the humility to take a step back and go I'm gonna question what I've always believed that's

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01:30:45,520 --> 01:30:51,560

when it starts all making sense and then when you see when you get your mind away from currency

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01:30:51,560 --> 01:30:56,320

being dollars and cents and actually currency is time with your loved ones and your own

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01:30:56,320 --> 01:31:00,560

physical mental health again that reframes it and then the unions are like oh we're just

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01:31:00,560 --> 01:31:04,240

going to chase another dollar and you actually understand it and you get together and go

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01:31:04,240 --> 01:31:08,320

no we're not going to chase another dollar this time we're gonna we're gonna pursue this

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01:31:08,320 --> 01:31:14,480

24 72 that is the superpower that is really the most valuable currency you can you can

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01:31:14,480 --> 01:31:16,920

pursue.

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01:31:16,920 --> 01:31:24,840

This this whole this this career is all about the long game and it's I think increasingly

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01:31:24,840 --> 01:31:32,400

harder and harder to have a career in which you make it till the end and actually enjoy

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01:31:32,400 --> 01:31:41,000

your retirement because of just all the different exposures that one gets on just a daily shift

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01:31:41,000 --> 01:31:49,920

I mean all those just add up and if we're able to reduce those then I think it would

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01:31:49,920 --> 01:31:58,480

it would make a significant long-term impact on us and not just us but our families so

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01:31:58,480 --> 01:32:04,480

what's the point of doing all this stuff for 25 30 years so you can enjoy retirement for

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01:32:04,480 --> 01:32:11,540

all five years but I don't I don't get that it doesn't make any sense to me like why do

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01:32:11,540 --> 01:32:18,960

that so if you're able to get through the career and be healthy and enjoy that retirement

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01:32:18,960 --> 01:32:24,860

and be healthy that's that should be everybody's goal yeah and this is what you're what you're

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01:32:24,860 --> 01:32:31,640

talking about is is would be a huge component of that because it's all about whenever I

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01:32:31,640 --> 01:32:36,520

go out and I talk it's it's all about reducing everything is comes down to reducing your

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01:32:36,520 --> 01:32:44,720

exposure whether it's to carcinogens whether it's to you know bad calls like a you know

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01:32:44,720 --> 01:32:50,400

I bet you were the same way like when you started early on and it was something gruesome

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01:32:50,400 --> 01:32:56,120

even if you didn't have to see it you went and saw it like I want to check that out that

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01:32:56,120 --> 01:33:02,880

guy you know cut a cope in his throat I want to see it and at some point you probably just

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01:33:02,880 --> 01:33:09,400

like me were like I'm good like if I don't have to be the medic that calls it like if

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01:33:09,400 --> 01:33:15,600

you're that guy then you have to see that it is what it is but like I stopped unnecessarily

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01:33:15,600 --> 01:33:22,880

introducing myself to trauma it's all about reducing your exposures yeah hundred percent

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01:33:22,880 --> 01:33:30,040

I talked about this in my first book we had a poor little girl decapitated in a car crash

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01:33:30,040 --> 01:33:34,120

and the engine was there first and they put a blanket over her head and that image you

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01:33:34,120 --> 01:33:38,640

know is still in my mind you know the little legs and everything normal but the flat you

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01:33:38,640 --> 01:33:43,280

know just above the neck versus where her skull should have been but I didn't lift it

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01:33:43,280 --> 01:33:48,080

up and look it you know I've been on and actually not that long probably three years by that

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01:33:48,080 --> 01:33:53,560

point but I was a little bit older as a firefighter and we were supposed to go back later to do

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01:33:53,560 --> 01:34:00,200

body retrieval because she was you know entrapped in the back as well and my captain and engineer

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01:34:00,200 --> 01:34:05,200

DFO'd me and my firefighter partner I said just stay here said you know we're about to

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01:34:05,200 --> 01:34:10,240

retire you don't need to see you know you're both I was a parent at the time of a child

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01:34:10,240 --> 01:34:13,720

of a similar age because you don't need to see this you're not saving a life we're just

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01:34:13,720 --> 01:34:18,080

removing a body and they ordered us to stay and I just remember being you know there's

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01:34:18,080 --> 01:34:22,480

a part of us that were like of course we'd be fine and we would have been fine but I

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01:34:22,480 --> 01:34:28,360

was so you know humbled by the fact that they thought about our exposures like you said

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01:34:28,360 --> 01:34:31,600

and then later on there was many times a medic where I just told everyone let's just wait

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01:34:31,600 --> 01:34:35,800

there I'll go you know call it and I did and I was the only one that saw that particular

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01:34:35,800 --> 01:34:39,840

horrible thing so I got to at least pay it forward but I've made this observation on

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01:34:39,840 --> 01:34:45,040

here that there's no medal for seeing the most stuff you know and it is it is a young

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01:34:45,040 --> 01:34:49,200

man and woman thing like oh I can take it I can take it well you can congratulations

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01:34:49,200 --> 01:34:58,840

what do you win nightmares exactly exactly flashbacks you know yes yeah yeah yeah you're

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01:34:58,840 --> 01:35:02,080

gonna see enough horrible stuff where you do need to be there you don't need to add

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01:35:02,080 --> 01:35:08,920

to it so well I want to I want to shift to another incredible proactive incentive and

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01:35:08,920 --> 01:35:13,400

that is the Brothers Helping Brothers Conference we discussed it because I think you'd started

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01:35:13,400 --> 01:35:18,680

it when we did the first conversation if I'm not mistaken but last year I was honored to

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01:35:18,680 --> 01:35:25,640

actually be part of it so walk me through you know the the growth of that and then I'd

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01:35:25,640 --> 01:35:29,640

love to just talk about some of the amazing speakers that we had the year I was there

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01:35:29,640 --> 01:35:37,800

sure absolutely so this all started out with my buddy Nick Maggato who is the co-executive

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01:35:37,800 --> 01:35:43,320

director from Brothers Helping Brothers and Brothers Helping Brothers is a nonprofit that

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01:35:43,320 --> 01:35:49,400

assist rural departments with equipment giving them grants to buy stuff that they wouldn't

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01:35:49,400 --> 01:35:54,200

really normally be able to buy just essential tools that they just don't even have really

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01:35:54,200 --> 01:36:01,840

the budget to have so Nick really does a great job of working with different vendors and

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01:36:01,840 --> 01:36:04,920

trying to take care of these departments and give them what they need to really do the

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01:36:04,920 --> 01:36:14,640

job and you know one of the other things that he has done as part of the nonprofits mission

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01:36:14,640 --> 01:36:21,880

statement is doing education as well so he approached me about seven years ago actually

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01:36:21,880 --> 01:36:29,100

and he had he was a local firefighter and he had he knew that I was involved in a firefighter

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01:36:29,100 --> 01:36:34,600

cancer world so we ended up having lunch and he pitched this conference to me and asked

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01:36:34,600 --> 01:36:43,480

if I would talk about it and I said of course yeah absolutely and but he was and doing so

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01:36:43,480 --> 01:36:48,840

he was also telling me about some of the other people that he planned on asking and I think

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01:36:48,840 --> 01:36:56,120

that was his first introduction in the world of like where he thought that everybody was

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01:36:56,120 --> 01:37:00,440

all on the same page and everybody would get along and we're all trying to do the same

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01:37:00,440 --> 01:37:06,680

thing and I had to break the bad news to him that said you can't have that person with

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01:37:06,680 --> 01:37:13,960

this person or that person and this person etc etc because there was like there there's

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01:37:13,960 --> 01:37:20,080

animosity amongst the firefighter cancer world as silly as that sounds so he had no idea

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01:37:20,080 --> 01:37:28,560

and I had to kind of break it down to him and before you know it I basically ended up

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01:37:28,560 --> 01:37:33,280

putting together the lineup regarding the firefighter cancer stuff and and his idea

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01:37:33,280 --> 01:37:38,440

was back then seven years ago he said we want to do I want to do a firefighter cancer conference

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01:37:38,440 --> 01:37:45,360

but I want to have mental health added to that and really just stick it down everybody's

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01:37:45,360 --> 01:37:49,640

throats like they came here for the cancer stuff but we're going to throw mental health

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01:37:49,640 --> 01:37:55,400

on them too and that was you know seven years ago it was still a little taboo it's certainly

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01:37:55,400 --> 01:38:02,120

not what it is now but I was like sure whatever and at that time I really didn't know a lot

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01:38:02,120 --> 01:38:07,040

about mental health I think being involved in this conference is really what kind of

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01:38:07,040 --> 01:38:13,600

started to just shape me regarding all that stuff and so you know this coming year you

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01:38:13,600 --> 01:38:20,280

were you were at the sixth annual conference and really the the conference is different

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01:38:20,280 --> 01:38:27,640

than I think a lot of conferences we know we can't compete with the FDIC sort of the

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01:38:27,640 --> 01:38:35,880

firehouses so we try to be the alternative and you know when you go to FDIC it's a great

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01:38:35,880 --> 01:38:42,560

conference but it is really expensive it's really expensive to attend and it's expensive

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01:38:42,560 --> 01:38:48,240

for the hotels I mean hotel rooms 300 bucks and I mean it is it is something in which

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01:38:48,240 --> 01:38:54,960

your fire department usually ends up paying for you to go you know it's part of the budget

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01:38:54,960 --> 01:38:59,880

and that's why a lot of people you know 30,000 people get to go we wanted to do a conference

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01:38:59,880 --> 01:39:08,640

in which you could still have that same quality of speakers but it's affordable to where the

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01:39:08,640 --> 01:39:14,320

individual can pay for it they can come out of their own pocket and pay for it instead

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01:39:14,320 --> 01:39:18,480

of having to rely on their department because a lot of these you know especially the skin

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01:39:18,480 --> 01:39:23,720

the smaller departments they don't have that budget so for three days at our conference

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01:39:23,720 --> 01:39:30,280

it's 75 bucks and we're going to feed you and we're gonna have a hell of a lineup and

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01:39:30,280 --> 01:39:35,480

I think the the reason we're able to do that is Nick and I don't get paid for it at all

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01:39:35,480 --> 01:39:41,920

like it's really more than anything it's the vendors that end up paying for all the speakers

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01:39:41,920 --> 01:39:45,760

and getting them there and the travel and the hotels and all that kind of stuff it's

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01:39:45,760 --> 01:39:52,560

really the the vendors that do the bulk of paying for it and because we don't take payment

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01:39:52,560 --> 01:40:01,280

it allows us to make this affordable and you know along with that I think Nick and I are

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01:40:01,280 --> 01:40:08,680

both fun like we we don't we're not rigid you know we're we're he always I remember

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01:40:08,680 --> 01:40:14,960

the second year we did this I wanted to be serious and I told him let's wear suits and

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01:40:14,960 --> 01:40:19,920

let's let's be serious because for whatever reason I wanted to compete and then I realized

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01:40:19,920 --> 01:40:23,880

really after the fact that I hate wearing a suit I mean I already knew I hated wearing



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01:40:23,880 --> 01:40:29,760

a suit but I just realized like why compete when we could just be different and that's

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01:40:29,760 --> 01:40:35,880

really when we started being silly and calling it exotic Beaver Creek you know and and wearing

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01:40:35,880 --> 01:40:43,040

either Hawaiian shirts or I mean last year our theme was Hollywood and this coming year

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01:40:43,040 --> 01:40:47,760

our theme is going to be pro wrestling you know so again like we're going to cover some

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01:40:47,760 --> 01:40:55,480

really serious shit it's in that room is deep and it is powerful but yet at the same time

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01:40:55,480 --> 01:41:03,720

it's um it's fun it's it's just it's very it's I don't know how we created it but I'd

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01:41:03,720 --> 01:41:09,440

love it and it's something I look forward to every year doing and it's for me it's really

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01:41:09,440 --> 01:41:15,120

become a great way also just to hang out with a lot of my friends and and and sucker people

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01:41:15,120 --> 01:41:19,080

in the coming that would never ever come to Beaver Creek Ohio to begin with like you

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01:41:19,080 --> 01:41:25,840

that it was it was phenomenal and there's one there's a couple of conferences I really

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01:41:25,840 --> 01:41:30,960

love the one the Orlando fire conference is great because I'm drawn to the ones where

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01:41:30,960 --> 01:41:35,200

it's just about classes and training and of course there'll be some vendors around and

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01:41:35,200 --> 01:41:38,560

you know that they have some good products and obviously they're supporting it but like

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01:41:38,560 --> 01:41:42,720

Orlando there have been some great classes I've taken this means phenomenal hands-on

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01:41:42,720 --> 01:41:47,080

training like VES and some of these other ones and it's it's hard like they're their

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01:41:47,080 --> 01:41:54,320

classes are rigorous like you will you will be tested in those the Rosencrantz Florian

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01:41:54,320 --> 01:41:58,880

Symposium when it was going when I went one year in San Antonio that was absolutely phenomenal

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01:41:58,880 --> 01:42:03,360

as well and then there's yours and then I'm saying this because I mean hand on my heart

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01:42:03,360 --> 01:42:08,560

it was it was incredible and listening to you know firstly seeing that room of people

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01:42:08,560 --> 01:42:12,160

and these brothers helping brothers obviously male and female firefighters you know from

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01:42:12,160 --> 01:42:17,960

all all backgrounds were there but you know the the spectrum of speakers that you had

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01:42:17,960 --> 01:42:22,000

you know talking about PFAS and cancer but also talking about the mental health side

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01:42:22,000 --> 01:42:27,440

and listening to Ben Vernon whose presentation now is mind-blowing and then Brendan McDonald

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01:42:27,440 --> 01:42:31,240

you know and then and then sitting down with them you know and then for me personally getting

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01:42:31,240 --> 01:42:36,920

to interview Raoul and Jeff from Orlando that had never even met each other before but Jeff

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01:42:36,920 --> 01:42:42,080

is was the creator of their peer support which by the way the city of Orlando doesn't support

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01:42:42,080 --> 01:42:46,760

to this day even though they go around the nation helping other departments and then

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01:42:46,760 --> 01:42:51,320

Raoul was one of the SWAT guys that ended up killing the the pulse shooter and so their

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01:42:51,320 --> 01:42:56,640

perspective from two very very different lenses on that event was phenomenal but the whole

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01:42:56,640 --> 01:43:01,800

thing was when you walk through the door you learn something and what I dislike about some

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01:43:01,800 --> 01:43:06,600

of these other conferences is it's a trade show with some training on the side and for

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01:43:06,600 --> 01:43:10,640

me and I know we talked about this before like if I walk into a trade show and then

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01:43:10,640 --> 01:43:14,080

they're selling helmets and I'm like oh wow that's so progressive that's what we wore

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01:43:14,080 --> 01:43:18,800

fucking hundred years ago like it's you know there's nothing really mind-blowing about

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01:43:18,800 --> 01:43:22,520

a lot of the the evolution and the really progressive stuff no one's gonna buy because

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01:43:22,520 --> 01:43:27,360

of the bullshit you know narcissism that we have in our profession too so if you remove

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01:43:27,360 --> 01:43:32,880

the trade show side the thing of value to the actual firefighter is the classes and

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01:43:32,880 --> 01:43:37,000

the hands-on training and so that's what I thought was was phenomenal and whatever your

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01:43:37,000 --> 01:43:42,920

background whether you're from FDNY or a volunteer department it was completely pertinent to

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01:43:42,920 --> 01:43:45,840

everyone that was in the room.

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01:43:45,840 --> 01:43:53,640

Yeah thank you you know we you know every year we Nick and I will hang out and enjoy

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01:43:53,640 --> 01:44:00,720

the weekend and kind of bask in our glory but then like Monday Tuesday the following

1006

01:44:00,720 --> 01:44:05,680

week it's we're back to and then going how are we gonna top this shit and start start

1007

01:44:05,680 --> 01:44:10,480

putting it together and it's it's worked I mean we've done it now this is gonna be our

1008

01:44:10,480 --> 01:44:17,400

seventh time and we've been able to I think get anybody and everybody like you know I

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01:44:17,400 --> 01:44:23,720

think we've done a good enough job to wear these speakers talk to other speakers and

1010

01:44:23,720 --> 01:44:29,040

they say hey yeah this is legit I mean these guys are gonna take care of you you know it

1011

01:44:29,040 --> 01:44:36,040

sounds it sounds a little crazy but like check it out for sure and it's it's worked well

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01:44:36,040 --> 01:44:41,680

and it's and it started to I think get a nice following and and we just have fun with it

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01:44:41,680 --> 01:44:49,360

I mean even our website like Nick told me he said hey I was just looking at names and

1014

01:44:49,360 --> 01:44:54,160

you know domain names and he said exotic beaver creek dot com is available and I'm like fucking

1015

01:44:54,160 --> 01:45:00,200

buy it yes and so that so you could go to exotic beaver creek dot com it's not a porn

1016

01:45:00,200 --> 01:45:04,640

site even though it kind of sounds like one and that's where our lineup is and all that

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01:45:04,640 --> 01:45:12,240

stuff so I mean that's just it's just fun I mean that's that's it we've got I mean gosh

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01:45:12,240 --> 01:45:16,640

I mean it's pro wrestling thing this year and Nick and I have I mean we literally have

1019

01:45:16,640 --> 01:45:22,760

a year just to use our imagination to come up with like stupid ass shit you know and

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01:45:22,760 --> 01:45:30,920

and to have fun but at the same time we know like we're we're going to like make a difference

1021

01:45:30,920 --> 01:45:36,240

in somebody like that room I know I know for a fact we've saved people's lives in that

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01:45:36,240 --> 01:45:42,760

room I know I've been told that we've saved people's marriages in that room so it is it's

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01:45:42,760 --> 01:45:50,360

a very intimate just powerful thing powerful and I'm blessed to be to be part of it there

1024

01:45:50,360 --> 01:45:56,160

was a couple years where you know we did and I was like how this is my last one and then

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01:45:56,160 --> 01:46:00,360

I'd get suckered back into doing it and I've I've this at this point I've stopped fighting

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01:46:00,360 --> 01:46:05,360

I just like yeah okay we're going to do this and it's just part of it and it's it's kind

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01:46:05,360 --> 01:46:10,520

of really especially now that I'm retired it's it's become you know one of my new purposes

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01:46:10,520 --> 01:46:17,600

it's one of the things that keeps me motivated and and keeps me busy up until you know the

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01:46:17,600 --> 01:46:23,100

actual event so and then I could do it all over again so it's it's a it's a good thing

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01:46:23,100 --> 01:46:30,320

for a lot of people I think absolutely I 100% agree so let's tell everyone who to expect

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01:46:30,320 --> 01:46:39,080

in 2024 so they can start looking to sign up this year okay yeah absolutely so the first

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01:46:39,080 --> 01:46:46,200

day which is October 16th so it's October 16th through 18th we're gonna have a deputy

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01:46:46,200 --> 01:46:51,840

chief of safety frankly from FDNY and he's gonna be the keynote he's he's been at the

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01:46:51,840 --> 01:46:58,440

conference a couple times but he's never really kicked it off and so he's gonna really I think

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01:46:58,440 --> 01:47:03,760

put everything in perspective I mean he does a great job of that he's got the the book

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01:47:03,760 --> 01:47:08,080

the cornerstones of leadership and I think he's going to really talk about leadership

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01:47:08,080 --> 01:47:14,760

and health and safety and how and the guy is so approachable I mean he's FDNY but he

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01:47:14,760 --> 01:47:20,480

also gets it he also runs for a volunteer department so he sees all the perspectives

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01:47:20,480 --> 01:47:27,240

so he is super approachable and even though he's works for the largest fire department

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01:47:27,240 --> 01:47:35,560

in the world he's so humble so he's he's just great for that we also have again and this

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01:47:35,560 --> 01:47:42,720

is we can we can make up our own rules which is which is lovely so we're actually going

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01:47:42,720 --> 01:47:51,760

to have a quine therapy at the conference so Tim Spradlin who's ex-military assistant

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01:47:51,760 --> 01:47:57,200

fire chief also was police officer does a lot of stuff to save a warrior his farm is

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01:47:57,200 --> 01:48:00,400

five minutes from where we're going to have this thing set up so he's going to bring the

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01:48:00,400 --> 01:48:05,040

horses down and we're going to do an intro to equine therapy which I don't know any other

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01:48:05,040 --> 01:48:11,080

conference that has ever done that but we're going to do that we're also going to have

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01:48:11,080 --> 01:48:17,860

one of my favorite clinicians Allison Feening talk Joe Elliott from Cincinnati will talk

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01:48:17,860 --> 01:48:24,920

about his therapy dog that he has and how he's integrated that within the Cincinnati

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01:48:24,920 --> 01:48:33,520

fire department let's see what else what else what else the second day I think you've had

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01:48:33,520 --> 01:48:38,480



him on the episode Michael Segru is going to be there and he's going to talk about organizational

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01:48:38,480 --> 01:48:46,360

betrayal and so he's a police officer which is you know different we've had Raul but that's

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01:48:46,360 --> 01:48:52,600

really kind of been it but he has such a great message that and he was so helpful for me

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01:48:52,600 --> 01:48:57,400

just going through all my stuff he's somebody that I leaned on and got advice from so I

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01:48:57,400 --> 01:49:06,600

really jumped at the chance to bring him in and we got Allison Brager coming in to talk

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01:49:06,600 --> 01:49:13,560

about sleep she was at a conference a couple years ago but she had to pivot and she had

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01:49:13,560 --> 01:49:19,240

to talk at night and instead of the day because a general was coming into town to talk to

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01:49:19,240 --> 01:49:26,040

her so so not a lot of people got to see her so we wanted to give her the opportunity to

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01:49:26,040 --> 01:49:32,320

come out we've got Brittany Hollerback come in she works with Dr. Starr Janky and does

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01:49:32,320 --> 01:49:42,120

a ton of firefighter cancer research let's see Carrie Ramela is from Phoenix and she

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01:49:42,120 --> 01:49:49,680

does a lot of peer support for she used to work for Phoenix Fire now she actually works

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01:49:49,680 --> 01:49:55,800

for their union and does a lot of stuff with the IFF so she's going to talk about a lot

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01:49:55,800 --> 01:50:02,000

of the stuff that we kind of mentioned earlier the the Stella Ganglion Block the EMDR just

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01:50:02,000 --> 01:50:06,480

the ketamine I mean all these different treatments that are coming out that can help us with

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01:50:06,480 --> 01:50:15,920

behavior health and then the last day we have Dr. Donnie Hutchison doing work-life balance

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01:50:15,920 --> 01:50:20,600

so basically doing a four-hour workshop on work-life balance because I do believe that's

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01:50:20,600 --> 01:50:26,280

something that we all struggle with and we all can could use that and and get better

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01:50:26,280 --> 01:50:33,280

oh and I forgot to Scott Ross and Ed Monroe from LA County are going to be there so they're

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01:50:33,280 --> 01:50:41,000

going to talk about the shooting that happened at the firehouse and then Scott will kind

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01:50:41,000 --> 01:50:48,800

of talk about really the peer support call out and what they did with that so you'll

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01:50:48,800 --> 01:50:55,440

get both perspectives there and then on top of that we have a guest MC and remember this

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01:50:55,440 --> 01:51:01,680

is pro wrestling theme so we actually booked the mouth of the south Jimmy Hart to to be

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01:51:01,680 --> 01:51:06,800

there to be the guest MC and help out with the photo booth and all that stuff so I mean

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01:51:06,800 --> 01:51:12,720

if you showed a picture of Jimmy Hart everybody would recognize him he's 80 years old he's

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01:51:12,720 --> 01:51:19,960

been in a wrestling business for 60 years and he's managed everybody from Andy Kaufman

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01:51:19,960 --> 01:51:27,680

to Paul Kogan and about everybody in between so he's a really cool guy that we're gonna

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01:51:27,680 --> 01:51:35,280

I don't know exactly how we're gonna use him completely yet but he should be fun and that's

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01:51:35,280 --> 01:51:42,080

kind of it exotic beaver creek comm check it out 75 bucks all three days amazing there's

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01:51:42,080 --> 01:51:48,560

my friend shameless plug yeah no plug away that's why I asked that question you've had

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01:51:48,560 --> 01:51:52,880

some amazing people you know you've got some amazing people coming Frank Lieb is phenomenal

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01:51:52,880 --> 01:51:55,800

absolutely phenomenal I had him on the show and then Ed Monroe I'm actually interviewing

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01:51:55,800 --> 01:52:02,000

next week about that very thing because again as I touched on earlier suicide homicide broken

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01:52:02,000 --> 01:52:06,880

mind you know slightly different obviously expression but I mean ultimately it's a lack

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01:52:06,880 --> 01:52:11,240

of value for life someone's own other people etc so it'll be an interesting perspective

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01:52:11,240 --> 01:52:18,760

to hear that yeah all right so you want me to say more didn't you you were waiting for

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01:52:18,760 --> 01:52:25,760

me to yeah I gave you that face if you don't you don't have to no no I go ahead

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01:52:25,760 --> 01:52:34,560

no no go if you had something no I just it's got to the point like I'm just I'm amazed at

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01:52:34,560 --> 01:52:42,640

the lineup and the people that we get because it is it's like such good quality I mean like

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01:52:42,640 --> 01:52:48,080

last year when you were there I mean you mentioned Ben Vernon who just who rocked it just did

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01:52:48,080 --> 01:52:54,480

amazing I mean his his talk is so polished and I I don't know the only other person I

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01:52:54,480 --> 01:53:01,240

could compare it to is Travis Howes as far as just taking you on a ride emotionally and

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01:53:01,240 --> 01:53:08,720

have you just feeling like oh my god and then and then two seconds later have you laughing

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01:53:08,720 --> 01:53:16,120

out of your seat like that guy that guy's amazing you know Brandon McDonough you know

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01:53:16,120 --> 01:53:22,200

he gets up there and he just he doesn't need slides he just talks from the heart it's just

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01:53:22,200 --> 01:53:29,000

amazing amazing kid I love them you know but um getting all these people there is just

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01:53:29,000 --> 01:53:36,360

I I when I booked this stuff I that I take a step back and go I can't believe I did this

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01:53:36,360 --> 01:53:44,060

like wow like this is impressive absolutely and it was and it was so everyone listening

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01:53:44,060 --> 01:53:49,840

sign up is all I can say all right so transitioning to the book then so you have written a book

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01:53:49,840 --> 01:53:55,840

overcoming Tuesday out May 1st talk to me about what made you finally put pen to paper

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01:53:55,840 --> 01:54:04,120

and who you brought in to help you write it yeah sure you know um the idea of a book it

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01:54:04,120 --> 01:54:15,440

it actually came from uh FDIC so I got picked to speak at FDIC in 2023 ironically I found

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01:54:15,440 --> 01:54:20,760

out that I was going to be teaching a class on wellness while I was at the center of excellence

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01:54:20,760 --> 01:54:26,560

that's kind of funny to me but um you know part of the deal when you talk at FDIC is

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01:54:26,560 --> 01:54:33,280

fire engineering asks you to write an article regarding your topic and so you know my topic

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01:54:33,280 --> 01:54:39,760

was how to create or enhance your fire department's wellness program and I just like any of the

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01:54:39,760 --> 01:54:45,040

articles I do I write an outline and this outline was I mean just the outline alone

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01:54:45,040 --> 01:54:51,800

was like eight pages and I remember sending that to Bobby Halden and going is there a

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01:54:51,800 --> 01:55:00,700

book here and Bobby said if you want it to be it absolutely is and I kind of just sat

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01:55:00,700 --> 01:55:06,300

on that for a while because I think the way the outline was written it was almost more

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01:55:06,300 --> 01:55:13,360

of like a textbook on wellness which that's not for me that's not my forte and I think

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01:55:13,360 --> 01:55:18,800

really I think Dina is doing that and that's going to be amazing when that comes out so

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01:55:18,800 --> 01:55:27,400

um but the idea of a book it didn't necessarily go away and after everything I'd went through

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01:55:27,400 --> 01:55:34,240

and ultimately even retiring like when I looked at that outline again like I realized that

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01:55:34,240 --> 01:55:43,320

there was so many of these items about wellness that are just part of my story that could

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01:55:43,320 --> 01:55:50,760

be part of part of this and you know my my sister um my sister Hillary who who lives

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01:55:50,760 --> 01:55:59,280

in Greenville South Carolina um she was the one that initially started bugging me like

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01:55:59,280 --> 01:56:07,080

hey you should write a book hey I'll write your book and she has you know Hillary's a

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01:56:07,080 --> 01:56:15,360

teacher um she's she's written a children's book um which was was tremendous and so writing

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01:56:15,360 --> 01:56:19,880

a children's book and writing my book it's probably about the same thing right but less

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01:56:19,880 --> 01:56:27,600

pictures it's a it's it took me it took me a while um initially I balked at it like I

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01:56:27,600 --> 01:56:33,560

just didn't want to I just didn't want to do it I didn't want to share my story I kind

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01:56:33,560 --> 01:56:38,880

of just I think wanted to move on and then the more and more as time went by I realized

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01:56:38,880 --> 01:56:45,760

you know like I think this story could actually help some people and I mean I saw that I saw

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01:56:45,760 --> 01:56:54,240

that really at FDIC when I did my class because my my class like I made sure to to make it

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01:56:54,240 --> 01:57:03,440

personal and do talk and I was very open um during that class and I got tremendous feedback

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01:57:03,440 --> 01:57:09,600

for doing that and and that I think kind of finally pushed me into saying all right let's

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01:57:09,600 --> 01:57:14,720

do it so the idea was um essentially for her I don't know if you want to call her a ghost

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01:57:14,720 --> 01:57:22,760

writer or what but um we waited until school started for both you know for our kids and

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01:57:22,760 --> 01:57:29,920

then we sat down I just did over zoom or or over the phone and I would just tell her a

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01:57:29,920 --> 01:57:36,360

story and she would she would take all the notes and then write the chapter out and we

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01:57:36,360 --> 01:57:41,800

would go back and forth back and forth back and forth until we finally it sounded like

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01:57:41,800 --> 01:57:49,200

it it should so I kind of took a shortcut like it's it's my book it's my story but um

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01:57:49,200 --> 01:57:55,480

I had somebody much smarter and and and better at grammar than me actually put it you know

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01:57:55,480 --> 01:58:03,920

down on on paper or on the computer or whatever and uh she you know she had to from the start

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01:58:03,920 --> 01:58:13,960

um actually decide if she's going to be my sister or or be just a writer um for whatever

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01:58:13,960 --> 01:58:20,160

reason like I had a list of the topics I wanted to discuss I didn't start off with the easy

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01:58:20,160 --> 01:58:27,560

stuff I went right from the start with the bad stuff the shitty stuff the tough stuff

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01:58:27,560 --> 01:58:31,640



and I don't think she saw that coming and I don't know what possessed me to do that

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01:58:31,640 --> 01:58:36,120

but that's how I did it and so she had to make that choice pretty much right away like

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01:58:36,120 --> 01:58:43,800

I'm going to just be a writer and I'm not going to try to be really a sister or be emotional

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01:58:43,800 --> 01:58:51,920

really at all just you know be that kind of middle person mediator neutral party if you

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01:58:51,920 --> 01:58:59,280

will and uh I think that was a lot for her because I don't think she knew some stuff

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01:58:59,280 --> 01:59:05,080

she certainly didn't know all the stuff and you know but it all it worked out we started

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01:59:05,080 --> 01:59:12,560

in mid-august and you know here we are now um getting ready to finally get it out there

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01:59:12,560 --> 01:59:21,720

and I brought in uh your friend and my friend uh pat canny to write the foreword um I just

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01:59:21,720 --> 01:59:29,760

I have a connection with that guy uh he's just amazing I love him dearly and and he

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01:59:29,760 --> 01:59:36,360

just it just felt right um having him be a part of it um I've been blessed he told me

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01:59:36,360 --> 01:59:45,880

I mean from the start that I was part of Sean's team and it's just uh man I'm just blessed

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01:59:45,880 --> 01:59:51,840

to have him around and and to have uh have him start the book off and he and what he

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01:59:51,840 --> 01:59:59,200

wrote was ah man I mean I love it just from the start he just he really kind of puts everything

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01:59:59,200 --> 02:00:03,720

in perspective and gets you ready for that journey that I take you on in that book which

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02:00:03,720 --> 02:00:08,040

is it's not all bad there's a lot of good stuff in there too but it's it's certainly

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02:00:08,040 --> 02:00:14,520

a ride um but the hope is ultimately I mean when you when it really comes down to it the

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02:00:14,520 --> 02:00:24,360

book is about hope and it's about resiliency and you know fighting through the static and

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02:00:24,360 --> 02:00:33,760

getting on the other side and not giving up um and uh I really I mean my intent is my hope

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02:00:33,760 --> 02:00:38,240

is that it just helps somebody like they can read this story and maybe they learn from

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02:00:38,240 --> 02:00:43,880

my mistakes and don't do the same thing that's it I never really truly thought that I would

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02:00:43,880 --> 02:00:48,120

write a book and I certainly didn't think it would be about me and about my story and

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02:00:48,120 --> 02:00:54,840

that would have value but from the people that have read it they they say yeah like

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02:00:54,840 --> 02:01:01,680

it's good shit in there and it's it's amazing you're still here uh it's what I've been told

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02:01:01,680 --> 02:01:09,560

it's crazy that is so it's it's just it's my way of trying to give back and uh to continue

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02:01:09,560 --> 02:01:16,880

having a purpose and and I I realized I'm I'm retired I'm not going to be a firefighter

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02:01:16,880 --> 02:01:23,240

I'm not going to be a medic anymore um but I don't feel like I'm done I want to continue

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02:01:23,240 --> 02:01:28,840

to contribute and I know you understand that like I I feel like there's I could still help

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02:01:28,840 --> 02:01:34,440

I could still do things and this is this is just one of those forms to do it and and you

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02:01:34,440 --> 02:01:40,160

know comes out May 1st it's going to be available on Amazon there there I go again with a shameless

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02:01:40,160 --> 02:01:46,800

plug but um plug away I'm not sure where it's going to go and I'm just going to and I'm

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02:01:46,800 --> 02:01:52,800

okay with that I don't know if it's going to sell a dozen or however many I'm just going

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02:01:52,800 --> 02:02:00,800

to go for the ride and wherever it goes it goes you know um yeah that's it

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02:02:02,240 --> 02:02:06,640

Did you find it cathartic to get these stories out of your mind onto paper?

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02:02:06,640 --> 02:02:21,360

I I think so and I and I think a lot of it was um part of it too I should say was a lot of like I left

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02:02:22,160 --> 02:02:26,960

like here like all my job you know for Dating Fire

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02:02:26,960 --> 02:02:36,560

a lot of people probably the majority of folks there I was there I was the wellness guy and then

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02:02:36,560 --> 02:02:44,880

I wasn't and I was gone and they really never saw me again like you know I went away for 40 days

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02:02:44,880 --> 02:02:52,560

you know was hidden away at a radio repair for 90 days and like and next thing I know like then

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02:02:52,560 --> 02:02:57,760

I'm not working at all and I'm growing this glorious beard and then I finally retire and

1176

02:02:57,760 --> 02:03:04,000

they just don't you know they don't know what happened they have no idea what transpired

1177

02:03:04,880 --> 02:03:10,640

because you know from their perspective I was there I was doing good things the people in the

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02:03:10,640 --> 02:03:17,360

street they loved me they knew that I had their back they knew that I was fine for them and all

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02:03:17,360 --> 02:03:24,240

of a sudden snap of the fingers and I can't I can't snap with well I got the this little

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02:03:26,160 --> 02:03:34,080

slung on but anyway uh and then I was gone and so and I really didn't tell anybody again because

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02:03:34,080 --> 02:03:41,120

I talked to you earlier about the fear like I was I was so fearful that um

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02:03:41,120 --> 02:03:46,080

that um something could happen and it was actual it was I mentioned it now a couple times  
Michael

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02:03:46,080 --> 02:03:52,240

Sugru was the guy who told me he said Jim you're not going to feel safe until you see a deposit

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02:03:52,240 --> 02:03:58,880

in your checking account only at that point where you feel like you have security in your family  
and

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02:03:58,880 --> 02:04:06,720

you're going to be okay and that was that was 100 true what he told me um and so this in a way  
this

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02:04:06,720 --> 02:04:12,240

book is not always that I think going to help people but it it tells the people what happened

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02:04:12,240 --> 02:04:20,000

what went down um so that doing that actually telling people and being honest and telling the

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02:04:20,000 --> 02:04:27,200

truth and giving it out there that was definitely cathartic um and then everything else I think is

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02:04:27,200 --> 02:04:32,960

just bonus as far as I think how it could help people because I try to I talk about

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02:04:32,960 --> 02:04:38,960

I talk about sleep in there I talk about hearing loss I talk about cancer I definitely talk about

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02:04:38,960 --> 02:04:46,480

behavioral health but um work-life balance it's all it's all in there and I and I wrote it as a way

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02:04:46,480 --> 02:04:54,240

because I did I really did want it to be considered a resource maybe not a traditional resource but I

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02:04:54,240 --> 02:04:59,520

wanted it to be a resource nonetheless beautiful

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02:04:59,520 --> 02:05:04,480

well I want to say thank you so much it's been a phenomenal conversation I think it

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02:05:05,040 --> 02:05:08,880

just lined up perfectly with the first one we literally just carried on where we left off last

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02:05:08,880 --> 02:05:13,760

time but it's that courageous vulnerability that I think is so important whether it's in this

1197

02:05:13,760 --> 02:05:20,480

conversation whether it's the story that you've written in the book um it's the people be able

1198

02:05:20,480 --> 02:05:25,600

identify like oh that's me I've gone through this or I'm struggling with that or you know this is

1199

02:05:25,600 --> 02:05:30,640

what my wife says you know I'm behaving like or whatever it is those are the stories that we

1200

02:05:30,640 --> 02:05:34,720

actually need and you mentioned hope I think that's that's the superpower like I always say

1201

02:05:34,720 --> 02:05:39,600

like the fact that you can go through these crucibles and come out the other side and even

1202

02:05:39,600 --> 02:05:44,560

not wear the uniform on you know anymore and still be okay which is what you did switch what I did

1203

02:05:45,440 --> 02:05:50,480

it really does I think infuse hope to people that are going through whatever version of struggles

1204

02:05:50,480 --> 02:05:56,400

they are so I want to thank you so much for being as I said so courageously vulnerable today there's

1205

02:05:56,400 --> 02:06:00,960

so much power to that and also for being so generous with your time and coming on the behind

1206

02:06:00,960 --> 02:06:08,400

the shield podcast no well thank you for that and thank you for bringing me back on I mean I I can't

1207

02:06:08,400 --> 02:06:14,080

say you know I remember actually talking to you and I don't know if you remember this at the center

1208

02:06:14,080 --> 02:06:24,800

of excellence no I didn't oh man I was so looking back and thinking that at that time I mean I was

1209

02:06:24,800 --> 02:06:36,640

just I was a mess I was uh oh it was just very dark back then but I I remembered you just putting

1210

02:06:36,640 --> 02:06:40,880

everything in perspective back then because I mean you were at center of excellence they do give you

1211

02:06:40,880 --> 02:06:48,240

a phone you're able to talk to people and our conversation was really powerful and it helped

1212

02:06:48,240 --> 02:06:54,160

motivate me and and make kind of clear my head and make sure that I I finished the job at hand

1213

02:06:54,160 --> 02:07:00,320

and I just focused because it was it was uh it was easy to when you're there to think about

1214

02:07:00,320 --> 02:07:05,200

everything else that's waiting for you you know that's kind of the you're you're safe there

1215

02:07:05,200 --> 02:07:11,120

but when you come home how's all that going to work out how's how's the wife and the kids going

1216

02:07:11,120 --> 02:07:18,720

to be how's uh how's work going to be you know during that time uh I remember I know you were

1217

02:07:18,720 --> 02:07:24,560

just getting ready to finish up and I'm I apologize but no no carry on you know you have your phone

1218

02:07:24,560 --> 02:07:31,920

and I remember seeing I remember seeing uh because I share a calendar with my wife and I was like

1219

02:07:31,920 --> 02:07:37,520

an appointment for my oldest son and I remember asking her like what what is what is this appointment

1220

02:07:38,880 --> 02:07:45,280

and and this is near the end I'm getting ready to come home but yeah my wife tells me like



1221

02:07:45,840 --> 02:07:53,040

Jamison's been acting up he's he's he's not been himself ever since you left

1222

02:07:53,040 --> 02:08:00,640

and oh man that sucked that sucked hearing that like it made me want to go home even more like

1223

02:08:01,200 --> 02:08:09,040

but just the fact that me messing up me being over here is now causing him issues you know this is

1224

02:08:09,040 --> 02:08:15,520

at this point an eight-year-old who's now talking to a clinician because of me like I'm not going to

1225

02:08:15,520 --> 02:08:23,680

like uh it just sucked man it was so heavy it was and I was just even I'll even say 40 days

1226

02:08:24,240 --> 02:08:30,240

quite honestly it wasn't enough like I I've wanted it to be enough because I just was really I wanted

1227

02:08:30,240 --> 02:08:35,920

to be home I didn't want to be there but like in reality looking back I wasn't ready and that's what

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02:08:35,920 --> 02:08:41,600

I struggled even when I came back and back, I can make a move forward when I collect information

1229

02:08:41,600 --> 02:08:46,400

I wasn't ready and that's why I struggled even when I came back and and also

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02:08:46,400 --> 02:08:48,100

we never really came back.

1231

02:08:48,100 --> 02:08:52,600

I had to leave because I just I needed more time to work through all that shit.

1232

02:08:52,800 --> 02:08:55,200

So I don't know.

1233

02:08:55,200 --> 02:08:57,600

I just I know I just went on that tangent as you're trying to leave.

1234

02:08:57,600 --> 02:08:58,100

I'm sorry.

1235

02:08:58,700 --> 02:09:03,000

No, no, but just I mean that that is exactly what I'm writing about the moment.

1236

02:09:03,000 --> 02:09:08,000

So just like you I'm writing a book because I want these stories to resonate

1237

02:09:08,000 --> 02:09:08,400

with people.

1238

02:09:08,400 --> 02:09:12,600

I don't about the money not about you know any fame not that you get fame from

1239

02:09:12,600 --> 02:09:16,000

writing a book as a firefighter anyway, but and then my ultimate goal is to get

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02:09:16,000 --> 02:09:21,400

it made into a TV show because this is what I want people to really understand

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02:09:21,400 --> 02:09:24,600

if it's you know, it's going to be a firefighter story modern-day, but there's

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02:09:24,600 --> 02:09:26,700

going to be a multi-generational element too.

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02:09:26,700 --> 02:09:33,200

So you've got those two kind of parallel journeys happening and then whatever

1244

02:09:33,200 --> 02:09:36,600

happened prior to put the uniform and zoning amplified and as we touched about

1245

02:09:36,600 --> 02:09:39,900

the way that we're worked at the moment and what we do see and you know, the if

1246

02:09:39,900 --> 02:09:44,400

you're a true empath you take on all this kind of trauma as well, but it's also

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02:09:44,400 --> 02:09:50,000

important to look back and not feel guilty about the impact because it is

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02:09:50,000 --> 02:09:55,900

dominoes falling and so that hope as well of realizing that you can stop that

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02:09:55,900 --> 02:10:00,800

last domino that you can actually be there for your kids and interject and

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02:10:00,800 --> 02:10:02,000

stop them having the trauma.

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02:10:02,000 --> 02:10:06,400

So I think it's beautiful that Jameson is going to see a counselor because that

1252

02:10:06,400 --> 02:10:10,100

is a proactive solution is beautiful that you transitioned out and your home

1253

02:10:10,100 --> 02:10:13,300

every day now and they have their dad there and they can see the healing.

1254

02:10:13,300 --> 02:10:18,600

So I think the hope of realizing that trauma in all these different ways

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02:10:18,600 --> 02:10:22,400

including multi-generational because again, I mean, you know, Ohio of all

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02:10:22,400 --> 02:10:26,300

states understands the impact of multi-generational trauma and we're seeing

1257

02:10:26,300 --> 02:10:27,400

it with the fentanyl crisis.

1258

02:10:27,400 --> 02:10:33,600

For example, the hope that yes, you know, this these these elements happened

1259

02:10:33,600 --> 02:10:36,400

up to this point, but I cannot turn the time back.

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02:10:36,400 --> 02:10:40,100

I can't go back in time and fix it, but I can own it today.

1261

02:10:40,100 --> 02:10:43,900

But that feeling of guilt has no place in the place of growth.

1262

02:10:44,300 --> 02:10:47,900

So forgiving yourself, you know for signing up for a profession that

1263

02:10:47,900 --> 02:10:51,900

ultimately caused some of these issues because it was coming from a good place

1264

02:10:52,200 --> 02:10:55,900

and just putting in the work now for yourself and your family to all heal.

1265

02:10:57,300 --> 02:11:00,800

So and that you know, we mentioned the Savior Warrior.

1266

02:11:00,800 --> 02:11:03,300

We really didn't go into that and I know you've had a lot of people on

1267

02:11:03,300 --> 02:11:08,800

Savior Warrior, but I remember I remember being there in my cohort and

1268

02:11:11,500 --> 02:11:20,600

just hoping that it wasn't too late to stop any of the trauma to my boys

1269

02:11:20,600 --> 02:11:25,000

to actually putting a stop to it to stop that generational trauma.

1270

02:11:26,000 --> 02:11:31,000

And you know, I was told then like yeah, they're young enough.

1271

02:11:31,000 --> 02:11:31,800

You're good.

1272

02:11:31,800 --> 02:11:37,000

You you know, stop stop the shit you're doing and you could stop that

1273

02:11:37,000 --> 02:11:42,200

generational trauma and I really think that despite all this stuff

1274

02:11:42,200 --> 02:11:46,600

site going away Center of Excellence and all the stuff like I think I have

1275

02:11:46,900 --> 02:11:53,100

you know, like my priority like I realized as shitty as all this stuff is

1276

02:11:53,600 --> 02:11:55,100

everything that happened to me.

1277

02:11:55,100 --> 02:12:02,500

I realized how blessed I am now to be in this place to be you know, to

1278

02:12:02,500 --> 02:12:06,800

to have a pension and to not really have to worry about money to be in

1279

02:12:06,800 --> 02:12:11,200

a good place where that's not a stressor and to where I don't have to

1280

02:12:11,200 --> 02:12:11,700

go away.

1281

02:12:11,700 --> 02:12:17,200

I don't have to work and like I have it to where like I don't do anything

1282

02:12:17,200 --> 02:12:18,000

in the summertime.

1283

02:12:18,000 --> 02:12:22,800

Like when the boys are off, I'm not I'm with them like and we go on

1284

02:12:22,800 --> 02:12:26,300

adventures all summer last year was the first year we were able to do

1285

02:12:26,300 --> 02:12:29,800

that and and it's going to be the same way this year.

1286

02:12:29,800 --> 02:12:36,300

So I'm really I am so fortunate to be in a place I am to where I can

1287

02:12:36,300 --> 02:12:37,000

be present.

1288

02:12:37,000 --> 02:12:42,500

I can be dad and I can do all these things while they're still young.

1289

02:12:42,700 --> 02:12:48,800

Why they still like me and I and I just realized that's not that's

1290

02:12:48,800 --> 02:12:49,600

not the norm.

1291

02:12:49,600 --> 02:12:56,700

So I as much as the bullshit I went through I'm I realized how blessed

1292

02:12:56,700 --> 02:13:00,800

I am now and and it's it's everything to me.

1293

02:13:02,700 --> 02:13:05,800

You know, it's it's sucked getting here.

1294

02:13:05,800 --> 02:13:19,800

But now that I'm here, I think I'll stay a while.