

# Jimm Walsh and Tony Gillan - Episode 831

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## SPEAKERS

Anthony Gillan, Jimm Walsh, James Geering

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**J** James Geering 00:00

Welcome to the behind the shield podcast. As always, my name is James Geering. And this week I have an incredibly powerful dynamic for you. Two of my previous guests, Jimm Walsh and Tony Gillan came to my home and sat down together. Now both of these men are fire service leaders teaching at multiple conferences around the country. However, they both had career changing or career ending injuries. Jim had a stroke just before being promoted as chief of his department. And Tony suffered a near fatal injury after a Halligan struck him from falling from a ladder. So as you will hear, we discuss a host of topics not only their own physical and mental rehabilitation journeys, but also multiple areas including firefighter fitness, leadership, mentorship, bridging the generation gap, the hiring crisis, and so much more. Now, before we get to this incredibly powerful conversation, as I say, every week, please just take a moment, go to whichever app you listen to this on, subscribe to the show, leave feedback and leave a rating. Every single five star rating truly does elevate this podcast, therefore making it easier for others to find. And this is a free library of well over 800 episodes now. So all I ask in return is that you help share these incredible men and women's stories, so I can get them to every single person on planet earth who needs to hear them. So with that being said, I welcome back. Jimm Walsh, and Tony Gillan enjoy. All right. Well, I want to start by welcoming you to my home. This is amazing. Tony, you were here a while ago, pre Halligan, we'll get into that. And then Jim, I was in your home last time I believe. So. So firstly, welcome to the behind the shield podcast again. Thank you.

**i** 02:15  
Thanks for having us. Yeah,

**J** James Geering 02:16

I think the best place to start is, since we did our conversation, Tony, you had a pretty life altering event. So let's start there. And then obviously, there's gonna be some parallels with Jim's you know, cerebral injury as well. And then we can get into fixing the fire service.

A

**Anthony Gillan 02:37**

Well, as it turns out, too much on your diet is not good for you. So as of on 1115, I had a career changing life changing event happened to me incident. working there, chain division, I was teaching new hires on phone ladders vs and bring in tools with a ladder. So good news is just through this Splinter net just being who I am, I was trading in full gear. Turns out it's a very, very important thing to have that happen. I have no your PPE, even in training. So there's a way out Marissa Halligan, to the ladder, a bit dense in 2007. A very well known FDNY instructor taught me a set of vital fire conference one year, and pretty much what that guy says his gospel is just one of those things. And I've done this never pay about 350 plus times no exaggeration, without failure. Obviously. This one day, something didn't go right. And due to some one thing or another, the ladder wasn't cooperating notice postive. And how many beat down the ladder the way the position was in must have in some way vibrated the tools from the tension is normally held on the positioning that it has. And their tool fell on them out. Some say six feet to 1012 feet, some say 20 feet. So judging from the wrong that I had it and it was more of the 20 feet, and it came down and impacted my helmet. And the young, the brand new hires the head of golf tennis on the job, or just looked at me dismayed that this thing had fallen hit me. I didn't know what happened. I just know my bell got wrong. And I was like, What the heck has happened. And I took my helmet off, shoot my head a little bit, which in hindsight, probably wasn't really good for it. But I was trying to clear the cobwebs out of my head, put me back on and then realize something wasn't right because it started apart. All of a sudden my hands in front of my face started to posture. Being a medic. I know that's not good. So I tell him I was a medic. That was when the new hires when they came in, came home and ready to go down. He's like Ha, what catch him going down just as I said this last film from the neck down. He caught me Lord me to the ground. I'm still in full PPE, air pack on everything. They went and got chief alerts and in chief to come out back and get me and he knew that it wasn't good. We have an ambulance at the train division and as a high performance truck, there are rescue. She comes to the rescue is back and realize what's going on the trauma Lord made based on the fact that I'm laying there trying to wiggle my hands and toes. And I'm realizing, and little fellas aren't cooperating. So I knew something was going wrong. But I managed to remain calm and kind of work the gods through a little bit. And then so get trauma loaded go to calories, no, go to trauma scan done telling me that my vertebrae are fine. Nope, no issues are was kind of high five, and hey, good job. There's just good article, thinking I'm going to go home that night, I just got a stinger and I'm going to be home but back to work, you know, Mike, my man and my wife and our notes. And then we go to MRI, an MRI for quite a while. And uncomfortably long time. When they pull me out MRI, the laughing and jovial attitude, the whole demeanor and the vibe and air completely shifted to something different. When I looked at the guy and said and he says yeah, the doctor that to talk with you, so I knew that was bad. Come to find out. I have a had a spinal cord injury, which is called I have what's called a central cord syndrome, which is the same syndrome that the original Superman cause bereave same injury, same syndrome, which sounds wonderful. And just not as bad as his Of course. So they weren't sure when they're gonna walk in had some problems breathing and some other stuff a bunch of other issues come into play. And so my poor wife is wondering what's going on, you know what is going to happen? So had many visitors you include it so a lot of people watching me one earn CME and the bad crumpled up in a ball. were amazed because I got told later on these feeders when the guys that this wasn't ever going to happen to that was indestructible. To see me do some pretty dumb stuff. And, and just shake it off and just keep going. So the fact that actually finally got stopped for once was kind of amazing. Some people end up getting transferred once I got feeling back in blacksmiths. All right, cool. They the surgery fused me from C to three, six

took all this out of my cervical spine. But they removed for this. Yeah, for this ectomy, so I've got zero desam C to the C six. So to keep the space intact, I wasn't close on spinal cord, they put hardware in there on both sides of my neck and screwed all in place to keep that open. So my neck is a saw that you saw it actually looks kinda like the Eiffel Tower now. So but um, you know, it's one of those ones pretty strong. Still going through some physical therapy and stuff, range of motion issues, or their ability to go to air shows or you know, not have a good workout looking really tall people more Alright, yeah, so we'll pop off. Oh, yeah, have those. So, um, but went up to Brooks rehab for that and go through the ability to have to walk again. Because I wasn't able to, I couldn't walk couldn't feed myself, couldn't do anything. Besides be as smart as is, know what superpower really have?



08:08

Still have it?



08:11

I'm gonna get a company that so. And the rehab process was lengthy, very challenging. So and just through constant just striving to just get better every time to little by little. And having something else look forward to and just saying that this is more to me than this. Yeah, love things happen through your mind. So that's the injury. I mean, it's got a constant reminder of it. And I scar back there. So it's interesting. So good conversation piece. So while still trying to go over some things still not back home to send on the job. But pulling along, you know, so it's good. Life was good.



James Geering 08:56

Well, you mentioned Brooks, and before he hit record, you guys were both kind of comparing notes on on that being part of your recovery. So Jim talked to me about, you know, post stroke, how that facility helped you?



Jimm Walsh 09:08

Yeah, so my stroke was in August of 17. And I spent I had a significant hemorrhagic stroke, they had to do a craniotomy, where they actually remove part of the skull. And then they kept my skull off for a couple months and then I had to go back to the hospital to get my skull put back in which not a lot of people get to say that. But so I spent three weeks at Florida South it was called at a time which was a stroke center near near Winter Park there. And then from there, I went to up to Brooks rehabilitation hospital up in Jacksonville and I was there for four weeks. And they were able to get me to do things that they never thought I was gonna be able to do. The surgeon that did a certain surgery the day of at first didn't think that I I was going to survive the surgery because it was a very aggressive surgery. I was very fortunate because I was my stroke happened. It was in a staff meeting, it was witnessed. I knew what was happening. I didn't want to, I didn't want to accept, I didn't want to acknowledge what it was, but I kind of knew. And when I finally tried to ask for help, I was just, I was just having a really bad headache. And when I finally started asking for help, I was I couldn't, I didn't had I had no

speech at that time. And I was slumped over my chair and everything. And so everybody knew that it was it was pretty, pretty significant at that point. So they got me to hospital very quickly, and everything must eight minutes from the time I tried to say help. I was in the ambulance heading to south and then from four minutes from our four minute transport time from Winter Park to south, which I'm not really sure how that works. But that was really quick. So I was I was in surgery in less than an hour, which is just it. That is the ideal situation, but it shouldn't happen that way. Or, you know, it doesn't always happen that way. So I was I was very, very fortunate with that. But I can tell you sitting on the on the stretcher, hearing yourself getting called in as a stroke alert. That was That was hard. That was hard. I knew what was happening. I was never I was a medic. I was never good medic. will say that. But yeah, and hear yourself get getting calls. The stroke clerk was was pretty, pretty crazy. Like so I was there for three weeks.

 11:42

And then went to Brooks as well. I was on the second floor. I think you were probably on a different floor.

 11:50

That goes on. They're out there. Yeah, they're no, no second Moses.

 11:55

I think a second are probably in the same. Yeah.

 11:57

Just down the word from Yeah. Was in the other ward. And you were down there around the area. Yeah.

 12:02

But yeah, so So Brooks, they were able to do some fantastic things for me as well. They never like I said they never thought I'd walk again. And Brooks had me, you know, barely, but they had me up walking and stuff like that. And those same parallel bars. I spent a lot of time in those as well. And yeah, so I after after some time after Brooks and doing some follow up. I walked in with a cane one day to my, the neurologists, that guy that were not the neurologists, the actual surgeon, the brain surgeon because you know, everybody gets have their own brain surgeon. And they're still looking for mine, by the way, I don't know, anyway. But he, he, he when I walked in with a cane, he's like, I he's like you're walking with and I'm like, Yeah, well, when I come off the cane for therapy, and he goes, I never thought you'd walk again. I'm like, well, thanks for telling me

 James Geering 12:56

earlier. We kept that to himself. So yeah, good for patient care.

 13:00

Apparently, I never met again, my patient care responsibilities are never great. But so yeah, so what Brooks good for me was was fantastic. But I will tell you this, and I know I'm getting really long winded on a couple of things. But this past year, I tried to meet up with you. I went to sandlot Jax. Yes. And yes, I'm in Jacksonville, and I ended up just randomly driving by Brooks. And sandlot Jackson, if you're familiar with it, as you know, so I went and I rocked. I rocked a 5k at sin la Jax. And it was it was took me like two hours and everything. But I went from they didn't think I'd ever walk again drove by Brooks and I was like how to stop and take like a selfie picture. And I'm like, oh my god, this is crazy. And then I rocked to 5k that, you know, which was and of course this is five, six years later and everything like that. So it's like relatable. Yeah, so Brooks is a big part of my market as well.

 13:59

We have we have to go up there south to go there for appointments for the physiatrist and stuff like that every now and then they go and see the girls and so it was funny, I was always over the top with them and I always had some crazy thing for them. And they said that they towards that there's a certain amount of physical therapy that is that people know and said the amazing thing is they only get to scratched the iceberg with a couple people with this type of injury have had this has been either either as a lot older people that have something as I have or more severe injuries or just the ability of did not want to do it. There's that too. There's there's the fact that human factor of defeat. So they don't get to do anything. So with me, are they the exact opposite. No matter what they do, I want to do it I want to do it well. So towards the end of my stay there they were actually having to have meetings to figure out what the heck to do with me next because I was breaking down all the barriers to the point war had me one day I was on that Whether they are left Brooks, they actually had me doing was, I was on a BOSU ball, standing on a phone block, doing air squats, throwing darts at a dartboard against somebody and a beat them. And they're like, we're literally running, I think I said, I feel like one of those seals that beep the horn with their nose. That's what you're doing with me right now. And they just start laughing. But I was always, I would always have like, just little different things because the people I was coming in to see me in or else Or like, nobody is coming feeling sorry for you. I don't, I don't associate those kind of people. I just I just don't. We talked about Scott Chapo Scott Chappell was there numerous times. And suddenly, like everybody was coming up was just like, hey, man, I'll get your lazy ass out the wheelchair, you know, stuff like that. And, and he's just they were like, first of all, like, Oh, you guys are brutal. No, no, this is what this is who we are this circle of friends I have, they're just this kind of person. So the funny one was, um, it was

 16:05

one of the things we're having me do. They had me and a thing hanging from the ceiling.



16:11

Spent a lot of time and that's why



16:15

it's not a walk. So I was didn't like Ninja Warrior track. You know, and you got to walk over stuff, or else at some like, Hey, can you guys do me a favor? Like, was it Can you clear the way? It wasn't? I want a Peter Pan this thing? They're like, what? Oh, I just want it running just like me. Like, no, I'm like, why? Clear, but out of the way, like, what if you get hurt, I'm like, I'm already hurt. You know, so I was like, so they wouldn't let me do it. So those are the pointed, though. But they were Brooks was absolutely fantastic. Like it was just the way they have me do things or an else. And the girls told me when the law says you were as much good for us as we were for you. Because we don't get to see the fruit of our works. We don't ever see each as you walked out of there. We don't usually have that happen. They're easily we seem to load up in the van and a wheelchair. And all right, you know, they don't remember they're just here you are given the hard time. You know, doing all these different things. And we're just like, amazed, she's like, you're the not even the 1% we get



James Geering 17:21

asked to go to Neverland. Yeah. What's interesting is that parallels how I see mental health is discussed. There's this sense of, Well, you know, you'll be able to deal with it, you'll be able to, you know, overcome it, rather than the Post Traumatic Growth conversation, which is this could be a super powerful you, you'd be in the hell on back, you come out the other end, not only are you going to be more resilient, but people are gonna come out of the woodwork saying, How did you do it? And I think it's the same with you guys physically.



17:56

Yeah, and, you know, that's the whole mental health aspect of this journey. You know, the six years into this journey, as a stroke survivor, and still feeling that and dealing with that on a daily basis. And it was, it was a couple of years before I even was able to acknowledge or realize that what I'd went through from a, I wouldn't say a traumatic perspective, but you know, I lost my career. I was forced, you know, all of that, you know, I became disabled. And, and that, that that was hard. And, fortunately, there's been a lot of people that have been able to help me through that. Throughout that, you know, throughout that time, and I still, I still have people to help me through through that part today. Because it's just, that's not going to go away. And I just I would have never, I originally I was I was in that old school firefighter mindset of just you just don't acknowledge it. You don't you don't, you don't talk about it. You don't do those things. And now I'm glad that the fire service is starting to catch up with that and accept it and talk about it because it I wasn't, I wasn't ready to acknowledge that part of it. Right?



James Geering 19:11

Well, you had so many facets, and I want to get your perspective on this. But you had the loss of the... you know, your actual... You had the loss of identity. The firefighter that work...

or tribe, you know, your actual crew. You had the loss of identity. The firefighter that year, we always are, but you were literally wearing the uniform. You know, the loss of purpose, the loss of your physicality. But then, as we talked off, Mike mentioning no names you had immense support from some people you work with an organization or betrayal from others. So now that tribe some of that tribe has turned their back on you. So there's, this is the thing, it's a multifaceted thing. And when someone hurts their back or has a stroke or gets nailed by Halligan, you know, there's the core group of people that around and thank God for them. But I don't think people understand the mental health element even of a simple injury like the blow I can back injury, back injury that I had no matter truly life altering events that you guys had.



20:07

Yeah, and there's, there's, there's still that core group of people that are that are still there and will always be there. And they're only ever phone call away. I don't get to see them all the time, like I used to, you know, and I don't get to get in there company often, but when I do, it's like, nothing ever happened. Nothing ever changed. And that part is tremendous. You know, I will always hold that near and dear to my heart. But recently I went to we have to go every year or every year, we have to get a form sign for our pension. And we basically say it's the I'm not dead form. And basically you have to so you have to go and get your your something notarized basically saying that you're alive



James Geering 20:48

today look disappointed when you show up with it. Well, not another. Yeah,



20:52

I don't think so. But so I always just go and get go to the station. It's one of the it's actually it's probably the only time of the year, I go to the station. And I'll see people away from the station. But it's just hard to go back to the station as you can imagine. And so I go back to the station to get that form sign because the people there all know me and you know, whatever. Because I used to be right handed. And I don't have the use of my right hand anymore. So my signature looks dramatically different. Right? And so anyway, so I just go to the station. Well, this last time I went, rang the doorbell, you know, because I don't have access to the station otherwise, and a new person, a new hire, came to the door. And I had no idea who they were. And I used to I used to know, I used to hire everybody. Like I used to know everybody's background. I used to know everything I used to guide them through the hiring process and everything. And so okay, no big deal. So I'm like, I wasn't even ready for that conversation. I'm like, Ah, I'm a retiree, and I'm here to get a form signed. And the rookie was kind of looking at me like, you know, and I'm like, oh, like they're almost not gonna let me in. They were but it was just like it was that and then all of a sudden, not you know, because the door when the doorbell rang, all the rookies started coming. So now the second person's there. And they go, Yeah, this is who's this and they're like, Oh, this is some retiree that wants to get something notarized whatever. Third rookie comes in. So three people deep. Yeah, they don't know me yet. No one's cool. Nobody knows.





James Geering 22:24

What's that? No one's called a stroke.



22:27

I'm gonna play that joke. We'll talk about that later. But so finally the third, you know, fourth person, and I'm walking through the station. Now. They were about ready to like, they weren't blocking me, but it was just, you know, there was this uncomfortable conversations. I'm like, I I spent 20 years in this place. I'm gonna walk into this is my firehouse. Okay. And I SPECT that truck. Yeah, that's Yeah, absolutely. It's my truck. And then then the finally, fourth person, and they're like, hey, well, she known that sounds like one of the new guys says, Oh, you're chief Walsh. So I'm like, okay, so good or bad. They still talk about me there. They know the name. Yeah. So I don't know if that's a good thing or a bad thing. But whatever. But it was four people deep. Yeah. Before I knew somebody and it hasn't been that long. But but it has, you know, and that's that was a that was just it was it was another step in the journey. You know, you know what it was like, Man, that's crazy. Yeah.



23:26

I'm just, that's just I'm blown away by that to just what he said. I was like, Holy crap. I was thinking about that. Your response to that, like, gut punch? Like, yeah.



23:38

Well, to your point, you said earlier, he said, you know, the loss of tribe like that's, that is, when we're in a profession, like we are with the fire service. It's so dependent on tribe. We, we've, we've all been, together, we've been through some tremendous things. And we've, you know, we wouldn't have gotten through those things without that tribe. Right? And when that tribe goes away, or you don't get to see that tribe often or whatever, that's hard. And people don't. We almost we almost need to prepare people to retire a little bit differently. All we talk about when people are going to retire is about pension stuff, and the drop and all these different things, which are all great, right? But they never talked about that loss of tribe, and that loss of purpose and those things and, and I certainly wasn't ready to, you know, you know, I showed up thinking, you know, I showed up that day, thinking I was gonna get a really big promotion the next couple months, and I left there on a stretcher and never went back and that's that's kind of crazy.



James Geering 24:50

Yeah. Well, Lewis, I think was the one that said I think it was Orlando that they had a sort of a program where they brought All retirees back to train, not to train them to do, you know, to do the training, because, I mean, I saw in my limited 14 year career go from burning a lot down to I mean, I did end up at regreat, which nothing burns, but But yeah, so you know, but it just gets less and less and less. So the guys that were on 30 years ago, there's a lot of knowledge, you know, and yes, it was different. And no, they didn't get their ass handed to them on the EMS side like guys do today. But I'd love that inclusion of keeping people connected, because I



talked about all the time, you know, your one day your ID doesn't work just like yours doesn't, and used to be an integral part of that. And one of the parallels, I worked on summer camps for six years in America, when I was still living in England. And, you know, you'd set this camp up, and then these kids would come for three, you know, three blocks for three weeks. And then one day, they'd all go, and it was just a bunch of buildings again, and even then you just felt like, this is really sad. Like you put



25:59

everything you had into it for those couple of weeks. Yeah, all of a sudden, it's



James Geering 26:03

and it's people that make things what they are, you know, and so the moment that those people that gave everything for 2030 years move on, how awful is that, that five years later, they show up and people don't recognize them anymore.



26:18

Like to hear what you're saying a minute ago about allude to is that the There's hardly a part you can kind of set yourself up for your years, you see the there's a graduate gradual movement towards that end of the tunnel. For you and I, that wasn't the case, it was all of a sudden, and you're as we're as immersed in the fire, so as anybody was, you know, you were very unexcited before and it's not blowing smoke or brass and know what to do, but you're a very integral part of Florida's fire service. You know, so, um, I was not to the extent you are, but when that injury happened, and also is like, Hey, you might not be a fireman again. That was our identity. Like, right, wrong are different. That's what we were. So I was like, wait, wait, what do you mean? Um, I might, I'm not gonna do this again. Whoa, timeout. Hold on, let's back this up. I'm not on board with that. Your body might say otherwise. You know, so on. And so my thing was, was I'm no longer on a truck I was on so and I so I'm gonna I've got before I got when I come back Nelson, they're gonna put me in train division stuff. Still mean to me doors open for me. Unfortunately, unlike whether the free chief and um, but I miss my crew. I had some of the best man Um, TVs Howard, Nick laid on some of the Jays Navarro. Some of the best men that I would have up against anybody in this country. He was I was so proud of them. We were the fires, it wasn't care about on the fire anymore. I loved watching them succeed, I loved watching them do things. High five. I knew that fire is going to get take care of when we got there. I've just seen those men get to do the things they've trained for. And it worked out for him was just gold to me. You know, and I don't get to see that anymore. And the guys come in and answer often to me, but I miss them. So I'm missing a miss mentor them and I miss because every day I got to be around them. Whatever, whatever. 10% I did to make them better. They made me better. 20%



28:39

That's awesome. But But the only reason why not the only reason but one of the reasons why that's happening because you you invested so much in them is why they were able to do what they were able to do and how they're able to succeed. Even when you're not able when you're

they were able to do and how they're able to succeed. Even when you're not able when you're not on the truck with them anymore. You know, that's,

 28:58

we always talk about the outside look, they're not military leaders. I had that with guys. They're phenomenal. Just such poise and such. They were they were hard assets. They were tough. If you'd feelings. We're not the truck company as we expect right kind of crew. Exactly. You'd love them. They're, they're fantastic.

 29:19

So this this is kind of a funny thing. So still still have the opportunity to teach and most of the stuff I do is online now but every now and then I still teach this one particular program in person. And and it's actually it's part of a public safety leadership program where it's a predominantly a bunch of police officers that come to these this four weeks of classes. And one day, we put them at the fire ground. And so the reason is parked

 James Geering 29:46

in front of the building. Well we're gonna we're gonna, we're

 29:49

gonna get to that part. You got to remember my father was a police officer, so I've got full right to make fun of them the entire time. But um, so anyway, so this police I'm sorry, I do this lecture part in the morning and I call myself out of show people scan of my, my, my, my brain. And hey, this was this is me, and this is what blood pressure does and all this and I, you know, I talk so they can learn from me and don't you know, I said, But, you know, anyway, the firefighters that I teach with all guys, you both know you've both been around them both all of them rather. And and they're they're just they're being brutal on me. You know, they're always they're making fun of me about you know, everything about not the limb, but the right hand and do all these things, whatever. And it got so bad that one of the police officers during the break came up to me, he goes, Hey goes, I don't know how to I don't know how to address this with you. But do I need to make a complaint? I'm like, and I'm thinking to myself, like, oh my god, what happened? I'm like, what, you know what happened? And he goes to complain about how they're treating you. And I'm like, what, who's treated? What What do you mean? And he goes, they're there. They're just making fun of you. And they're making them like, Oh, I'm like, listen, when they stop making fun of you, is when you worry. Yeah, I'm like, these are these are firefighters. You know, I spent my entire career with these people. And I date I deserve to be made fun of, and they deserve to make fun of me. And if that ever stops is when I'm going to worry. And so it was just it was funny, because but the law enforcement community was not. They look at the firehouse humor a little bit differently than than everybody else does, I guess.

 31:31

Oh, yeah. I'm lucky my wife is an ER nurse. So for 20 years, she's probably got either darker humor than I do. Or just as an Soma life and I are carbon copies of each other the way she is with nursing and what nursing is supposed to be as well and with the fire service. So all the guys that know my wife, the hospital, I've said that are like your wife is the female version of you, like just cut and dry. Like, if we're not doing what we're supposed to do on, like, what pays and stuff that she'll she'll get in her butt about it. Like, really, they could have taken an Uber and gotten better care. What are you doing? Come on, you're better than that. And she would, she would give more time but she would coach them up. And they're like LTE or your wife is brutal as of late so the drug is always on. Wait, hold on sec. Was she in jeans and a T shirt? The right now is that so the charge nurse at the hospital gave her a hard time not my wife. Yeah. I said my wife is way more brutal than the charter of the hospital. Remember that? Oh, yeah, he deserved it.

**J** James Geering 32:27

I have my crew from Anaheim on twice, truck crew. My was me. And then my my firefighter partner was from South Africa. My engineer is Mexican American. And then my captain is basically a Caucasian American with a Scottish heritage. Perfect. And so

 32:45

Nicole is the belt and own your shrug.

**J** James Geering 32:48

So it was nonstop, you know, making fun of each other. It was hilarious. I laughed so hard for like, two and a half years straight to like, had to come East. But if anyone had listened in, right, oh, you know, the PC police would have thrown us in jail. So this was this

 33:06

was another funny thing. So the day I went to the hospital to get my skull put back in because again, that's not solidly but so the surgeon he comes in and this is the guy that did the surgery that the first day and he goes Hey, so I just I left the bone freezer and and you know, everything looks good, like your skull, it's intact and everything. So we're gonna be able to put your skull back in and everything's good. He goes, Do you have any questions about the procedure? And I'm like, Yeah, Doc, actually I do. And he's like, okay, so he gets real serious and stuff like that. Again, brain surgeons don't have a lot of sense of humor, right? But I love my surgeon. I'm so thankful for his skill and precision. But anyway, he goes, so it gets real serious. He goes, Okay, what's what's question said, um, I said, Doc, the crew are all the firefighters. They said they all signed it like a cast my skulls piece. Can you verify if that happen or not? And he he's looking at me and he, he didn't know what to say. And I'm like, and I'm like, I'm like, Doc, I'm just I'm just joking. He's like, I didn't even I don't know how to handle that. Like he's never been never been asked a question like that before. So gotta love the firehouse man. Gotta love the firehouse



34:21

my guys, we're trying to find some a 3d printer. And there we go to make out of plastic a life size probar out of plastic, you're gonna spray paint it nice sunshine analysis and do like they're gonna tune it and everything. But we're going to put a band in the middle of it. Station, like I would tend to go was here, you know? So, that's the kind of stuff that you love. It's just a case of, you know, other people look at that. It's just like, it's just, it's our way of caring. It's always showing that hey, we're thinking about you. as dark as that may seem, they made little things about you know, you know, travelers in our house and I went to the station one day and they had on there You know, no elegance above this height, you know, lines announced I was like, that's awesome.



35:07

It is, but it probably says a lot about our, our mental health and those kind of things. But anyway,



James Geering 35:16

I used to love going to Anaheim when when one of us made a mistake, because by the time you got back to the station, the entire pinball, yeah, was all these cartoons, and it was taken on the internet. And it was like, Alright, I guess I won't be making that mistake. Again.



35:34

It's a learning opportunity. So I want to



James Geering 35:37

throw some topics at you, obviously, you know, we want to talk about the kind of commonalities between your due to healing journeys up to this point. Let's start with the hiring crisis that we have at the moment, obviously, you know, we've got different generations at the table, you know, some some already transitioned out some work in at the moment. I obviously have some observations of my own, but I don't want to throw it out there first. So let's start with you, Tony.



36:05

So being in bad weather and going on everyone posts, you hear the term when COVID was was going on, or Nelson goes over the walls that the great resignation is what the terms the term was a renovation of everybody getting out of different things, different fields, because there was such a dirty word from home to a fine that, hey, I can stay home and make money on a computer and stuff, you know, so. So, due to the fact that fire departments are getting ran ragged, EMS health, healthcare in general is getting run ragged after COVID. We had a lot of

people leave the healthcare in general. And in the fire service there, we got burned out. So there was this huge void left, because you're the people that were still here waiting to do the retirement or burnout. Your city governments or your county governments are having a hard time trying to. And other one is, hey, we've got to fill seats. We're one of those professions. You can't just fill seats. It doesn't work. You may, but only us in the field, giving a chief know the detriment that can hurt your organization. You have to vet at some point in time you have to vet things out. And is this person a good fit for department? We run into the issue in most departments didn't have that luxury anymore. I remember when city of Orlando and back when I got hired in 2005 I remember applying to city of Orlando back 2004 2003 And the hirings where the Senate floor fairgrounds, over two days, 3000 applicants plus,

 James Geering 37:48

that's when I graduated school, but I couldn't because they said I wasn't an American citizen. So fuck yourself.

 37:57

So and then even that it was a case of you had a speeding ticket. You weren't getting hired, you know, we could be that selective nowadays. It's like so what kind of family do you have?

 38:09

It's only one it's fine. Motor and self defense. It

 38:14

was a domestic abuse one. When he do an interview, you know, and it's sad because it's just there was such a strain on this on the system. So in comes this newer generation, that like we said before, we've been raised at home raised during COVID, or something of that or different things. You got to help the whole gamut of stuff. One, one parent households, you name it. So what joked about you guys are about one of the young men we just got that didn't know how to put on about not singling them out but other guys as talent chief Walsh, belts don't come with instruction manuals. They're pretty self explanatory. But this show man didn't know how to put on belt. At first I was like, Are you kidding me? Then it was like, hold on. Take a step back. You don't know what you don't know. So I'm like, this is where we're at. So I've told our other attendees now Nelson training, bringing these young kids in hidden tell you guys but you have to raise them. This is where this is where you being an office where you being in the forest, you have to mentor these young men and women. What makes our job special? Because they don't know. It's hard. It's a thought process that you and I would never in a million years thought and you they would ever have to worry about. You know, so here we are. And it's just like, it's completely on charted waters for us.

 39:41

It's going to take it's going to take the fire service, and you know, certainly law enforcement

it's going to take it's going to take the fire service, and you know, certainly law enforcement, police or law enforcement and military and they're going to have similar issues as well. That our way of training people and insured, introducing them into our system and our culture and everything else. He's going to have to be a little bit different, because they're just going to need a little bit different attention in different ways, and some of the things that made us successful and what what drove us is not going to necessarily drive the next generation of, of public safety individuals. That doesn't make it wrong. But it just makes it where we, as people that are that are in the industry or whatever we have to we have to adapt, because the generation of, of new hires is, is different. And we're going to have to adapt the way we teach them and, and all those things. And it's just it's, I don't think that we as the fire service, we're ready for that. But we don't have a choice. We have to we have to respond not react,



40:56

even to the fact of I was in the fire service during Daksa 911. But it's calluses may sound I don't know how to say this, right? It's gonna sound horrible. But no matter. I said it was a recruiting tool to a certain extent. You know, I mean, as far as 911 was the shoot, you seen these guys that? Tell them you knew a lot of names, you knew you'd associated with Dan Hannon guys like that, that you could say, Oh, these are these great guys. He's what firemen were and it's not and it was a people wanted to be belong to that. I've got kids in this class right now. And we've got kids that were hard they weren't born. When that won't happen. So horrible to say. It doesn't mean anything to them. We do not live in a circle. And they're like, Okay, we're just doing PT for the day. They're not understanding the lead the gravity of the situation. It's not their fault. They just weren't born. You know, so, and people like myself, we get aggravated. When a guy don't care during we work every year we watch. So I'm still writing. And I'm sitting down with myself, Pablo Janner. And our new guide station, we're watching it. About 20 minutes into it. We're watching on 911. And one day I learned you guys slept he goes to the gym. The Power goes with the Zune. I don't know maybe I'm gonna bathroom. And Paul are watching it. And over here, the weights clanging and banging in the bay. I was like, when he's like he's working out. I was like is Does he not know what's on TV? I'm like, hold on. So I was talking about the same and what are you doing? Because as my hair work out, I didn't want to bother you guys. And now it's just this like a learning thing. He's like, it was not been routed doesn't matter to me. And inside, I can feel my blood pressure. Just



42:50

gotta be careful, that blood pressure man.



42:53

So just like I was like, I hurt to hear someone say that. And I'm like, is a medium get right knife? And I'm like, What do you mean by that? He goes, Lieutenant, I was three. And I'm like, come on back in.



43:10

This is important. Yeah. And that's where we have to, we have to do better to to make sure

people learn the why that's important. You would think you would think that it's, you know, but but they've only they've only learned some things from a history book or from, you know, you know, whatever, they don't, they weren't there, or they weren't of that age. At that time. You know, just before I left the fire department. I was hiring people. I was also seeing applications people were trying to apply for the fire department that were born after my start date in that fire department. So these were people that were they were born after my start date. I was like, I was on shift before you were born. Like, okay, so again, I just you have to change that perspective a little bit, because I would have never thought that I would have never thought that that could happen or would happen or whatever. But of course it did.

 James Geering 44:11

I had an aha moment when I was early 30s That, that time in my life that IE whatever it was, that many years prior to my birth was World War Two. Now me as a young boy, World War Two was 1000 years ago. And now we're all good. And that's how short a time, you know, that was, you know, I mean, I'm 49 now so that's another 15 years gone from there, but the other 50 But wait, this is this is one perspective I have on you know what you're talking about as far as service. Do you remember Blue Peter? Yeah, when we were there. We had quite a few awesome children's television shows. One was called Blue Peter, and almost constantly, there was some sort of fundraiser going on for Are the kids in Ethiopia? Oh, you know, whatever it was they would, they would deliver what was going on in the world and they'd be like, let's do something about it and have jumble sales and all these things and kids from all over the UK, the schools there, Cub Scout, you know, whatever it was would raise money, and then you'd send it and I feel like there was a lot of kindness and compassion about a thing called John Cravens news round, which was like a kid's version of the BBC. And we would learn what was going on in the world without, you know, people arguing with each other and, you know, having the, you know, conservative John Cravens and the liberal drunk, it was just the news, the end. And now you look at today, children that's not poor. Where are the people saying, let's help other people. This is this is the thing all our kids no other Trump's and the Biden's and the CNN and the foxes and this divisive, fuck community, I got mine. I'm not doing socialized medicine. This this whole rhetoric at the moment doesn't inspire kids to serve. So I think that's another part of the conversation.

 46:05

I'll help just not them.

 James Geering 46:06

Yeah, exactly. Yeah, do you even know them is?

 46:11

So I, you know, my wife and I have been, it was, it was my wife's idea. And it's awesome. But we actually we do some volunteer work with our kids, we bring our kids to, like we do to Give Kids the World Village. there and, and, and our kids go with us. And they understand and they

appreciate the volunteering and stuff like that. And they enjoy that as well. And I think that's I think that's awesome. You know, and I think more people should do that, you know, we're fortunate that we're able to do it in that regard. But then the other thing is even like, you'll, you'll appreciate this, my daughter apparently, you know, so, my, my daughter was seven when I had my stroke, and my son was four. And so my daughter remembers, well, both of them, but certainly my daughter remembers coming up and seeing the app, Brooks, and and, and so forth. And so my daughter, she's she's still in Girl Scouts, and she wants to do a project her like silver war project, or like her project in the high school. She wants to do it, where she wants to be able to give people the ability to have hotel rooms, to go visit their their loved ones that are in, in in Brooks, and those types of hospitals. And I was like, Man, that is like, that is so cool, right? That I was so like, but you know, that's, that's, I gotta say that's for my wife like she, the kids understand. It's service service, right? And how important that is, right? So that's like, that's,



47:49

it's not just services, selfless service, wanting nothing in return, but the feeling you've gotten your heart for doing the right thing. We don't have enough that anymore. As always, like, I'll do something, I'll do some for you. What's in it for me? We have a whole society like that. I remember growing up as a kid in Scotland or else and when I came to United States, my mom and I know some different things going on to Scotland. If I had something that I didn't need anymore, and you could use it, I gave it to you became the United States start seeing all Americans like this, obviously. But we noticed that when we moved the Navy houses and stuff that y'all my mom was like, oh, you know, she's a golf said something and one lady's like, Oh, could you use that? My mother? Yeah, she was like, \$20 I was like, what are you gonna do with it? I'm just gonna throw it out. But if you can use it \$20. And we were like, Hell's NFL? You know, this is one of the things that we were like, wow, this is a little different. You know, we weren't used to that. There wasn't that kind of financial motivation behind it was just a case of paying, if I could help you, I'm going to help you. You know, so and it's just, it sits on earlier about the arm. The thought process on how we have to deal with the generation of different of younger people coming in as fire service. Well, they won't tell you the roof. I don't say bashful fire chief that was a case of it was we've when I've made a lieutenant, you're talking about different things to talk about millennials in this younger generation. And the congressmen about you know, he made the comment of and I know what he meant by it. And he says, You need to understand the Navy Seals of today in combat, or millennials, if seals can be filled, can adjust and accommodate millennials. So can we and I was like put my hand up I was like, ah, Chief that's that's that's wrong mindset. Excuse me. I'm like, the Navy SEALs didn't change you're allowed to to allow anybody and you have to meet the you have to meet the criteria and the standard to be a Navy SEAL. They don't change who they are. They haven't since World War Two. So no one else had to change who they were to become seals. That's a good thing. And I knew what he meant by it. He was like I Anthony, you're a little We came up a little harder said, Chief apologizes didn't mean that that was recon Marine. So I was like, I understand, wait a minute, well, well, we don't lower standards for that as that doesn't, that's not how that works. So I came out a little aggressive, and I apologize for it, we have a laugh about it now, but it just, but we do have to have a standard, but we have to implement it a little different. You know, it's okay to have a standard, but you've got to implement it a little different. The shouting,



50:00



 50:28

you gotta keep the standard, though, there's got to be the standard has got to be, and that standards are actually probably going to have to increase or change with, I wouldn't say but a change from when we started our careers. Because there's a lot of things that are different. There's a lot of things like I remember very specifically, the first time there was a conversation about putting body armor enough on a fire truck, I'm like, that is never going to happen. Right? Oh, yeah, in less than a year from that, that me saying and that was never going to happen. We were doing it and training along with our police officers in the city and doing all these things. And I was like, wait, what, what just happened? Because so we're just going to have to, we're just going to have to adapt, and we're going to have to move everything forward. You know,

 James Geering 51:15

it's interesting hearing, you know, the people in the tactical world talking about that. And they're like, you have one helmet, you know, per seat on the fire engine is like we see you guys getting off like the helmets fallen off the fast isn't sitting properly. So again, even that is kind of box checking. Like if we're going to do it, we need to do it properly. And everyone have their own, you know, basically PPE when it comes to to shooting as well.

 51:41

We'll look at the whole thing that done with them. Did you ever worry about when you were coming to the rice mills

 51:48

active shooter training? Now we have many of you have active shooter training for good reason. Triage has definitely have tapped we have tactical one party triage no one else for for schools. I mean, who would ever thought that? You know, it's just one of those things, how I hate to say a degradation of society has changed how we have to do business

 52:10

well, and the speed of when it's happening. So like, even, you know, we were, you know, when when Columbine happened, we were we were obviously the the law enforcement community changed pretty drastically after that, but but the fire service didn't at first, and it took some time and everything but now there's some of these, there's a number too many of these defining types of calls that are happening very, very frequently in many jurisdictions. It's not just certain places anymore, I mean, it's all over the place. And we're just the fire service and just emergency medicine and just law enforcement everybody's gonna have to keep up and it's and it's changing so quick. It's just hard to keep up. But we have to

 James Geering 52:57

that was that video of that retired police chief getting deliberate was even by the bid that state

that was that video of that retired police chief getting deliberately run over by the kid that stole a guy saw that that was that I mean, that's the thing is that you've got to we've now devolved, and again, these are isolated incidents. It's not the whole people just as with the kindness thing, I think most Americans are kind Yeah, we just don't see it on our screens. And if we do it some dickhead, filming himself, so he can make twice as much money on his YouTube channel. But, you know, this is the threat to anyone in uniform is getting greater and greater and greater. So I remember working in a lot of rough areas of my career and was taught very early, don't stand in front of the door when you're not, you know what I mean? And so that was from day one for me, but now the likelihood of something bad happening you know, and when we were young, you know, the, the IRA was right next to an MO D base. Yeah, so we were thinking about you know, it's you know, devices have blown up our cars. So again, that was in my head when I was a young boy but this is what's terrifying is you know, you can literally be murdered simply for wearing the silver or gold badge, Boy Yeah,



54:00

well, we were same thing. We had a problem with a couple of guys that we changed our uniforms we used to wear our last piece or button ups. We were we were light blue for longest time we'll also went to no maximum went to dark blue uniforms for dark blue uniforms. Ocala Police Department, whereas the exact same color uniforms, they're a little different in Anaheim, so you know other people and I thought was like, I was like, come on, people know the difference, you know, to see the Maltese cross on my shoulder, you know, but I was gonna had a fire truck one day at Publix and this guy get this guy goes, it goes, Hey, the cops are here and I'm like, That's a fire truck is God Of course I'm gonna fire trucks. I'm thinking myself. You're on the cover.



James Geering 54:42

Yeah,



54:43

I'm like, What is wrong with you? You know, we ended



54:45

up putting on that's funny. We ended up putting on red polos a number of years ago, we started doing red polos. Like you know this is gonna be great, right? Well, then we walked it was just happened to walk around and like one of the first days we had that uniform. We happen to walk around Office Depot. We had to go go get something. And Office Depot, they were wearing red polos. And so somebody was coming up to me. And it was about like two or three people came up and by the by the neck by that by that time it was like, alright, it's like it's the printer ink is over that side like yeah, it wasn't even worth telling them that we were firefighters anymore because it was like



 James Geering 55:18

the same happened to Atlanta and then soon as the boys had truck showed up.

 55:21


Oh, yeah. Yeah, there's been a scheme changed. Yep. Hey,


 James Geering 55:27


I remember in Anaheim because we have such a dense Mexican population, some of whom were documented. Some were not. We would do the fire inspections which I love by the way as a fire department to relearn learn your first because it wasn't like you. It was a very, it wasn't punitive. Yeah, information, just advising really, but you got to see, I mean, some of the crazy shit we saw and suddenly, but yeah, you'd see the guys scatter. Yeah, we'd be like no Amiga karma day. We're not We're not here to take you away. We're just the fire department. But yeah, I mean, we had the big puffy jackets, everything. We look just like cops, but with no body armor or guns. So very vulnerable in a gangland area. We talked about standards. One thing that I've witnessed, that seems to be a truth. When you keep a standard high, I argue that you make it more desirable. And the best people will actually start lining up outside your department. If you like the last place I worked, dig a hole and then put the bar down there. Then wonder why no one's testing for you, I think is converse and yes, benefits will pull some people but those are people that are going to because of the benefits not because of service. So what is your perspective not only on the bar that you touched on marine recon, the absence of fitness punitive fitness standards in our profession, when it's present in special operations, ocean lifeguards, and all the other professions where lives are at stake.


 57:01


We're looking at areas as I've known you, you've always been in good shape. So to me recommend that. And also, the reason why you've had success with what you've had in your injury is your physical fitness. Okay, if you'd had been obese and bent out of shape or nows, you may not have been so lucky. But your body was strong, seemingly have the me and my neurosurgeon told me she was if you would have been in the shape and you'd be dead. And I was like, okay, so it's one of those things where it definitely pays dividends. I hate the word catechol. Actually, I don't care for that term, I understand it, okay. But you're making an oath and a commitment to be there for someone. And if you there's so many different avenues to that, um, it's being shipped or else, you know, if you're out a gear, if you're out of breath, putting on your gear, got the truck, and pull it, put an air pack and you're already huffing and puffing your LED, and you definitely have on the paragraph. Now I can't depend on you as an officer. If I'm worried about you. There's just so many we see in training division we see in training the crews that that aren't in good shape are terrified to go to training. Because they've What do you guys are judging me? Yeah. Because you're showing up unprepared we know you're going to struggle. I can't be able to do the strain strain stupid we did this last time this is stupid. I want to do is oh you want to do is come down on this? No, no, but you're clearly not doing your part of the end of the bargain.


 James Geering 58:48  
You should be excited to go to training period.

 58:51  
I loved I love going to train What train division thought this is awesome. You know what else? You know, I always end up critiquing go, Hey, we can make this better by doing this, you know, and it usually was going to make it harder. You know?

 59:02  
Yeah. But that's the time to do it and training. Yeah.

 59:05  
You don't highperformance crews sweat together. They get sweat equity. They they they do hard things together. There's a camaraderie compounds that. Exactly. So the and what it does is they don't understand the psychological aspect that has is I just saw you get put through the wringer on a workout. But you endured and you stayed with me. Awesome. I know where you're at. I know your heads that I know you didn't quit. is miniscule. That sounds that psychologically is huge for us. Yeah,

 James Geering 59:45  
one of the things that worries me because I your department posts pictures of new hires. And we label our fire academy minimum standards. Beautifully labeled. This is the fucking worst you should ever be. Yeah. And yet, several of these young men and women, and I'm not trying to be mean, but this is you haven't got into shiftwork, the thing that's really going to brutalize you are already clearly, I don't even know how they pass them in the PT must have been easy in some of the academies they went to. Because that terrifies me, if you walk, if you stand on a grinder of orientation of a fire department, deconditioned, you have set yourself up for failure,

 1:00:29  
we've had people come, we've had people who are with us and said that they did not go to force the Fire Academy. Because the PT was so hard, they went to somewhere else somewhere else out there is. And so and it shows and their performance or else and, and that's the thing is these, we get them in our department, though, Becca, we just had an a non starclassic With for everything. And they were like, now they're done with the fire school, they're like, oh, you know, who would have to do that? I don't have that again, like, oh, sure, your bar one, you know,

 1:01:05

spend the rest of your career getting better from this point, correct. To your point minimum standards. And, and, you know, that was I never, I never took the whole physical fitness side of it as, as I never took it to light as much as I should have. I was always of the mindset of, and whatever I was, I'm going to work smarter, not harder, right? Which is great, right? That's, that's important. That got me very far in my career, but at the same time, you have to be able to do the hard work as well. And I was able to do all the work and stuff like that, but I'm now seeing a different side of, you know, in the department that I used to be in, I'm seeing their their physical fitness is, is going through the roof in a good way. Because they are, what they're doing tactical type training they're doing. They're doing physical fitness stuff, incorporating training in physical fitness and their tribe and training, they're doing both at the same time. And I think that the bar is, is getting raised. And so but I think it's I think it takes a tremendous amount of work, I think it takes a tremendous amount of not only the physical work, but it also takes an administration that's going to support that and finance that a lot of it isn't doesn't take a lot of money, it takes a lot of effort. And a lot of everybody here knows firefighters can bring a lot of effort. If, if, if the conditions are right, right, if they're inspired, right. And so, given the right conditions, so what administration's need to do is embrace that, and inspire people and give them the opportunity, just they just need to get out of people's way. And then firefighters will come up with a ways to make good training, physical training, skills training, I've combined it all at the same time. And I think that's where, what I'm seeing, I'm seeing some and I'm looking at a very small lens, I'm looking at the things that I want to look at in the fire service now. Not the stuff that everything you know, because I only have to look through a small lens anymore. Right? And what I'm seeing is is good stuff, but I know it's because I'm looking at a very small subset of it. And I wish that more people were doing it right.

J

James Geering 1:03:29

I just did the 343 hero challenge again for the ninth year that Casey Allen who by the way, you know of our points he's responsible for a lot of them but yeah, there's the Masters which was I think 40 and above and and I've always do that fact that I'm doing regular one because you know to me the ladders the hose the person they don't care ya know, you know that was born in the 70s shit just get me out. So but I've always said this You know, the people say all brotherhood and sisterhood is dead. Like really go to the hero challenge. You will see fit firefighters driven firefighters cheering each other on suffering together. Just like you said, leaving everything out is one guy. I think he's actually a CrossFit guy. I don't think he's a fireman. But he literally every single time I've seen him compete they follow him with a trash can because he pukes when he works out good. You

o

1:04:18

know what I mean? Yeah, good. That means he's he's giving it his all exactly.

J

James Geering 1:04:22

So they get it and then this this year, there was a new facility but prior to that, where they're able to, you know FDNY photos all over the wall that every heat begins with one that dispatches from 911. I mean, so you when you start, you're like, you get it. I know I'm here and we're not we are never going to forget. But that is the level of strength and conditioning that

you need. I remember in the last place, they did high rise training, and they were going to do it in this two storey building and Disney property. And I'm like JIRAs quick question. How are we going to simulate getting to the fire for that? Oh, you're going to walk around the building couple of times first. I'm just like, farming so hard, my hand goes to the back of my head. And I'm like, this is a problem next to my station as a 29 storey hotel. So I have to be able to take 100 pounds of gear with a high rise strip 28 stories, 29 stories just to get to the fire floor to do what we were trained to do. But you're telling me that it's okay, just to simulate that with two times around the building? And then, you know, I mean, this is the problem is that what training is is a mirror. And you've got to have the courage to look in the mirror, which I mean, I tested for be a paramedic instructor, I was thinking about this today. And we don't do RSI in Orange County. And I don't think I've ever hung dopamine in my life. No the street method. But they asked me those two things. I couldn't tell them how to calculate it. Melek school style. And I couldn't tell them the doses of you know the RSI meds because I use them. Yeah, no excuse, I should have fucking looked it up on me. Right, that mirror that day was embarrassing. James, you don't know him? You may not use them. But you don't know. Yeah, these skills that you needed to know for this position. That is what training is look in the mirror and going Holy shit, I didn't realize I wasn't very good at this,



1:06:12

but you took ownership of that. And you have to you are willing to take ownership of that we have all seen people that are not willing to take ownership of their failures in training or on calls, and not and not willing to make themselves better. And that's the problem. That's a problem.



1:06:31

We set about the standard like that, that that train division rows are training the scenario they give you. So that's a a gentleman wanting a standard, but not mean it's that are himself. So you know, all right, hey, we want to accomplish this. I don't want to I don't want to have to climb this up and down a bunch of times because I'm not fit to do it. So what can I do to kind of mimic it a little bit where I'm not really shown this bother me that much. And I can keep up? Hey, let's walk around the building a few times, then we'll climb this up and down twice. And that will mimic it you know and he's hoping that Erbil split, okay, we won't do that either. me like that you are like, this isn't enough. And, you know, we've seen something with you have often thought about keeping a standard and they'll they'll put a bar up that they can't reach. You can't do that. Do as I say not as like, you can't do that. That's that's that's horrible. I mean, I am not I'm sort of 25 pound weight restriction per my surgeon and which drives me crazy. And I'm not going to I could do more. You know what I'm not allowed to do stuff and this and that. So I'm I'm not in the shape that I want to be in again, you know, I'd like to get back in shape was and my guys were just blown out the water. And, but I always wanted to when it came to the fitness part of it. Did you agree? I'm 54 so younger guys had asked me what Tyler said out here. It's good that you stay in shape to get your detriment if something bad happens. I'm like, that's not it. You're missing the point of studentships. I don't go to Dallas for mental health to come get me. That's because when I stay in shape, it's got nothing about me being on the right team, we're gonna get them Can I sure. I don't want to be the guy that goes now in the house, my man has to come in to that environment to come get me because I couldn't be the one to take care of myself.

J

James Geering 1:08:14

I remember him doing some sled work a little while ago in I think it was still in in the last place and pulling like 400 pounds on the slab with the straps or simulating dragon someone out. And I had a kind of realization of the little post on social media and like, I just realized that I can pull the heaviest member of my fire department out of a fire, but they can't pull me. Yeah, you know what I mean? Now they're twice my weight, but they wouldn't be able to barely barely get themselves on no matter me that I think you know, if you look in the mirror and you realize you're the guy that can't pull anyone else out, you know, and then you add to that if you're a chief or a member of a union that opposes fitness standards, you need to look yourself in the mirror

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1:08:58

we're lucky that our department we've got a pretty good fitness culture, I mean our our deputy chief in charge of that area was our trainer and else he's the one to help put our HGH together and else so he's got a pretty good thing we have the firefighter mile and we got an EMS version of it for 500 standard it's not difficult it is taxing if you're not in shape, but if you're in any kind of shape you can get through this this program and so they're talking about for a while there, they're asked about making different age brackets like the do the military and it was funny because when the guys were taught to my wife the hospital one day it says well how does how does how does LT Gillen feel about you know the fact that they don't make age brackets for for for the firefight mile? You know, because he's well he's he's older She's a kid. Is is so so it's not fair that he has to compete with a 23 year old and my wife because you know, I've been around a lot of firemen and I've never ever heard them talking about an old guy fire young guy fire I've never heard At a fire chief on a scene, say, hey, yeah, this working fine. Go ahead send me two ends with 23 year olds on it grabbed me the female ladder, you know, and they were like, Oh, she's like, That's ridiculous. Knock it off. So I was like, good for you, honey. She just didn't like my answer, but I was like

J

James Geering 1:10:21

so throwing another topic out there. One of the things that I talk about all the time is Chris segments mentorship program that I know a lot of people are part of now but I believe this was Chris's baby initially. There's so much again, this this frickin environmental these kids are growing up in you know, there's this lack of community and service. But then there's also this is rolling kids today, participation trophies. Usually, let's be honest, bye, guys. Don't walk the fucking walk anyway, usually on spouting that shit. But where I see the solution is firstly, they say if you want to change the world start at home. So making sure that you're a good parent, you know, Oregon, child if you're living at home, but then to step outside your front door and mentor. What I love about the local mentorship program here. Firstly, Ocalan Marian actually talks to each other, which is always good. Yeah. Secondly, you either raise kids up and prepare them for the fire service or like my bonus boy, my stepson you give a kid and exposure and he like, you know what, I don't want to be a firefighter. Awesome. You did it before you ever went to an academy wasted money access. So talk to me your perspectives on mentorship as a solution to some of the challenges we've discussed before.



1:11:42

It's going to it is the only way a mentorship a solid mentorship program is the only way we're going to be successful in keeping the standard that we want in the fire service. And if we're not investing in the young, the young people we're, we're we're going to be out of water. Like we, for example, many years ago, I was I started off as an explorer. And that was a great mentorship. It was loosely but it was a mentorship program. That got me into the fire service. And I ended up having the ability to start a explorer post for a couple of years at my agency and and we ended up hiring somebody that ended up. So he was a high school explorer, he was 14 years old, when he came through the Explorer program, he ended up graduating, he ended up going to minimum standards and EMT school. And we ended up ended up hiring him. So this is this this is like this is a small department. And we were able to like have just one good success story like that. And there's couple other kids that decided that they did not want to go to the in the fire service, we had some military and that kind of thing. So if you if you have people that are dedicated to mentoring the youth in in any way that is going to help tremendously. And some of the people might not end up becoming firefighters, but you like you said they're going to end up becoming just good, solid human beings because they've they've had that person that time somebody invested in them. And their well being and they they became a better person for that. And they might become a better firefighter or it or they might become a neurosurgeon.



1:13:41

I don't Yeah, yeah. If you want a good product on the back end, you have to put forth the work on the beginning. And that's, I think, that gets missed on a lot of times. And in our line of work in any organization, you have to put the right people in the right place to affect the change. If we still have a lot of the old, the some of the older guys or department or else that are like that should be taken care of for they got to me, you know, and sometimes it's not the case, you know, or they don't have the time, or I didn't join the fire farm or raise a kid. You know, I've heard that from all sorts people. That's train divisions problem, you guys, you guys should should get him get him fixed before they got to me. And I'm like,



James Geering 1:14:27

so you walk through everything like



1:14:29

like, man, I've got nine weeks with a kid. Well, you know, it's given that Jesus, I've got nine



James Geering 1:14:36

given his Scottish



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you know, so I'm just like, come on guys, you know. And it's just it is one of those things and we've got to end up in unison. Try to help these young people are different things. Engage them in different ways. Find what makes them tick, you know? I have straight lines, different things. I've gotten used to laugh at me conversation. You We'd have dinner. Yeah, it was it was like when everyone has I was like 15 bucks. Got you breakfast and dinner. All right. That's it. All right, cool. So kids would get there and like, Hey, I Altea. So switch your cash app and wake. What? Bless you could go to the bank and get cash. Why don't we get cash? I don't have when you when you run the rescue, stop by Winn Dixie, get a pack of gum and pull out 15 bucks. Yeah, we're not going to cash out thing I want you to know how to transaction with with money and people. You don't like, how he made me use cash. And it was just funny. And I'm like, I'm not I'm doing this for you. Not for me. You know, because obviously, it's a lot easier. We're just the phone. My Gaza was laughed, like, Hey, if you're coming to like, hey, LLC is a stickler about cash, make sure you got cash for dinner. We're just saying, you know, so they had a laugh about it. And I would phrase I was like, my driver was over when the guys that was one of my careers. I was like, I hate to use cash is such a pain in the butt. I'm teaching you guys a lesson, you know, so just stuff like that. And it's just such a, an ongoing process. And for people like me, or you. It's different for us. It's, I mean, my kids are 22 and 20. You know, enough of these kids are just like the kid with a bell, for instance, I'm just like, a fight to show a young man how to shave. You know, I don't wait. I get you know, but I never did it begrudgingly. So I was like, Okay, this is the rule. I gotta play, you know, different things. I mean, kids come up to me when he's like, Hey, Itr I got invited to go to a wedding. I don't want to where I went, what kind of wedding? Is it? It's the one where they get married? I don't know, is it a form wedding is like me certification. Okay, I had to go help the kid pick out clothes, he had no idea what to wear for a Speedo.

 1:17:09

T shirt was a ship. It couldn't be.

 1:17:12

So just local state. And also, I was like, you know, I never thought see that. Yeah, to teach young men how to dress for something occasion. You know, so it was just interesting.

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It's just it's going to be the success of the fire service. Moving forward is going to be based on mentorship. But it's going to be mentorship in a different way, we are still going to have to be the mentors. We've always been and always expected everybody else to be. But we are going to have to mentor in a different way as well. And that's going to be hard sometimes because depending on calls and everything else, but in order to be the in order for the fire service to be the successful fire service that we know and love. It we the fire service is going to have to change just to evolve, right? And you know, we could we could we could sit and complain about it. It shouldn't be this it shouldn't be that it was this. Okay, okay, great. But if you want it to get better, you've got to be part of the solution. Not part of the problem, right?



1:18:21

Hardest thing for you? No, no, you'll like this, because of the mental health aspect of it is how to prepare these young men and women. For things you're going to see. I can tell you all day long the stuff you're going to be exposed to. But it doesn't really prepare you for. And so the hardest thing for me as the author was trying to either get them involved in something, but shield them from stuff that's actually absolutely unnecessary. You know, if you're not doing patient care on a person who's completely merely in a car crash, I'm not going to play around with them just so you get exposed to it. That's dumb. That's how you that's how you hurt. That's how you mentally screw somebody up.



James Geering 1:19:09

I always say there's no



1:19:09

trophy for seeing the most shit. Yeah, you know what I mean? But when I was coming in fire service that happened to me, Hey, and I was 35 and I committed fires really? Hey, you got to use did you get you seen the stuff? We've got to get used to it at the core of what they do somebody you know,




1:19:28

I remember very early so I was already hired in in Winter Park but then I was still volunteering a little bit down in Osceola County. Early in my career. And in February of 1998. tornadoes hit Central Florida, and there was a I was a lieutenant on the on the volunteer department and I had the like the command vehicle that night. And there were 11 tornadoes touched down in Osceola County that night. seven of which were in the area that I was responsible for. And we didn't they were, you know, it was, it was crazy. It was crazy what we saw what we did that night, whatever. And whatever it was, it was it was a career defining moment and everything else. But uh, and then it's because I was a volunteer, I had to go to work the next day at the fire department, because I didn't want to I'm wanting to make sure they knew that that was my priority. So I went, I was out all night long, running a call doing all this stuff for the for the storm. And then I went straight from there, went to the fire station, got cleaned up, and then went to work. Because I was I was a fire inspector at that time in Winter Park anyway. We ended up having some sort of debrief. It wasn't like CISD, whatever it was just it was this was 98. So it was, it was not evolved the way it should have been at that time. But I remember we had some people come in. And we had a bunch of volunteers that were out at this call that responded that night. And nobody, nobody even talked about what this process was supposed to be. They never even talked about the never even explained to us what we were supposed to talk about what was okay to talk about what was not okay to talk about whatever. And so everybody was, was the room was silent. Nobody was talking. And I remember that I decided to I knew that I had to be the first one to start talking. And I was I was because I was the highest ranking person on the scene for that first night. And I just remember telling, like, I was like, Listen, I don't even know how bad this was. I know what I saw. And right now, I think nothing's wrong with it. But I'm sure I'm going to have some problems with some of the things that I saw

that night. And I just as as, as the first person to start start that conversation. I just tried to normalize it. And I wanted to make sure everybody else understood that it was okay to talk about what they saw that night. Because we had people there, that that knew what to look for and knew whatever, I still didn't even know the process at the time. But I knew that we just had to start talking and sharing what we saw. And I don't know that much ever came from that. But I remember that was my first opportunity to I don't even know how I got onto this. And I'm sorry. But I was the first it was the first opportunity for, for me to talk about things that I saw on the scene. And it was, you know, pretty traumatic, and this was pretty early on in my my career. And but I knew as as the most ranking officer, I just knew, I knew that I needed to be the one to start that process and normalize that conversation. And that's what was. So I think as, as veterans in the fire service, we need to normalize that conversation with everybody. We need to make sure that people know it's okay to talk about what they see and what they saw and what they did. And, and everything. And James I love I love your concept of let's put some of this money, are hiring money for polygraphs and stuff like that put that money into counseling ahead of time, create that environment, where can people know about counseling and what's available and stuff like that? I think that would have been very helpful in that instance and early in my career. And I can only imagine that that could have served me very well throughout the remainder of my career.

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I know our department now has a as command is our health and wellness safety battalion chief. So as to what he is in charge of as a mental health, mental health aspect of it, they sent him to different functions different counselors say seven things he's a man he's taken off and ran with it like he They've given him full authority to learn as much as he can to bring stuff back to the department and help us with any kind of crisis and stuff that we have and get people's hands in the right area which is fantastic. Unfortunately, the things that took to get that happen were for bad. We had think as five suicides for Missy here

 James Geering 1:24:33  
you have four and 5444445

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and one attempt one attempt and and as a as a young, a newer guy, I'm heading to the hospital, that medic when he was given off reporting and I'll say a dump of patients stuff that they come in he got in the truck and the kid got a hold of the had gotten hold the drug keys and he earlier on and got into the Buckland put up some some rock rhodium it pulled it up there and Elvis didn't know though he was an EMT and and else and the guy gets the truck was Danny she's a syringe and the file to hell and looks at the kid and the kid just goes and flake falls out the truck is like it because it goes like what the hell you know so he's at the IDI and he pushes the Merge button on his radios like I need help. And yeah, the kid Jacks his leg with it just the whole thing just with the paralytic yeah with a paralytic

 James Geering 1:25:35

man you think about it is

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awful way to go. So and as but it was like nobody knew nobody had any idea this kid had anything going on three different things. I guess there was they found some things in the kids background that never ever came up. And I don't know the process that was saying I'm not really liberated slaves. I don't know. I just know they come to find out certain things and so they got the could help her Nelson he could end up living and stuff. But it was the case of what would it be catch at will nobody ever did enough digging or

 1:26:09

not ask the right questions. Not asking the right one, you know. So then

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so then we had that a couple of years after that. And you're the one that kids that one the guys that committed to us I was one of my good friends Emilio and, and that was hard. You know, it still was the anniversary of his birthday was another day. And so we've had an A we talked about so weird little thing. And what we've done we've talked about in circles is so for him, they put his name on the side of a firetruck sounds like an admirable thing to do. The guy that same station he was that? Frank Kennedy has died. They put his name on a fire truck or an ambulance. Okay, cool. Oh, Senator, like, maybe we shouldn't be doing that.

 James Geering 1:26:54

We're gonna run out of fire trucks.

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Well, then, because you're saying what now? Hey, I don't feel Anthony right now my life feels useless this and that. I don't feel have any worth. If I do this, they'll put my name inside a fire truck and remember me? We're like, oh, maybe we're going about this wrong way. You know what I mean? And what we thought was a good thing.

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And that's, you know, the intent was there, correct? Yeah. But when you first started talking about that, I'm like, Oh, I don't know that that's going to be a good thing. And I think

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and I don't, and we haven't done it with the other the other gentleman. And and I think it was we pre kind of reverse her mindset on it. Because I guess in a way we thought this was we've been with Amelia was given an isolated case.

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Exactly. So you know, one of the things this Winter Park a number of years ago, we had a retiree come in. And this this guy at the time, he had 33 years of service, he retired with 33 years of service, he was the highest retiree we'd ever had her most years of service. And one of the new guys, he came, this guy came in, he was just getting ice, you know, one of the new guys goes, Hey, there's, you know, some guy out there just get nice. I'm like looking just like it's this guy don't wanna say his name, but it was it was Cow, cow, you just, you know, go help him. Yeah, like, that's you. That's what you got to do. Yeah, so I'm leaving a bunch of parts of story out. But what we ended up doing is we ended up getting a bat, we got a helmet front done, anybody who who did 20 years or more in Winter Park, got a plaque made up with a helmet front with their badge number on it, their name, their rank, and then it sit there was a little plaque at the bottom and it said, you know, proudly serving the citizens of Winter Park from this day to this day. And you had to hit 20 years in order to get that and there's you know, because I wanted to make sure that people knew about our retirees they should be the reason why I'm saying this is that that's what should be celebrated as hitting the 20 years and retiring and enjoying your life. Not ending your life.

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Yeah. You know, and like I said, it was meant well, and it was a good sentiment, you know what I mean? And it's, you know, it was one of the things and we're like, did we did we send the wrong message by doing that, and we never really get a full discussion. It was a case of for that reason why they don't do anymore. But it was like, a minute or two and wait a minute,

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but this is this is the hard part about being specifically becoming a chief officer in a fire department is you can't react emotionally when stuff like this happens. And it's hard because emotion is going to happen but something like that. I feel like that was emotional decision. And it was it was it was on the right had the right intent. But what are we are we saying are we celebrating the wrong thing or whatever?

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Yeah, I'm trying to think his name because throwing a plant from an eye Um, I feel horrible about right now.

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Because me killed the motorcycle accident. Manning delay Manning, okay. And I'm horrible I

could remember then.



1:30:17

So Peters is immortalized and got killed on the motorcycle. So they're given a full full fire part of the



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fire department here. Funeral Honors that a lot of people don't have department we're like so what are you gonna do for someone dies in Atlanta duty. You just give this guy the whole kit caboodle. There's a lot of as much as but as their monster love Billy, who is an awesome guy. A lot of people were really upset over that.



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And that's what I'm saying is that was an emotional decision that they and he was a super solid guy. He is like everybody. But it's hard. And we even actually one of our there was some honor guard commanders in Central Florida in the area there that were, you know, Orlando area and stuff that we're trying to come up with the criteria of what is what is line of duty, what is not line of duty, what do we do for off duty accidents, or whatever and, and that's where I share, it's an emotional decision. And we started and we had fire chiefs all agreeing to some of these things. And then as soon as it happens in their organization, they all that went out to the window, and they start doing full honors for this and everything. And, again, the intent is there. But we have to, we have to make some of the difficult choices. Because if we water it down for everybody, then what are we going to do? There's no difference if it's a like legitimately line of duty type of thing or not. It's hard, it's emotional. It's emotional. Well, I



James Geering 1:31:59

think what's hard as well is that, you know, we think of line of duty is okay, he fell through a roof he got burned to death. That's a legit bonafide line of jewelry. Yeah, well, what about the guy that Odede after 15 years of seeing horrible shit was that not? You know what I mean? And even with, you know, just to go back to what you were saying about the, the on ramp thing is now I know, seven years of doing this, how many of us have trauma for we ever put the uniform on. So, you know, looking at the way we choose, we don't choose, we don't select we box check, so that it'd be CYA, you know. So, rather than be proactive and be like, right at the front door. Here's some tools. You know, here's your PT, here's your bunker gear drills, but then we're also going to do counseling sessions. And this is why you guys are probably been led to do this position. Because you've got things in your past that led you to be a protector. That's just what happens in our profession. So let's start talking about that too. Because a lot of our young guys, Alan Tripp Emilio, you know, like, well, he's only been on a handful of years. Exactly. That's, that shouldn't be a discounting comment. Like, this is terrifying. We've been doing it wrong. These are all great firefighters. But we got to the same way as if they came in, you know, with a leg in a cast, like we still want you but with us to get that leg fixed. Huskers go through to the next class, and we'll bring you in and we don't look at that with the mind

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said that we've all grabbed like I said that but gravitated towards life to service. Your dad was formula was law enforcement, okay? You grew up that way. I grew up at my my grandfather was obvious influence in my life as a kid, my grandfather was a regimental Sergeant Major for the British army. You know, I grew up with a military background from him. And coming United States became an ISIS Marine. So I've always known a life of service in some way form or another, you know, so it's just want to say just gravitate towards that, you know, just I never thought of it and different really, that was when they got there me Cornell's after doing private security, a bunch of stuff I was gonna become a cop was good weapons, you know, then realized I couldn't go to swat team right away. And you know, just right speeding tickets was boring. So I became a cop. I became a fireman. He also, you know, just one of those different things, but it's just that, like I said, there's something I don't know, if it's heroic or broken, like your thing that wants you to have that net need to help others. It's a good thing, but at a certain point, you set yourself up for some kind of trauma with it. You know,

 James Geering 1:34:32

I mean, it's, it's understanding the kind of person that will be good, which is why tattoo policies and you know, misdemeanor discounting, so and so had a speeding ticket, or they had marijuana when they were whatever, bring them in, do the site do not have access to the background check. And then we'll we'll determine okay, you know, you stabbed 12 people to death. Yeah, maybe you're not the right person for this. But you know, you did a couple of things you paid you're paid what was that you know, you did your time. And now, you know, this is the facade that we think that it's only choirboys that can do this. Because Miami Beach, I did a pre app with them. I started like kind of, you know, one test, the fire test where it goes out to a bunch of people. And I said, Yeah, and I tried this drug in Japan. At the time, my life bounced with a bunch of people hug them, nothing happened. And they literally screwed it up and threw it in my face. And I was like, Oh, so you gotta lie to be in the fire service. Got it. And I lived my way through polygraphs. And like, Okay, this seems to be counterproductive, because I thought honesty was kind of important. But if I get, you know, a drug that used to be a marriage counseling drug that by the way now is working really well for PTSD was so appalling to the gentleman that was judging me the probably went home and slammed eight beers when he got home. And this is the thing, we've got to take a step back, and some of the things that we do are just so fucking ass backward. And, you know, we got to, we got to keep the things that are working. And like you said, with the progress of these younger generations, some of their tools, you know, we're understanding mental health. Now let's revisit the way that we hire the way that we screen. Take good people, give them all the tools at the front door, remove the barrier to entry, the mental health make it a normal conversation, and I'm up for success. Exactly. Yeah. And so the moment they see a horrible thing, they're like, I'm gonna go see, Miss Sandra, Mr. Steve and whoever, because that that kind of sucked. Let me get it out now.

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But you know, and I'm not saying that they're, that we should create all these policies and everything. But there's almost there, there's always been this policy about, you know, well, you can call in a some sort of team and you can call in. But some of this stuff should be default at a

certain at a certain when you hit, hit a certain level of call, or you hit certain, whatever, somebody should be able to one, just throw the flag and everybody goes for counseling or something like that, just because I don't want to be the one to do it. But if we normalize it, it's okay to talk about it. It's okay to call people in that, that can only be helpful. You know,

 James Geering 1:37:06

I kind of cringe at the idea oh, that so and so sent their team down to that, you know, and they also the whole kind of, can't help us say, but it's box check in one single facility in the northeast of our country. All right, we took care of mental health and the fire. So I think I think it's bullshit. I really do. We need to have lots of peer. You know, counsel, they call it culturally competent clinicians. Embedded in all fire departments, not just the Team America fucking world place that the Vegas shooting happens and they throw their capes on and come down like Alright, everyone. Good. All right, well, see you later, then. That's not that's, that's again, that's almost like a mental health version of virtue signaling. Well, we did the job. We're off now. And no disrespect to the people involved. But I don't think that system

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works. Well, again, it's instead of saying that, it's not that that doesn't work. And I understand what you're saying, I just everything in what we do is evolving, like, minute by minute basis. So why are we thinking that the old way of doing CISD, CSM, any any, whatever we're calling any of this? Why do we think that that is going to, if that hasn't evolved to this new generation of calls and employees and trauma that we're seeing? If that hasn't evolved? Why do we think you know, we should everything it should all be we should be changing all of that and how we're doing it and whatever takes

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us. I was just reminded when you were in Brooks, did you have to see the psychological counselor? Yes. Yeah, I did, too. They have you do psychological counseling when you're in rehab? And as a young lady says, and you have a question, or Nelson, you ask you different things, or else, they want to assess your mental health 100 Noon with your injury, and limitations have an analysis, which I thought was was phenomenal. I was I wasn't expecting that. You know, and I didn't they told us I don't need this. And she's like, No, you do. Yeah. You know, and I was like, no, no, I'm good. And she's like, No, I understand. You're happy, you know, but no, you did. Yeah. You know, and that

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was, yeah, I had the same thing. And it was the other thing was is I was very fortunate that even after that, I was told at one point to follow up with a clinical psychologist. And some of that got lost in translation and stuff like that. But anyway, it was one of my occupational therapist was, I was working, just trying to work on my arm on some stuff or whatever. And my, one of my occupational therapists goes, Are you seeing a speech therapist? And I'm like, Well, no, she's like, why not? And I'm like, because I'm talking just fine. I noticed some differences in



my speech, but I'm not you know, and, and cognitively, I'm still whatever but she's like, just just go see speech, and you can talk about cognition. and stuff and everything. I'm like, okay, whatever. And then went to I went to the speech therapist and have a couple conversations and she's helped me with a couple things. And again, it was a cognition thing. It wasn't actual speaking type thing. And I'm like, speech language pathologist. That's that what that phrase is or that that position is called. So poorly branded, because they do so many other things besides just speech.

 James Geering 1:40:27

It's like the fire department. Yeah, right. Yeah.

 1:40:30

But anyway, this, this person, she was phenomenal. She helped me realize she helped me realize that I was depressed. And you know what? It's okay that I was depressed. Because I went through a pretty significant injury, a pretty significant lifestyle change, and all these different things. And it was like, she normally helped me normalize that in my mind. And then I was like, oh, yeah, I guess it is okay. Because I remember and actually, when I went to that clinical psychologist, it was just funny how it worked out. I guess he was the one that I saw when I was in the hospital. Oh, and so I went to him. And I said, Hey, you know, I was told to come here. I don't I don't know why I don't need you. I don't know what I'm what I'm doing here. At this point. This was still very early on in my recovery. And he goes, You don't remember me? And I go, No, why he goes, you basically ran me out of the hospital. I go, what? He goes, You were you weren't you didn't want to talk to me at all. And I'm like, well, sorry, sir. I wasn't being guaranteed be disrespectful. But at that point, I still thought I was going to be back at the fire department that I was going to be. And so it was so programmed in my mind that I couldn't have any anything mental health related. And I couldn't have to see a psychologist of any type. I couldn't. So I automatically said, No, I don't need you. I don't want you whatever. And then that same guy, basically, to go by tail between my legs be like, hey, help me understand what I've going through here. You know? Oh,

 1:42:00

I know when I was I spent seven days in ICU, I don't remember anything. And a lot of people came and saw Minar. And else and some will say something, have a conversation. And I'd look at Charlotte she'd like, they came and saw you. Um, so I remember that. Yeah. All right. Well, yeah, you're on, you're on some drugs and stuff. Oh, my God. Obviously, I was I don't remember. I remember this. And also the couple things like that. And they helped me like different things, or Nelson, it was like a whole part of that whole is just from fish from like, just a really severe concussion or whatever, probably. And I don't remember someone saying there's some of there's a lot of events, I don't remember. And I guess I get the argument one of the girls therapist there, and I told her is gonna run over from a wheelchair somewhere that are just unwilling to do crazy stuff. And so it's just a whole bunch of stuff. And it was it was interesting when I went to different went to Brooks, and they said they brought the lady in. And I will happy go lucky as far as now. Yeah, I'm realizing right now Life sucks. But, you know, I wouldn't be the best fit. And that lady sat me down and taught me and I was like, taught us

how to depress the hell out of me. Yes, she starts laughing. She was not oh, we're trying to unlock certain little things. And she was she was great, you know, like shoulder throw now if my wife was by my side the whole time. And so it was just interesting, different things in the sleigh, talk to Cheryl separately. And she's like, you have a good support. You know, what mechanism to her. I said, Oh, yeah. And it's just just like what, like we said one of those different things. And that's what we just need to think about when you said about the things. They gave me a speech, person or an else and I'm like, wait, I'm talking just fine. And she's like, we have some stuff going on. Boy, it's like, no, that's a Scottish accent. He's hard to understand. slurring is so. But it was interesting, all the things in the rehab place that you wouldn't think on that they do. And so,



1:43:54

one of the things they're like, just randomly they, you know, I was in a wheelchair while I was there. And, you know, I was getting out and trying to try to walk with a cane and stuff like that, but that was a train wreck at the time. But they did a did you do recreational therapy? Oh, yeah. They did recreational therapy. And one of these therapists they had you. One of the things they did was they go, we're going to lunch. We're going out to lunch. I got on a on a handicap bus with a wheelchair lift and everything. And we went out to lunch. And this was like a Greek restaurant was really good, by the way. And it was I had to learn I had to go through the process of being okay with being disabled, which was new to me. I had to work off the menu, cognitively read the menu, tell the waitress what I wanted all these different things. And this was part of the rehab. And it was it was a great part of the rehab. I would have never, ever thought about that. But I remember that I remember that to this day, like I was like, Oh my gosh, that's like that was a big part of it. You know?



James Geering 1:45:06

What, speaking of hope as well, a lot of the kind of new neurologists, neurophysiologist, all the other neuroscientists, when we were all young, I remember saying like, once you damage the brain, and you damage the spine, that's it. That's you forever. And you hear all these people and again, that evolution, whether it's mental health, or fitness, or whatever these conversations is like, No, you know, I've had people on now that, you know, especially with TBI, being so prevalent with our veterans, there's a lot of hope may not be overnight, but you know, people that are, you know, progressing from full quad to para to be able to hold their body weight up. I mean, it's, that's what we need in every facet is not, you know, all that will never work. You know, the old way of thinking but find someone who, who overcame it, I use them as your beacon.



1:45:59

I just got done reading the book not too long ago, um, objects of secure objects of security by Nick Lavery. And he's the guy that was the first column at first Special Forces amputee and to see actual combat or no, so this guy is the guy from Boston or else and we read the book and he talks about going to Walter Reed, and they took his likeness, Walter Reed, and he says they've got an oval track in there. And he says his talk about when he got fitted with the prosthetic, and he says he gets on his trying to walk with analysis. He's a little cocky, so he

starts to try to walk a little faster. And he just he says, he says, I wipe out eagles in like, historic Wipeout fashion, because I just eat it. Because now he does end up on a bunch of stuff and a bunch of weights like kettlebell scissors, like platelets falling off, and they're like, follow enrollment, like roll and like a penny over towards like the physical therapist, and then make this huge crash. I'm on my face. And honestly, it wasn't the person who was okay. Now get up. He wasn't here. I'm embarrassed. I'm laying in his ways and he was an old Intel was okay, I'll get up. And he goes, it's a case of hearing that get up. You're gonna fall down, get up yours. And I fell down a lot. And so McKesson okay, you fell down. It's gonna happen get up. And it's so it's really interesting. This guy's like crazy. Like, they just hear what he went through. And, but it was like he said, he says in the whole thing, and he goes, I can't remember a GET UP is nothing historic advice or y'all know big Jews, Facebook quote, just the words get up. Oh, that's really awesome. Now.

 James Geering 1:47:42

Well, I think we're gonna wrap it up. It's getting late. And I know, Jim, you gotta sit pretty decent drive ahead of you. So I was gonna go into leadership. But I think really, leadership is encompassed by everything we've discussed. Anyway. So are there any parting words you want to leave before we wrap this up?

 1:48:04

I'm just excited. I got to sit with a guy that I'll just think the role of since the first time I met him, and it was, thank you for having me. All right. It's an honor to be with all of you. So thank you so much.

 1:48:16

Yeah, definitely. Thanks for having us. It's, I wasn't sure what we were going to talk about today. Matter of fact, I was just talking with somebody about it ahead of time on the way here basically, like what are you gonna talk about? I'm like, I don't know. But I'm sure we're gonna have a lot to talk about. And you know, I don't even remember what we talked about already. The nice thing about having a brain injury you can kind of forget about a lot of things sometimes. But yeah, it's, you're you're doing great work with with what with our, with our profession, and I appreciate what you do for everybody and bringing two of us here that had a very different but a very similar situation. It's pretty neat and to just share some share some time with everybody, so I appreciate it.