

# Kevin Basik - Episode 761

Fri, Apr 28, 2023 6:19PM 2:45:19

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

leaders, leadership, people, humility, great, military, talk, day, integrity, book, called, standards, drift, moment, honor, air force academy, culture, values, story, storm

## SPEAKERS

James Geering, Kevin Basik

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James Geering 00:00

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Kevin Basik 03:26

Yeah, so I'm born in Chicago, but my family moved down to Southwest Florida when I was about two years old. So that was always home for me. And I'm the youngest of six kids. One girl who stands about a towering five foot two, and then five boys. All of whom basically are big, meaty, cornfed, muscle dragging, you know, knuckle dragging mouth breather. So you know, as I described, because they're all the big strong football player types. And I showed up as the runt of the litter. So I was the baby of the six. And, but I grew up in a very loving household and very active. I grew up watching my siblings, older siblings, play sports, and just be members of the community. So the tribe I grew up in, in the family it was it was supportive and healthy and loving and a very, very blessed, but my oldest brother, when I was about 12 years old, was recruited for football and a couple different places. But the one that kind of captured his attention was this place called the Air Force Academy. And we knew nothing about the military. Nothing, because my dad, my dad was a developer. He was a builder he built. He built houses he built every house we lived in, but he was also just a visionary developer in South Florida, and created all sorts of projects and things that endure today. But my brother gets this invitation to the Air Force Academy through the prep school. And off he goes, and the first time he came back, there was something different going on. So that was our first introduction to what's you know, he looks different. He's carrying himself differently. This uniform thing just caught our attention. So much so that my next older brother was recruited, went through the prep school as well. But he was recruited for football and went to the Air Force Academy. My next oldest brother went to normal people College in Georgia, but he went our Army ROTC and got injured, we got introduced that whole thing, the army thing, my next brother went to West Point, he was recruited that way. So here I am. Now it's time for me to enter that phase of my life. So I've been introduced to the service academy thing. And I knew I wasn't going to fly. I wasn't recruited for athletics. But I was able to after quite a bit of of a number of attempts, actually, to get in the Air Force Academy. And that introduced me to sort of the leadership domain I was I was a behavioral science, student, human factors engineering student at the Air Force Academy. And I bought into the leadership thing, and the human domain, arena. And that caught my heart. So as I graduated from the academy, went out and the Air Force about a year, year and a half later called me up and said, hey, we'd love to have you come back and teach, because this seems to resonate with you. So we'll send you to grad school, if you come back to be the faculty. So that's their pipeline program. And that got me on the professional journey of leadership development. I got a master's degree in industrial and organizational psychology. So what is that? That's what do we know about what's happening in in the funky human animal up? Well, you know, above the head, and then put that person in a context. So my focus was small team leadership, why does it work? Why does it not work? What's happening? What are the dynamics that matter? So I went back in the Air Force, we got a chance to apply that and explore that and and just dive into the mission. Went taught at the Citadel for a couple of years, running the Air Force ROTC program, the leadership program there called Leadership at that school, which is a it's a civilian school, but it's a military service school. So it still had that environment. And then I got called up to kind of the headquarters to the show to run leadership development nationally. For for the Air Force for so any college or university that had an Air Force ROTC program, I was in charge of the leadership development component in the summer programs and whatnot. And eventually, they said, Hey, we need you to go a little deeper. So they sent me to get a PhD. And the joke in our family is, anytime I think the PhD isn't all impressive, my mom will introduce me as this is my son, Kevin, he's a doctor, but not the guy that helps anybody. All right, so that's, that's it, but I gotta say it, again, master's degree at Florida State. And they're through the College of Business, in organizational behavior, which is

a lot of the psychology stuff all over again. But now it's kind of up a level, the muscle movements are a little bit bigger. Now we're going to talk about trust, we're going to talk about culture, we're going to talk about sort of the the identity of the people in the organization, or what is leadership do to model that and to develop that, and admire and focus on I know, we'll get into this is something called behavioral integrity. And that just became the goggles through which I see the world. And I brought that mindset with me to the back to the Air Force Academy to help run some of the the Center for character and leadership development. And at the Air Force Academy, we say we develop leaders of character. And the test failed me to say, what do we mean by that? We've been saying it a long time, we never defined it. And how do you actually develop somebody toward that? And what's it can't just be well, that's how it was done to me. So it must have worked out? It must be good, because look at me, you know, can't be that it's got to be what's the rigor? What's the science behind it? No. So we developed a framework for developing a leader of character in a culture that that strengthens that. And through all that work, we did some cool things. And my name bubbled up, apparently, and I got pulled up to the Pentagon to help focus on values based leadership at the Department of Defense level. So across all the branches of the service is what do we do to strengthen people's identity in the profession of arms? You know, their commitment, we don't we don't want compliance based leadership. We want commitment based leadership. So how do we fanned the flames of that? So based on my background, I get invited to help out with that. And then as I retired, I love this stuff. James i i I drink the Kool Aid, I mix the Kool Aid I serve the Kool Aid, you can't convince me that some of the things that just keep bubbling up to the top, don't matter. And in organizations, whether it's you know, whether it's a, it's a group of firefighters, whether it's police force, or the military or corporate or sales team or a family, if things are breaking down, usually you can connect the dots back to the fundamentals, there are certain things that you got to get right, you got to make sure you're watering that corner of the garden, or else it's gonna, you're gonna have problems. So as I got military, I said, I love this. And I want to just keep doing it. So I started my own company. And I was blessed enough to have enough military folks who said, We want you to keep coming and talking to us. And they got corporate things and all that going on. And then about a year and a half ago. Through just a classmate, mutual friend, amazing leader in her own right, she introduced me to a group of folks that were doing something amazing. And it's the National Medal of Honor museum foundation. But basically, in this meeting I got invited to they said, Hey, there's three things we're trying to do, we're going to do actually, first is, we're going to get the National Medal of Honor monument, built on the Mall in Washington, DC, which is not an easy lift, but they pulled they pulled it off, and now it's just down to site selection. But that that national monuments going on the Mall in DC, probably close to Abraham Lincoln off his left foot. The second piece of the puzzle is, we're going to build the National Medal of Honor Museum, which is this iconic, amazing structure designed around the values embodied in the Medal of Honor. And the third piece of the puzzle, they said in this meeting is, within that museum, we're going to have the National Medal of Honor Leadership Institute. And we'd love help sort of figuring out what that needs to look like, what the structure should be, what the Spirit should be, how we start that we need, we need structure, we need some momentum, we think you might be the guy to help us do that. So for a year and a half, I've been kind of helping on that mission to, to bring the Medal of Honor values to the world and say, these things matter. And we're back to leaders of character again, and you know, the values courage, integrity, sacrifice, commitment, though, you know, service to something bigger than yourself, that never stops being important, and wrapped in that, of course of citizenship and patriotism and some of these other virtues. So, so there you go. So from a little kid on an island in southwest Florida, I have the blessing now of sharing just concepts about living leading with character and honor to the world.



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Beautiful. Well, I'm going to take you back to Florida, because, okay. So a couple of things. Firstly, you mentioned that your sister was one of six, the only only girl? Yes. What impact did that have on the person she became when everyone around her was, you know, burly cornfed? Boys? Yeah,



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well, what a great question because she is she is such a special woman, and is just, she's a force of nature in her just gentle, loving spirit. And she, she had to tolerate a house full of guys, you know, and now I was the baby. So I showed up after everybody. So I got a different chapter in the whole story. But as I was growing up, as much as you know, everybody's heard dog each other and everybody respected my sister. You know, my sister, she, you loved Laurie. And she's just again, she's not a towering figure. But she is. She is strong and significant, just in her presence and her faith and her dedication. So she, I don't know if because she grew up there with a bunch of guys. I think things roll off her shoulders, just differently. She can just shake your head give those guys though, you know, knuckleheads, I think she can keep things in perspective, because she's just seeing goofball you know, brothers in mass that Do you know, it's like that ball of just just chaos and energy. And she were she remained separate and in control when all that stuff was going on. But she's she's, I think she is strong because of her primary position in the family.



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She was respected.



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Beautiful. I'm one of five kids and funnily enough, my eldest sister she used to we look her up on a farm so she used to mock out stables and all that kind of thing. She actually could be I think all the boys in her Her school year armwrestling. So I remember she had these like, onions are amazing, but my youngest one, she was really the one that grew up around, you know, three boys by that point one was a twin to older ones. And I guess she was always the tough one. You know, she she, I think again, her her spirit and her. Her ability to just not be intimidated by people was interesting watching the two dynamics you my oldest sister was born before any of us. And then my youngest one obviously was one of the last ones born but strong for different reasons.



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Yeah, and I think the strength shows up differently. I would say she my sister is definitely strong, but wasn't armwrestling strong. I think I can take that one off the table right there. But, but just strong, you know, strong and her her personal stand. And she and my dad, I think had a very unique relationship. I'm 11 years removed from her. And my relationship with my dad, you know, he was in business. And he was he was off and running with things as I was growing

up. And, you know, when the six kid shows up, it's just like, alright, well, good luck with that, you know, the rest of the kids will probably take care of you. And hopefully you don't kill yourself. So I think her relationship with my dad gave her strength and wisdom, I would say there's probably a lot of wisdom in her role in our family to him.

 16:23

Now speaking of your dad for a second, Florida obviously has had an X absolute explosion of housing, especially where I live, we've got the what's called the villages, and that is rolling a mass of elderly people. So are there any kind of reoccurring themes that you heard him talking about his observation being in construction in Florida, specifically, whether it's, you know, the way that we're building the communities or anything at all?

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Yeah, so as far as

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like managed growth and all that, I didn't hear as much of that. But with my dad, it was interesting, early on, he was in the home building process. And this is when Florida was just sort of, especially southwest Florida was just sort of coming into its own. So he was a developer of communities and things. He always wanted to bring

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a different look to what

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the masses tended to get. Right. He, like, I think when he built one of his most recent communities, everybody was going with sort of the Italian Renaissance style. And he said, let's go back to old Florida man, let's let's go back to like the Hemingway vibe and create an enclave there. So he was always throughout his life, one to sort of pivot away from what the masses were doing. But I will tell you this twice in our lives in my life. I saw what it's like to be an entrepreneur, especially in that industry, in the development industry. And twice, I watched my folks go through, you know, tough, tough, tough financial times, when the music stopped. He went from developing houses to developing more sort of larger projects. And after he battled back from sort of the first thing, now with my brothers, they created this really neat retail space, outside of Naples, kind of on the edge of the Everglades. And if if growth continued the way it was going, this place was in the right spot at what would could be the right time, you know, it just needed to grow into it. Well, they built it, it was amazing. It had his fingerprints all over it. And the doors opened in 2008. And lines of cars down the street, man, as far as you could see in our family tears in our eyes, daddy did it man, he paid the price, and it was all worth it. And then October 2000, he shows up, and the music stops, and the bottom drops out.

And it became clear in just just within days, almost. This is not going to work. It's not going to be fixable. And the growth that was necessary to sustain this thing is not gonna happen. So I've seen the trends in the real estate market, through my dad's experiences, teach a lot of lessons. And now that the growth has happened again, go figure that same location is exactly where it needed to be, you know, the timing was just off a little bit. But he still had planted some seeds that my brothers were able to turn into something amazing now, but But yeah, I tell you what, man. It was tough for everybody in 2008 when when the economy just just tanked but in southwest Florida, it was a bloodbath, especially if you were in the development. You saw million million million dollar golf courses and the million dollar houses on these multibillion golf courses, and just weeds grown up on the golf course. And of course like one Eat, because the developers like, Thanks taking us out. So so that that's an industry that, you know, feast or famine, literally, literally.



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So while we're on that topic for a second, I want to stay at the child, I got one more question, then we'll kind of progress through. But we definitely have some things to discuss as far as leadership and the last couple of years that we've sort of been on and again, bringing solutions to problems, not just throwing stones. Yeah. When you look back retrospectively at that period, that, as you said, was so damaging to so many people. What was some of the leadership failures back there? Whether it was in the political space or other areas



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that led to that? Yes. Well, you know, obviously, the you got the subprime mortgage, and people were just chasing profits without even understanding what was going on. And one could I think, pretty easily connect the dots to cryptocurrency and all people are diving after the shiny thing, they're going well, I don't really know how it works. But man, this guy is making a ton of money. So there's, you know, we get blinded and distracted by, you know, by growth, and by seeming strength and profit. So, you had all those mechanisms. And I think there was a lot of reinforcing functions that as long as, as long as the music doesn't stop, what was happening was, there's just there was an assumption that the curve continues in the same direction it's in right now. And that when, when you're developing properties, and you know, in this industry we're talking about, you know, sometimes you have to borrow money here from equity in order to pay for this next phase of the project, to keep that going, and then once that pays off, then we can pull from that, and we can keep this next thing going. So it was always I mean, almost looking back on it, it almost felt a little bit like a Ponzi setup, and that in order to make the curve, keep going, we got to keep borrowing from ourselves. And it works, as long as that model plays off. But as soon as things start getting shaky, you know, that's, that's when the banks went, hang on, okay, we need to collect money. And people were like, well, my money's tied up in the next step. And they said, Well, you got to pay for the last step. And it was just, it was amazing how quickly the, the assumption, the flaw in the assumption was demonstrated. And, you know, from a leadership standpoint, I guess the, the thing that was missing was some humility, you know, was,



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was, it was some wisdom



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was, hopefully we're not ignoring the lessons of the past and doing the same things now. Because it's easy to do that when things are going well. And I will tell you this, this is, this is kind of a little bit of a shift toward the conversation of leadership writ large.



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But let's start with this as the point of entry. No system drifts toward excellence.



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No system drifts toward excellence. Now that can be your physical system, you know, your physical body, it doesn't you you got to work. If you want excellence, you got to work because there's a lot of things pulling you away from that your marriage doesn't drift toward excellence, it drifts towards the K, it drifts toward your lack of passion, it drifts away from excellence. Unless you you focus on that. And I think a lot of times in our society, we drift from our values, we drift from our principles. And because there's this natural tendency, whether it's just sort of human rationalization, comfort, laziness, fatigue, we drift away from what we say we are, as a nation, as a company, as a tribe. And in this in this model, I do some work with the Special Forces and the folks down at the Joint Special Ops University and at MacDill, Air Force Base in Tampa. they've mapped out this really cool framework for drift for moral drift and ethical drift. And if you can imagine sort of this the two by two matrix, right is on one side is we are right in line with our values and our principles and our standards and our commitments. Okay, we are in integrity with that on one side. On the other side, we're away from it, and that's not good. But the other dimension is really important. And I think this is important for our, our country to what's happening with the mission. That's what that's what the vertical axis is. Because if we've drifted away from our standards and values, but the mission still getting done, the economy still feels like it's going okay. You know, there hasn't been a suicide in our unit. You know, we're getting a way with it, if the mission still getting done, yet we've drifted away from our standards and our principles, buckle up. Because it's only a matter of time because of that natural drift, that you turn the corner. And you end up in what we'll say is the bottom left hand quadrant, which is, we've drifted from our standards, and the mission is no longer getting done. It's the Oh, crap moment. It's the front page of the newspaper, everything breaks down the big scandal, the sexual assault, the marriage is now broken beyond repair. And when we hit that, Oh, crap moment, all heads turn and ask, how did we get here? And the answer is not all at once, man. Little by little, we had drifted. And yet because there wasn't a big consequence. We were tolerated. And it's in that quadrant where the mission is getting done, but we've drifted away. That's where leadership is most important. Because it's the leaders job to recognize we drifted and just fight their way back to the standards and the values and principles. And maybe that's shining a light on the fact that we don't know what the hell we're talking about in this industry, and what we're buying and selling, you know, or we've, you know, as a country, we say, we stand for this, and then we tolerate this or we elect this or we're looking past this, or we're rationalizing this. It's the leaders job to recognize when we've drifted. And it's most important when we drifted. In the end, the consequence hasn't shown up yet. That's That's what I think that the big takeaway there is.



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Well, firstly, I love that kind of visualization. I think that's so profound. And I can see that in, for example, the last Fire Department I worked for, I've worked for some phenomenal fire departments, this wasn't one of them. And they they protect the most famous theme park, I would argue on planet Earth. We had a near miss, where the guy that ended up murdering all those people impulse have gone to where my station was, yeah. Then in the area there, Disney Springs. And I happen to be overseas when it happened. When I came back. I was like, alright, what are we doing? What's changed? What's new equipment? You know, what the training we're doing with the law enforcement? Nothing under the rug it goes. And so that's exactly what

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we got away with it. Yeah, exactly. Saying, and then let's keep on keep on.

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And I've been saying that, that didn't get in the world of mathematics, that you're one more roll the dice closer to that disaster. Now, law of probability. So you know, there's that. But then also, if you look at right now, what I see and I don't have the news, I unplugged my TV. I mean, the cable side a long, long time ago, like a decade ago. But you know, we have social media now. And what fills my feet? Oh, this ex president is now in court. And I know we can't drink this beer anymore. There's a transgender person on it. And then like, really, we just had a mass shooting yet again. And already two days later, we forgotten about that. That, to me is the massive drift. The mission is the health and security of the American people and our ability to help people outside of our country as well. And we're bickering about this my my new shirt. We've totally not not even we haven't drifted, we're now talking to a volleyball on an island. You know what I mean, without far away, and we think we were not going to get good leadership if we keep the same system as well, because the system that we've got, has shown from left and right, that, you know, we do not get leaders and we keep hearing the same thing, the lesser of two evils. So I think even our ability to choose leaders has drifted so far from what it used to be.

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Yeah. And I oh my gosh, I see this so much. And it shows up in language is when there is an obvious deviation there's an obvious blip that man Come on, we're better than this. How the leaders respond to that the language they use, do they go you know what we're right we got let's let's own that. Or can we explain it away and blame somebody? Blame is never a Leadership Competency man. But we've got so comfortable in that third in that quadrant up there. When the mission is getting done. And we can we can explain away we can rationalize, we can blame the other party. And that keeps us feeling good. And we've like you said we just moved that much closer to the oh crap moment. You know, I don't know wherever people fall on this standard. But when you you know a couple years ago, on the sixth of January, we're we're looking at the people's house this the capital of the nation, and you're seeing what



happened. You can't help but go whoa, there's this is not what we should be doing. You know, there's a obviously This is a big enough event that everybody in the room should go not that we all agree not that right. And boy, it does not take long for people to reintroduce language that just is like, well, you know, it's, it's okay. And they're here, I'll give you I'll give you a quote that I heard at a camp from the education, domain, grunter and Whitaker. And it says, this is the culture of an organization and I'll say your country or a family or a firefighting unit, the culture of any organization is largely defined by the worst thing the leader will tolerate. Right? So if you tolerate that, especially if you're the leader, you just said, it's in bounds. You know, the standard you walk past is the standard you endorse. And God help you if you're modeling it, because man, you really want to get it into the culture for the leader to model it. You know, there's, if there's a difference between the video and the audio, people are going with the video every time I'm watching you, and if you you are the model for what we really thinking how we really act. And I think there's just, there's just power in the language that people use. And it's what signals what we are willing to tolerate and allow from ourselves. And, and that, you know, it's what's funny is, people shake their head, and they're like, man, that's hypocritical. We are so bothered by hypocritical things, especially in politicians. But in all leaders, yet, we lament it, and we allow it, you know, and it's, that's the big challenge is it's I think, this country, it's going to take a leader,



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who, who signals accountability,



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even within their own tribe, to go, you know, not everybody on our side of the table, always gets it right. Matter of fact, that dudes on to something, and he's wearing the other team's Jersey, and I want to honor that, you know, what this side of our tongue, we need to stop that we're better than that. And, you know, we need to, I think a leader will emerge where people go, I'm not really even sure which side you're on.



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But I get it. And



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finally, somebody's saying that, and I think that's why the independent party is growing so fast, is people go I need, they can't be just the two extremes. It can't be.



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Well, they you said the word leader and other people, you talk about this, because I don't wanna talk about politics. Well, it's not politicians that are their entire own breed. What I want to see is leadership. And we haven't seen a leader in this position for a long time. I mean, you

saw tyranny with a lot of the, the way, the last couple of years were handled as far as mandates and all kinds of things. I mean, the number of people I know whose whose jobs were taken, or were threatened, who were on the front line with no PPE, and no vaccinations, and everyone was absolutely fine. And then all of a sudden, now they're, you know, selfish murderers, because they won't take a vaccine that as we progress through we realize was nowhere near as effective. And it's not that's not even the topic. I got vaccinated. I'm not scared of it either. But middle of the road leadership. And the same thing, like you said, I know of people that were in the law enforcement side on the you know, in that January incident, and I know people died in that January incident. I know if I tried to break my way into a government building, I'd probably get shot. But all of a sudden now that these fairytales Oh, it wasn't as but like you said, it wasn't as bad. No, take a step back. It was really bad no matter how you look at it, we should not be you know, rushing into government buildings and doing the things that they did. So the moment your

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bathwater doesn't mean you, you are against everything on your side of the table, if you acknowledge that that thing was unacceptable. But you know, it's it's we've gotten to a point where if you acknowledge the point or value of any buddy on the other side, you obviously are not loyal, or you hate America or something like that. And that's childish.

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Absolutely. And that's the thing that I've you know, when you come from another country, and racially and you're talking about some things, I'm sure there's people that think, but you know, and say behind my back, because I don't have it set on my face. Oh, yeah. Why don't you just eff off back to England? And it's like, yeah, or you could actually cared about this country enough to stay here and try and be a part of the solution. And,

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yeah, you know, language that's been sort of morphed over time. I think we get back to the heart of patriotism, you know, and citizenship, you know, at the local level, but you know, even at the national level, it's wanting to make better. You know, it's believing in the potential and the beauty and you know, for America, America is the It's the great experiment that gives hope to the rest of the world. But it's beautiful. It's imperfect. It's beautifully imperfect. But at least I think, you know, patriotism is wanting to take it from where it is, its imperfections and move it forward because you believe in it so much, and you'll love it so much.

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Absolutely. 100%. Well, I want to get to, you know, unpack the actual tenets of true leadership so that then maybe we can compare and contrast and know what we're going to be looking for in the future. Before we do you obviously ended up in the teaching role in the ROTC. My son is actually in the army JROTC at the moment. I've got to see what an amazing program that is, as

a parent watching my son grow within, you know, more mentors outside his own family. So firstly, what was your brother's experience of that program? No, it wasn't JROTC but the ROTC program at the college level for him as a student?



35:59

Yeah, so my, again, we had a few go through service academies, which is just one path to commissioning, and you're sort of immersed in the military environment at service academy. And then my one brother, Danny went through the ROTC program at the college level, Barry College in Rome, Georgia. And that was his path of entry into the army. And so if you're asking about his experience, or all the experiences, his experience, again, I'm seven years removed from him. But his was, you know, I think there's, there's a tribe, there's a culture, you know, associated with each ROTC program, they want to introduce you to the army culture writ large. And there's a, you know, the Army is very skills based, and, you know, tactics based, so we're gonna, we're gonna get do field expeditions and things like that. So I think, like, everywhere, he was exposed to some positive leadership examples, and some negative ones. In the ROTC programs, it's a leadership laboratory. So some of your leadership experience is coming from a knucklehead college kid that's just a little bit older than you or maybe the same age, but right, you know, rank wise, they're trying to lead and inspire and influence you. And Lord knows, you pick up a lot of lessons learned positive and negative going through that. But my, my perception of what his journey was Is he really resonated with the mission, where we stand for something bigger than ourselves, you know, we're up to something that matters. And that was appealing and inspiring. And I think he also gravitated towards the structure that there's, there's a process for us pulling this off. And we can train our way to excellence. And we can, we can model it, and knowing my brother Dan is as well as I do. He's just one of those natural folks that has a heart for people. And he's rootin for the people that he's leading. So I think it gave him a forum to just sort of demonstrate what comes naturally to him. And he progressed up and ironically, of my sister went, she served in the government for over 20 years as a civilian. But of all the five basic boys who went into the military commissioned, the one who went ROTC ended up retiring at the highest grade out of all of us. thought that was interesting.



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That is indeed so one of the things when we talk about, you hear the phrase diversity, and I talk about this a lot, because I think it's a very important message. What I've seen whether it's the fire mentorship program that one of my friends has in Ocala, whether it's a JROTC program that I've seen, you know, with my own eyes with my son, the way it appears that you actually create diversity in an organization is you find areas that are underserved, and you give them the tools to find the best people within that community. So for example, Christmas program, if it's at the central location, all these kids have to do was get to this fire station, they'll get the equipment given to them, they'll get the training given to them, the end of the obviously form this cohesive group, their scholarships to the Fire Academy itself, there's certainly agencies waiting to pick them up on the other end if they if they graduate. And so you find the best of all these different groups and you raise them up. What have you seen now with the I know you're slightly higher at the kind of college level by this point, but what are you seeing as far as the impact of these programs on raising up young men and women that maybe wouldn't have had an opportunity if it wasn't for a program like that? Yeah, that's interesting.

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So when I came in, alright, so we got a couple of different ways to look at that. When I came into the Air Force Academy your women had been there for a decade. Alright, so it we didn't know any different And there were enough of them there, that it was just hey, we're all in this together. And then you got you know me, you still got teenage hormones and all that stuff going on that introduce themselves into that dynamic. So what I saw then and man, fast forward now 30 years later, what I've seen now is it's, it's great when I go and speak to like, last week I was at the Air Mobility Command, senior noncommissioned officers course, is, it was just the racial diversity, the gender diversity at this senior noncommissioned officer level was amazing. I mean, it was representative of population. And these folks were sharp, holy cow, they were sharp, and they were sharp, regardless of the plumbing or the pigment. They were just sharp people that, thank God, they were introduced

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to

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the, to this avenue. And for some of them, it was, it was a way out that that had they not known, they might not have gotten out of very tough situations. So I have personally seen just amazing talent show up that might not have otherwise gotten there. So there, I'm assuming there were deliberate initiatives that reached into populations that may not have been aware of the military. And you know, you think about it now, given how few people have family members that have served in the military now, you know, so with regard to familiarity with the military, almost everybody's an underserved population with regard to that as a resource. So we just got to do a better job of telling the story, to say, there's something here that matters, I think we need to do a better job of connecting it back to, to serve the nation, and to serve the world. I mean, this is it is about national security is about, you know, world stabilization and security and whatnot, as opposed to just hey, it's a great way to pay for college, I think we reinforce maybe the wrong message, when we step away from, you know, you are raising your hand, and you are pledging your allegiance to an idea and a document, the Constitution beats at all, it doesn't matter who's in the White House, the Constitution wins. And that's what you're up to. And again, you're protecting the great American experiment. So I think we need to do a good job of making sure everybody understands that. But representation of people getting in and diversity of thought, background experience, it's a powerful force multiplier, to have very different folks show up as long as they're all aligned on the mission and what we're trying to do, because you can get very different collection of people, different backgrounds, and mindsets. But that's not always a good thing. If they're all just sort of looking out for themselves or their own best interest, so focused on the mission externally. I'll give you one more point, though, when I was at the Citadel, women had not been there very long. And they had not come into the Citadel in numbers that could create sort of that tipping point. So when I came back there in 2000, to 2002, I think, or 2003 to 2005. There, it was possible for companies, which was the squadron level equivalent, or you know, there's the unit, the smaller unit, it was possible for them to find themselves in a season without women, it just because the numbers worked out where here we are without women again. And it was amazing how quickly the mindset



Yeah, and you hit on so many important things. There's that. Let's I mean, the, the kids want to be inspired. But we all want to be inspired. And there's just a fundamental human dynamic, right? It's called in group psychology, where, where people are drawn to connection, even if it's just with one other person, because my identity, who I am is defined largely by who I am with and who I am not with. So as if I'm looking for tribes, if that's just an innate hunger of mine, I will modify my behaviors to maintain membership in a tribe that I want to be a part of, right. So this can go well or it can go poorly. And people will adjust their behaviors. And this is how gangs work. And this is how toxic units emerge, is people start saying, Hey, if you want to be a part of this, this is how we roll here and it can go south or it can go north. Now we're back to leadership again, because your son's ROTC detachment, he's, you know, he could be playing video games, but something about our JROTC caught his attention. So he decides to dip a toe in there. Now he's got to change his behaviors. You have to manage your time a certain way, you have to wear your hair a certain way. There's certain uniforms and outfits you use and you talk a weird way. But if you want to be part of this man, that's the deal. So the commander of his JROTC unit is mentoring him on



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something.



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Now, hopefully, it's positive stuff. And if to whatever degree He's raising his game, this guy is a leader, the type of leader that we want. And your son is now learning lessons on how to inspire and lead and influence other people who want to be a part of this. There's a the Sicilian Mafia was referred to as Cosa Nostra, which I'm not endorsing the Sicilian Mafia, but you know, it's, it's a group of people that were up to something and were fiercely loyal, you know, to a degree, but I just liked the phrase, Cosa Nostra translates to this thing of ours. I just like I like I think that's poetic. And I think part of the leaders job is to say, if you're part of this, here's what we're up to. And here's why it matters. We don't just need bodies, we need bodies directed toward that. And to protect and serve and to we race to the sound of the guns or we've we attack the fire before to tax us. There's something that if people connect with that, and it's the leaders role to make that connection. They will modify their behaviors to maintain membership in that and they will they don't mind being held accountable to high standards. They'll compete to be a part of an organization with high standards like the Navy SEALs, ladies on Special Forces, first responders I want and I'm willing to do all that crap. As long as the standards are consistently enforced. What I've noticed for leaders is man, if you if you are inconsistent with enforcing those standards, I don't know what that means. And I got to start playing games now. And now I got to look out for myself, we got, we got a safety issue, and I'm going on right now. And now it gets into protection mode.



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So you just hit on the very pertinent topic that I have observed myself. So I mentioned, I've been on four different fire departments, arguably one of the best and one of the worst, and then a couple of very, very good ones in between. But what I found was what I consider the best, which is Anaheim, in California, their orientation was exploded, their hiring practice was extremely competitive, I was one of the 1000 people that were already fully certified for the

job, fire, emt or paramedic experience. In other places, I mean, the resume was was stacked. And then they were notorious for about cutting about 25% of each class that they actually hired. So the attrition rate was 25%.



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It's an exclusive tribe now that anybody gets in know, exactly, and



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they're there, they test it every four months, you know, you had this big workup for that whole year. And I saw people lining up out the door for this, like I said, conversely, some of the departments I work for recently, their bar isn't just low, you mean the last one, you had to dig a trench to put the bar in, and they, you know, well paid slightly better, you know, working conditions, a lot of places, and they have to, like scrape whatever they can to get people even test there. And what I have seen is there seems to be this kind of belief in this mythology that if you lower standards, you're going to be able to fill the places easier, what my, you know, experience and now really common sense sees as well, if you lower standards, people in our professions want to rise to a challenge. So if you just open the door, not only can anyone walk in, but I think you turn away a lot of people because that challenge isn't there. So what is your perspective, you know, with all the the leadership elements that you've been a part of, on this lowering of the bar to quote unquote, you know, improve recruitment,



52:09

I have seen that play out to, to open access to certain folks. Maybe standards get lowered, Hey, man, we really love you in here, we're gonna lower the standards, there's another path for you to get in the door. Well, eventually, there's going to be a performance event, that's going to demonstrate, you don't have what we said, we need. And if we're serious about what we need, you set that person up for failure, first of all, because now they're in over their head. And what I've seen is in order to now have to survive, or in that environment, people will now start doing anything they have to do and it might turn into honor violations might turn into character things that I shouldn't have gotten in here in the first place. And it's it's it frustrates them, it sets them up for very, you know, dilemmas in order to maintain membership in this. But it also signals to the other folks who came in under the standard that should have been there that our word isn't good, man, we say we're the best of the best. And yeah, and then you come on, you do this. People are hungry. Absolutely. What you said, people are hungry for a challenge. I saw this at a recruiting event. And this was I was helping out with, with and high school levels, were going visiting high schools, and I was just there to sort of support and answer some questions for the Air Force. But the other services were there. And you had an auditorium full of high school kids that may or may not know about the military. So you get the parade up there. The Air Force, or the army stands up there. I think we went first, the Air Force went up there first. And we're kind of the cool kids. And we've got the really cool toys and we're sort of maybe perceived as the more intellectual. I'm totally using stereotypes here. But of the services were the newer ones, the technologies a little bit better. So if you like that sort of stuff, pick this. And therefore in our presentation, it's a lot of gee whiz, you know, cool planes and things like that. Come to us We're the cool kids and we got the neat toys then the Navy shows up see the world



hey, you saw Top Gun right? That was us. And we've got planes too. So they show all their technology and all and they had a good presentation the army shows up and they're like we got tanks and we do stuff and be all you can be and and you know Army strong. And you know money for high school or for college. So they did their whole pitch, a slides, audio, the whole bit, all three of us did. And then the Marine Corps.



54:51

You talk you talk about



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culture, there's some power man there's something about identity and culture with the Marine Corps. This dude steps up marine In, and he has the uniform just painted on its mat. It's just beautiful. He's got the rack ribbons looks like a fruit salad, just walks across these no slides, no audio doesn't even use a microphone. And all he says he walks to the front stage he goes, odds are you don't have what it takes to be in the Marine Corps. If you think you do, I'll be over here. Where does everybody go? They go, Oh, we're like, yeah, come on, man. The Marines should check this, you know, and they



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got a pull up bar. We've got



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a slide presentation, that'll bring tears to your eyes. This guy's got a pull up bar. He's like, stop talking. Just show me what you got. And people wanted desperately to demonstrate. I'm the type of person who can get in with you guys. There's something special here. So just at a primal level, I've seen the theater play out beautifully. People don't mind the standards as long as the standard. I mean, you can't fake the pull up, do the friggin pull up or not. Don't tell me you can do too. I just watched our tan I watched you do too. So come back when you can do eight. Sia. That's that's the deal, man. So I stand standards. Again, we're back to that whole thing is culture is defined by the worst thing a leader will tolerate. And that comes back to standards as well.



56:25

It's funny, you talk about the marine thing. I think, pretty much every Royal Marine friend of mine has quoted the TV commercial that they ran in the UK for their enlistment. And it basically said 99% of the military will never be a Royal Marine. I think there was something I'm paraphrasing, but that was it like, Oh, really? Okay, I'm gonna show you, you know, so it's the same thing. And it says it's what I saw in Anaheim. I remember, I tested because I will move back to the East Coast. And I went and did a CPAP practice tests, which is our physical test, just to make sure because again, you know, even though I was in great shape and everything, I'm

alright, I'm not, you know, a narcissist, let me make sure I'm where I need to be. So I went out of the water when I go back East. And the guy said to me, you're the only person I've ever known that's left Anaheim Fire Department, and it was purely for family, we had a little boy and she wanted to go back to, to her, you know where her family was. And that is what you want to hear about your placement where your department, your special operations unit, whatever it is that people never leave, you know, I



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want to flip this on you because I know you've talked about this in some of your other and many of your other podcasts. But what was it about that? What do you miss or what to you, you went holy cow. That's what it's supposed to look like, what was the secret sauce at Anaheim with regard to culture, and what the leaders did to create that culture,



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I think goes back to what you're going to expand on in this conversation. But you've touched on already it was, you know, the the lowest level that the department would tolerate, they set that bar so high that and we saw people we have people that we were hired with that we you know, gave a hug to and off, they went out the door because they didn't make it. But then after especially after you make it through that crucible the first year, and you don't become what they call a yard, which is your a day where you suddenly become a third but you know you your embrace, because these people know how hard it was to go through that, as I'm sure it is with buds and shs selection and a lot of these other things. And if you make it through there, like we didn't even have fitness standards, because it was just a cultural thing. Not everyone was in great shape. Don't get me wrong, but a lot of them were up. And we used to work out together all the time. And no one told us to that I think that was the real takeaway. And if you have a great probationary firefighter that just made it a year, you're going to have great regular firefighters, they're going to become great engineers, great. The captains over there didn't have any tenants, great battalion chiefs. And there's, you know, there's always anomalies, but when you set the bar out the front door, that culture carries through the ranks as well. And so now you end up with battalion chiefs and chiefs who have walked the walk who have been through the fire themselves who know what it's like to run all these calls. And you know, more often than not, at least at the battalion level, they never forgot it. Whereas what I saw on my last place was the the actual Chief Chief came through fire Prevention's. And there have been a firefighter, the operations chief, who was in charge of, you know, the actual boots on the ground, came up through dispatch 911. So, had no idea neither about the job and the other side, raw EMS only not the fire side. So you add that with fragile egos. You had fired up people and it's funny, I was just telling someone the other day, a lot of the known fired up leaders in the fire service. They are not received well by their own fire department or interesting is everyone else that does you know, when they're outside looking in, so contrasting those two, it was really, like you said, it's setting that bar and just standing by your word saying, this is where we expect you to be. And we're gonna keep it. And I think it's deviate a little bit since I've been gone for 15 years from that particular department now, but, you know, when you hold yourself to that standard, and you the, the why is so ingrained, like we knew we were there, because people's lives were at stake that almost seems to be forgotten, and sometimes are disregarded, and not even in people's minds. And so that disconnect is absolutely terrifying to me. And then the other part, which even Anaheim still hasn't got yet, is the investing in your

people. And a lot of people now they're that we're deviating and the fire service, because a lot of our people still get the mission. That's why we show up it is why volunteers around America still show up to fire stations every day. But we're deviating from what we're doing as far as taking care of our people. And we're having, you know, heart disease and cancers and you know, suicides and overdoses and electrolytes. You said people like, wow, well, you know, oh, well, moving on. And we're forgetting that that's a huge red flag on leadership down and then from the ground level up as well.



1:01:16

Well, I want to hit it. You mean, you hit on so many good things here. I'm glad this is nine hour podcast. So let's just make it we didn't make much. But if in that I want to give hope to people who may find themselves in a battalion chief job or in a senior leadership job, and that didn't come up through those ranks, right? Because there may be people who good heart and I want to lead Well, or this is I find myself in this role.



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What would it take in



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order for somebody who did not come through that process? I came through dispatch, but I want to serve this unit?



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Well, what would it take for them to still be successful?



1:02:00

I would say the same humility they saw in the good leaders that have come up through the ranks understanding and I did this even like a rescue to man or man or woman team on what the ambulance that we have the fire year on, we call our rescue, I might be the lead medic, but I turned on my EMT and we'll I've done this, I've done this, I've done this. And what am I missing? Are you seeing anything that I'm not, that's just the you know, person to person level. So to me, having the humility to ask people who know more about something that we do, and for me in the fire service, they were experts in everything, I was not the subject matter expert, anything, I was just trying to juggle all my skills as best I could. So training your people well, allowing them to lead without question not micromanaging. But then also going to the people who really are the leaders in those fields and those ranks and saying, What do you need? How can I help?



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Exactly. So it's so humility. That's I mean, that's there's your point of entry there that I think anybody whether they come up through the ranks or not, there was a great story in the Harvard Business Review about a lady who found herself in a CEO position. With this technology company that was very engineering based, she wasn't an engineer, she came from a finance background. And that's what the company needed. And because she wasn't an engineer, and she's a woman, perhaps, you know, there's a there's a cultural thing there too. And she said it was it was a tough lift, because they just she was dismissed, before she even had a chance to come in. And she said, she rallied the senior engineers, and said, I have never been an engineer. I'm amazed at what you all do. But I am now in a position where I have to lead this company, I need you. And your job is not to make me an engineer, I'm hungry to learn anything you think I need to know. So I can serve you in this role. And with that, I think she she turned the table and said, I want to honor the fact that you are the expert here, I'm gonna do my best to always be a student of my craft. And part of that is learn what I needed to know. But there, there I think there's a bridge that can still be built by somebody who didn't come up through the ranks. But it's got to be a humble heart if you pretend like you did, but you didn't. Now you're just flexing your ignorance, you don't know what it's like to have been, you know, on the frontlines. So I think there's a, I think that the humility thing is cannot be overstated. I think making sure people stay connected to the purpose and meaning lives are at stake. I was visiting a dear friend of mine who does a wildland fire down in Colorado Springs, and he's doing amazing things and he's the type of leader you want pulling together and it's a volunteer force there. And he's created a space for you know, for the for the unit to come together and eat together and train together and all that and build that tribe. But we talked about visual signals, signals, symbols, In this space, and, you know, burnt helmets, you know is that these are you know, or if if we've lost somebody if we've lost a firefighter to have something of theirs on display, that reminds us, this is real this is this is the big deal to have children shoes. You know, it connects maybe on different level, I heard this, man, I hope this is true. And maybe somebody can can research this. Vladimir

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Zelensky when he sort of

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came into this wartime leader role, one mandate, a request he put out to everybody was take every picture of me down, if you have a picture of me and the chain of command or whatever, take it down, put up pictures of Ukrainian children, anywhere you can.

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I thought that was brilliant.

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If true. If not, it's still brilliant. But but for that simple thing to say, all we got to do is look at that or point to that, and I don't need, there's no burden associated with me inviting you to say

this is important, you know, so I think in our organizations, visible cues can be a powerful thing to say, if you made it into this tribe. The reason the standards are so high is because of that. The reason training, safety matters so much. Let me tell you the story behind that helmet right there. And that will never happen again. And I loved that guy. And my heart is broken every time I see it. And, you know, I think we need that. And I think a leader's job is just to keep beating the drum of Cosa Nostra. It's this thing of ours.



1:06:45

Well, I love that also with the chronic illnesses that plague our profession to I think every person you've lost to suicide, to overdose to cancer to you know, heart attacks and strokes and all these things. They should be plastered on the Chiefs wall. Like these are your people, this is your tribe. And right now, sadly, we're still working people the way we did 100 years ago, when we actually sat around smoking guitars and smoking guitars everywhere, smoking cigars, or guitars. And you know, and petting the Dalmatian, you know, now you stand on any main artery road and see you're gonna hear sirens nonstop, it's a very, very different world. And we worked on the same so that this is why they're just falling apart. So I think for us in the station and the training grounds in the gym, those are an amazing things as well, as you know, in headquarters, making sure that we've got the right safety gear and having the right level of training, but also the people we lose from the other side, the unspoken element, the you know, it's still line of duty, in my opinion, but it's not seen as that way. And how can we change the environment. So rather than breaking our people down, we can have them thrive in and this applies. I mean, even a lot of the gray area officer involved shootings, when the people ever asked when did that person Lastly, were they forced to do two shifts back to back, you know, that's never even discussed.



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That's brilliant. That's a great, great insight. One of the things that that keeps popping up. And there's a lot of research in here. And Amy Edmondson is the leader, lead scholar in this area, but the idea of psychological safety. So now we're back to the culture and unit level. And if, if it is not safe, especially in sort of these alpha environments, it's to the police forces, firefighters as military and sports teams and sales teams, even. For people to feel like it is safe to raise their hand and going, I'm struggling, I need help. To not feel like they're disloyal, they're less than they're weak. You know, somehow the it's got to be safe to, for somebody to raise their hand and say, I know you guys love me, and you'll understand why I need to take a knee. Or I gotta get right with my wife, because my head's not straight. With what I've with what I got going on is people should rally to each other there. But what happens is, I've discovered this, this is a, I think a cool word. When human beings don't feel safe, now that can be physically safe, but it's also emotionally safe and professionally safe. How is this going to affect my promotion and all that? So physically safe, emotionally safe, socially safe? When people don't feel safe? They hoard H O A R D they just they hoard, it's a I gotta protect stuff. What's important to me, and they will hoard things that you as the leader can't afford them to hoard. They'll hoard conversations. They'll hoard initiative. I'm not taking the initiative you want me to because I'm I'm worried. If it doesn't go well. It's going to affect my career. If I'm worried about that. That's the reason I'm not taking the initiative I could take but the reason I'm not raising my hand saying I don't think this is a good idea, or I think this is a safety issue or I need help is because I've got those concerns, but if I don't feel it's safe to share them based on what I've

seen around Hear, then it doesn't make the concerns go away. But people are just hiding and faking and lying about what they need. And I've had a lot of leaders, executives go, why don't my people tell me, if they think we're going the wrong direction, I've got an open door policy. If they perceive you got to get teen on the other side of the door, or they've seen how you respond when you get a little bit of feedback, or somebody pushes back against your pet project. If they've seen how that goes down, and it's not healthy, they're just gonna tell you what you want to hear. They're gonna hoard their real opinion. And you're gonna be often going until the crap moment count.



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So I was just checking on my phone, make sure I got the name, right, because I just shared a story. I've never heard this before. One of my friends actually sent it to me. And I thought this was phenomenal. And you talk about a culture that does understand the Dodgers LA Dodgers, there was a a baseball player, Andrew Talas, I think I've got his name, right. He was suffering from mental health problems when he was playing. And he ended up having bipolar and schizophrenia. At some point, he was even homeless, from what I understand. They just resigned him. He's been he hasn't played baseball for four years, I think it is. But they've kept him on the books. So he keeps having access to the mental and physical health care window. That was phenomenal. How easy would it be just to cut the ties, and we have first responders that leave their fire and police departments. And that's it 00 health care, nothing done. And a baseball team keeps someone on, you know, who hasn't played for them for years, because they understand that tribal element, and they care enough to do that. And I thought that was beautiful. And that, to me, is the kind of culture that we need to be looking at, because I've heard that open door policy all the time. And it's the same exact thing. They say open door until you actually speak, you know, say something that needs to be said, and not an unprofessional way. And all of a sudden, that door slammed in your face. Yeah. And everybody



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else saw the slam. And they learned like that. I don't speak up either. Yeah, I mean, you just taught everybody to hoard too. But that is a that is a beautiful story. And we're back to behavioral integrity is how many organizations say we're a family here? All right. Well, the Dodgers just said, we're a we're the type of family that doesn't cut you loose when you have problems that don't serve us, you know, we got your man or we're worried about you. And we want, we want to keep you close. That's a beautiful, beautiful signal.



1:12:34

So you said the term behavioral integrity, let's start unpacking that next. No, that was a big, you know, nucleus of a lot of what you do now. So using for let's use, the last couple of years as an example not to get again, political, but I think it's something that universally we've all experienced. So what should this look like in a positive leadership environment? And then what are some of the things that we see whether it's, you know, the political side last couple of years, or whether it was in a fire department or police department or a community that maybe were, we're missing the point when it comes to this.



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So we've we've talked about behavioral integrity in a bunch of different ways. So even that drift is the drift from the standards of what our word is, and and, you know, we've talked about all of the things where we say, we want this and then we do that. And we say, this is the standard. And then we tolerate that all of this is wrapped in behavioral integrity, which is simply the perceived pattern of alignment between the leaders words, and their actions. And now your word, now we can unpack that your word is your promise made your commitment, the values that you espouse, or the values you're kind of on the hook for, because of the role you're in, you know, for a priest to be standing in line at Walmart, and you're, you know, if you're standing behind a barista, and he's just dropping the F bomb like crazy. And you're like, what's with that? For him to turn around? Go? Well, I never said I wouldn't be I wouldn't swear ego, but you're kinda, it's kind of the thing you're into, right? That's, I'm gonna lay that over the top of you. And I'm gonna expect certain values and standards because of what you're a part of. So all of that, whether it's officially espoused or it's ascribe to us. How much do your values align with this, but the reason I like behavioral integrity, versus just the word integrity writ large, which is in everybody's value statements, right? Behavioral integrity takes it down to the moment to moment, opportunity. In this moment, I'm watching you, man in this moment. You're either in integrity, I've got my hands together for those of you who are listening, or I am think out of integrity. So my hands are just deviated a little bit. Now. The fact that you've drifted from your faith in this moment, or your promise. It doesn't make you a bad person, necessarily. It just means you got a choice. Especially if you noticed it if you know I said, this is important to me, but man in this moment, it sure looks like it's not. I say this is a priority sure looks like it's, we say we're a family here or I say on the I want to delegate, and I trust my, you know, my officers. Crap, this is a moment I could probably delegate, but there's so much at stake, it's just easier if I do it, well, then you are out of integrity. With the spirit of delegation, every time you pull the stick back, you know, or you're, you're committed to being patient, but man in this moment, it kind of got away from you. So there's the deviation in that moment, from your standard and your work. But then there's the moment after that, which is what's a person like you do? When you know you're out of integrity on this thing? Do you let it ride? Or do you battle like hell to get back in integrity, and acknowledge and own that. So it's an integrity out of integrity, just constant battle, it's a mountain with no top, that's the phrase we use. But this is what this is, this is life. So as leader, the values the standard of the standard, or they're not, let's watch you in this moment. And it also puts the burden on you to be the living example that you are the the video, it looks like this. And in moments of, you know, in the firefight, in the pandemic, in the uncertainty of what's going on right now, when there's uncertainty or lack of complete information, heads turned to the leader. People look at the leader to go okay, fill the gaps for me, are we It seems like this policy is stupid. You your actions will dictate how we respond to this policy, you know, if you're taking it seriously, okay, I guess we're taking it seriously. You're both talking about diversity and inclusion. If you roll your eyes every time that comes up, you've just polluted the well in your organization. Right? So. So behavioral integrity is just that simple moment to moment alignment. And people look at the leaders, and it's the it's that, you know, hypocrite stamp that they're going to put on you. And there's all sorts of interesting data to say that that's a big moderator. That's the it depends factor. If you're constantly preaching these values, and standards and safety, and all these things, if you're constantly preaching that does on the graph, does it actually increase behavior? Does it create more buy in? Does it strengthen the team? The answer is, it depends. It depends on what they think of you as the mouthpiece of that. Because if they think you are a hypocrite, if they think you have low behavioral integrity, the more you talk about this stuff, the more pissed off I get. You talk about standards, you talk about fitness standards, and I see you looking like this. The more you talk



about fitness standards, the more I'm gonna blow stuff off, the more this culture gets polluted, it's the behaviors follow. But man, it's on the graph, it's interesting, because they deviate, they, they just go in two different directions, depending on what the perception is of the person speaking these things that need to be said. So it's a huge driver of, of performance, affect mission accomplishment, all these things.



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So that's a really interesting perspective, because I've heard words spoken by lots of people, and especially when they lose a firefighter, and you know, especially it's through self harm. And, you know, all we care and my, my door's always open, you know, I'm here if you need me, and yet when you look holistically, you know, and from the wellness perspective on what is going on, there are a lot of things that are fixable, but it takes courageous leadership to go to these various areas and say, Look, we have to change the way we're working this year. You know, we are literally killing them. But I don't I see that so you're getting these people like you said the mouthpiece. You know, this the same thing as Oh, you know, make America great again. How? Explain to me what is it that we're supposed to do because division and hatred? I hate to tell you, I don't think that's a good perspective. That's that's



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not gonna Yeah, that's not the path and we're not telling, you know, to say, you know, to start by blaming and taking no ownership of anything. Okay, well, that's, that's not a path to greatness by, in any arena. You know, for the leader. I mean, look at the greatest sports coaches in the world after the game. Very few of the legendary Hall of Fame. sports coaches will go well, these refs. The refs just suck. That's why we lost the last four games. Hmm, you know, the great leaders are like, yeah, it was a tough call, y'all may well, we're gonna we're gonna protest visit that. But we should have never put ourselves in a position that the game came down on one call. I mean, if you just listen to the great coaches, let me let's stick with the sports analogy because it translates, I think really nicely to some of the other political and other things. There was a huge brawl after one of the bowl games a couple of years ago. I mean, just to the point where ESPN had cut away, you know, they're doing the handshakes after the game, and are let's go back to here what some of the other bowl scores are, they come back, because they're like craps hit, something's going down here. And it was a full out melee and one team was for the most part, just like Terran helmets off and stomp and people with cleats. And the the announcers who are used to watch a lot of sports games by frustrated people get a little heat, it's getting chippy out there, you know, that's the phrase. This was not chippy. This was criminal, what's going on here. And as they're breaking away, and things are finally settling down, you heard the sports announcer say things like this is a dark day for college athletics. These two schools should be embarrassed that these young men who represent that's the phrase, right. And I remember turning to my wife, and I said, I can't wait to see what the postgame interviews are with the coaches. Because what we just witnessed right here is the product of the environment for them to even think that stuff was imbalance. Right? So I want to see this. And sure enough, one of the coaches, primarily the foot stomp and pulling the helmet off kind of coach, that that team, he goes, Look, it's football, man, if people get banged around a little bit, I'm not gonna tear my clothes about it. You know, somebody went to a football game and they got in, they got hit, you know, we'll take a look at it. But let's move on to some other stuff. And I said, this coach has just given the green light to almost any behavior after that as

Hey, just football man, we're just, you know, it's a tough sport. So I think, you know, that if you if you say you're raising young men to you know, let's make college athletics great again, you know, brother, you got to own moments like that, too. And, and I'm watching what the coach does when when things deviate, you got to own it. And, you know, you got to bounce it against what we should be in a moment like that. It's the recovery moment that matters so much.



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Well, I think another just staying on that theme. Another thing that I've seen is this whole chest beating with the greatest country in the world, which again, is allowing that drift to use your analogy. Alright, just keep drifting, you know, that is that is an island. Let's see, I think it's coming up. You know, instead of going, as we talked about before that service, we're not an underlying that I hate you slash we're actually here on education. We're here on the obesity in the world. We're here on the crime on our streets. We again, we talk about law enforcement, when do we ever hear? Why is it that the streets of Reykjavik don't have gangs murdering each other, and homeless people living near every every square mile and prostitution all over the place? What are they doing differently over there that we're not doing here and vice versa? So there's some things that we do incredibly well here. But why are we not saying, Actually Norway is doing this really well. In Portugal, the drug prohibition has worked really well for them, maybe we should consider the war on drugs is an epic failure after eight years. But we're not hearing any of that we're so that's the word



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humility. That's where the humility comes in. And I think where we can stand and say America, is the greatest country in the world, in that it has the potential, you know, is that we are great because we own and acknowledge where we could and should be better. And man, we rally around that, because we want to be the great hope for the other nations. But to Yeah, to look past where we are, where we have deviated from what we could and should be. We do ourselves a disservice. You know, it's the promise of America. That is, it's the idea of America, and the potential that is so powerful and attractive, and hope giving. But with that, I mean, what what military unit doesn't focus on? It's, it's flank, it's weak area, to say, we're good at this. And we're going to keep dial dialed in, we're going to fire for effect, because we have hit this target, and we're going to keep training to hit that target, man. What do we need to work on? And to acknowledge that? Yeah, at a national level, I mean, I'm obviously a big fan of the country, big fan of America. And it's the principles and values that when we are we are At our best, you know, individually and as a nation, when we embrace and actually live out certain values and virtues that are so, so American, but you know, they're universal to there's, you know, there's courage and there's humility and there's compassion and there's commitment. And there's, there's, there's humble pride, you know, humble a humble swagger. Where I think when you watch the, the draft night, you know, when they select the NFL draft, you know, when people especially the teams that are just in the toilet, they know, they're gonna want to get one of the top draft picks, what are they looking for? I think I'm always looking at how does the person carry themselves and talk to the media, when they know they're going to be one of the top draft picks going to one of the worst teams. I think they're looking for humble swagger. Where somebody goes, I've, I'm gonna bring some strength, I'm gonna bring a mindset we're gonna bring, we're gonna have the champion mentality. But watch me because I'm going to

work harder than anybody else. And I have the humility. I'm gonna learn from the veterans. I'm gonna learn from anybody I can, I'm going to make mistakes. I'm gonna own him. But keep up with how hard I work to be great. I think most teams



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go. That's the guy. That's what we want.



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I'm always reminded of that show. I think it's newsroom. I think Jeff Daniels is the one. They're asking her why do you think America is the greatest country in the world? And he goes, is this not? gasps? Yeah. And because it's not about like, Oh, we're not the end. It's his where we are. He said, But but we used to be. And we can be again, it's not about I hate that phrase in the world, because it's not a competition. But we, you know, we, as you said, the American Dream is what brought me here, one of my friends. Drago is a Navy Seal, you know, hearing some of the people that have come to the US from other countries. It's the same thing. It's the true American dream. But even I just was just talking to DJ, you're one of your good friends who you know, obviously is a Native American. And I told him, What was weird is when I first moved to the States, people say, ah, you know, Europe is amazing, and said, you know, you've got so much history, we don't have history here. And I remember thinking, Yes, you do. You just, for some reason, America seems to start in the 1700s. And a lot of people's minds when we have you know, 1000s of 1000s of 1000s of years. So I think that's another side, to me is one of the most beautiful things about America is America, the country, this sprawling beautiful tapestry from mountains and plains and deserts. That is the country that we're so fortunate enough to inhabit. But I think we think of it as DC, as you know, these people that we see on television, and that's not what it's about. It's the community, it's the tribe that is being an American, or even just as small as the street that you live in. But I think that's the problem is, it's almost become a caricature. And we forget that it takes every single one of us to be a mentor in our home, and then walk outside our front door and be a mentor in our community as well. And that's how you elevate your nation, not by some elderly geriatric president, or some bright orange narcissist that preceded him.



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And I think, you know, you're speaking about something called citizenship, which is, which is a virtue when it's practiced, you know, you can value citizenship, you can value your country. But a virtue means you put the value into action. And I think that takes a lot of the, you know, so easy to point to Washington, DC, and oh, my gosh, Congress and doing IKEA, you know, to quote the stoics. I can't control that stuff. I can control what I do, and how I respond to that. And what I've got control over is local to me, How am I handling my family? How am I handling myself? How am I serving the community and those people around me? How am I modeling to folks and lord knows I and we, you know, many of us can, can do more. But we spend so much time lamenting what's happening at the at the headquarters level. We're missing opportunities to bring America to life. And I think again, I think America, it's the beauty It's a beautifully imperfect country that has nothing but potential to live up to what it can be. And maybe, I think, maybe at its origins, the Make America Great, again, concept that that phrase was about,

let's let's where we've gotten weak where we've drifted from our potential, let's bring it back. Now, you know, one could say that, how that that phrase got, you know, marketed and brought to life took it in a different direction. One could argue that how's that for understatement, but but I think the potential and all of us I mean, let's take it down to the individual level, you know, is how do I commit and live in Integrity with my best possible self. And that causes me to look at as a husband, as a dad, as a professional, as somebody leading a team, as a community member. My best possible self when I'm when I'm on the money, man, I'm bringing positive value to this nation in this world. But it's amazing how often I'm, you know, just scrolling on my phone, not quite my best possible self. And I gotta own that, because, you know, to Jocko Willink is onto something, you know, it's that ownership. It's got to start there, any development has to start with ownership, because I can't want it for you. You gotta want it.



1:30:41

We're going back to the deviation point, I kind of went off a tangent for a second. One of the things that I've seen, almost is accepted culturally now as this whole wishy washy, like, you know, how dare you change your mind 20 years ago, you thought this and you should still think the same thing. And that would also apply, one would think to oh, you know, you Kevin deviated from that thing you said he was going to do so now he's dead to me, and this whole cancel culture thing, too. So talk to me about that perception of changing your mind. Because to me, when you take ownership of something, and you change your mind and go, Hey, that thing I said yesterday, I actually just read this thing. And I don't believe that anymore. And this is what I mean, my whole evolution of this podcast, I'm a completely different human being through the 750 plus people I've listened to, in the last six and a half years, I don't think about mental health, the same way to think about fitness, nutrition, a gamut of things. So is that wishy washy element? Is that again, a byproduct of the lack of humility? Do you think?



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Oh, that's all right. So that's a great question. So you know, wishy washy is one of those terms is sort of like woke that gets that can distract from maybe that the the continuum of change, some of the change can be informed evolution, informed growth. Now that I know this, or I've been through that, I have to adjust my worldview, is I now come to appreciate that, you know, the first time you go to third world country,



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you see, you see waste



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differently, you know, you appreciate things differently. And all if all of a sudden, you're maybe starting to pay attention to what you're putting in your body or what you're throwing out or what you're spending your money on. Well, that's not just because your blog is because you go I have I have a new appreciation of gratitude about certain things. So I think some of that

continuum of change can be informed change. Some of it can be wishy washy. I mean, I've seen folks and again, we're back in the political arena, where I saw one one politician, turn to this, you know, describe a person as just this list of absolute negative,



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toxic behaviors.



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This guy is this, this is now at the point at that time, he was running against him, right? This person should never be fit for office and does this is a liar, you can't trust anything. Here's what I've known. I've spent some time around him now. I've seen him in action. It is the worst of the worst, it's worse than you think. And fast forward. That same person just couple years later, is, you know, kissing the ring and lockstep and you're like, Okay, I gotta make sense of that. And what that first soliloquy was so deeply embedded in what your values are, and what that stands for, and all that. I can't rectify that, to me, it seemed a little bit more wishy washy, and seemed more politically motivated. Now, it serves my best interest to align with you and my loyalty and all that. And so I think, you know, when people change, we, we give ourselves the benefit of the doubt often when we change, right, we, we base our behaviors, we evaluate our behaviors on our intentions, we evaluate other people's behaviors based on our assumptions, and we ascribe character values to them. So I think the reason for the change is going to help me understand where things fall in that continuum and battle male, we're back to humility, aren't we? If the change is based on I was wrong, or I've grown, or I've, I've gotten introduced to something new, that at least is an acknowledgment of humility. And that puts it in a little bit more positive side of that continuum for me.



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Yeah, cuz I think it's an important thing and I talk about this with friends that I know are struggling with addiction, for example, and they'll be like, Oh, I'm such a piece of shit. I you know, I had a drink last night like you're not You didn't drink for one month, 10 months, whatever it was, or you didn't, you went to the gym for X amount of time, and then you stopped or you ate clean, and then you just went and we're gone, or whatever it was. That was one time. You're not, you know, on the protractor, yes, if you wait long enough that five degrees is going to send you a long, long way. But you're one day in. So you can just stop beating yourself up, stop feeling guilty and full of shame. And just go, yeah, it was a bad day. And then



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the fact that the fact that it bothers you is good news, because it means you want to fight to get back in integrity. And one day, it doesn't mean you're a bad person. But, you know, failure is an event, it's not an identity. So you have to acknowledge that now, if it didn't bother you, if

you go, Well, I guess, you know, I had one drink, but whatever, not a big deal. That's a bigger problem than the fact that you're disappointed because you know, what you're capable of, you know, what,



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what it means



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to be in integrity. So all right, you've got fuel now to get back in line. But you're absolutely right, that that narrative that we have that a failure is an identity versus an event. It's unfair, you know, that's that inner critic just trying to win the day. That mindset is challenging. I know you do. A lot of you know, a lot of your podcasts have also been on, you know, just how people talk to themselves. In those moments of challenge and failure, uncertainty and crisis, and what can we as leaders do, to help people challenge and, and reshape that narrative? And I think there's, you know, there battle cries that people just naturally gravitate to, that maybe give them strength or hope or access to maybe a path through the storm?



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Well, you just said the word storm. That was a perfect segue, because one more area and this but I want to talk about before we get to the Medal of Honor side. You mentioned the phrase leadership through the storm. And one thing that I witnessed through again, whether it's from from the the president level, whether it's fire departments, and police departments around whether it's you know, counties and cities, is you have these people and on their lapel it says, you know, county commissioner, President, whatever it is, and they're collecting their paycheck, and they're walking around with their chest, chest puffed. And then you actually get called on. Now it's time to lead. It's your George Bush moment when they just whispered in your ear in a cloud. Yeah. And some did, some were phenomenal. I think some ironically, some of the countries that really did well, like Sweden, and even Florida here, and I say Governor DeSantis I don't love everything he does. But he led very well during that is



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needed after after the last hurricane to I was very impressed. Exactly.



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Exactly. So you gotta you got, okay, beautiful, you were on your lapel pin, you were on your salary. But what I saw was a lot of people that really should never be in those positions, absolutely crumble from the top, even through the next election and the next person and other areas. So talk to me about the concept of leading through the storm, because to me, you don't really get tested as a leader until you don't earn your money until you actually get to one of those storms in the first place. And then you could obviously there's the proactive side, of

course, but that's really, when you it's like the firefighter actually having to go into the structure fire. A lot of times we're working out, we're training, we're running low level calls. But really what we're paid for are those acute calls where lives are absolutely at stake. So talk to me about the the leadership through the storms element.



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Okay. So I think it was Roy Disney, who said, when your values are clear, your choices become easy. So, you know, if you're not sure what you stand for, if you're not if the Y is not clear, Cosa Nostra, you know that the purpose, why we have this thing and what we're up to, if that's at all fuzzy, you got to now spend time in the storm trying to crystallize that, especially if you have to get it done through other people. So the clearer you are on, you know, this is why I'm in this role. And this is the outcome and the effect, it's that I'm trying to achieve the more you're clear on that, the more you can say Alright, now we need pas to pull this off. And you can invite folks that have hopefully been empowered to to give you solutions. So clarity of purpose is key. In the Navy SEALs, they say you don't rise to the occasion you sink to the level of your training. So here comes now the the bill shows up for how seriously you've taken the training beforehand and you get to see where the the equipment is been maintained properly and whether the procedures or protocols are in place. So, you know, if we haven't taken it seriously beforehand and then I think some of the leaders showcase that in the moments of crisis. You know, if you've been playing on the political arena, if you just sort of play in that grad hand and win approval game, that doesn't serve you really well, when all sudden it's time to make decisions. So, I think, clarity, I think humility, you your job as a leader, this is Simon Sinek, saying, you know, your job is to accomplish the mission, your job is to go through the people who accomplish the mission. So the culture you've created, is also a positive thing. But the leader needs, there needs to be confidence. There needs to be competence, and there needs to be clarity about where we're going. And I think the leader also needs to feel burden, the burden of modeling how they hope everyone else responds to this,



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when Solinsky was asked, you know, offered a ride out,



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and he said, I don't need a ride, I need ammunition. I mean, he's just in a green t shirt now going, that's not what I'm here, I'm check this out selfie, boom, right in front of the, we're here on the ground. For everybody who's saying we've left the country, click. This is what it looks like, signaling to everyone else. This is how leaders act. So you better line up follow suit. So I think I've, we've seen it done well, that way. But man, I mean, imagine this, when it's time for the leader to make the call. When when craps hitting the fan. For leaders who are playing the blame game during those moments, you've lost total control. And this is the moment of ownership of decision making of clear communication of making the complex, simple. Here's what we're gonna focus on. Here's the next two or three steps. And here's what you guys need to do. I think that that sort of clarity, makes people feel like, okay, from the top down, we're safe, we're safe in that there is a plan. There's hope. And there's a path forward. And hope there's there's ingredients of hope.





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Hope is, is there a way through this storm? Right, whether it's suicide, you know, if you feel hope less, there's only so many options



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that seem to make sense. So how do we make somebody hopeful that they have a path through the storm, and maybe they meet somebody who's been as sad as they are, or felt as overwhelmed as they are? Or felt as broken as they are? Who is healthy now? Oh, my God. If you could do that, then maybe I can do this. Right. So that there is a, there's an a path through this storm, I've got to believe that, that I can walk that path. There's an agency component, do I believe I can actually take those steps? Because if I don't, I think only people like you can take that. So then I'm back to hopeless again. And then how badly do I want to get out of the storm? I think that's probably the easiest one, you know. So I think that leaders that can provide hope when all things are going going poorly. Now, I've been talking to folks about leading through the storm. And I want to just offer this framework, okay. And this largely has to do with resilience. And I know you spend a lot of time on resilience. We are not always at the point of resilience of bouncing back. Right? Sometimes we are getting ready for a storm, we're preparing for something there's suck coming in, we know it now can be positive suck, hey, we're having our first kid or I'm about to start grad school or, you know, it could be a good thing. I'm about I'm gonna run a marathon. But the training is gonna kind of suck. Alright. In that phase of the storm beforehand, the presents, what do the great ones say to themselves to get their head, right? Because man, there's all sorts of chatter in our heads at that phase, which is I don't want to do this, this is going to suck. It's going to be too hard. People like me can't do this. So when those voices are present, that inner critic shows up, we need something that can trump that that is stronger than that voice. Otherwise, the voice wins and we never start, or we're paralyzed with fear. And there's certain battle cries that they kind of emerge in that phase, right? The second phase is you're in the storm. And, you know, you're going through chemo, you're, you're going through the divorce. You're working for a toxic boss. You're literally in the firefight or you're going through the fire. And in those moments, the voice has changed. Now the voices are it just be easier if I stop this is too hard. Just give up. It's not working. Nothing I'm doing His right whatever those voices are, you need something then. And some of the battle cries there go, you know, go back to the Stoics, or many faith origins, there's a reason why we keep gravitating towards things like



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this too shall pass. It is what it



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is, you know, that gives us perspective. It gives us patients control what you can control. I mean, how often do we tell people when they're losing it, or they're getting overwhelmed? Just breathe. Why? Cuz, because you can control that. And we know that's going to help serve physiologically. But just controlling something right now is important for you. Take the neck,

just do the next right thing, just break the big, the big overwhelming thing down to the next step. And how many times you know if I can make it to the next meal, if I can make it the next day, the next treatment, that makes it more bearable, and maybe I can pull that off. And maybe that gives me hope. So there's just a lot of a lot of phrases that emerge in the storm that give us perspective or hope, Grace, sometimes faith shows up a lot of times when we're in the storm people will have versus they go back to or they're have risk tattoos or tattoos somewhere in their body, that remind them that when things get hard, don't forget this. You know, just breathe, you are not alone, you are good enough. Shut up that voice that your hearing. Read this again. And then sometimes we are coming out of the storm and we're trying to put the pieces together and make sense of trauma. Or I've just finished up a career and I don't know who I am now. Okay. Well, that's there's a whole area of science when in fact, I just I had this book I made of post traumatic growth, a love of tuskys work there's there's power in what is it that helps some people come out of traumatic experiences stronger than when they went in because they tap into this, this new life narrative or they frame it as maybe I can do new things only because I went through what I went through, I can't rewrite the chapters that have been written but man, I own the pen of this next chapter. And it's going to be not that. So as people are going through the storms of life, just the the good ones and the bad ones where the struggle is real. I think it's important for them to figure out what phase in my end? What are the voices that are talking to me saying to me, that are just making the struggle even harder. And can I tap into something that helps me through this and I had one I was faced some mental health challenges just over the last year. getting overwhelmed and sleep was jacked up, man, I'm waking up at 334 Every morning in a sweat moaning like an animal. Sometimes a wake up and I was hitting myself in the head because I'd forgotten about the it was just



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exhausting.



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And I had a battle cry that I heard from my dad in a very different storm when he was going through financial stuff after you know, the bottom fell out in 2008. I asked him, I said Dad, how are you doing during this whole thing? Because he wanted me to focus on other family members. And I said, because I'm thinking while he's going through this storm, the second big financial dip in their life. It's reasonable for hear him to hear voices like you failed again. Now you've brought your kids into it or you can't recover from this or you're an embarrassment, whatever that chatter is is wrong as it was. I bet it felt very compelling. So I asked him, I said, How you doing through all this? Where's your head at and he said, Kevin,



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all I know how to do is keep showing up.



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Just keep showing up with ideas and effort and an attitude that there might be a path through that That's all I know how to do through my whole life That's all I know how to do it right now

and that's all I know how to do through my whole life. That's all I know how to do right now. I'm just gonna keep showing up. And I thought that phrase is a gift. And sure enough at 334 in the morning. I'm like, I'm not giving up and I'm just gonna keep showing up attitude, effort, ideas, and maybe there's a path through the storm and lo and behold, eventually you get some traction, you have a quick win. The all the craziness at 334 in the morning isn't accurate. And a new day emerges. So I think there's value maybe in folks realizing to hunt for battle cries that remind them of the phase they're in and what the voice needs to hear in order to shut it up.



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When you deconstruct it, what do you think will see element or some of the large contributing factors to you having that mental health struggle year ago?



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Well, I'll tell you this. It's the fear of VHS. Because one morning, I got up and I said, I've got to shine a light on this because this is I don't know what's going on here. I've never been this unhealthy, like mentally. So I'm on this computer when I'm talking to you on on and I said, What am I afraid of, and I start typing on a PowerPoint slide. It's fear of failure. It's fear of embarrassing myself, it's fear of being the leadership guy who can't lead this project or this program. It's fear of not being good enough that I created a list of fear offs. And then I said, having spent some time on in this area, what am I saying to myself right now? That's scaring the crap out of me. What am I listening to? What's the inner monologue. So that's the next column, and it's your JV at a varsity game. You're a fraud, you're the imposter in the room, you are going to lose control of your family balance, and you're going to lose it during a time you can because my dad was going through memory care, and we had teenage daughters at the time, this is critical time and you're gonna lose it and you're gonna fall out of balance. Me I had a list of all of the things is going to happen. And the last thing I did. So that's what was causing it, that it was the scene of the crime is the mind that debate is what got me too moaning like an animal and not sleeping well. It's the fear of XSS. And then I wrote a third column that was sort of the beginning of a breakthrough, I think, and it was, what assumptions are in place based on what I just listed right there. The assumptions are, I need to do this all myself, how's that? For the lie? We often tell ourselves, I'm alone. And that's the only way it can be. It's got to be perfect the first time that no will, no one will understand if I'm struggling, they will think less of me, if I asked for help. I mean, those are the assumptions that seem to be in place for these first two columns. So I'm reading that and I'm like,



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wait a second. That's not true at all. I can borrow



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competence. I can hire people I can, I can bring friends, I can borrow confidence, there are people around me who believe in me, and I need to not isolate myself, I need to surround myself with dumber people than me who have figured stuff like this out. So maybe there's no to

quote Dumb and Dumber. You're telling me there's a chance. So the what got me there was I had isolated myself. And I started honoring the fear of VHS and the voices. And I was not throwing anything back at him that I had the potential to.

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Well, I mean, thank you for sharing that. Because I mean, there's there's so many different pieces of that pie chart that contribute to people's struggles. And it might be childhood trauma is a huge one that's not really discussed very much in the uniform professions. Obviously, what we see what we do sleep deprivation, you name it, but I'm I can relate to what you're talking about very much. So because I took the leap of faith four years ago, and my entire ability to support my family rests on what we're doing now. And then the occasional book that I can squeeze out my tiny brain, which I'm working on, right now, it's terrifying. absolutely terrifying, because everything that you've been told, is, you know, a stable job. You just kind of crumpled it up, throw it in the rubbish and like, Yeah, I'm just gonna wing it. That comes with impostor syndrome fear. And like you said, you know, when you're when I'm writing all that shit, but that's okay. This is draft one. It's not supposed to be good. It's just Yeah,

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imagine if the voice was yeah, it's got to be perfect. The first time I read it, and I'm writing it and I'm like, It's shit. What's wrong with me? That's the natural next evolution. Why can't I write as good as these other guys? They don't write like that right off the bat. That assumption is flawed.

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I saw on Instagram that this guy writes it once. And then he publishes it and makes millions and he lives in Ireland mansion. He's got a Ferrari in Wow. Yeah.

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And I bet I bet he filmed that commercial in the first take till

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Exactly yeah, yeah. With this smokin hot. Wife.

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Right. All right for her to this guy. Yeah, he makes money with no, no problem.

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Well, I want to hit one top. I want to get to the Medal of Honor. store if you if you're good with time still You bet. Beautiful. But one thing I think I need to ask you. My James Geering is personal opinion. I have had some incredible leaders and mentors in my life. And I don't see those in British Prime Minister. I haven't see those in American presidents. But there's hope. There have been some amazing leaders in our country's paths and I think There can be again, but I think there are, you know, things that have devolved, where there's a lot of corruption and you basically got to be, you know, a millionaire to even compete, you know, in this environment. So you talked about the piece of paper, right, and the next chapter and when you're holding the pen, if you could be king for a day, what would it what will we need to do to actually change the system so that we could actually put the best leaders or some of the best leaders back in these positions, whether it's, you know, the absolute tip top, whether it's counties or even fire departments, especially focusing on the president side, so that we can just get the right people that rather than divide during, for example, a pandemic, it pulls us together, we have a common enemy, you know, this thing is killing our people, as is obesity as his cancer as is suicide. What do we need to do to to go to make America great again, to actually put the right people at the helm?

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Yeah, so you say, you know, there's, there's a value and a common enemy, you know, as soon as the Twin Towers got hit, mayor came together pretty quick, you know, all of a sudden politics and are you a Yankee, or a southerner? Or do you like Dallas Cowboys, the Washington Redskins, all that, all that stuff came to together, because the tribe cut across all that. So I think in you know, in a perfect day, that that is the independent party, that that sort of blended a read that a reasonable adult could sort of say, I think there's goodness in both sides. And I'd like to invite you here, and we'll learn in this process, too. But we're going to move away from the extremes, because that's just where anger and and there's, it's non value added in the extremes. And we get into this confirmation bias kind of thing where we ignore information that competes with our interests.

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So I think

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that alternative party would need to put somebody forward that people undeniably said, their hearts in the right place. They're not polluted by the game by the system. matter. Matter of fact, the game is the common enemy. The constitution is the thing that they're just bringing to the table. I think somebody like that it's got to be charismatic, it has to be appealing and all that.

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That, to me, that's

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in the short term anyway. That seems how we break down the logjam between the two extremes that have now just started making money by blaming the other party in Hell yeah, it's not them and those just a reason balanced approach. So I think that might be a step in the right direction. And in your organization's I think, I think we do have, there are examples, especially in in organizations of great leadership, and some of the things that bubbled to the top and it's another new I mean, Jim Collins in Good to Great highlight, you know, this, this humility,

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the power of trust,

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the power of here, I will tell you this, when I do my workshops, I will ask people, and they can vote on their their phones. So I collect data in probably ask the question 15,000 times now, if somebody's going to successfully lead you, someone is impressive as you by God, they had better blank. So I just want what's on the tip of your brain, tip your heart these days, as far as you better get this right if you're going to lead somebody like me. So you get the the answer to the leadership test, what are people hungry for? And the cool thing is, the answers are the same. No matter who I'm talking to lowest level to the highest level, military, non military doesn't matter. The number one thing people want is you lead by example. That's the number one thing. It's the most frequently want to frequently state one and it's the most important one. The second most common one is you better get the you better demonstrate you care the way you should. And you damage how you talk to and about the people you are leading. Do I perceive that your heart is in the right place? When you demonstrate vulnerability, and imperfection you signal to us you care because you're willing to put yourself out there like that. When you admit you are made a mistake or you are wrong, you signal to us that you care. When you know our story and you sincerely listen to us you signal to you. So that's the second most important thing behind lead by example. The third most important thing is if you're going to lead me I need you to be competent. The way a leader should be competent, you need to know what you should know. Right? And you're always a student of your craft and you're not a master your craft your student of your craft, which may require you to humbly asks people to teach you stuff.


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Right? But part of competence is

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also, I need you to make the decisions that fall to you and own them. And I need you to also be able to effectively communicate what the deal is what the expectations are. So those those are

the three primary things people say they want from their leaders. And I think if we get leaders who who model and demonstrate that, that it would be a breath of fresh air, in the political arena. But if you look at the leaders who are just killing it right now, typically, they're those humble people who just who do that, and I run into them a lot. So I'm encouraged that they're there. They just don't make front page of the newspaper, sometimes.

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There's one single person in my entire time in the US, which is 20 years now that I've actually been impressed by and she's coming on the podcast. I've been saying there's people listening to the change. You heard this said, like, two years. Yes, I know. It's been a long time. It's coming. But Tulsi Gabbard, she is you know, she's not even a vet. She's military still active duty in the National Guard. She's She is in great shape. She you know, she she just to me, is the kind of person that we need. Now. I don't know if she's going to be able to do it. And you know, again, I don't know if there's a dark side of Tulsi that no one see. And she's actually going to, you know, kill all

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humility will shoot she will I bet you anything, she would humbly share with you all the things she's working on for herself, which only validates why she does. So

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yeah, exactly. So she's someone I'm actually excited about. And it's not politics, it's leadership, whether she makes that particular seat or whether it's something else. To me in that arena. That's what we need her or someone like her male, female, whatever, whatever, you know, Avatar, they are that kind of human being.

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Have Yeah, I can give you a list of folks that I won't give you a list of folks that would should make it on your podcast, because they're just they live it in a way that you sit there and go, Okay, that's what I want to align with.

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Beautiful? Well, I get to that question, because I know you've probably noticed coming. Alright, well, then, I really want to make sure that we spend some time with the Medal of Honor side. So talk to me about the museum itself. Um, I've had people on the show who I believe have Medal of Honor winners here. And as I'm embarrassed if I don't know who it is, but I've had, you know, people like major James keepers, as well who, you know, the push is to try and get him recognized. And I'm not sure if race was a part of that particular story, or not always a good




question to ask. So just, you know, I'd love to hear your experience, you're in the Air Force. on the academic side, you find yourself in this new arena, talk to me about the establishment itself, and then the role that you have within that.

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So so the the vision is to create a world where everyone answers the call, to live with live and lead with honor. And, and there are certain values, ascribe to the Medal of Honor. So this is the nation's highest award for valor in combat. So the combat is the context in which this these behaviors were demonstrated. But the whole purpose of the museum is to take the values and say, Okay, what from that story? What values were showcased in that in the story of that recipient? And how can that be applied to your life, that's the second bridge that has to be built, because it is not a military museum. It is a values Museum. Let's go here. And you will see people human beings admit self admitted ordinary people, who in the moment did something extraordinary, that brought to life, courage, sacrifice, commitment, integrity, and beyond that often after they earned the middle citizenship and patriotism was all wrapped into that. So we're gonna take those six values and honor those through the stories of these these people. And what's it you want to hear something interesting, of the over 30 40 million people plus have served in the American military, of the 40 million people, just over 3500 have earned this metal. And once you take out the Civil War, which was the vast majority, because the standards were a little bit different back then. It's a very, very small percentage of these people have served 19 People have earned the Medal of Honor twice for different events, you know, so you talk about somebody who, who demonstrates what is possible when the moment shows up. They just act in a way that that brings these values to life. So in Arlington, Texas, right in your Dallas Cowboys Stadium, and Globe Life, Texas Ranger stadium is this beautiful, huge iconic museum that is being built right now. It'll door was open in the beginning of 2025.

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That will spotlight the

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the actions of these amazing Americans that demonstrated these values.

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So, in that,

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I was asked to help stand up an element that will also be co located in the museum, which is the Medal of Honor Institute, or a Leadership Institute. And our job is to basically build the second branch is how do those values show up in your life? We'll talk about times, you won't, you won't have to throw yourself on a grenade on a rooftop and Volusia but maybe talking to

Kyle Carpenter, who did and survived it. This humble, amazing human being just if you want to spend your time around Kyle Carpenter, by the way, he wrote an amazing he wrote a fantastic book and needs to be on your podcast, you'd be amazing. And his book is called you're worth it. But to hear Kyle story and to talk to Kyle, it reminds you maybe of how you too can be courageous in your own life, whatever sort of the the symbolic grenade is there, what's it look like to sacrifice for the people you love in your life? And what are the what are the insights there? So the whole point of the institute is to help inspire, equip and connect people around the values associated with the Medal of Honor. And those kids maybe are those people, maybe youth K through 12? How do we offer this in a way that meets them where they're at. Because you know, K through 12, a lot of them aren't ready to hear the war time, you know, the combat context. But man, they they have to be courageous. They have to demonstrate commitment, they need to learn about integrity. So there's a youth component, there's an adult component, obviously, where we'll we'll invite folks to explore this and how this shows up in their work in their life. And then we're going to have a center for the elevation monitor, which is thought leadership, let's bring together folks who just are in the trenches trying to identify the best practices and the ways we can build habits of excellence in anything related to honor, which would include resilience, and grit. And what's what's the idea of duty look like these days? What is it that causes people to go above and beyond what is required of them? You know, what does citizenship look like in 2023? And how do we dial that up? So there's three different centers within the institute, one focused on K through 12, one focused on adults, and one focused on sort of thought leadership but all of them designed to inspire, equip and connect people around the values of the leader of the metal vana



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view if when you said Arlington, Texas 2025 2025. Now



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the the institute we're trying to get, or we're trying to, we're getting things up and running right now, we want to have some momentum. So actually, in May, in about five weeks, we're having our first cohort of our flagship leadership development experience called leading in the moment. And we've got a cohort of 22 Rising executives, you know, these are C suite potential folks that are force multipliers in their organizations, from across different industries. We've got educators, we've got bankers, we've got people in the airline industry, and we've got people in the entertainment industry, we got people from all different industries that will be coming together for three and a half days and just diving into this. And what's cool about our programs is, you're gonna get to do it alongside Medal of Honor recipients. So we're gonna have three recipients that spend some time with the cohort to say, Hey, let me tell you my story. Here's what I've learned. And let's talk about how this applies in your life.



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sounds absolutely amazing. Now, you mentioned Kyle, that's someone who I'm fully aware of and I would love to try and get him on a favor to help me cuz he's a



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blessing man. He's a lot of people are trying to get him. So that's the unfortunate thing is he's he's high demand for exactly the right reason. He's just a great human being trying to get it right. And humility is his wheelhouse. And you're always better after spending time with Cal carpenter.



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sounds absolutely amazing. I want to just stand out when we spoke before, you touched on some of these stories. We've got a Medal of Honor recipients that are still alive, they're still able to tell their story, especially in this amazing technological age where now you can do podcasts and write books very easily. Talk to me about some of the stories that really struck you of some of the people that we are no longer with us.



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Oh, gosh, I'm just I mean, there's there's 65 living, you know, and we've just added one in the last couple of months. That was one of those honor denied for time he was African American that his package got kind of lost. Two times. So for whatever reason that was, he has now been rightfully honored. So, but one of the ones that sticks with me is Tibor Rubin. And are you bi n. And in World War Two, he was a Hungarian Jew that was in a concentration camp. And he was, I think, 17 at the time. And just because of fate, or luck, or whatever you believe in, he survived and was liberated by the Americans at this at this camp, and he swore on this day. If I ever go to America, for I can ever become an American, I will become a GI Joe. So as luck would have it, he emigrates to the United States. And with very, very broken English, he is able to as the Korean war starting up, join the American military and goes in the army. And he is so proud and so excited. And he gets sent over to Korea and his first combat unit, his sergeant is a raging anti Semite. And it has followed him here. So even within this beautifully, you know, imperfect nation in our armed forces, he finds himself there, and they are in combat. So as they keep going up, this Sergeant keeps sending this Jew on the death missions, because he wants this guy out of his unit. So he sends him on just sort of unrecoverable, the worst kind of a mission, and he keeps coming back. He keeps surviving them thriving this guy nuts. And were there there is there's argument that he was written up four times for the Medal of Honor. Some of those may have been for different scenarios. So he was given many opportunities to do things worthy of the Medal of Honor. But in one case, they were on a on a hilltop and the Chinese army's just advancing Here they come, you know, and, and they're going to they need to evacuate. Well, the sergeant says, Ruben, you're gonna stay behind. We put all sorts of weapons in the foxholes. You just hold down the fort until we can evacuate safely. And then we'll come back and get you. Well, they leave Nightfallen here come to the Chinese army. And this guy is up there by himself. And I think it got I think it was for 12 hours or 24 hours. He's running from foxhole foxhole firing and throwing grenades and, and fighting these guys off, I think kills hundreds of, of Chinese soldiers. And then he realized the next day, nobody's coming to get me. So he event eventually leaves tracks down his unit, you can imagine his sergeant is just going insane now that this guy has shown up again, they go back and scout and realize what he did. Right? So they've got that information. So as the unit progresses, I think it was a couple of months later, they're captured. And they're put into another prisoner camp, his second one in his life. And because he's Hungarian, they they offer to let him go as long as he goes back to Hungary. And he says, No, he goes, I know, I know what it takes to survive in this.

And I'm not leaving my brothers. And he voluntarily stayed in a prisoner of war camp, and rendered aid and provided medical treatment, because they weren't giving any medical treatment, he provided the best he could. He provided comfort and optimism and that alone could have been a Medal of Honor thing. But add that on top of the thing he just did on the hill. If you have an opportunity to go to the Medal of Honor Societies, webpage, and you can search all sorts of recipient videos, his video is just a national treasure because they before he passed away, obviously he did this interview. And it's the beauty of America because you've got to you've got somebody who immigrated into the United States bought into the spirit of America. And it did not meet him where his heart was, and he gets this guy and he still buys into it and brings the best of the human spirit to the situation. And we finally you know, honor him so it's compassion meets valor meets courage meets citizenship and patriotism. It's just an amazing story.



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That's one of



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1000s



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Well, I mean, firstly, thank you because that was one of 1000s that need to be heard because he's you've lost these men and women now. And it reminds me as well of talking to DJ vantus When I watched the documentary that he was originally in a talks about it wasn't till after World War One and we'd had Native American soldiers in our in a military since you know, we basically took them from him And then they were finally made the Americans like between World War One and World War Two. So and then what happened? Yeah. And then, you know, they became, you know, the I think the highest serving of all the different races mistaken? Yeah. How



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what isn't that amazing that percentage wise, they're the highest servings were per capita, despite how they had been treated by the same nation beforehand. It's just this this buying into the tribe in the warrior and and that needs to be honored. So I'm so glad deejays are able to share that.



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Yeah, no, it was it was incredible. But I think it also highlights because they said, Well, this is our country, you know, and that's what they're fighting for. I think it's the same with a lot of these immigrants and I'm one of them, is not all some people come in and bitch and whine and hang their original country's flag from their flat, they're everywhere. But I think a lot of people,

they understand the American dream, sometimes more than people that were born here. And it's that's so you know, it's just a reminder, when you hear some of these amazing immigrant stories, not mine is not amazing. But you hear you know, some, like you just told us this is these are people that truly understand that why they're there, their mission is clear in their mind. And that is that this is a beautiful country. And when it's threatened, whether it's military, or whether it's, you know, corruption in a leadership position, they want to make it better. They're not trying to bitch and whine, they're bringing problems to the forefront and saying, we need to fix this.



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I tell you, when I feel most proud of this country, and the spirit of America, when I take an Uber ride, I can't tell you how many Uber drivers I've talked to, hey, tell me your story. Where's that accent from? And they're and they're immigrants who came over? And they just, you know, again, my assumptions go here. I'm like, so is this primary job or side hustle like, oh, I only do this so that I can pay for my the rental properties that I've gotten. I've put my kids through these schools. I came to America and I I'm all in and I I bring my kids back to our country of origin to show them what could have been if America did not make this available. I mean, they they are proud and hardworking. And it's just it reminds me of the the beautiful melting pot that makes this country and its potential Great.



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Yeah, that we've always been. It's funny. Even with the UK, you go to London. Have you ever seen the film I love actually. Yeah. So opens with Heathrow Airport. And I remember even as a young young child go in there, and it's, you know, African dress and Indian and all these different places, because that is that's actually what England is now in. And when we, my forefathers did some terrible things and colonized countries and did some, you know, horrific things in those nations. But the plus side of that is we have such a beautifully diverse country. And that is America, that is the UK, it is so many places. And so when people get in the position, and they preach this very hateful, anti immigrant rhetoric, and I'm not condoning, you know, horrible things that happen in the borders, but we're negating the very fabric that this country was built on. And it's funny, because with the the Uber, my wife kind of groans because I'll, I'll chat to every single one of them. In fact, one, if this gentleman was was American born, but he was from San Francisco, and we were talking and so in depth that we were out in the parking lot outside where she lives. And Uber contacted him and asked to make sure we weren't being murdered, because he was sitting there for so long. But it said, I mean, we are surrounded by incredible people. And most of us whether we were born here, whether we came here, most of us adore this country, and I don't think you hear that message enough.



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And I wish you asked, you know, one thing that I would change if I were, you know, in charge for day, I would love for those who emigrated here, like you said, that two flags get displayed. But one is bigger than the other. If you are here and part of this, that the American flag is the one that probably gets displayed. And then the smaller one is I happen to also have origins here and I have family there. This is part of my story. But I am you know that America is us

together. And because when you flip that it feels like you know, I'm just kind of I'm a renter here, oh, man, you you're part owner. But you know, you gotta you gotta buy into the ownership of what we're up to. And it's, it's beautifully imperfect. And there are many people who experience you know, the dark side of of society and culture and all and there's justice, fairness and equity issues and all that and I've, I've been blessed that haven't I haven't been, you know, had to walk that walk. But I think we walk it better when we do it together and focused on the big flag America and what's been sacrificed to to give us that opportunity.



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Absolutely. That's one thing I said to TJ is Again, through my eyes, one thing I realized through this journey is if you, for example, look at slavery, the entire white race did not benefit from slavery. If you look at the UK when we were slaving the British, the England was at his one of his deepest periods of poverty in British history. And so we have this tar and feather mentality when it comes to these issues. And as long as you keep pigeonholing yourself always black or white, or this or that, there's only one truth in pretty much every element of tyranny. There's a group, a small group of people profiting off the masses, and that the the real spiritual awakening is once we realize that, and the rest of us are all together. That's when we'll actually finally flip this around. But if we keep allowing ourselves to be divided, that's one of my guests talks about, you know, what happens when you fight amongst yourselves? The people in the castle, looking over the walls? They're happy, because you're not looking at the castle anymore. Yeah, right. That's what we've got to get to.



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And, you know, when we talk about, it's got to be safe to have the the discussions and there's, this would be a great author of a person to have on your podcast if he had not passed away. But there's an author from Harvard who talks about the something different than perspective taking, right? Well, you need to take somebody else's perspective or try to put ourselves in their shoes, that's an important thing. But he focused on something called perspective giving, which is when you share with me, your frustrations or what it's like or your journey, just the fact that I say, let me say back to you what I heard. I'm not going to tell you, I'm not even going to say whether I agree with it or not. But I want you to feel heard. And let's strip the emotions out. But let me tell you back what what you said, and clarify where I missed the mark. Because that's our point where we can move forward, you feel heard and gotten, as opposed to, you know, you should try and to share what it's like from your perspective. And I keep telling you why that stupid. And let me tell you, what's my perspective. We just keep missing each other. So I think perspective giving just, we honor each other by saying it sounds like you're trying to tell me this, is that right? I think that works pretty well in a marriage too. Because if you don't feel gotten you don't feel appreciated, and we got problems.



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Absolutely. I learned that as a man, you can't fix some things, you have to listen and be there and hold hands and hug and not try and offer a solution. And when you're a male and a firefighter that your job is to fix things. Right? It's really hard just to bite your tongue and just simply be there and say, I'm so sorry. Yeah,



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yeah, but it's uh, you know, there's a our author named Michael Bungay, Stanier. He's the He's the number one voice and coaching executive coaching these days. And he said, we all have an advice monster that we love to let out of the cage. It's in a cage. And as soon as somebody starts telling us what they're upset about, or what they're angry about, we just let that advice monster go. And I know, as a husband, I do that a lot of times when that's not what she's asking for, and his his call to action, which again, is a humility request. He said, just be curious. 30 seconds longer, man. Just keep the advice monster in the cage a little bit longer. And I think the heart of curiosity, sincere curiosity, can go a long way toward pulling people together, eliminating some of the divide. I sincerely want to understand why this is important to you or what you're trying to say, because I think I'm missing it. Boy, that's,



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that's not a bad thing.



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Absolutely, not just doing this podcast has made me have to shut the hell up. And listen, and I think it's a great skill to take out of this, you know, world I found myself in now because I noticed I just listened more. And I take a beat. You know, I'm not I was never someone that would snap back. But I mean, I certainly stuck my foot in my mouth more times than I care to remember. So by having this and just, you know, waiting, because I mean, I don't know if someone's even going to finish the train of thought. So I have to wait and see if someone's done. And it's an incredible skill. And you realize that, you know, we do we we talk over each other so much. I find that you know, as a recipient, even with my son, I have to catch him like, Hey, I wasn't finished talking yet. But that's how culturally we do that we all go. But I'll forget it. If I didn't say it now. Write it down. That's what I do. So we've done this last two hours, write it down and wait your turn. And you'd be amazed that maybe they'll actually answer what you're going to ask anyway. He just gave it a moment.



2:24:34

Well, you're very



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good at this. And you seriously, I mean, I've done a number of these and you. You come from a place of sincere curiosity, and you are willing, in a way I haven't heard before, to explore topics and nuances that that taken a very personal direction. So I applaud that and it makes it fun for me to



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Well, I appreciate it. But again, I'm curious because I'm interviewing people that are, you know, a fascinating and are leaders in their field? And that's the point is, you know, as you talked about earlier about always being a student that is it, you know, I mean in the fire service in this now, you know, and there are truly masters of their craft, but they you ask them, no, I'm still a student and that's why they're the master, you know, to everyone else that doesn't know as much. So

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there's a I've got a dear friend who's at the Coast Guard Academy, and he tells a story about I might be Admiral Loy, but former Commandant of the Coast Guard, as he was coming up through the ranks to eventual be the commandant, which is the highest position in the Coast Guard. He had a sign over his door that said, the only non training billet in the Coast Guard is the commandant. Right? signaling that even somebody he was on his way up, even even somebody like me, is still a student. And then he became the commandant, and he changed the sign. There are no non training bullets in the Coast Guard.

 2:25:59

Love it. Humility again. Right. Beautiful. Well, we've been talking for a good two and a half hours already. I'd love to throw some closing questions at you if you've got time.

 2:26:11

Let's do it. I'm assuming you're going to edit this down so that people don't have to listen to me for two and a half. Oh,

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no. Is this funny people always say that I don't. Because firstly, the same way there's time flies when we've been talking, I would hope that it was the same listening. And when I listened to I mean, Joe Rogan's obviously notorious for his long ones. And if it's an engaging conversation, it flies by so the only thing I do is just for the sound itself just to clean up if there's any background noise. All right, well, then the first question, and you touched on a couple already in this conversation. But is there Excuse me? Is there a book? Or are there books that you love to recommend? It can be related to our discussion today, or completely unrelated?

 2:26:46

So I'll throw it

 2:26:48

to one is the daily stoic by Ryan Holiday. I'm a fan of Ryan holidays. And through him, I become a fan of the stoic mindset. I don't know if you're familiar, it's not a religion. It's you know, we're going back to to Marcus Aurelius and Socrates, or Aristotle, and you know, a lot of the ancients. But there's a reason why his journal, his meditations just to himself, he's just talking himself, have been on the bedside of, you know, presidents and CEOs and world leaders for, you know, hundreds of years since he wrote them 1000s of years ago. So Ryan Holiday introduces us to that. And if you have, if we have a moment since



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time is ours. One of the



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stoic philosophy principles is, is what's called Memento Mori, which is just realize that you will die. Right? Remember, you will die. And you don't have you don't die once you're dying every day. So therefore, what are you doing with the precious resource of time? So Seneca says, It's not that we don't have enough time, we just don't use it very well. So if you go on now, Ryan's website daily, still, UK has a place where you can buy stuff, but there are other places to buy this. And it's your week or your life in week's calendar. Have you heard about this?



2:28:12

I think I It sounds familiar. So you basically given yourself a countdown to your professional



2:28:17

show, I'm gonna show you what mine looks like.



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So I'm getting off my whiteboard.



2:28:23

My wife hates this thing. And my kids are like, Why would you have this? And I'm like, whether you like it or hate it? It doesn't matter. Sort of. It's sort of good that you do have. So my mind looks like this. So I'm holding up this big sheet of paper. It's oversized parchment paper, but it asks you in at least where I bought this one, do you think you'll live till 85 or 100? And let's just put an end on that. Well, you know, based on my dad, and when your memory care showed up, and all that I said, Alright, let's put 85 And I said, How old are you now, I said I am 50 I'll be 54 soon. So 53 and a half, so it sends you. So each one of these rows is 52 little boxes. So each box is a week, or you could say a weekend. So you'll see that it's broken up into chunks of 10. So you know now 1020 30 There's my 40s right there, I'm in the 50s I'm past 50s. So all of

these are blocked out. And you're like holy crap, that's a lot of the boxes are already black. I can't get those back. And then I went and I said okay, now I'm further in the year. So I had to put a bat a blacked out over here, which signals where I'm at right now and I've started filling in the weeks after that. And then I went down and I put a little mark on this one right here, which is when my youngest daughter goes to college. So that now represents all those white boxes that need to be filled in represent how many weekends I've got left, or weeks I've got left. Are they were they worth it? Did I spend that week? Well, I either put a black or a blue in there. Did I make memories? Did I add value to somebody's life did it you know My wife hates this thing. And I said, Whether you love it or hate it, you got to fill in the box, you got to fill in the dot. That's the point is it just puts this urgency on the moment. So the daily stoic touches on that, among other concepts, control what you can control. And he's got a number of other books courage is calling. So I'll start with the daily stoic, it's a great point of entry to just sort of the stoic mindset. And one of the other books that I'll throw out too, is one called culture by design. Okay, and this is David Friedman, fri e, d ma n. And what I like about this is, you as the leader of the culture, whatever that level of tribe is, you define what do you want this tribe to be? Like? What are the phrases, and the behaviors is very behavior based, we do stuff like this here. And it offers a way to crystallize that. So it's very easy to carry around that language and to have to ritualize it into your culture. And it just becomes that that natural language that that allows us to hold each other accountable to, you know, to what we really do around here. And I just, to me it. I mean, some of the things are,



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be present, be consistent. Communicate,



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have fun, there's, there's just so many different ways to approach it. But it drives the behavior associated with the values in a way that I've not seen before. So I think that's a winner.



2:31:41

Beautiful. Well, thank you. Obviously, the daily stoic has been mentioned before, as you listen to part of your interview on Ryan's show as well. But then the culture by designer never heard before. So that's another great addition to the immense book list. I developed here. I haven't written it down, but it's there. If people listen, I can't,



2:31:58

I'm gonna throw out one more, just really quickly, that you have not had on your list before I know it. Ready. Man, this this got handed to me at a workshop I was doing,



2:32:08

and it was amazing. It's the little blue

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book from Alcoholics Anonymous. I'm not an alcoholic, I have not been. But somebody who came up who was a recovering addict. He said, I hear how you've struggled with your faith. And I hear that you the way that you focus on just sort of this this relentless self assessment as part of something that you need to own to be better, he goes, I think you may get something out of this. This is a fascinating book. And it is a life lessons book and a sort of guideline. And you don't have to be an alcoholic in order to see that. So the Alcoholics Anonymous blue book. There you go. Beautiful. Has anybody ever said

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that before they have and it's funny because I actually bought myself a copy as well. I haven't read it yet. But I've had a lot of people that have, you know, had amazing progress through the 12 steps. I even watched a documentary on the founder as well, which is fascinating. But I mean, this is it. It's not it's you know, you're you're identifying the nucleus of your addiction, but that's through growth. And he talked about you know, the the post traumatic growth is basically what you're you're fostering through this. So obviously, your your unhealthy coping mechanism may have been alcohol, but it may have been 1000 Other things and those same lessons can apply to anything that you've been through.

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Absolutely. And number step number four and the 12 steps, make a searching and fearless moral inventory of yourself. What a great phrase that is a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves. Well, I'm bummed, I thought I was gonna be the first one. But when when the guy recommended it to me, and he tried to explain why it would work. I'm like, I think this is so I ordered it while we were talking. You know, I said, I want to make sure you see that I'm taking this seriously. But I had to call my wife and go, hey, something else show up in the mail that you may be concerned about. It's let me let me tell you why it's coming.

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Yeah, no, absolutely. No, it makes perfect sense. And it's you know, and we were talking about I think it was the 50s I think when it was originally Yeah, a little bit

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dated, but you have to just see through that put in perspective.

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But I mean, that says that that that wisdom has lasted for seven years because it's still working today. So obviously it stood the test of time and pretty pretty interesting change in time from

today. So obviously it stood the test of time and pretty pretty interesting change in time from the 1950s America to where we are now so yeah, interesting

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but you to lay the principles and the solutions over the top of today. I think it still stands people are still flawed in the same way.

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Absolutely. All right. Well then that's the books i What about movies and or documentaries.

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Gosh, you know,

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movie I have.

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I'll throw a couple of weird ones out there and they're not necessarily you know, Leadership movies or personal development movies. Fascinating one, since we're having a conversation, that the world is having a conversation about artificial intelligence these days,

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Ex Machina

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just I thought it was a clever movie, it was very different than usually the the recipes we're seeing over and over again these days. But I thought that was a provocative movie that makes you wonder, are we getting pretty close to that that transition point where we may lose control of what we're creating?

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Yeah, that was a great film beautifully shot as well. Yeah. Yeah. All right, any documentaries that you love.



2:35:38

Gosh, I'm obviously deep into in the Medal of Honor stuff, right now. And there's a book or I'm sorry, there's a movie. It's not necessarily documentary, although it does capture, very realistically, an event that generated two Medal of Honor recipients. And the movie is called the outpost. And it is probably one of the most realistic, just deploy how how deployed folks talk to each other. And it is the intensity is almost Saving Private Ryan kind of intensity. But it is based on the real event. And matter of fact, they even had somebody from the unit who was an actor there and a number of the people from the unit who were advisors in this. So it's pretty much the thing. And I've gotten to know one of the Medal of Honor recipients that was present at this and he's like, Yeah, this was, it was tough to shoot.



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Because it brought back so



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much, but it's based on a book



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called The Red platoon. Okay. by Clint



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Romo, che, he was the Medal of Honor recipient. Beautiful, but the movie, if you watch the movie, and then you read the book, it makes the, the book brings in a lot more of the emotion. But the movie was really powerful.



2:37:03

I've seen that pop up on my Netflix. But you know, there's a lot of terrible war films out there too. So I'm glad that you're able to, I guess this is one



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buckle up, because I can tell you, it's it's hard to believe what they pulled off. And your your hairs just sort of blown back for two hours.



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Brilliant. Well, I appreciate that. Thank you so much. Well, speaking of amazing people, you talked about Kyle, is there a person that you'd recommend to come on this podcast as a guest to speak to the first responders, military and associated professionals of the world?

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Well throw out another Medal of Honor recipient who's just an amazingly humble guy. His story is phenomenal as they all are. In his name is Britt slawinski.

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Former Navy Seal, man, Chief Petty Officer, and just somebody who's been tested

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by fire a million times and was in a very, very tough moment and did amazing things. But his insight, just his insights from that experience are pretty are really powerful. So Ruth's Lubinski is one of I've just been blessed to be around him and hear him explore some of these topics. And he can dive into the leadership thing in a powerful way too.

 2:38:21

Fantastic. All right. Well, then we'll work on trying to get him on next. And if you can help you bet, thank you so much. All right, within the last question for you make sure everyone knows where to find all the different things that we talked about today in yourself online. What do you do to decompress?

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I work more than I should because, you know, as I as I check things off, I'm like, Okay, I have I've got some breathing room now. Mike, I do work out when I'm not traveling. And when I do travel, I try to work out as well. I have a teenage daughter that pushes me with regard to reading. Like she'll finish a book and she's like, are you gotta read this book so that you and I can talk about it. So So there have been some some great books at her recommendation. So there's the family thing. I'm I'm a water guy too. Doggone it. I love the water. I miss the water. I grew up on an island. So water is medicine for me. I just don't get back to it as much as I want. So when I go back home down to South Florida, I'm like hey, I love you guys but I'm gonna love you while we're walking on the beach or I'm gonna love you when we're out on the boat because I need that so if decompressed when the time comes in the near future that my wife and I maybe get a second place or relocate there's going to be water close by

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of all the books that your daughter got you to read what's one that really jumps out that it was completely out of your wheelhouse but blew you away anyway



completely out of your wheelhouse but blew you away anyway.



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The Book Thief done



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that's it. The Book Thief Yeah, really clever



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you if you try about The Book Thief, and it was made into a movie, don't watch the movie, what read the book first, you got to trust yourself for like the first 30 pages because you're gonna go like, I have no idea what's going on. I don't know who's talking or what this is, you just gotta grind that out. And then all of a sudden you go, I get it. Okay, I see what they're doing. And it's really clever. It's brilliant. And at the end, it's emotional. At the end, I finished it while I was sitting in a gate at an airport, my flight had gotten delayed, and it was during COVID. So we all had masks on. I'm reading the last six pages in a packed gate at the airport. And I'm crying so hard. But trying not to make any noises that I'm making even more noises because I'm not doing that. I had to change masks, because it was just, my mask was so wet with snot and tears. But it was one of those things, even my daughter who was just wise beyond her years at 16. She said it had to be this sad in order to honor the story. You know, it just it needed to do this. And she and she was right. But but it was I finished it. And I said Doggone it. I think I thought The Kite Runner was one of my favorite books. That book. I said this, this one beat it hands down. So it's but you got to give yourself some grace on the first 30 pages, and then you'll start getting your stride.



2:41:26

There's a book called Birdsong, by I think it's Sebastian folks. And I read that Well, I was living in Australia for a few months. And again, mind blowing, it's kind of a love story. But it's also set in World War One. And I could not put that book down the moment I was done at work and was on the bus, I had the thing open again. Same thing very, very few books have really moved me and not the best reader I kind of get distracted easily. But that seems that just drag me right in. So I'm



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like you, I probably like you, I tend to read a lot of leadership books and development books. And you know, so every once awhile, she's like, enough of that, you got to do this. So the one she just had me read was All the Light We Cannot See. And it was a world war two book a lot easier, a lot faster to read. A great story. Again, the writing was just beautiful and and vivid. And the characters are were powerful. So I give that one big thumbs up all Light We Cannot See. But Book Thief is going to win out of those two.



2:42:28

Brilliant. Okay, well, thank you so much. I'm trying to write my in the moment but I might have to pause and read some good fiction.



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It is a it's a pivot and



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beautiful. Well, we've talked about so much. Firstly, where can people find your actual your own consulting firm.



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So I'm at Basic, my last name is spelled Ba Si que



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insight.com.



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So you'll just be an introduction to me and a little bit about my philosophy and whatnot. But more importantly, the Medal of Honor Museum, and the Institute



2:43:06

can be found at



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I want to make sure that I give you the M O H museum.org.org. That's the important thing there, M O H museum.org. And you'll see just sort of what the spirit of this is you can search by recipients and get some of the stories there you can see what the museum and the Institute is going to look like. So easy first step and then I'm happy to answer any questions people might have.



2:43:40

Beautiful. Well, Kevin, I want to say thank you so much. It's been an amazing conversation, almost three hours of chit chat. But I mean, again, another unique perspective, I've had so many different people from so many different walks of life here, you know, and then obviously, the nucleus of their their journey might be anything from mental health to you know, physical fitness, whatever it is, but the lens that you have on leadership, you know, not only from an academic perspective, but also within the military and then you know, all these different personal stories is just been invaluable. And rather than complain about, oh, this person is a terrible leaders like we need to, we need to understand what we're doing wrong as an individual and what to look for, as far as you know, creating that culture in our in our workspace in our city or county and even in our country. So, I want to thank you so, so much for being so generous with your time today.



2:44:35

Well, I appreciate it. And the good news in all of this is the things that people are hungry for from from leaders are accessible to all of us, you know, lead by example, demonstrate you sincerely care. You know, no, you're be a student of your craft. So, I mean, if they say no thermodynamics, I'm like crap, I'm screwed. But you know, these things are, they're available to all of us and I think those As they travel into our personal life to which is so encouraging and that's what lights me up