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This episode is sponsored by a company I've used for well over a decade and that is 5.11.

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

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00:00:11,120 --> 00:00:17,440

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

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00:00:17,440 --> 00:00:23,520

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

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00:00:23,520 --> 00:00:28,480

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

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00:00:28,480 --> 00:00:35,280

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

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00:00:35,280 --> 00:00:40,720

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

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00:00:40,720 --> 00:00:45,760

ballistic plates rather than the fake weight plates and that has been my ride or die through

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Murph the last few years as well. But one area I want to talk about that I haven't in previous

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sponsorship spots is their brick and mortar element. They were predominantly an online

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00:00:55,760 --> 00:01:00,960

company up till more recently but now they are approaching 100 stores all over the US.

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00:01:01,520 --> 00:01:07,040

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

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online are applied also in the stores. So as I mentioned 511 is offering you 15% off every

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purchase that you make but I do want to say more often than not they have an even deeper discount

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00:01:20,640 --> 00:01:31,760

especially around holiday times. But if you use the code SHIELD15 you will get 15% off your order

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or in the stores every time you make a purchase. And if you want to hear more about 511, who they

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stand for and who works with them, listen to episode 580 of Behind the Shield podcast with

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00:01:44,000 --> 00:01:51,680

511 regional director Will Ayres. This episode is sponsored by Bubbs Naturals, yet another company

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that I track down to bring on as a sponsor because I myself love their products. They are offering

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you the audience of the Behind the Shield podcast a 20% discount but before we get to that I do want

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to highlight a few of the products that I use myself. Firstly collagen. I am about to turn 50

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and so my hair, my skin, my nails, not really a big concern when I was younger, definitely a lot more

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00:02:14,880 --> 00:02:20,640

of a concern now. However where I've really seen the impact is joint health and gut health

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00:02:20,640 --> 00:02:26,080

and I've been blown away that when I'm consistent using collagen, Bubbs collagen in this case,

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I see a massive improvement in both. Another area I drink coffee, love coffee and in the morning I

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00:02:32,480 --> 00:02:38,960

use the halo creamer. Now originally I used the MCT oil powder but now they have the halo creamer

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which has also got grass-fed butter in it, a lot more creamy if you're not trying to go for the vegan

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option that they have as well. Now it's important to mention as well the altruistic element of Bubbs

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Naturals. The origin story involves Glenn Bubb Doherty, one of the two Navy SEALs killed in

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Benghazi and a good friend of the founders Sean and TJ. So 10% of every single sale goes towards

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00:03:03,200 --> 00:03:08,960

the Glenn Doherty Foundation. Now as I mentioned before they are offering you the audience 20%

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00:03:08,960 --> 00:03:18,240

off your purchase if you use the code SHIELD, that's S-H-I-E-L-D at bubbsnaturals.com. And finally if

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00:03:18,240 --> 00:03:24,960

you want to hear more about their products and Glenn's powerful story, listen to episode 558

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00:03:24,960 --> 00:03:31,600

with co-founder Sean Lake. Welcome to the Behind the Shield podcast as always my name is James

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00:03:31,600 --> 00:03:38,160

Gearing and this week it is my absolute honor to welcome on the show firefighter and cancer survivor

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00:03:38,160 --> 00:03:45,600

Kyle O'Neill. Now this was such an important and powerful conversation. Firstly Kyle has lived

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experience with his own diagnosis, treatment and horrendous complications that he endured.

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But then he took his lessons and his journey and he applied them to helping the rest of his department.

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So as you will hear we discuss a host of topics from post-fire decontamination and PFAS,

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self-examination, what to do with a cancer diagnosis, the resources at hand, the financial

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implication, his push to remove as many barriers to entry as possible and so much more. Now before

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00:04:19,200 --> 00:04:23,920

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

43

00:04:24,560 --> 00:04:30,080

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

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00:04:30,080 --> 00:04:36,640

a rating. Every single five-star rating truly does elevate this podcast therefore making it easier

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00:04:36,640 --> 00:04:45,040

for others to find. And this is a free library of over 900 episodes now. So all I ask in return is

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that you help share these incredible men and women stories so I can get them to every single

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person on planet earth who needs to hear them. So with that being said I introduce to you Kyle O'Neill.

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Enjoy. Well Kyle I want to start by saying two things. Firstly to say thank you to Mark

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Dombroski for connecting the two of us. He's been a wealth of information and brought me to several

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of the guests that are on the show already. And secondly to welcome you onto the Behind the Shield

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podcast today. James thanks for having me. I really appreciate you bringing me on today and

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allowing me to have a conversation with you about some very important topics. Absolutely. Well very

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first question. Where on planet earth to be finding you your morning my afternoon? So I live in San

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Diego and I work for a large metropolitan department in southern California. Beautiful. And so I would

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love to start at the very beginning of your timeline. Obviously we're going to get some

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pertinent chapters in your career but tell me where you were born and tell me a little bit about your

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family dynamic. What your parents did, how many siblings? Yeah so born and raised in San Diego

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California. Grew up in an area kind of right near the beach, Ocean Beach, Pueblo area of San Diego

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which is a you know small beach town community. Let's see my parents were my mom and dad split

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when I was five and so then my mom ended up remarrying and that's when I moved down into the

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the Ocean Beach area. I actually currently live there. Funny thing is I never thought I'd be able

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to own there but life's been good. Family dynamics. I have an older brother two and a half years older

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than me, a sister who's five years older than me. We all are really really close. I've had a very

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close upbringing. My grandparents brought us all obviously moved here and the only reason we ended

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00:07:09,520 --> 00:07:18,240

up here is my grandfather was shot in World War II and was treated here in San Diego and years later

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talked my grandmother into moving down this way. They're both since gone but my family all my

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closest relatives are here in San Diego so just a close family. Grew up I'm a kid of the 80s. Grew

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up in the 80s and had a lot of fun growing up. A lot of freedom and just having yeah really good

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00:07:38,880 --> 00:07:45,280

life growing up and now I'm married. I've been married for 13 years and have two wonderful

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daughters that are 11 and 8 and yeah just a really really good life so far. Beautiful.

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00:07:52,640 --> 00:07:58,320

I would love to go two generations back just for a second. The reason being I just interviewed two

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World War II veterans in November live on stage and they I think were 99 and 98 I think the ages

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were and so that's a generation that we're losing and you know some of their heroism obviously is

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well documented in the books but the real impact of the war the human experience and their homecoming

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experience I think has been a little distorted and a lot of kind of fairy tales told the greatest

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generation which they were but kind of this projection of they were fine you know and a

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lot of times they weren't and you hear this over and over again. What was your experience with your

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00:08:34,000 --> 00:08:39,680

grandfather? Did he ever discuss the the war itself or did you ever see the impact of the war as you

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00:08:39,680 --> 00:08:48,240

were you know younger in life? That's a great question. As a young kid I remember my brother

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and I both we were really close to my grandfather. I also have three other cousins but they're younger

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but what I remember is I remember the scar on my grandfather's hand where he took a bullet

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but I never felt comfortable asking him questions about the war. It just felt like a topic that was

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kind of off limits to some degree. It felt like you know it just didn't didn't feel appropriate

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at the time. It wasn't until both my brother and I got older and my brother more than me

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started asking more questions to my grandfather. My grandfather since passed he passed away at

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00:09:23,280 --> 00:09:30,880

the age of 91. He lived a great life. He was a wonderful man but he did towards his later years

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had developed dementia and some things kind of randomly came out during that that time period

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of probably about eight to ten years of seeing him kind of decline because of age etc. So what we

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know about him is he was a an LCM operator. He talked about one specific thing I really remember

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well is he talked about names going up on a board and if you're a landing craft operator

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he mentioned you never went in a straight line because he was in the South Pacific and they were

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00:10:07,200 --> 00:10:14,400

taking the landing craft to the beach and dropping off I assume soldiers and equipment and he said

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00:10:14,400 --> 00:10:19,200

you never went in a straight line you always zigged and zagged because that's how you could avoid

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00:10:19,200 --> 00:10:26,160

being hit. But it almost sounded to me the way you described your name your name going up on this

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00:10:26,160 --> 00:10:32,320

board if you will is you're like you your name would go up and it and then when it came up it

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00:10:32,320 --> 00:10:40,800

was your turn and you had to be ready to go. Almost kind of like just how else to describe it other

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than you know if you're you're like winning an unfortunate lottery if you will like your number

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00:10:45,760 --> 00:10:50,160

keeps coming up over and over again and I assume at some point you're wondering I hope my number

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00:10:50,160 --> 00:10:54,080

doesn't come up anymore to have to drive this thing to the beach because you know how many of

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00:10:54,080 --> 00:11:02,240

those times you're going to make it. I'll also say too he did get wounded I knew that was a thing as

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00:11:02,240 --> 00:11:06,320

a young kid and you know he never complained he never complained about being a

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00:11:06,320 --> 00:11:14,160

over there he went in I want to say at the age of 17 he was born in 1925 so kind of when the war

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started if you do the math people you know that in that area generally speaking they wanted to go

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00:11:20,800 --> 00:11:27,280

fight for their country and that was exactly what he did and I want to say he served two or three

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years total and then he was released he got I don't think he was a soldier but he was a soldier

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and then he was released he got I don't think he went back after he got shot in the hand I don't

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think they would allow him back into war but yeah I was I have fond memories of my grandfather and

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again it's it's I wish I would ask him more questions but it was one of those things out

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00:11:48,720 --> 00:11:53,440

of respect to him I I really didn't feel comfortable asking him very specific questions.

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Yeah my granddad was the same he was one of the crew in the Auckland Islands which is right up in

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00:11:59,600 --> 00:12:06,480

Scotland and they shot down the very first German bomber over the UK but same thing he was tight

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00:12:06,480 --> 00:12:11,920

lipped and I think you know like a lot of a lot of kids kind of start to probe and I think they

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00:12:11,920 --> 00:12:17,360

get the same kind of reaction because I feel like that generation back then were forced to bury it

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00:12:17,360 --> 00:12:22,240

down you know and sometimes they were able to process that and it was a healthy process and

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00:12:22,240 --> 00:12:27,120

they had a long you know healthy life but I think a lot of them suffered the same way that a lot of

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00:12:27,120 --> 00:12:32,960

our modern day veterans do and it's sad because we romanticize about how well they dealt with it and

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00:12:32,960 --> 00:12:38,800

a lot of a lot of them didn't and what they saw and had to do I think there's very few people

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00:12:38,800 --> 00:12:43,280

in uniform that have matched that kind of horror that the World War II era endured.

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00:12:45,120 --> 00:12:53,200

I I agree wholeheartedly what they must have seen and went through I mean we have I feel like

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you know you talk about with PTS you know when there's it's important to do those

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critical incidents stress diffusings into briefings because if you bring all the different

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components together you're you're able to fill in the gaps of information that if you didn't

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00:13:10,320 --> 00:13:20,880

your mind would create on its own for example for us here we bring our dispatchers fire EMS police

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in the same room to discuss what happened and everybody shares their different story and it

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00:13:25,040 --> 00:13:32,800

helps build the real story in your own head to help you process it and and likewise with what

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00:13:32,800 --> 00:13:40,400

we're discussing it's you know that era that generation you know they they didn't have that

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00:13:40,400 --> 00:13:46,080

they didn't know that so those there's a lot of things there that are probably missing so

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00:13:46,080 --> 00:13:52,240

and what I was wanted to relate that to is like so with my grandfather not really telling me all

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00:13:52,240 --> 00:13:59,200

the details because mainly because I didn't ask we go and see a movie Saving Private Ryan or

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00:13:59,200 --> 00:14:05,360

something like that for example and in my own mind am I creating this this whole thing of what might

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00:14:05,360 --> 00:14:09,760

have happened with my grandfather but not really knowing exactly all the things he went through

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but you're absolutely right and I 100 agree with you that they went through some really bad stuff

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00:14:15,760 --> 00:14:23,360

and the stories are probably a lot worse than we realize absolutely well what about military and

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00:14:23,360 --> 00:14:27,280

first responders you had your grandfather anyone else in your family that was in uniform

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so my my maternal grandfather was in World War II he was in the navy and then my paternal

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00:14:35,280 --> 00:14:41,680

grandfather was in the army and was in Korean War obviously different age groups so that's where

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00:14:41,680 --> 00:14:50,480

that falls in my uncle was also in the army but then from there on out the next generation

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00:14:50,880 --> 00:14:58,320

did not go down that path in fact I think I'm I'm the only one in my family that I know of that

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00:14:58,320 --> 00:15:03,920

actually went into firefighting so what about at the school age what were you playing in

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00:15:03,920 --> 00:15:10,160

as far as athletics and sports yeah so growing up I grew up playing a lot of different sports a

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variety everything from football soccer baseball let's see I tried different things I tried

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00:15:18,640 --> 00:15:25,040

martial arts growing up but by the time I got to high school I really narrowed it down to

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00:15:25,040 --> 00:15:30,160

football wrestling and track and track and field I did the shot putting discus kind of a bigger guy

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00:15:30,160 --> 00:15:34,080

wrestling I wrestled heavyweights and then eventually lightweight heavyweights

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00:15:36,000 --> 00:15:42,320

and then played I was a tackle both offensive defense during high school football played all

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00:15:43,040 --> 00:15:46,000

all the years I was just busy it kept me busy kept me out of trouble

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00:15:47,920 --> 00:15:53,120

I guess you could say one thing I would say tell anybody about sports in general

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00:15:53,680 --> 00:15:55,680

the one sport that taught me the most was wrestling

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00:15:55,680 --> 00:16:00,080

it was the one thing that I've done in my life where you couldn't blame anybody else for losing

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00:16:00,080 --> 00:16:07,200

you either win or you don't and when you put in all the work and the effort to to beat the person

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00:16:07,200 --> 00:16:12,560

they're your opponents coming up you'd either at either a wrestling match that's like a

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00:16:13,280 --> 00:16:17,920

city match or if you're gonna if we had to wrestle at a competition where we were

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00:16:17,920 --> 00:16:22,800

going up against multiple people it's it's a lot of people are going to be going up against

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00:16:22,800 --> 00:16:28,400

multiple people it's it's you you have to take ownership for the loss and so put in the work and

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00:16:28,400 --> 00:16:35,040

the effort and so that that actually is one of the things I like to tell the young guys is

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00:16:35,520 --> 00:16:41,280

you know try different things try you know push yourself because it'll make you better and that

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00:16:41,280 --> 00:16:46,400

that was the one sport that I think really shaped me as an individual and got me ready for the fire

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service. You just answered the question I was going to ask because you know the individual sport

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versus the team sport it's an interesting dynamic when people have done both. I had the founder of

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the Iron Neck and have you ever seen that but it's a neck strengthening tool it's incredible and you

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00:17:01,680 --> 00:17:05,840

know great application for us in the fire service and martial arts and the stunt world that I've

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00:17:05,840 --> 00:17:13,360

been a part of as well but he was a wrestler and a football player and I asked him you know how did

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00:17:14,160 --> 00:17:19,520

how did wrestling or football help you with you know we do a development as an athlete and his

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00:17:19,520 --> 00:17:25,760

and his answer was wrestling helped him immensely with football he said but football was detrimental

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00:17:25,760 --> 00:17:33,280

to wrestling did you have the same experience? No not detrimental so the last part it wasn't

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00:17:33,280 --> 00:17:39,360

detrimental to football football or wrestling definitely helped me for uh so excuse me wrestling

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00:17:39,360 --> 00:17:44,560

definitely helped me for football and was the reason I got into is I've been I was a lineman

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I've been a lineman basically my entire youth playing football and then into high school and one

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00:17:49,440 --> 00:17:55,920

of the coaches at the end of football season says hey you really should think about wrestling and

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00:17:55,920 --> 00:18:01,520

they could use a guy a bigger guy like your size so when I started high school I was 215 pounds

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00:18:01,520 --> 00:18:08,160

was a big kid I kind of grew quick because I'm probably about 225 now so I haven't grown a lot

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00:18:08,160 --> 00:18:14,560

since but it became a natural fit and the other thing is I had a long-time childhood friend

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00:18:14,560 --> 00:18:21,520

who is my brother's age three years older than me who was in the as a wrestler as well and he

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00:18:21,520 --> 00:18:28,240

encouraged me to do it just because he thought I would be good at it one thing I didn't mention

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00:18:28,240 --> 00:18:33,120

this is something important about that sport is so I when I wrestled my freshman year I lost every

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00:18:33,120 --> 00:18:38,800

match I didn't win a single match and I wanted to win and I wanted to learn how to get better

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00:18:39,760 --> 00:18:44,960

but because of all those losses I kept at it I kept pushing myself and I just got stronger

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00:18:45,680 --> 00:18:52,480

and I got more hungry to to be better and actually win a match and my sophomore year I remember this

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really well I actually did something it's called a Japanese arm throw I threw the guy put him on his

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00:18:59,200 --> 00:19:04,560

back and I had him he was turning blue that's how hard I was squeezing I'm trying to pin this guy

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00:19:04,560 --> 00:19:10,560

to the mat so I won my first match and then the rest was history after that I got a taste of what

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00:19:10,560 --> 00:19:19,120

it was like to win what it took to win how hard I had to work my wrestling coach was a long-time

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00:19:19,120 --> 00:19:25,600

wrestling coach he was really hard on us but it like you want to talk about shaping character and

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00:19:25,600 --> 00:19:31,120

and paving a path for people to be successful is you give them the skills and the tools and you

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00:19:31,120 --> 00:19:37,440

show them what it's like once they get that taste of a victory then then the rest rest is you know

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00:19:37,440 --> 00:19:42,560

up to you how how far do you want to go did you do play football and wrestle at the same time

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00:19:42,560 --> 00:19:49,120

I think that was what Mike's comment was that he was so beaten up from football that he was he was

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00:19:49,120 --> 00:19:53,520

kind of you know a shadow of himself when it came to wrestling practice when he wasn't playing

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00:19:53,520 --> 00:19:59,360

wasn't playing football at the same time his wrestling was incredibly strong understood yeah

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00:19:59,360 --> 00:20:05,120

no so for us here in the west coast football and wrestling are different seasons so wrestling is a

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00:20:05,120 --> 00:20:11,680

winter sport one thing I do I do remember too is I wanted to play baseball but I wasn't allowed to

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00:20:11,680 --> 00:20:15,760

because if you wanted to play baseball you had to play winter ball to be able to play spring ball

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00:20:15,760 --> 00:20:22,880

and I wasn't I got into wrestling and so no I wasn't beat up you know I would always come out

194

00:20:22,880 --> 00:20:28,320

of wrestling football season heavy for some reason I guess I just didn't get quite as much exercise

195

00:20:28,320 --> 00:20:33,440

or burn quite as many calories so it always kind of started as a higher weight class and then

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00:20:33,440 --> 00:20:37,920

eventually with wrestling because the work was so hard I mean you're probably familiar with monkey

197

00:20:37,920 --> 00:20:43,760

rolls we would do monkey rolls which are like a figure eight of three you have three people

198

00:20:44,320 --> 00:20:48,240

to one laying down in the middle two on each side and you're just jumping over each other and

199

00:20:48,240 --> 00:20:54,800

rolling and doing push-ups and basically you're doing that for 15 minutes in a hot you know heated

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00:20:54,800 --> 00:20:59,600

room and amongst all the other stuff we would do you couldn't we couldn't keep the weight on so I

201

00:20:59,600 --> 00:21:05,120

I would always go from heavyweight to light heavyweight at some point in the season and

202

00:21:06,240 --> 00:21:12,000

so no I wasn't beat up from from football I was I would I that would be tough having to do both

203

00:21:12,000 --> 00:21:20,640

would be a definitely a big challenge what did you notice mentally when you got that first win

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00:21:20,640 --> 00:21:26,400

because it's funny I talked about this a few times on here I did taekwondo not quite the the impact

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00:21:26,400 --> 00:21:32,160

of football or wrestling but I went into a tournament I went up against a friend of mine

206

00:21:32,160 --> 00:21:38,720

I'm all tippy-tappy smiley like we are in in the class and he fucking destroyed me and so from then

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00:21:38,720 --> 00:21:44,080

on it was something switched and I shifted my training I'd be up in I live on a farm so I'd be

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00:21:44,080 --> 00:21:49,840

up in the the bedroom I had a heavy bag hanging from the ceiling through the attic space and I

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00:21:49,840 --> 00:21:54,160

would just drill for hours and hours and hours and I started winning and winning and winning and

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00:21:54,160 --> 00:22:00,080

winning and I'd never had that kind of you know for lack of a better word killer instinct until

211

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

someone would kick my ass was that kind of similar for you was it was was there a certain point where

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00:22:06,160 --> 00:22:13,520

you turned that corner and you found a different part of yourself yeah just something inside I

213

00:22:14,080 --> 00:22:23,520

I just remember I've always been kind of a nice soft-spoken kid growing up um tough I felt like I

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00:22:23,520 --> 00:22:30,000

was a tough kid growing up and I grew up you know I was one of those kids that left the house in the

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00:22:30,000 --> 00:22:35,200

morning on the weekend and came home when it was dark and there were no cell phones and parents

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00:22:35,200 --> 00:22:40,320

kind of knew we were somewhere safe and they knew we would be home and we kind of fended for ourselves

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00:22:40,320 --> 00:22:46,960

for different things and I experienced things along the way but I think there was a moment where I

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00:22:46,960 --> 00:22:54,080

just got tired of losing and I just told myself that I some something something inside of me

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00:22:54,080 --> 00:22:59,200

became like you know just like straight out of rocky or something like you dig down super deep

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00:22:59,200 --> 00:23:06,160

to a place that you didn't know existed and then what comes of that is a bigger better version of

221

00:23:06,160 --> 00:23:14,800

yourself that and I just built this toughness and one thing I will tell you you talked about one

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00:23:15,360 --> 00:23:20,960

one sport affecting another I decided to start boxing after high school and I had to unlearn

223

00:23:20,960 --> 00:23:26,880

the wrestling stance because in boxing you have to narrow your your plane so that you don't get hit

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00:23:26,880 --> 00:23:32,880

right so you're you're going from this square stance to like a profiled stance at an angle and

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00:23:32,880 --> 00:23:39,440

so that was that was one area that impacted me later on but still to this day I think it's

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00:23:39,440 --> 00:23:44,800

one of the greatest sports if there's the team aspect to it when you're when you're wrestling

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00:23:45,760 --> 00:23:52,640

team competitions and but then there's the the personal aspect and the you know similar to boxing

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00:23:52,640 --> 00:23:58,480

can you can't blame anybody if you lose it's it's it's on you 100 if you're going to win that match

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00:23:58,480 --> 00:24:05,600

or not absolutely well from the career aspect then you didn't have anyone in your immediate family

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00:24:05,600 --> 00:24:09,760

that was in the first responder profession were you dreaming of the fire service when you were in

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00:24:09,760 --> 00:24:15,440

school or was there something else in mind yeah so what happened was is my senior year in high school

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00:24:16,560 --> 00:24:22,160

we were required to do what's called a senior portfolio upon exit from high school and

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00:24:22,160 --> 00:24:29,120

essentially what this was was a three members from the public come in and they were kind of all walks

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00:24:29,120 --> 00:24:37,920

of life if you will and you had one of those like foam boards and would put up your four years of

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00:24:37,920 --> 00:24:44,480

what you did in high school and and then talk about not only what we did but then what we were going

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00:24:44,480 --> 00:24:51,040

to do after high school and it just so happens that there was a division chief from a local fire

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00:24:51,040 --> 00:24:57,600

department in that group and after everything was done he pulled me aside and says hey how would you

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00:24:57,600 --> 00:25:04,400

like to come do a ride along at my fire department I sure I took him up on it and that was my first

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00:25:04,400 --> 00:25:11,760

exposure to the fire service and and he you know I started to learn a little bit everything I learned

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00:25:11,760 --> 00:25:17,760

as I went really really made me like it because I was one of those people that really had that

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00:25:17,760 --> 00:25:23,440

mindset of I don't really want to be behind a desk but this this I could do so that's kind of where

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00:25:23,440 --> 00:25:29,120

it all started for me initially was that that experience and then that offer and just taking a

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00:25:29,120 --> 00:25:34,080

leap of faith was that department you're with now was it another department went to first

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00:25:35,200 --> 00:25:43,520

it was a different department I didn't end up working for them but what stemmed off of that was

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00:25:43,520 --> 00:25:48,000

uh I had a neighbor the street that I grew up on this old guy that used to walk up and down the

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00:25:48,000 --> 00:25:53,440

block and I would see him every just about every afternoon he says hey you know Kyle there's this

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00:25:53,440 --> 00:26:00,000

old fire captain up the street you gotta go talk to him you know uh he he knows his stuff and he

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00:26:00,000 --> 00:26:05,040

might be able to help you out and again one day I got the courage to go up there and ring his doorbell

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00:26:05,040 --> 00:26:12,400

which was a pull station funny funny enough here the actual pull station and uh little did I know

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00:26:12,400 --> 00:26:17,280

he was actually one of the most well-respected uh captains on my department they have a building

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00:26:17,280 --> 00:26:24,320

named after him um and he got me pointed in the right direction with the fire cadet program here

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00:26:25,040 --> 00:26:32,400

and I got involved with that was in that for um from 18 to 21 and then with my my current department

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00:26:33,760 --> 00:26:39,200

um there was a few things that run concurrently with that but essentially um for three years that

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00:26:39,200 --> 00:26:44,880

my life I ate slept and breathed fire department and then eventually got picked up with the current

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00:26:44,880 --> 00:26:50,720

my current department at the age of 21. So this is an interesting topic that's coming up a lot

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00:26:50,720 --> 00:26:56,480

recently because of the nationwide recruitment crisis and I don't think you know we're in we're

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00:26:56,480 --> 00:27:01,120

in the landscape now where people are scrambling they just put bums on seats in a lot of departments

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00:27:01,120 --> 00:27:07,280

and it breaks my heart because I don't think our younger firefighters know what hiring looked like

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00:27:07,280 --> 00:27:13,680

when you and I first came on so I got hired in 2004 and I was testing certainly and when I went

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00:27:13,680 --> 00:27:18,480

back to west to anaheim I was testing against like a thousand plus candidates all with resumes that

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00:27:18,480 --> 00:27:23,920

were stacked so you just mentioned a three-year gap where you're in a cadet program which by the

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00:27:23,920 --> 00:27:28,800

way I love mentorship programs in fire service I think it's the answer to so many of our issues

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00:27:29,280 --> 00:27:34,960

talk to me about the difficulties getting hired when you first try to get in uniform.

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00:27:34,960 --> 00:27:40,640

Oh very competitive I was also hired in 2004.

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00:27:42,640 --> 00:27:50,960

Jeez it was thousands of people were taking the the initial test to get through the general

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00:27:50,960 --> 00:27:56,160

aptitude component of the testing and all that and I just remember being in this in the groups

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00:27:56,160 --> 00:28:02,240

with those people and just seeing how many people again I was really young I was 21 when I when I

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00:28:02,240 --> 00:28:08,400

finally got the job but super competitive but it was like kind of we always we always talked about

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00:28:08,400 --> 00:28:14,080

how it was competitive but like a friendly competitiveness you know we all work together

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00:28:14,080 --> 00:28:21,600

and and some of those same people that again being friendly competitive with later got hired

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00:28:22,560 --> 00:28:28,080

to the same department and so we all we all kind of made it in our own way but it wasn't wasn't

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00:28:28,080 --> 00:28:35,920

easy and the department I currently work for it is it was highly sought after department so

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00:28:36,560 --> 00:28:41,280

it drew a lot of attention I I'm throwing a random number out but I want to I think somewhere in the

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00:28:41,280 --> 00:28:45,920

neighborhood of seven to eight thousand people took the test and then you know kind of dwindles

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00:28:45,920 --> 00:28:51,440

down to you know maybe they only hire a hundred off of that list over the course of three academies

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00:28:51,440 --> 00:28:57,200

you know 30 some odd people per academy and something to that nature is the intent but it's

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00:28:57,200 --> 00:29:05,440

it's super super competitive and yeah like you mentioned there's been a shift it's it's not the

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00:29:05,440 --> 00:29:11,760

same doesn't have the same flavor anymore it concerns me in a lot of ways that we're not

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00:29:12,560 --> 00:29:18,800

attracting the right people for the right reasons but there's also the component that we need to

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00:29:18,800 --> 00:29:23,920

we need to take better care of our firefighters from a higher level ensuring you know adequate

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00:29:23,920 --> 00:29:30,800

pay and you know I don't know why any of the benefits would be going away in any way shape

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00:29:30,800 --> 00:29:36,480

or form especially things that we used to have like lifetime medical and with so many firefighters

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00:29:36,480 --> 00:29:41,760

you know getting having some long-term health consequences you know those things would be

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00:29:41,760 --> 00:29:49,360

really important and probably draw more people in and we also just need to focus our energies on

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00:29:49,360 --> 00:29:54,240

health and safety of members and then put our efforts there that could be a recruitment tool

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00:29:54,240 --> 00:30:00,480

in and of itself is like our department has a robust health and safety operation so taking

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00:30:00,480 --> 00:30:05,200

care of our members we need to make sure that they're the highest priority and one thing I'll

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00:30:05,200 --> 00:30:12,160

speak to is I wrote a grant some years back and was fortunate to get the award for that grant

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00:30:12,160 --> 00:30:20,320

it's 47 PPE washing extractors and I finished that that grant writing with the most important

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00:30:20,320 --> 00:30:28,080

resource in the fire service is not the fire engine but the fire personnel and what my I'm

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00:30:28,800 --> 00:30:34,160

I still stand behind that it's our membership they matter the most it's the people we got to

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00:30:34,160 --> 00:30:40,320

put all our time and effort into making sure that they're properly taken care of and one of the

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00:30:40,320 --> 00:30:46,400

things I'll finish with here is that my my boss taught me one thing really important he says we've

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00:30:46,400 --> 00:30:53,360

always been so concerned about our members making it home safely and in the health and safety arena

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00:30:53,360 --> 00:30:59,120

the perspective kind of shifts towards making sure that our members come back to work safely

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00:31:00,080 --> 00:31:06,240

and healthy and in one piece because our home lives there's things that go on everybody's got

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00:31:06,240 --> 00:31:13,360

stuff things that don't go right at home and the things that they say well back in the day they

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00:31:13,360 --> 00:31:17,440

would just say well just leave it at the door and nothing that happened at home should come into

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00:31:17,440 --> 00:31:24,000

work well unfortunately it does and that's the reality so we have to have things in place that

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00:31:24,000 --> 00:31:30,160

help our members that essentially that that help them take care of themselves give them the

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00:31:30,160 --> 00:31:35,520

resources that they need ensure that they're well taken care of through all kinds of different

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00:31:35,520 --> 00:31:41,840

things and I don't want to go into all of them but we we can do better and we have to because

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00:31:41,840 --> 00:31:48,880

the fire service has changed we're not running um the call volume has just gone through the roof

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00:31:48,880 --> 00:31:54,560

and we're not expanding our departments fast enough to to keep up with this demand of the of

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00:31:54,560 --> 00:32:01,280

the public whereas there's much more public a 911 abuse than I can recall from my earlier years in

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00:32:01,280 --> 00:32:09,920

my in my career um there's and they and they as you mentioned recruitment we didn't need recruitment

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00:32:09,920 --> 00:32:17,120

when I came on the department that's it that that whole thing blew me away when that started because

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00:32:17,760 --> 00:32:23,680

it spoke for itself and there was people just chomping at the bit to get hired on the fire

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00:32:23,680 --> 00:32:30,000

service and now we're we're in a different completely different phase and it's a different

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00:32:30,000 --> 00:32:34,800

generation too there's some of the generational things that I think we could do better at is just

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00:32:34,800 --> 00:32:41,600

kind of learning how we can best communicate with the newer generation etc so I'll kind of pause there

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00:32:42,240 --> 00:32:47,200

no no I think these are such important conversation it's great when I have someone that's you know

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00:32:47,200 --> 00:32:50,240

kind of my generation some of the guests have been on a lot longer than I have but

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00:32:51,200 --> 00:32:56,240

it kind of shines a light on what it was like for us and how competitive it was and I agree a thousand

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00:32:56,240 --> 00:33:01,600

percent studying with other firefighters trying to get one of those positions not stepping on each

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00:33:01,600 --> 00:33:05,680

other or stabbing each other in the back but just you know helping each other trying to training

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00:33:05,680 --> 00:33:11,520

together all those things but what my perspective in is interesting because you said a phrase that

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00:33:11,520 --> 00:33:17,840

we always talk about make sure they go home the next day we never say make sure they go home more

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00:33:17,840 --> 00:33:23,600

often and we look at what's going on at home one of the big reasons why we have issues at home is

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00:33:23,600 --> 00:33:28,640

that we don't get to go home very much and so correct me if I'm wrong you guys are 56 hour

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00:33:28,640 --> 00:33:35,280

work week do you have a kelly or no kelly 56 yeah so so yeah so 56 so there we go so when you and

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00:33:35,280 --> 00:33:41,360

I were hiring bright-eyed and bushy tail no one was talking about seat deprivation mental health

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00:33:41,360 --> 00:33:45,200

you know hardly anyone was talking about cancer in the fire service no one was talking about

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00:33:45,200 --> 00:33:51,440

you know divorce and you know uh overdose and addiction and all the things and that's not

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00:33:51,440 --> 00:33:56,240

the entire fire service but it's the part that they kind of kept on the shelf out the way from

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00:33:56,240 --> 00:34:00,720

everyone and so we could just be rah rah rah you know getting the job and love it and we did

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00:34:01,760 --> 00:34:07,520

generationally we always talk about you know these newer guys kind of you know in a kind of looking

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00:34:07,520 --> 00:34:13,680

down lens I think what's happened is that there's been an awakening because this young generation

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00:34:13,680 --> 00:34:19,200

now has so much information at their fingertips they can look at the fire service that you and

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00:34:19,200 --> 00:34:24,480

I never could because they can see the whole picture and now when they see 56 hour weeks and

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00:34:24,480 --> 00:34:29,520

they see mandatory overtime and they see all these other things that they factor into the equation

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00:34:29,520 --> 00:34:34,480

of a job to be proud of and service and camaraderie and all the good things they look at the whole

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00:34:34,480 --> 00:34:40,080

puzzle and go this doesn't sound as good as everyone was saying this doesn't look to me like I

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00:34:40,080 --> 00:34:45,440

I only work 10 days a month this looks like I work one and a half times more than every civilian I

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00:34:45,440 --> 00:34:50,560

know actually when you do the math so this is one of the things I think that we're it's exciting

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00:34:50,560 --> 00:34:56,160

because we're a paradigm shift now the world has realized or the US at least has realized

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00:34:57,040 --> 00:35:01,200

all the things that are contributing to killing our firefighters and we're going to get to obviously

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00:35:01,200 --> 00:35:08,240

other factors so we have the most beautiful opportunity to fix it because either a we go

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00:35:08,240 --> 00:35:12,560

down to minimal recruiting where we have to basically take everyone which includes the good

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00:35:12,560 --> 00:35:17,840

ones and the bad ones or be in some departments we might not have a department anymore we might

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00:35:17,840 --> 00:35:23,280

not have firefighters anymore so I look at it optimistically like we've turned a corner where

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00:35:23,840 --> 00:35:29,600

we have the option to really go back to the old day where people are queuing up lining up to become

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00:35:29,600 --> 00:35:37,680

a firefighter if the department has the courage to actually advocate for their people put you know

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00:35:37,680 --> 00:35:44,320

workplace health initiatives in which includes more rest and recovery between shifts because

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00:35:44,320 --> 00:35:50,640

of the high up tempo of a firefighter in 2024 and therefore we solve that and we make a huge dent in

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00:35:50,640 --> 00:35:57,600

all the issues that we see so that's kind of my perspective I agree wholeheartedly that

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00:35:58,640 --> 00:36:05,600

is a really good summary of the way of explaining that yeah it really there has been an awakening

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00:36:05,600 --> 00:36:13,280

and I think you're right and the technology is a huge huge part of that I think when we started

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00:36:13,280 --> 00:36:20,240

realizing these things were problems too is that we just opened up pandora's you know this pandora's

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00:36:20,240 --> 00:36:28,560

box if you will of information like I remember so I'll get into it here if it's okay I just talk a

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00:36:28,560 --> 00:36:36,160

little bit about being a cancer survivor and please let's go yeah yeah so you know I'm really

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00:36:36,160 --> 00:36:45,040

proud of being a firefighter I actually became a firefighter in 2003 and I was a reserve for a local

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00:36:45,040 --> 00:36:52,080

Indian reservation Native American reservation fire department and first shift in a fire station

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00:36:52,080 --> 00:36:59,440

believe it or not I go in two hours into my shift I get called out to the apparatus bay and

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00:37:00,720 --> 00:37:06,320

you're going to go on a strike team and didn't know this but it led to nine days being deployed

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00:37:07,200 --> 00:37:13,520

first to the Grand Prix fire in San Bernardino and then four days into it we we were demobilized

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00:37:13,520 --> 00:37:24,000

and sent back to the cedar fire here in San Diego and it what I what I think about in retrospect of

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00:37:24,000 --> 00:37:31,280

that whole time was how much experience I gained in a really short amount of time that and now

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00:37:32,000 --> 00:37:37,840

how much exposure I had in a really short amount of time and how we fought those types of wild

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00:37:37,840 --> 00:37:44,880

and urban interface fires it wasn't fought in structure gear and we didn't think about using

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00:37:44,880 --> 00:37:52,960

our SCBAs yeah so many things cycled through my head and it's kind of a just you opened up a random

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00:37:52,960 --> 00:38:00,160

thought there but if you start if I think if all of us were really to sit down as firefighters and

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00:38:00,160 --> 00:38:05,040

start thinking about how many times we've been exposed throughout our career if you've been on

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00:38:05,040 --> 00:38:09,440

any amount of time you're going to start to realize really quickly that you've been exposed a lot

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00:38:10,560 --> 00:38:15,280

it's not and I know we've talked previously and it's not just the the the fire ground exposures

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00:38:15,280 --> 00:38:23,040

that's the problem it's the culture it's the sleep deprivation it's this whole huge mixture of of

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00:38:23,040 --> 00:38:30,000

things that are are leading to adverse health effects in our firefighters so uh yeah so I got

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00:38:30,000 --> 00:38:37,440

diagnosed back in 2016 with a mid-grade form of cancer spent a year and a half on the sidelines

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00:38:39,120 --> 00:38:46,240

in part due to the treatment from the cancer the cancer treatment and actually I had quite a few

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00:38:46,240 --> 00:38:53,520

complications unfortunately that not everybody would have but certainly infections and pulmonary

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00:38:53,520 --> 00:39:00,080

embolisms and things kind of set me back and kept me out longer than I needed to be and I feel very

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00:39:00,080 --> 00:39:07,120

fortunate that I made it back but that kind of was a turning point for me in my life because I

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00:39:08,000 --> 00:39:14,240

was so frustrated because I felt I kind of felt cheated I felt like I had given so much of my

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00:39:14,960 --> 00:39:21,040

of my life to the fire service and as I mentioned being very proud of being a firefighter but also

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00:39:21,040 --> 00:39:29,600

working at busy companies putting myself in harm's way more than if I went to a slower station and

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00:39:29,600 --> 00:39:37,520

and just kind of kicked my feet up but I definitely like going back in my mind and thinking of all the

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00:39:37,520 --> 00:39:44,560

times where I made mistakes and I could have done better and I and now that fire service is no longer

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00:39:44,560 --> 00:39:50,320

in my mind that that fire service shouldn't exist anymore but unfortunately because of the cultural

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00:39:50,320 --> 00:39:56,320

barriers that we face in today's fire service we have we still have all these problems and we have

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00:39:56,320 --> 00:40:01,840

policies and we have SOGs and we've done infrastructure changes but we haven't fixed the

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00:40:01,840 --> 00:40:10,640

cruz of the problem which I think ultimately comes down to better leadership and the the people that

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00:40:10,640 --> 00:40:17,680

they can make those changes they can be firm in their stance on things have to do those things

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00:40:17,680 --> 00:40:24,400

in order to protect the people underneath them so I might have wandered a little bit on that question

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00:40:24,400 --> 00:40:30,320

no no no this is the space for wandering wander away um it's interesting when you were talking

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00:40:30,320 --> 00:40:35,680

I had a concept I never thought about before and it's you know it would be it would have to take a

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00:40:35,680 --> 00:40:42,800

little um open-mindedness but if say that there was no fire service and you had to create one from

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00:40:42,800 --> 00:40:50,160

scratch here in 2024 would we do the things that we do at the moment and the answer is no because

388

00:40:50,160 --> 00:40:55,280

you would look at for example health and safety standards from companies that deal with hazardous

389

00:40:55,280 --> 00:41:00,160

materials and bio hazards so the way that you looked at decon and PPE would be completely

390

00:41:00,160 --> 00:41:05,040

different the way that you looked at rest and recovery and shifts would be completely different

391

00:41:05,040 --> 00:41:10,240

but I feel just as you said earlier that there was absolutely an application when we were literally

392

00:41:10,240 --> 00:41:16,240

sitting around a firehouse playing you know cards stroking the dalmatian and waiting for a fire

393

00:41:16,240 --> 00:41:23,120

period but what we have now jack of all trades master of none you know ems fire rope rescue

394

00:41:23,120 --> 00:41:29,120

confined space you name it snake retrieval I've done I've done some of that too um you know we

395

00:41:29,120 --> 00:41:36,640

we really are just spread so thin and that's okay if the environment the health and safety side the

396

00:41:36,640 --> 00:41:44,080

PPE the advances in technology had gone along with it but the that mentality has stayed back

397

00:41:44,080 --> 00:41:52,000

in the 1950s but as you pointed out 70 years later what we do is completely unrecognizable

398

00:41:52,000 --> 00:41:59,360

to our forefathers a couple of generations before right and we I think to factor into that as well

399

00:41:59,360 --> 00:42:07,120

is you know just look at the example of of legacy fuel fires versus modern fuel fires I mean those

400

00:42:08,240 --> 00:42:12,880

these aren't the same fires anymore and you if you I've talked to the old guys the old guys will

401

00:42:12,880 --> 00:42:17,920

say the same thing they these these the fire behavior is different the fire department's

402

00:42:17,920 --> 00:42:24,480

different a lot of things are changing I mean look at look at the more current um topics lithium ion

403

00:42:24,480 --> 00:42:30,480

right hot topic I'm sure still for a lot of departments cancer prevention's hot topic

404

00:42:30,880 --> 00:42:36,080

behavioral health all these things that if you had to start a new fire department right now

405

00:42:36,880 --> 00:42:40,800

you would have to start with that and how much more time would you spend on those topics

406

00:42:41,840 --> 00:42:48,400

as compared to you know endless days out on the grinder pulling hose and and you know

407

00:42:48,400 --> 00:42:54,080

these are the things that could kill you too when you look back now you had what 12 years

408

00:42:54,080 --> 00:42:57,920

on when you first got diagnosed have I got that right I can think back my first department was

409

00:42:57,920 --> 00:43:04,160

Hialeah Miami and then I went to Anaheim for a few years in California and I can remember the

410

00:43:04,720 --> 00:43:12,240

complacency when it came to dumpster fires when it came to overhauling car fires you know and

411

00:43:12,240 --> 00:43:18,000

then I went into to Anaheim they got a lot better even overhaul but you know there was always and

412

00:43:18,000 --> 00:43:22,720

it's understandable you know the stuff we wear is hot it's heavy you want to get it off as soon

413

00:43:22,720 --> 00:43:29,520

as you can so I saw that kind of slow movement towards getting better but you know the beginning

414

00:43:29,520 --> 00:43:35,280

of your career the beginning of my career I'm sure there were a lot of micro exposures so with that

415

00:43:35,280 --> 00:43:42,080

being said though were there any larger incidents that you look back and think maybe gave you a kind

416

00:43:42,080 --> 00:43:49,520

of macro exposure during that particular fire absolutely so the one I mentioned earlier the

417

00:43:49,520 --> 00:43:57,520

nine-day strike team for the Cedar fire in 2007 had a another nine-day strike team here locally

418

00:43:57,520 --> 00:44:05,520

it was the Witch Creek fire again this is just my my the way I like to think of the wildland

419

00:44:05,520 --> 00:44:12,560

urban interface is just you're fighting a structure fire in the wrong equipment and I've heard

420

00:44:12,560 --> 00:44:16,640

different things like oh well you should have been in structure gear well it's not realistic

421

00:44:16,640 --> 00:44:22,720

you're not going to spend nine days in structure gear and there's not enough SCBA bottles that

422

00:44:23,360 --> 00:44:28,560

you would breathe down every SCBA bottle in the department and our light and airs would never stop

423

00:44:28,560 --> 00:44:37,520

running if we were to operate that way so there's those exposures were macro in my mind a few other

424

00:44:37,520 --> 00:44:45,600

ones would be just really big you know commercial structure fires we've had quite I've had quite a

425

00:44:45,600 --> 00:44:53,520

few over the course of my career and then some of the ones where we actually were able to figure out

426

00:44:53,520 --> 00:44:59,520

what was burning and thinking about how bad that probably was I remember one of them that I was on

427

00:45:00,160 --> 00:45:06,560

there was a fairly large amount of hydrogen cyanide it was a color smoke I'd never seen before at a

428

00:45:06,560 --> 00:45:11,120

structure fire you know if you if you know anything about reading smoke it stems from

429

00:45:11,120 --> 00:45:19,120

it stems from the ISO incident safety officer course and we talk about a lot about different

430

00:45:19,120 --> 00:45:26,400

colors of smoke but we also don't really think too much about the off-color yellows or browns

431

00:45:26,400 --> 00:45:32,080

that happen occasionally when there's really bad toxic stuff burning so that that one kind of stands

432

00:45:32,080 --> 00:45:37,760

out in my mind as a another bad one so they they happen and like you said though there's probably

433

00:45:37,760 --> 00:45:42,800

a lot more of the micro exposures over the course of the career and kind of that whole

434

00:45:43,440 --> 00:45:49,280

mindset of like you know rocks in the backpack or drops in the bucket and and you know you fill it

435

00:45:49,280 --> 00:45:55,680

up the more the more you fill it up the worse your chances of getting a you know a diagnosis for cancer

436

00:45:55,680 --> 00:46:00,720

is or if it's on the behavioral side it's more a likeliness of having some kind of a behavioral

437

00:46:00,720 --> 00:46:07,920

issue but all those things happen and the fact that we're we're doing a better job of equipping

438

00:46:07,920 --> 00:46:12,640

today's fire service with that it's a step in the right direction we still have a long way to go

439

00:46:13,600 --> 00:46:19,520

what about the road into realizing that something is wrong with you kind of walk me through how you

440

00:46:19,520 --> 00:46:25,200

discovered that and then you touched on you know the the the side effects of some of the issues

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00:46:25,200 --> 00:46:29,520

you know what were the treatments that were presented to you and what were the treatments

442

00:46:29,520 --> 00:46:39,120

presented to you and and how did they affect you positively and negatively okay um so i

443

00:46:40,720 --> 00:46:45,440

felt tired more than usual right before i got diagnosed i was having these

444

00:46:46,400 --> 00:46:51,200

this really i was really fatigued there were some home life things going on

445

00:46:51,200 --> 00:46:57,520

i had a special needs daughter at home who was going to require treatment in another state

446

00:46:58,800 --> 00:47:04,080

and i was working every day i could possibly to pay for that expense because i was essentially

447

00:47:04,080 --> 00:47:13,920

going to have to pay two mortgages uh flights every all these other uh extra expenses that were

448

00:47:13,920 --> 00:47:21,520

to be able to give my daughter to eradicate her to seizures and or find a solution for the seizures

449

00:47:21,520 --> 00:47:29,200

if you will and so i had a lot of stress um i was a fairly new engineer um i would like i said i was

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00:47:29,200 --> 00:47:34,080

burning the candle at both ends working a lot trying to get all these days covered and you know

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00:47:34,080 --> 00:47:40,560

the fire service trying to just trying to get it set up and so i just remember just not feeling

452

00:47:40,560 --> 00:47:47,840

real well and i couldn't quite pinpoint what was going on but i did decide i would go to the er

453

00:47:47,840 --> 00:47:58,960

and get checked out and i did have a um a growth and i remember um i had to find child care coverage

454

00:47:59,840 --> 00:48:06,320

i went to the er thought i was going to be there um for a couple hours maybe once they saw me and

455

00:48:06,320 --> 00:48:11,200

um for a couple hours maybe once they saw me and then they would release me and all that whole

456

00:48:11,200 --> 00:48:16,640

mindset and i remember going in and you know when you're in the triage with the nurses

457

00:48:16,640 --> 00:48:22,640

i remember their eyes were big and i when they told me to go have a seat i turned around walked

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00:48:22,640 --> 00:48:29,520

away and i never hit the seat they called me back right away um they ran a bunch of different tests

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00:48:29,520 --> 00:48:37,280

which included blood and urine and eventually led to an ultrasound uh and then ct scans and

460

00:48:38,080 --> 00:48:42,480

kind of left leaving there and when i share my my story with people i remember

461

00:48:43,840 --> 00:48:49,040

probably one of the harder things to do is calling my wife and i i made up my mind when i walked out

462

00:48:49,040 --> 00:48:53,760

i'm like i'm not going home and dropping this on her i'm going to call her and let her know

463

00:48:53,760 --> 00:49:00,880

what was going on and so but thankfully very supportive um and you know kind of started

464

00:49:00,880 --> 00:49:09,280

me on that journey if you will excuse me um so fast forward a little bit um there's a whole

465

00:49:09,280 --> 00:49:14,640

lot of details in between but i ended up having to start um i had a surgery to start to remove

466

00:49:14,640 --> 00:49:20,960

the cancer the big tumor and then that uh i moved into having to go through chemotherapy for

467

00:49:20,960 --> 00:49:28,000

um which ended up being i'm going to say um almost three months just about three months

468

00:49:28,800 --> 00:49:32,560

and as as you mentioned you asked about the complications so i was most of the way through

469

00:49:32,560 --> 00:49:40,080

chemotherapy and i was at home and at this point my white blood cell count was really low

470

00:49:40,880 --> 00:49:45,680

um had lost all my hair was had lost a lot of weight because of the effects of chemotherapy

471

00:49:45,680 --> 00:49:51,360

um and then i remember i was sitting in like a lazy boy chair in my living room and um i wasn't

472

00:49:51,360 --> 00:49:56,160

doing a whole lot i was just really because i was really tired and i remember going to get up out

473

00:49:56,160 --> 00:50:05,600

of the chair and i remember feeling this really sharp excruciating pain in my like right um my

474

00:50:05,600 --> 00:50:12,240

right rib cage area and it was so bad it dropped me to the ground and i was having trouble breathing

475

00:50:12,240 --> 00:50:17,280

and what i ended up you know coming out obviously later on figured out that i ended up having

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00:50:17,280 --> 00:50:22,400

pulmonary embolisms which is a side effect of both cancer and chemotherapy because both are

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00:50:22,400 --> 00:50:28,800

considered uh they both put your body in a hyper coagulated state so if you're not moving enough

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00:50:28,800 --> 00:50:32,160

and it's one of the things i tell guys that are going through cancer treatment is make sure you're

479

00:50:32,160 --> 00:50:38,400

moving don't stop have a regimen walk your block do something but don't don't just sit in one place

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00:50:38,400 --> 00:50:48,000

because then you know that that can cause issues so uh that happened and um it was it was chemo's

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00:50:48,000 --> 00:50:51,840

bad enough uh you talk to anybody who goes through it and they probably have a very similar

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00:50:51,840 --> 00:50:57,680

experience and some are worse than others but now i had to do these injections these lovinox

483

00:50:57,680 --> 00:51:04,320

injections which are these preloads um and they're fine at first you're basically stabbing yourself

484

00:51:04,320 --> 00:51:10,320

with like a i don't know 12 gauge needle or 10 gauges it's a big needle and you had to we had

485

00:51:10,320 --> 00:51:16,080

to do it twice i had to do it twice a day morning and night and so i had had literally divided my

486

00:51:16,080 --> 00:51:21,440

anatomy at my right side of my belly was the morning and my left side was the pm but after

487

00:51:21,440 --> 00:51:26,480

a while that the part that you kind of have to like really psychologically psych yourself out for

488

00:51:26,480 --> 00:51:32,320

is it's like meat tenderizer like my whole belly was bruised and i was like i was like

489

00:51:32,320 --> 00:51:37,840

my whole belly was bruised black and blue because i'd stabbed myself so many times for these

490

00:51:37,840 --> 00:51:43,120

injections that you're starting to have to stab yourself in these already bruised areas so it's

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00:51:43,920 --> 00:51:49,440

it's not it's not fun uh and then on top of that chemo just makes you feel like garbage you know

492

00:51:49,440 --> 00:51:54,560

and the way i tell people chemo is like the worst hangover you've ever had in your life

493

00:51:55,120 --> 00:52:01,360

and it never goes away and and you're you're wearing it for 24 hours a day seven days a week

494

00:52:01,360 --> 00:52:07,840

and even it doesn't subside until many weeks if not months after you you finish off the regimen

495

00:52:09,040 --> 00:52:15,760

um so i had that complication um i got through chemo okay but i kind of fell into this gray area

496

00:52:16,800 --> 00:52:23,920

of um you know what do i do from here well i had my cancer had had gotten into my lymph nodes

497

00:52:24,640 --> 00:52:31,120

and the chemo didn't shrink them enough so the next course of action and i had multiple doctors

498

00:52:31,120 --> 00:52:35,680

weigh in on an oncologist surgeon and and they said you need to have this big surgery so

499

00:52:36,720 --> 00:52:42,960

i had what's called an rpl and d retroperitoneal lymph node dissection where they go in they

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00:52:42,960 --> 00:52:50,080

basically open you up um i had 44 staples in my stomach when i was done so it's a big surgery

501

00:52:50,080 --> 00:52:56,080

um i think it took about seven hours um but they open you up and they go in and they they take what

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00:52:56,080 --> 00:53:01,760

they need um they ended up taking six lymph nodes out and when they do and they take those lymph

503

00:53:01,760 --> 00:53:06,480

nodes out they put these clips on these surgical clips and that'll come in here in just a little bit

504

00:53:07,920 --> 00:53:15,280

um so i i remember waking up i got through the surgery you know i survived it and uh spent about

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00:53:15,280 --> 00:53:23,920

five days in the hospital um and got home and it's pretty humbling as as a firefighter who's never

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00:53:23,920 --> 00:53:28,880

been transported in an ambulance only only just you know with my job and taking people to the

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00:53:28,880 --> 00:53:36,640

hospital etc having to get transported for the embolisms and then going home to uh uh a hospital

508

00:53:36,640 --> 00:53:41,600

bed because i had to sit sleeping up and i had to have a pull bar because i didn't they had cut

509

00:53:41,600 --> 00:53:46,560

through my core and i had to have a commode in the bathroom because i couldn't physically

510

00:53:47,440 --> 00:53:52,720

get all the way down to the toilet um you know things that you don't think of at the age of 33

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00:53:52,720 --> 00:53:59,040

that you're going to need and in order to recover um but i had them and they were there and they were

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00:53:59,040 --> 00:54:07,040

again it was humbling um so then uh not not far after that not long after that i ended up having

513

00:54:07,040 --> 00:54:15,600

an infection that i had a gastro or a yeah an infection in my in my stomach i had contracted

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00:54:15,600 --> 00:54:22,640

uh this is gross but cdiff and ecoli in the hospital from being in a room i think with another person

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00:54:22,640 --> 00:54:28,560

and things weren't as clean and i wasn't able to do as much as i would like to have been my hygiene

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00:54:28,560 --> 00:54:38,640

better at the time um and and one of the things i tell in my story is this that if so those i was

517

00:54:38,640 --> 00:54:42,640

i stopped doing the lovinox injections prior to surgery for obvious reasons right that's that's a

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00:54:42,640 --> 00:54:49,120

blood thinner and i had to stop it so that was my stomach was still really badly bruised and i had

519

00:54:49,120 --> 00:54:58,800

this huge abdominal scar and at the time when i got sick i remember i was so violently i was so

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00:54:58,800 --> 00:55:04,240

violently ill i was just trying to get out of bed and to not tear my staples i had to do like a very

521

00:55:04,240 --> 00:55:09,920

specific like way i rolled off my bed onto my feet kind of thing and it wasn't wasn't easy but i get

522

00:55:09,920 --> 00:55:15,680

out of bed and i make two steps out my door headed to the bathroom and i just vomit everywhere and

523

00:55:15,680 --> 00:55:21,280

that all that if you can picture your stomach muscles when you're vomiting it's like it's

524

00:55:21,280 --> 00:55:27,760

giving you it's doing everything it can and having 44 staples in your stomach and that pain i thought

525

00:55:27,760 --> 00:55:34,480

i tore my stitches i thought i tore my staples in this process and so when i landed back in

526

00:55:34,480 --> 00:55:42,720

the hospital again transported from my house they treated me for the infection and i was in a lot

527

00:55:42,720 --> 00:55:53,280

of pain from all of it and then i i did get through that piece of it and there were some things noted

528

00:55:53,280 --> 00:55:58,000

because they ct they did another ct scan on me and noted that there was this like mass starting to

529

00:55:58,000 --> 00:56:05,200

grow on my stomach from the fluid from one of the clips leaking from the surgery and what ended up

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00:56:05,200 --> 00:56:11,440

coming of that is that the the leak what's called oymphocel it started to create this like

531

00:56:12,080 --> 00:56:17,120

little baby in my my my abdominal cavity and started walling itself off and it was lymphatic

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00:56:17,120 --> 00:56:22,640

fluid just leaking out well that eventually pushed on my inferior vena cava it caused a

533

00:56:22,640 --> 00:56:30,320

second round of pulmonary embolisms which i wore about a month later so then i had to go through

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00:56:30,320 --> 00:56:35,920

i had to they had to intervene because that obviously is causing me problems so i got treated

535

00:56:35,920 --> 00:56:42,160

for the embolisms again ambulance back to the hospital treated for three days and then released

536

00:56:42,160 --> 00:56:51,360

with lovinox now i'm doing the injections again and then sort of towards the end of my my my whole

537

00:56:51,360 --> 00:56:57,760

story of treatment i had they had intervened through interventional radiology where they

538

00:56:57,760 --> 00:57:04,960

basically use a live ct to go in and find that problem and put a needle in there and then

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00:57:05,920 --> 00:57:12,640

they would they had this needle running through my back and this tube coming out into a 500 cc bag

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00:57:12,640 --> 00:57:18,720

that i had to carry around with me all the time initially that bag was filling full of lymphatic

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00:57:18,720 --> 00:57:26,320

fluid twice a day i was draining a thousand ccs of lymphatic fluid and then it started to to slow

542

00:57:26,320 --> 00:57:32,640

down well sadly it failed on me and then i had to wait another month for it to fill back up for them

543

00:57:32,640 --> 00:57:39,680

to do the same procedure again and then they got it in and i got an infection in that and then that

544

00:57:39,680 --> 00:57:46,560

like five different bad things ended up down that tube and into this deep space in my abdominal area

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00:57:46,560 --> 00:57:52,960

and that landed me in the hospital for seven days with some really a really heavy concoction of

546

00:57:54,960 --> 00:58:01,280

you know antibiotics to to get me through and kill off what had all landed in there

547

00:58:02,800 --> 00:58:06,960

and they didn't know what was wrong with me at the time because i was kind of a little i was a

548

00:58:06,960 --> 00:58:12,080

little bit hallucinating from being just so sick just really the sickest i've ever been

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00:58:12,080 --> 00:58:17,200

and i ended up they stroke coded me initially because they thought i might be having a stroke

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00:58:17,200 --> 00:58:22,480

then they spinal topped me the next day so i was just like a pin cushion through this whole thing

551

00:58:24,000 --> 00:58:29,200

and i say all that that's though i mean that that kind of ends the year of treatment and then i

552

00:58:29,200 --> 00:58:33,920

spent six months on light duty just recovering and trying to get my strength back so i could come

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00:58:33,920 --> 00:58:39,360

back to the job you know i say all that it's really you know a bad experience there's people

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00:58:39,360 --> 00:58:43,760

that have been through a lot worse than me people that have been through less but that was my story

555

00:58:43,760 --> 00:58:52,960

and it was suffering if if when i tell people what was it you you think you know what pain is

556

00:58:52,960 --> 00:58:57,680

you don't unless you've been through something like that you've never suffered before because

557

00:58:57,680 --> 00:59:02,880

you've never got you don't get a break you're just in pain all the time you feel like crap the whole

558

00:59:02,880 --> 00:59:09,840

time you don't you know you can't eat anything you eat is it doesn't taste right because of the chemo

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00:59:09,840 --> 00:59:17,360

drugs everything tastes like metal because of the metal chemotherapy based treatments

560

00:59:19,840 --> 00:59:24,800

but it but honestly and here here's the here's the here's a light at the end of the tunnel with all

561

00:59:24,800 --> 00:59:30,400

that the light at the end of the tunnel is i think for me personally i didn't realize that

562

00:59:30,400 --> 00:59:36,880

is i think for me personally i didn't realize how good life was like how much i take for granted

563

00:59:36,880 --> 00:59:43,760

all the time the just waking up every day and getting to eat and having a roof over your head

564

00:59:43,760 --> 00:59:50,240

and getting to go do things and people just they miss out on such the such important things in life

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00:59:50,240 --> 00:59:57,360

the simple things in life that are just amazing and it's every day if you just would pay attention

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00:59:57,360 --> 01:00:02,480

to these small things that happen if you have kids if your kids come up and give you a hug your day

567

01:00:02,480 --> 01:00:09,520

is amazing if you were able to eat and not have any you know any problems from the food and if you

568

01:00:09,520 --> 01:00:14,960

have the ability to go to work and make money you you're lucky you just don't know how lucky you

569

01:00:14,960 --> 01:00:22,160

really are put yourself in somebody's shoes who who doesn't have that or is going through a really

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01:00:22,160 --> 01:00:28,400

really unfortunate time in their life where they're sick and so i find myself one being proud to be a

571

01:00:28,400 --> 01:00:34,000

cancer survivor but two sad for the people that don't survive and have to endure all that pain

572

01:00:34,000 --> 01:00:41,840

only only for it to lead to death so i became and i'll pause here and i want to ask more questions

573

01:00:41,840 --> 01:00:48,720

but that's why i became so passionate about cancer prevention and finding solutions to fix these

574

01:00:48,720 --> 01:00:55,680

problems is because nobody should ever have to go through that that was the worst possible thing

575

01:00:55,680 --> 01:01:00,240

i've ever been through in my life i couldn't imagine it being any worse than it really was but

576

01:01:00,960 --> 01:01:07,040

again thankful for surviving the doctors the amazing friends and family and co-workers that

577

01:01:07,040 --> 01:01:12,240

supported me along the way like it's just it's like overwhelming when you really think about the fact

578

01:01:12,240 --> 01:01:17,840

that you get a second chance what are you going to do with that second chance and i decided to fix

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01:01:17,840 --> 01:01:25,760

these problems that i know are problems and i knew i could do that if i just applied myself and use

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01:01:25,760 --> 01:01:32,560

my passion and my motivation so again as you can see that that it is really near and dear to me

581

01:01:32,560 --> 01:01:41,680

that we fix these issues well firstly i mean i think it was so needed to hear all of the horrible

582

01:01:41,680 --> 01:01:47,200

things that happen because it really then reframes the reality of what a diagnosis would be if you

583

01:01:47,200 --> 01:01:53,440

don't you know then end up dying as well but um i just want to go back for one second was it am

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01:01:53,440 --> 01:01:59,120

i understanding right was it testicular cancer initially yes okay and did you ever do any kind

585

01:01:59,120 --> 01:02:04,080

of self-examination is that where you found the lump because i mean obviously there there is a way

586

01:02:04,640 --> 01:02:10,640

if we are fortunate enough and be you know overly familiar with our balls to actually notice that

587

01:02:10,640 --> 01:02:15,440

you know that can go from a somewhat easy you know removal and treatment all the way through

588

01:02:15,440 --> 01:02:21,760

to the nightmare that you're in jord yes yes and it you know obviously there's different things

589

01:02:21,760 --> 01:02:28,320

at play there's different types of germ cell tumors that you could get if you got testicular cancer

590

01:02:29,200 --> 01:02:35,280

uh and it's one area that actually we'll touch on for a second is this women are taught at really

591

01:02:35,280 --> 01:02:40,640

young ages to do self-breast exam and you know i have two daughters so i want them to know that

592

01:02:40,640 --> 01:02:46,320

information and they should be doing that right young boys aren't taught that and it's it's such

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01:02:46,320 --> 01:02:51,120

a disservice that you know i know it's it's a touchy topic or whatever but when you start

594

01:02:51,120 --> 01:02:54,960

you know i start bringing these things up in the fire station you know like the guys that are

595

01:02:54,960 --> 01:03:00,800

approaching 40 like hey you you're gonna have to go through a prostate exam and it's really not that

596

01:03:00,800 --> 01:03:06,400

bad if you really i mean it's uncomfortable nobody likes to do it but you shouldn't avoid it and if

597

01:03:06,400 --> 01:03:12,480

they give you an option out of it tell them no you want it because the the worst of the two is

598

01:03:12,480 --> 01:03:19,200

you get it and um you don't treat it right away like you said i mean with the self-exams are so

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01:03:19,200 --> 01:03:24,880

important and that's an education component that i think is equally important as having the right

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01:03:24,880 --> 01:03:29,520

screening set up for your department because from my experience about half of the people that have

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01:03:29,520 --> 01:03:33,200

come in through my office that have been diagnosed with cancer have taught have caught their own

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01:03:33,200 --> 01:03:41,120

cancer through self-examination self-examination um but yeah yeah that's that's it mine actually

603

01:03:41,120 --> 01:03:47,920

just been transparent here is my uh testicle was three times its normal size and it grew that fast

604

01:03:47,920 --> 01:03:54,640

and in just a few days crazy what about the self-talk i want to get to obviously what happened

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01:03:54,640 --> 01:03:59,600

next and all the initiatives that you're working on now but i've had a few guests on here that have

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01:03:59,600 --> 01:04:04,480

just been through absolute hell and there were times where they just wanted it to end and you

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01:04:04,480 --> 01:04:11,120

know contemplated just finishing it what was that self-talk that kept you going through this this

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01:04:11,120 --> 01:04:20,880

nightmare for an entire year i remember when i first started and i just i just put on my

609

01:04:20,880 --> 01:04:28,240

warrior face um i knew i had to go through this uh chemo class before i started chemo and i remember

610

01:04:28,240 --> 01:04:34,160

uh the doctor looking at me and saying are you ready and i said yeah i'm ready i mean what other

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01:04:34,160 --> 01:04:39,280

choice do i have i have to do this or i'm dead so it's it's pretty straightforward for me

612

01:04:40,560 --> 01:04:48,000

um i was really strong initially and i like to think i'm a tough tough guy but after

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01:04:48,000 --> 01:04:55,520

enough of the treatment it really really pushed me to a place that i've never been before

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01:04:55,520 --> 01:05:03,040

and i'll cycle back to uh the wrestling comment earlier i think there is a a level of

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01:05:06,000 --> 01:05:12,560

mental toughness that i've had from childhood and from firefighting and from wrestling and things

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01:05:12,560 --> 01:05:20,720

that i've done and i think that that along with having uh being having two little girls at home

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01:05:20,720 --> 01:05:27,040

at the time three and six months were my two daughters and you know my wife and all these

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01:05:27,040 --> 01:05:32,800

things that are one that i have to live for right um those are the things that carried me through

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01:05:32,800 --> 01:05:40,400

probably the hardest parts of that and i don't know i just i didn't have a choice i just had to

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01:05:40,400 --> 01:05:48,560

deal with it i had to tough it out i had to get through it um uh taking my own life was not an

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01:05:48,560 --> 01:05:54,400

option it's never been an option i don't care how bad life gets for me it's no it's not an option

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01:05:54,400 --> 01:06:00,720

it's just not not me i'll suffer the worst suffering um if it kills me then it kills me but

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01:06:01,520 --> 01:06:09,040

killing myself would not be an option for me i just had the uh former head of psychology for

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01:06:09,040 --> 01:06:14,880

the navy seals eric part around and it was interesting because he himself was shifting

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01:06:14,880 --> 01:06:23,520

away from the word trauma and um using the word struggles instead and the the observation he'd

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01:06:23,520 --> 01:06:29,920

made because i was talking about you know when we have things happen early in life if we are able

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01:06:29,920 --> 01:06:34,960

to process them work through and whatever it is i truly believe that becomes a superpower so it's

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01:06:34,960 --> 01:06:39,280

that post-traumatic growth it's that hope of in the mental health story that we really don't hear

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01:06:39,280 --> 01:06:44,800

very much it's very kind of you know sad violin at the moment um and he said he made a comment

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01:06:44,800 --> 01:06:52,640

basically that almost none you know he struggled to believe that that any candidate could come

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01:06:53,280 --> 01:07:00,800

into buds having never really endured struggles in their life and be successful in that selection

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01:07:00,800 --> 01:07:07,600

process and so when we hear now about your resilience and the ability to maintain a healthy

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01:07:07,600 --> 01:07:12,400

thought because it means suicide basically is suicide ideation comes when that brain is

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01:07:12,400 --> 01:07:18,240

breaking down whether that you know that miswiring begins so through all that suffering

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01:07:18,240 --> 01:07:21,840

i would argue that you know some things that happen when you're younger and i'm sure the

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01:07:21,840 --> 01:07:28,160

separation of your parents and the wrestling and other areas created that um repetition of

637

01:07:28,160 --> 01:07:32,400

overcoming struggle that then factored later in life when you were fighting for your own life

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01:07:32,400 --> 01:07:41,520

absolutely yep i do i do agree with that it it it's it factors into that and so many other things

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01:07:41,520 --> 01:07:49,680

um i just it it's hard to explain but it was one of those things that probably the hardest

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01:07:49,680 --> 01:07:55,120

points in my treatment when i was the sickest i was just curled up into a ball on my bed

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01:07:55,120 --> 01:08:02,480

i couldn't move it hurt to move um there weren't enough pain medicines in the world that would

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01:08:02,480 --> 01:08:12,080

would treat the pain that i was in um and the as i mentioned going to the hospital um my wife uh

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01:08:12,080 --> 01:08:17,840

recapped this for me recently actually uh when i went in for the the first round of pulmonary

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01:08:17,840 --> 01:08:25,280

embolisms um and i don't know where the pains generated in that in that type of scenario but

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01:08:25,280 --> 01:08:30,320

they dumped everything on me they cut me off because i'd had too much and my respiratory

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01:08:30,320 --> 01:08:35,760

drive is starting to slow down but uh that's a whole another animal right there you know we

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01:08:35,760 --> 01:08:41,840

treat we're treating i got treated with a morphine on the on the road trip over there in the ambulance

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01:08:41,840 --> 01:08:50,880

then uh delotted at the hospital then eventually fentanyl which was short-lived um and when the

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01:08:50,880 --> 01:08:57,200

pain's that bad and you can't you can't touch it you just have to wear it and you know i never

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01:08:57,200 --> 01:09:01,360

never heard that comment about the navy seals talking about struggles but it makes sense you

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01:09:01,360 --> 01:09:07,680

know and i think um some people wear those struggles easier than others others don't and

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01:09:07,680 --> 01:09:13,840

that's okay i think everybody's individual but my whole life literally prepared me to endure that

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01:09:13,840 --> 01:09:25,360

moment uh at 33 years old um i think just being a firefighter a bruiser of a kid and uh it yeah and

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01:09:25,360 --> 01:09:31,760

i got me through it just glad i'm i'm glad i'm done with it and then ackham wood doesn't ever happen

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01:09:31,760 --> 01:09:39,120

again uh yeah certainly agree with you that there's life life trains us for upcoming events for sure

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01:09:40,880 --> 01:09:44,640

while we're on the conversation of pharmaceuticals you mentioned about your daughter

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01:09:44,640 --> 01:09:51,120

and her seizures i had a woman on about a year ago now page figgy and her daughter was charlotte and

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01:09:51,120 --> 01:09:57,120

if you ever look into the kind of cbd conversation there's a story charlotte's web um and that is

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01:09:57,120 --> 01:10:02,480

charlotte page's daughter and she was born she was a twin born and then very early on they noticed

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01:10:02,480 --> 01:10:07,120

she was different developmentally and she started having seizures and the seizures got more and more

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01:10:07,120 --> 01:10:15,600

acute to the point where i think she was about a year and a half old um she was seizing for 29

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01:10:15,600 --> 01:10:21,280

minutes having a one minute post-exile period and then seizing for 29 minutes again so we're talking

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01:10:21,280 --> 01:10:27,040

about you know hospice palliative care by this point and she had tried all the latest supposed

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01:10:27,040 --> 01:10:32,880

wonder drugs and all the you know the pharmaceutical side and she went the other way to cbd and

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01:10:32,880 --> 01:10:38,640

literally found a a company that would formulate um a hemp kind of cocktail for her and they put

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01:10:38,640 --> 01:10:45,760

it in her stomach tube and immediately the seizures started diminishing and page went from hospice

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01:10:45,760 --> 01:10:51,280

through living nine more years and then ultimately she passed away from febrile seizures from covid

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01:10:52,000 --> 01:10:57,280

about two or three years ago now but you know massively extended the lifespan and she was a

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01:10:57,280 --> 01:11:02,800

healthy little girl up to that point so um what has been your experiences with that because i've

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01:11:02,800 --> 01:11:07,360

had patients you know numerous times as a paramedic that have been on all kinds of meds and they just

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01:11:07,360 --> 01:11:12,320

didn't just didn't work they didn't change anything but they turned them into a zombie when they

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01:11:12,320 --> 01:11:16,640

weren't seizing um what have been your experience with that i mean is there anything that you found

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01:11:16,640 --> 01:11:21,360

on the pharmaceutical side or have you looked on the plant medicine side well ultimately ended up

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01:11:21,360 --> 01:11:28,240

being is the uh the pharmaceutical medicine is what has been successful in treating my daughter's

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01:11:28,240 --> 01:11:36,880

seizures uh so my daughter um has a rare disease called sturgweber syndrome um it's kind of a three

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01:11:36,880 --> 01:11:43,360

things that are the makeup of that syndrome um they're born with a port wine birthmark um usually

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01:11:43,360 --> 01:11:49,760

on their face usually the ones that are affected the most is when it covers the eye um or in the

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01:11:49,760 --> 01:11:56,720

upper portion of the cheek and the more the more there is and basically what that the birthmark is

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01:11:56,720 --> 01:12:02,240

replicated on the back of the brain on the opposite side and it's it's like a calcification in the

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01:12:02,240 --> 01:12:11,840

brain the same associated eye that's affected by the port wine birthmark also has um i'm drawing

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01:12:11,840 --> 01:12:17,920

a blank right now um uh usually there's there's eye pressure issue and i'll think of the name here

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01:12:17,920 --> 01:12:24,240

in a second um glaucoma glaucoma thank you glaucoma and then the birthmark so those are the kind of

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01:12:24,240 --> 01:12:30,400

three the three things that that are there so as i mentioned i was trying to get my daughter

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01:12:30,400 --> 01:12:40,000

um working all this time to take my daughter out um to a specialist out of maryland um and it would

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01:12:40,000 --> 01:12:46,640

end up being the first trial study for what is now uh the first fda approved version of cbd

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01:12:47,280 --> 01:12:54,160

now what i can tell you is it didn't work for her um it wasn't a one-size-fits-all so

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01:12:54,160 --> 01:13:00,960

uh one thing i do remember from early on is she was on like kepra and some like lower level um

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01:13:00,960 --> 01:13:08,800

forms of um you know anti-seizure medicine one of them was like an alcohol base which is really

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01:13:08,800 --> 01:13:15,440

common i'm and i couldn't think of the name of it right now but um we had to get her off that

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01:13:15,440 --> 01:13:21,280

you know that wasn't going to be good for a long term uh this is i said the cbd didn't work but we

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01:13:21,280 --> 01:13:26,800

we pulled out all the stops and we got invested into he's the last she was the last candidate to

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01:13:26,800 --> 01:13:34,880

get involved or participant to be involved in this uh this trial study um and as we were trying to

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01:13:34,880 --> 01:13:41,280

titrate her off of her normal meds with the cbd oil her seizures picked up and got worse um you

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01:13:41,280 --> 01:13:48,720

know emergency medicine we treated her with the diazepam the rectal valium several times throughout

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01:13:48,720 --> 01:13:55,840

she started seizing seizing when she was six weeks old um and they were more focal seizures not not

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01:13:55,840 --> 01:14:02,960

full body but um again we we kept kept with it with the neurologist and finding different uh

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01:14:02,960 --> 01:14:08,080

trying different anti-seizure medicines and now we have what we have her on you know definitely

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01:14:08,080 --> 01:14:12,960

knock on wood has been working with her for very well she hasn't had a seizure in quite some time

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01:14:13,680 --> 01:14:18,080

but it's not like people ask me all the time hey you know will she be able to drive someday or

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01:14:18,080 --> 01:14:23,520

will these averages go away and the answer unfortunately is no because it's part of the

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01:14:23,520 --> 01:14:29,840

syndrome with the calcification in the brain and the neurological dysfunction in the brain it's

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01:14:30,400 --> 01:14:37,360

not correctable um completely but it's live you can live with it for a long time and um you can

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01:14:37,360 --> 01:14:44,000

also be seizure free for a really long time so sad to hear about charlotte passing away and i do

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01:14:44,000 --> 01:14:50,160

remember her story very well i watched a documentary on that um and i think it's magical for a lot of

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01:14:50,160 --> 01:14:56,480

kids and a lot of people it just isn't it's there's no it's not the miracle drug for everybody

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01:14:57,200 --> 01:15:01,600

in my opinion yeah no and that's what page says as well i mean it's just knowing i think it's even

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01:15:01,600 --> 01:15:06,400

with the mental health conversation in nutrition conversation strength and conditioning conversation

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01:15:06,400 --> 01:15:11,680

is understanding what tools are in the toolbox and if plant medicine has been vilified for so

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01:15:11,680 --> 01:15:16,960

many years it may work better than other things for some people and as you said it might be the

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01:15:16,960 --> 01:15:23,360

pharmacy when i don't demonize drugs you know some drugs have a powerful application even the ones

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01:15:23,360 --> 01:15:28,240

in our drug boxes medics i mean they're miracle drugs in my opinion some of those but you know

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01:15:28,240 --> 01:15:34,160

it's understanding that if we bring in the plant medicine into the toolbox as well you've only

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01:15:34,160 --> 01:15:40,320

given parents and you know and children alike more opportunities to find whatever their unique fit

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01:15:40,320 --> 01:15:48,880

is going to be absolutely yep all right so you have now come out the back end of your own you

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01:15:48,880 --> 01:15:56,400

know journey through cancer you've got this new you know perspective on life how does that now

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01:15:56,400 --> 01:16:00,880

affect the way that you view the fire service we touched on it early as far as some of the issues

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01:16:00,880 --> 01:16:07,440

that we are still doing wrong that we haven't evolved what was your perspective now on elements

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01:16:07,440 --> 01:16:13,120

when it came to you know the actual gear that we wear and pfas and the exposures and the diesel

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01:16:13,120 --> 01:16:18,320

fumes and all the things that we've been talking about but a lot of us still haven't taken seriously

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01:16:20,880 --> 01:16:27,840

yeah uh that's a pretty that's a that's a loaded question um gosh there you know i spent five years

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01:16:27,840 --> 01:16:34,880

working in this field uh dedicated as a in an administrative position and i remember early on

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01:16:34,880 --> 01:16:41,120

thinking gosh you know how bad is this problem and the more i read the more more i got frustrated

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01:16:41,120 --> 01:16:47,600

the more i more i realized that we've been doing things wrong for a long time and the the current

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01:16:47,600 --> 01:16:56,320

fire service the modern day's fire service has inherited a lot of problems um and i think let

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01:16:56,320 --> 01:17:05,360

me start here uh the cultural issue is is one of those things that jumps out of me is one of those

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01:17:05,360 --> 01:17:11,920

things that's fixable but we as firefighters have to own it we have to fix it um if we're going to

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01:17:11,920 --> 01:17:17,440

fix it it means we have to have buy-in it means everybody has to be on the same page and i remember

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01:17:17,440 --> 01:17:22,640

when i you know got started in this whole cancer awareness and prevention program somebody asked me

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01:17:22,640 --> 01:17:27,120

says kyle what what does cancer awareness prevention mean to you and what what is the program

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01:17:28,400 --> 01:17:32,480

and i said well i started thinking then i wasn't really putting a lot of thought into it well it's

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01:17:32,480 --> 01:17:41,200

you know it's policy and sog changes supported by infrastructure changes um it's a you know a social

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01:17:41,200 --> 01:17:46,560

marketing campaign to fix this problem and all these different things and then i stopped and

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01:17:46,560 --> 01:17:51,520

really thought about it and i says you know what it is it's all of us it's never one person it's

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01:17:51,520 --> 01:17:57,360

not the person who's the the person in the position who's running it it's never one person it's

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01:17:57,360 --> 01:18:03,920

everybody and it only works if we all believe in it so we really i really think that we one one of

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01:18:03,920 --> 01:18:08,480

the things i looked at was how do we break down these barriers but we have to draw emotional

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01:18:08,480 --> 01:18:13,680

impact you know i tell my story and i shared my story today with you about my cancer um it's

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01:18:13,680 --> 01:18:19,040

pretty personal right not everybody wants to share their story but i do it in hopes that people will

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01:18:19,040 --> 01:18:25,680

learn from it and and it will impact them emotionally to see the the the greatest

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01:18:27,040 --> 01:18:32,000

the loss right and here's one of the things that i've realized when i share and i say i've lost a

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01:18:32,000 --> 01:18:39,360

year and a half of my career the bigger impact is i lost a year and a half of my my kids and my wife

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01:18:40,240 --> 01:18:46,800

and i said i i feel like i stepped into a time machine and i fast forwarded a year and a half

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01:18:46,800 --> 01:18:54,000

and when i woke up my daughter that was six months old is now two years old and it just completely

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01:18:55,760 --> 01:19:06,640

it changes it changed me and i i just that's that's the impact that's the loss so if we can make

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01:19:06,640 --> 01:19:12,880

decisions right now today that can prevent that i mean think about that nobody wants that to happen

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01:19:12,880 --> 01:19:20,960

to themselves it just it's brutal um so that cultural component of this is really important

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01:19:20,960 --> 01:19:27,360

and it has to be i think the starting point is that people have to understand that it all starts

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01:19:27,360 --> 01:19:33,440

with me it all starts with me the changes within me then there's the parts that i would like to

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01:19:33,440 --> 01:19:40,800

get into about we know exposures are bad right and most departments a lot of departments there's

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01:19:40,800 --> 01:19:45,920

still some that aren't have caught on to the fact that we need to do things like post-fire crust

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01:19:45,920 --> 01:19:52,320

decontamination we need to wash our gear better we need to do all the personal decontamination

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01:19:52,320 --> 01:19:57,200

components the wipes the showering at the station and we need to prioritize those things

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01:19:58,240 --> 01:20:02,800

and that's the on-scene stuff right and then there's those things that are a little more subtle

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01:20:02,800 --> 01:20:10,640

you know the diesel exhaust extraction systems in the station you know um having that i i'd say

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01:20:11,440 --> 01:20:18,240

most people think that death for some reason magically makes diesel exhaust healthier for us

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01:20:18,800 --> 01:20:26,400

and i argue that that's not true um you know and obviously we know that there's some concerns there

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01:20:26,400 --> 01:20:31,280

so you got it you got to do those things you got to do the small things every day that you know

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01:20:31,280 --> 01:20:37,360

keep those things from factoring and adding up on us and then the the added you know the bigger

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01:20:37,920 --> 01:20:43,040

the bigger things need to happen too and it starts with the leader at the station it starts with the

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01:20:43,040 --> 01:20:48,880

captains the the biggest influence in the fire service as we know is our fire captains they run

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01:20:48,880 --> 01:20:56,720

the company and they have the ability to firmly say that we need to do these things and personally

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01:20:56,720 --> 01:21:01,840

i'm seeing them not happen now that i'm back in into operations as a captain i'm not seeing them

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01:21:01,840 --> 01:21:07,760

happen and people aren't taking them serious so we have things at our fingertips right but the

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01:21:07,760 --> 01:21:12,560

firefighters unfortunately i'm one of them and i'm guilty of some of these things but we like to

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01:21:12,560 --> 01:21:18,400

complain and we like to complain that these things don't happen but were we really doing them are we

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01:21:18,400 --> 01:21:25,840

taking them serious are we considering them are they in our minds although they we keep the

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01:21:25,840 --> 01:21:31,520

information comes out over and over and over again about the same things right we have these

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01:21:31,520 --> 01:21:35,200

stand downs in january january's dedicated firefighter cancer awareness but how many

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01:21:35,200 --> 01:21:39,840

people are getting on their computer and reading the information how many captains are sitting down

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01:21:39,840 --> 01:21:45,360

with their crew and making sure that they're doing how many chief officers are ensuring that

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01:21:45,360 --> 01:21:50,640

decon gets set up at every fire right this is these are the changes that have to happen until

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01:21:50,640 --> 01:21:56,560

they do unfortunately we're going to continue to see the numbers rise and i hate to say that but

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01:21:56,560 --> 01:22:02,000

it's true and for many departments that haven't had a cancer case and maybe think it's not going

774

01:22:02,000 --> 01:22:09,760

to happen sorry but it's just a matter of time the odds are against us in so many ways so those are

775

01:22:09,760 --> 01:22:16,960

our big areas i think we need to continue to um the death by a thousand cuts approach we need to

776

01:22:16,960 --> 01:22:23,840

continue to drive that home we need people out there that have have gone through really bad form

777

01:22:23,840 --> 01:22:29,360

you know have gone through cancer they're the best spokesperson spokespeople are the firefighters

778

01:22:29,360 --> 01:22:35,600

that are cancer survivors they could stand up in front of people have instant credibility and talk

779

01:22:35,600 --> 01:22:41,120

to them like people and tell them literally how bad it is and that you don't want this and that

780

01:22:41,120 --> 01:22:50,000

there's things you can do every day to to help keep this from happening uh ppe pfos

781

01:22:52,160 --> 01:22:59,440

gosh well ppe we need to do a better job of teaching our people about ppe most people most

782

01:22:59,440 --> 01:23:06,960

firefighters probably don't know a whole lot about nfpa 1970 and 1851 and the the criteria in there

783

01:23:06,960 --> 01:23:13,600

and here in the state of california 1851 is now state law so we're required to do those things

784

01:23:14,640 --> 01:23:19,040

like a preliminary exposure reduction and those different things that need to happen

785

01:23:21,760 --> 01:23:27,840

you know and then the pp itself and we get into pfos i mean pfos is a really complicated topic

786

01:23:28,400 --> 01:23:34,560

i've done a very deep dive into it yes it's in our gear yes it's in our station wear is it in all of

787

01:23:34,560 --> 01:23:40,480

it no it's in some of it probably most of it it's in a lot of things it's in pizza boxes it's in

788

01:23:40,480 --> 01:23:46,320

all this not to diminish with the the how bad it is it's bad it's a class of chemicals that

789

01:23:47,280 --> 01:23:52,480

is as an endocrine disruptor an immune suppressor and the way i frame it is you know you you
as

790

01:23:52,480 --> 01:23:59,120

firefighters um that essentially eliminates your body armor for when you do get exposed to those

791

01:23:59,120 --> 01:24:05,680

really bad chemicals so what can we do better there well i mean for one um you know i just
think that

792

01:24:05,680 --> 01:24:09,600

we don't need to wear our gear all the time you know and there's nuisance calls that we need to

793

01:24:09,600 --> 01:24:16,640

evaluate um you know hospital ringing alarms for example that you know you've probably
looked back

794

01:24:16,640 --> 01:24:22,160

historically in the records and seen that there's never there's been very few actual responses for

795

01:24:22,160 --> 01:24:27,520

to some of these nuisance ringing alarms maybe surface street traffic accidents things like that

796

01:24:27,520 --> 01:24:32,400

that i've had discussions about so should we be in structure gear for those or can we get maybe

797

01:24:33,120 --> 01:24:38,880

uh a more tactical form of equipment or ppe that people wear that's pfos free that you know

798

01:24:39,440 --> 01:24:44,080

but we're not going to completely be able to eliminate this hazard i mean it's if it's

799

01:24:44,080 --> 01:24:49,280

everywhere it's everywhere but we do need to do things and we do know that there are things out

800

01:24:49,280 --> 01:24:54,800

there that are working to help eliminate at least certain forms of pfos in the blood the study that

801

01:24:54,800 --> 01:25:03,200

came out of australia in regards to blood and plasma donation excuse me that's being replicated

802

01:25:03,200 --> 01:25:12,880

in in arizona um all very important things that need to be looked at and done um and in low-hanging

803

01:25:12,880 --> 01:25:20,320

fruit of of pfos is you know uh essential uh concepts for essential use take a look at that

804

01:25:20,320 --> 01:25:25,920

you know is it is it essential is it non-essential or is it substitutable find those find it in one

805

01:25:25,920 --> 01:25:30,400

of those three categories and and make recommendations to your department on based on that

806

01:25:31,840 --> 01:25:37,600

um let's do you want to talk about sleep these guys i'm gonna keep you the microphone i've got

807

01:25:37,600 --> 01:25:44,640

some things i'll ask after you are done but please lead us through these lists okay um you know so

808

01:25:44,640 --> 01:25:48,560

i've kind of bounced around a little bit but when i started really looking at the exposure side of

809

01:25:48,560 --> 01:25:53,680

things i started just basically thinking in terms of the fire scene back to the fire station and

810

01:25:53,680 --> 01:25:58,160

everything in between and that's how i started to work on eliminating exposure and that's how i

811

01:25:58,160 --> 01:26:06,720

wrote policies and um that's how i got infrastructure things and advocated for better things like wipes

812

01:26:06,720 --> 01:26:14,720

and soaps and different cleaning supplies for decontamination developed a decontamination kit

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01:26:14,720 --> 01:26:21,360

for uh all of our apparatus including our reserve so that we can decon appropriately started

814

01:26:21,360 --> 01:26:28,480

looking more into uh extractors that were nfp 1851 compliant to meet that criteria

815

01:26:29,200 --> 01:26:33,200

uh making it more accessible to firefighters so they're all at there at every station in the

816

01:26:33,200 --> 01:26:39,200

department i work for um and also looking at things that from the exposure side how do we track these

817

01:26:39,200 --> 01:26:44,960

so that if there's an issue with workers compensation because cancer is presumptive in california you

818

01:26:44,960 --> 01:26:49,760

know how do we make sure the firefighters are being taken care of uh so those are all things

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01:26:49,760 --> 01:26:56,720

and i'm just kind of highlighting them and just bumping on them quickly um uh but let's i'm gonna

820

01:26:56,720 --> 01:27:03,520

move over into sleep for a little bit so obviously sleep disruption is is very bad and i'll tell you

821

01:27:03,520 --> 01:27:10,080

i'll tell you one like aha moment i had is when i was in a a meeting for a research study we're

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01:27:10,080 --> 01:27:15,200

involved with here with locally with the salk institute and ucst for the healthy heroes study

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01:27:17,360 --> 01:27:21,520

which was in a sleep study it was actually more about time restricted eating and how maybe that

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01:27:21,520 --> 01:27:28,160

could improve firefighters health um and there was discussion about how that did actually improve

825

01:27:28,160 --> 01:27:35,840

and make better sleep um but the actual circadian rhythm disruption component was really fascinating

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01:27:35,840 --> 01:27:40,960

and learning more about sleep and i am by no means an expert in that area but one aha moment i had

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01:27:40,960 --> 01:27:46,960

is when i was in this meeting and we were talking and one of the researchers brought up the fact

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01:27:46,960 --> 01:27:52,560

that shift workers were considered considered a class two or group to be possibly carcinogenic

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01:27:52,560 --> 01:27:58,720

a classification through iarq international agency for research on cancer and i was like what do you

830

01:27:58,720 --> 01:28:03,440

mean like i hadn't read that anywhere didn't know that and i should i feel like i should have known

831

01:28:03,440 --> 01:28:10,240

that and in the majority of what i was able to figure out about that that grouping and why

832

01:28:10,240 --> 01:28:14,960

shift workers were brought into that grouping was the sleep disruption component and i said well

833

01:28:14,960 --> 01:28:20,480

we're shift workers firefighters are shift workers this is not good and then that was several years

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01:28:20,480 --> 01:28:28,720

back and in fact then july of 2022 the firefighter occupational exposure was reclassified from group

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01:28:28,720 --> 01:28:36,000

to be possibly carcinogenic to group one one which was a known carcinogen and then it was really clear

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01:28:36,000 --> 01:28:42,720

to me that there's a toxic soup of of things the firefighters deal with the the the fire ground

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01:28:42,720 --> 01:28:49,600

exposures the the sleep disruption and then so on there's more there's a lot of things to this and

838

01:28:49,600 --> 01:28:56,000

now you know the new challenges of how do you combat lithium ion and the pfos and those types

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01:28:56,000 --> 01:29:04,320

of hot topics so again it's a lot it's a lot of information and it's it's a big challenge all the

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01:29:04,320 --> 01:29:13,360

way around i've i've touched on all of them all of them have many many many details but i do think

841

01:29:13,360 --> 01:29:18,960

as a whole the fire service service is getting better but there's not just one thing that is

842

01:29:18,960 --> 01:29:25,920

involved here it's a lot of things let me let me go touch back into the sleep so one of the things

843

01:29:25,920 --> 01:29:32,080

i have a problem with is so sleep hygiene right we we as firefighters don't sleep good at work

844

01:29:32,080 --> 01:29:38,320

we know that's a problem so what do we do when we go home well i'm guilty of this and i used to

845

01:29:38,320 --> 01:29:43,920

fall asleep by drinking a couple cocktails right well come to find out the falling asleep drinking

846

01:29:43,920 --> 01:29:50,960

a couple cocktails actually reduces the amount of REM sleep you get so we we can't just you know

847

01:29:50,960 --> 01:29:58,800

complain about these things affecting us and and then not go home and not have uh just be disciplined

848

01:29:58,800 --> 01:30:03,760

enough to do these things appropriately you know if you know you don't sleep good at work then you

849

01:30:03,760 --> 01:30:08,640

need to find time to sleep good at home now that's not the answer to the whole problem but that is

850

01:30:08,640 --> 01:30:13,280

part of the issue i have with it is we can't just complain about something we actually have to do

851

01:30:13,280 --> 01:30:20,880

something ourselves within our own power to fix it you know having a good nighttime routine

852

01:30:20,880 --> 01:30:25,360

having a good you know get off your your mobile devices there's all those things you could go

853

01:30:25,360 --> 01:30:32,960

deep into the details of it all but those are all all big problems with the sleep side of things

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01:30:34,000 --> 01:30:38,880

and then as a department we have to start looking and start thinking outside of the box some of the

855

01:30:38,880 --> 01:30:44,720

things i've heard that some organizations are starting to do this mainly this first part is

856

01:30:44,720 --> 01:30:52,000

mainly ambulances are starting to give them actual rest periods at night and taking them off and

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01:30:52,000 --> 01:30:56,720

taking them out of service and allowing them some time to sleep that's a step in the right direction

858

01:30:57,920 --> 01:31:01,920

shift change maybe shift change should be at a different time i've heard some departments are

859

01:31:01,920 --> 01:31:10,400

starting to do a 12 noon shift change and what that noon shift change might do is allow you time

860

01:31:10,400 --> 01:31:15,120

to sleep in if you're on duty if you had a bad night maybe you get to sleep in a little bit

861

01:31:15,680 --> 01:31:21,040

when you go home you're guaranteed at least the ability to go to sleep at night and not have to

862

01:31:21,040 --> 01:31:27,040

wake up early in the morning it's just a thought now it's not going to solve all the problems let

863

01:31:27,040 --> 01:31:33,360

me just say this this is like this stands out to me the most in all this stuff as firefighters

864

01:31:33,360 --> 01:31:38,960

and you're not going to like most firefighters are not going to like this but really to fix the

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01:31:38,960 --> 01:31:47,120

problem in my mind the biggest part of this is you need more fire stations you need to fill in more

866

01:31:47,120 --> 01:31:53,440

gaps in the district you need more firefighters you need more units running calls out there to

867

01:31:53,440 --> 01:31:58,080

start to reduce the amount of call volume that each individual firefighter responds to

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01:31:58,960 --> 01:32:03,440

to start to eliminate some of those wakeups we're all going to have to share it we're all going to

869

01:32:03,440 --> 01:32:11,760

have to wear it but more stations more firefighters right those resources have to if you're in a fire

870

01:32:11,760 --> 01:32:18,240

department that hasn't grown much in the last five to ten years think about how much your population

871

01:32:18,240 --> 01:32:24,640

has grown and think about how much run call call volume has gone up if you don't start adding to

872

01:32:24,640 --> 01:32:29,920

reduce that effect on the membership they're just they're just running all those calls i don't where's

873

01:32:29,920 --> 01:32:34,640

in a slow station left in my department they're all gone they used to be there used to be slow

874

01:32:34,640 --> 01:32:38,880

stations right and those are the ones that young guys didn't want to work at because they wanted

875

01:32:38,880 --> 01:32:46,000

to be where the action was but but now they're all somewhat busy and most most of them are so

876

01:32:46,000 --> 01:32:50,640

you have to combat that side of it too because you are a firefighter you start to age in the fire

877

01:32:50,640 --> 01:32:58,560

service you're you're you're not wanting to get up and run 15 calls a day and five after midnight

878

01:32:58,560 --> 01:33:06,160

your body just can't endure that for 30 years so i i'm just kind of throwing a bunch of stuff all

879

01:33:06,160 --> 01:33:11,680

out at once but those there's so many areas that if you even mentioned it i could probably focus

880

01:33:11,680 --> 01:33:18,800

in on it more but it's it's a complicated problem there are a lot of just different sides to it

881

01:33:18,800 --> 01:33:23,440

different things that are problematic and there are solutions to some of these and some of them

882

01:33:23,440 --> 01:33:30,240

are still building the airplane in the air and trying to figure out how to fix it so i'll pause

883

01:33:30,240 --> 01:33:37,360

there well one one area you didn't mention when it came to sleep which people listen to this podcast

884

01:33:37,360 --> 01:33:42,080

i've been preaching for seven years now and this is you know when you're talking about it's on us

885

01:33:42,080 --> 01:33:48,640

this is the problem that we have there's so many of us still believe fairy tales unicorns and

886

01:33:48,640 --> 01:33:53,360

rainbows and the fact that firefighters have the best shift in the world and we only work 10 days

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01:33:53,360 --> 01:33:59,760

a month when you actually break it down we don't work one day on two days off for example we work

888

01:33:59,760 --> 01:34:06,000

three day three eight hour days crammed together so we work three days on one day off or 30 days a

889

01:34:06,000 --> 01:34:10,640

month so this is the first thing we need to debunk this fallacy that we have this amazing

890

01:34:10,640 --> 01:34:17,200

schedule because we fucking don't 56 hours a week before mandatory overtime is not a dream schedule

891

01:34:18,160 --> 01:34:24,320

secondly and i've had two great um guests one um chief hubert ruder chief of pointon beach who

892

01:34:24,320 --> 01:34:32,080

went to 2472s um about a year ago now and then dixon phillips union leader in pasco county here

893

01:34:32,080 --> 01:34:36,880

in florida they are about to go to that system in a couple years so you got one that's made it

894

01:34:36,880 --> 01:34:42,720

happen already one that's kind of ramping up to do it but both of them i'd love to say that their

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01:34:42,720 --> 01:34:46,640

departments are just like we love our firefighters so much we're going to change it because of their

896

01:34:46,640 --> 01:34:51,920

mental health and their physical health but it was money they realized that they were bleeding money

897

01:34:51,920 --> 01:34:58,160

on overtime and all these other things and going to a healthier shift saves money hand over fist

898

01:34:58,160 --> 01:35:02,960

so anyone can look at those two episodes and listen to the why behind it and what's beautiful

899

01:35:02,960 --> 01:35:08,160

is the dominoes are falling here in florida finally they are falling and now the departments

900

01:35:08,160 --> 01:35:13,280

around are going well shit if they go to that department and we're struggling to hire now how

901

01:35:13,280 --> 01:35:17,760

the hell are we going to hire when these other departments are doing it better than us they

902

01:35:17,760 --> 01:35:23,040

become what they call destination departments the other kind of kick back to that is like oh well

903

01:35:23,040 --> 01:35:27,200

you know but how are we going to hire we don't have enough people now circling back to what you

904

01:35:27,200 --> 01:35:33,520

and i said these young candidates now see the work week is a lot more healthy you know what i think

905

01:35:33,520 --> 01:35:37,840

i am going to be a firefighter and gainesville has seen that here where the recruitment line has

906

01:35:37,840 --> 01:35:44,080

started to line up outside the door again pascoe boynton so that's the other part and i agree and

907

01:35:44,080 --> 01:35:49,360

it needs to be a double-pronged attack you need to educate people from the front door about sleep

908

01:35:49,360 --> 01:35:54,880

hygiene i talk about this all the time if you get an extra 24 hours between two shifts which is what

909

01:35:54,880 --> 01:35:59,600

we need to do it just bring it to a 42-hour work week basically the same as all the people that

910

01:35:59,600 --> 01:36:04,320

make decisions that firefighters should not get more time off they work 40 hours so you're bringing

911

01:36:04,320 --> 01:36:12,080

it down to their their work week but then you educate them look go hang drywall go dig you know

912

01:36:12,080 --> 01:36:16,800

be landscapers whatever it is if you want extra money go do it but don't take a night shift at

913

01:36:16,800 --> 01:36:22,800

er don't work for a private ambulance company understand that you need to be in your bed and

914

01:36:22,800 --> 01:36:27,120

then understand the sleep hygiene and the acute effects of sleep deprivation the chronic effects

915

01:36:27,120 --> 01:36:33,680

of sleep deprivation now you've put the onus on the individual and the employer simultaneously

916

01:36:33,680 --> 01:36:39,040

so i think that's a big part of the conversation but we have this i kind of called us called the

917

01:36:39,040 --> 01:36:44,720

fire service out a while ago i'm like we're so courageous in a fire yet such giant pussies when

918

01:36:44,720 --> 01:36:49,520

it comes to advocating for our own health and more time with our families and it's about time that

919

01:36:49,520 --> 01:36:54,880

we look in the mirror and say why the fuck do i not deserve to be at home with my children and

920

01:36:54,880 --> 01:37:00,000

my wife or my husband the same amount of time that the average civilian that i protect does

921

01:37:00,720 --> 01:37:05,680

so this is i think a real kind of you know point now if we want to affect the mental health and

922

01:37:05,680 --> 01:37:10,880

the cancer and the obesity and the hormonal disruption that's got half of our men on trt

923

01:37:10,880 --> 01:37:16,080

and our women on the same then we have to bring this into the equation if we're going to talk

924

01:37:16,080 --> 01:37:22,640

about dcon and pfas if we're going to talk about what we see in peer support we have to also talk

925

01:37:22,640 --> 01:37:27,040

about the work week so that's the one thing i would add to your your sleep conversation

926

01:37:28,080 --> 01:37:34,560

i like it i like it i think they're that's that that's an out of the box thought process that

927

01:37:34,560 --> 01:37:40,720

needs to happen and it makes sense right we we know that we need to sleep we need to make we need

928

01:37:40,720 --> 01:37:48,000

to find a better way to get sleep we need to take better care of our people so time will improve

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01:37:48,000 --> 01:37:55,360

this and it's been you know what it's been really rewarding to be a part of i can tell you

930

01:37:55,360 --> 01:38:02,320

i don't have all the answers i do think very logical try to keep my thought processes simple

931

01:38:02,960 --> 01:38:08,560

but if if uh if you're we're dealing with a recruitment problem there's a really good

932

01:38:08,560 --> 01:38:15,600

tool right there if you in your organization have a robust health and safety program that takes into

933

01:38:15,600 --> 01:38:21,440

account the sleeping component the shift changing of the shift maybe work cycles where there's

934

01:38:21,440 --> 01:38:27,040

mandatory breaks different things like that you're going to see a better recruitment you're going to

935

01:38:27,040 --> 01:38:31,520

improve the firefighters lives their outcomes we're going to start to reduce these numbers

936

01:38:31,520 --> 01:38:38,560

because they're there and the numbers don't lie and that's it learn from somebody who learned the

937

01:38:38,560 --> 01:38:44,560

hard way i i will tell you all day long i wish i could go back and change some of my my thought

938

01:38:44,560 --> 01:38:52,480

processes as a young aggressive firefighter but i still to this day um love the job i think it's

939

01:38:52,480 --> 01:38:58,320

amazing personally i love what we're able to do to help people but it's the people at the station

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01:38:58,320 --> 01:39:03,840

that matter the most going into the work is all about the guys you know and and if you're one of

941

01:39:03,840 --> 01:39:10,000

those people if that resonates with you then realize that we have to change we can't continue

942

01:39:10,000 --> 01:39:17,920

to ride this old fire tradition you know the hundred years unimpeded by progress thought

943

01:39:17,920 --> 01:39:24,240

process anymore you have to we have to start thinking of very innovative ways of fixing these

944

01:39:24,240 --> 01:39:30,400

problems and there's solutions out there somewhere in between all these discussions and all these

945

01:39:30,400 --> 01:39:37,680

questions and all these answers there's there's a there's a path forward and a way to fix it so

946

01:39:39,920 --> 01:39:46,080

one more area when it comes to dcon that i have observed you know i mean now we have a lot of

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01:39:46,080 --> 01:39:51,520

departments where you know like 50 60 percent of departments got five years on or less so these are

948

01:39:51,520 --> 01:39:58,320

young people coming on where a lot of these lessons are being learned now and you know it's it's some

949

01:39:58,320 --> 01:40:02,720

of the same ones that i see you know a year in they've already bought their leather helmet

950

01:40:02,720 --> 01:40:08,960

they've got the big old bushy mustache and they're all chiming in on the you know um clean cabs stop

951

01:40:08,960 --> 01:40:17,920

grabs bullshit that i hear banging around too so talk to me about ego and narcissism as an opposition

952

01:40:17,920 --> 01:40:23,520

to to progress because you know when it comes to for example leather radio straps i've got leather

953

01:40:23,520 --> 01:40:27,280

radio strap with a name on they're beautiful but when you learn about what leather does as far as

954

01:40:27,280 --> 01:40:32,880

its porous element and and being a sponge to carcinogens then you think well should i be a

955

01:40:32,880 --> 01:40:37,920

cunt my throat for you know ems call after ems call when i've just had it in a structure fire

956

01:40:37,920 --> 01:40:45,600

two shifts back you know so i also talk about the the the uh you know leather fire helmet the same

957

01:40:45,600 --> 01:40:51,600

thing and there's this real nauseating kind of ridiculing of the european helmet which is you

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01:40:51,600 --> 01:40:56,560

know easy to decon ergonomic light you know and as you were talking about trying to fight

959

01:40:56,560 --> 01:41:02,240

wildland fire in bunker gear that's kind of what we're doing now with that so where i see resistance

960

01:41:02,240 --> 01:41:07,680

to progress and thus preventing a lot of these needless deaths that we have in the fire service

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01:41:08,320 --> 01:41:14,800

our own ego is a part of it and and this is just through my eyes i see a lot of resistance and

962

01:41:14,800 --> 01:41:20,240

ignorance created even people by people that are being hired in a generation that now should know

963

01:41:20,240 --> 01:41:28,480

better yeah what's that saying about three years of mustache and a leather helmet you know big

964

01:41:28,480 --> 01:41:34,720

lifted truck you know when you talk to guys that have been in the fire service for any amount of

965

01:41:34,720 --> 01:41:39,600

time um and certainly there's guys have been doing this a lot longer than me and the guys those are

966

01:41:39,600 --> 01:41:45,360

the guys i look up to um i'll tell you this this is one really important thing i remember

967

01:41:46,480 --> 01:41:52,720

probably one of the best firefighters um most legendary figures in my department

968

01:41:53,920 --> 01:41:58,720

he was also the only firefighter who ever was a lead instructor at our academy and there was a

969

01:41:58,720 --> 01:42:06,640

very good reason for that he was really good at his job and really really well respected it wasn't

970

01:42:06,640 --> 01:42:11,520

until years later that i put something together i remember working a shift with him when i was on

971

01:42:11,520 --> 01:42:17,840

probation and i noticed how clean his helmet his leather helmet was it kept it very clean now

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01:42:17,840 --> 01:42:23,280

here's a guy who went to a lot of fires who fought a lot of fire again very well respected busy station

973

01:42:24,080 --> 01:42:31,840

a guy and uh i realized that he kept his helmet clean because that's what we were supposed to do

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01:42:31,840 --> 01:42:36,720

and you didn't need a dirty helmet to tell everybody else around you that you'd been to

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01:42:36,720 --> 01:42:45,520

a lot of fires they just knew right and i when i finally realized that i just is this again on

976

01:42:45,520 --> 01:42:52,240

like another aha moment like man that's so powerful for me in my mind that we can convey that to the

977

01:42:52,240 --> 01:42:57,680

younger generation you don't need to have a dirty helmet you don't need to have dirty gear

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01:42:57,680 --> 01:43:05,200

and this this concept of clean cabs stops grabs or whatever listen i had a captain in texas called

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01:43:05,200 --> 01:43:11,120

me one day he says i just wanted to ask you some questions about your fire apparatus

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01:43:11,120 --> 01:43:17,200

shoot go ahead he said yeah um it's my understanding you used to have the scbas in the seats

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01:43:17,200 --> 01:43:22,480

in the jump seats i said yes sir he says do you know why i found out that you don't have them in

982

01:43:22,480 --> 01:43:26,800

in there anymore i said yes we we got rid of them some years back but to be honest with you i don't

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01:43:26,800 --> 01:43:31,760

know why so i had dug around a little bit and i asked the questions and i got a hold of a couple

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01:43:31,760 --> 01:43:36,720

of our different chiefs at the time the reason we removed them had nothing to do with clean cab but

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01:43:36,720 --> 01:43:42,000

it had everything to do with tactical pause at a fire because it's our belief in our culture is

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01:43:42,000 --> 01:43:47,760

that when we had our scbas on the outside of the apparatus and during the opportunity where you're

987

01:43:47,760 --> 01:43:53,600

donning your ba you're taking a look at the fire and that tactical pause moment that's why we we

988

01:43:53,600 --> 01:44:02,000

moved back to that um and it just happened to work out well for the the clean cab part as well

989

01:44:02,000 --> 01:44:06,560

like years later and so i told him then he says well our guys here don't want to move away from

990

01:44:06,560 --> 01:44:12,160

them in the seat they think that they they get a uh extra i don't know whatever 10 or 15 seconds

991

01:44:12,160 --> 01:44:16,320

it could be the difference between a life and death and i said really that's a good question

992

01:44:16,320 --> 01:44:22,160

a life and death and i said really that's their that's their that's what they're saying right now

993

01:44:22,160 --> 01:44:28,320

they can't they can't hop out of the rig faster and and get to their ba and do multiple things

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01:44:28,320 --> 01:44:33,920

at the same time right i mean usually i what i teach my guys is when i get to that cabinet i

995

01:44:34,480 --> 01:44:41,040

get my once i get my ba over my head i'm moving the path of direction towards a hose line if i'm

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01:44:41,040 --> 01:44:47,040

going back to my firefighting days back to my days of pulling hose so you're moving you're doing

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01:44:47,040 --> 01:44:52,480

two things at once and it's quick it doesn't have to be slow you just have to be efficient and and

998

01:44:52,480 --> 01:44:58,080

faster not only that there we're seeing a lot less knee and hip and shoulder injuries from

999

01:44:58,800 --> 01:45:04,960

dismounting the apparatus wearing an extra 40 pounds of equipment you know so you got to weigh

1000

01:45:04,960 --> 01:45:11,200

all those things uh into the equation are you really that much faster also funny enough i've

1001

01:45:11,200 --> 01:45:15,520

can't count how many times i've seen people not get their headset off and they're all wrapped up in

1002

01:45:16,080 --> 01:45:20,320

their their seat belts and their different things right i mean we can all just be a little vulnerable

1003

01:45:20,320 --> 01:45:26,640

here for a moment i've been there i have absolutely been there so so is it faster i mean that that's a

1004

01:45:26,640 --> 01:45:33,520

question is it is it that much faster i don't like having my mask on entering exiting the rig

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01:45:33,520 --> 01:45:39,360

personally because it's going to fog up before i get to the where i'm at i'm my vision is more

1006

01:45:39,360 --> 01:45:45,360

obscured there's so many different reasons but that's you know you have to decide you have to

1007

01:45:45,360 --> 01:45:50,240

make up make a decision not to make excuses we can do this job efficiently both ways

1008

01:45:51,200 --> 01:45:56,960

i i like having the scbs outside of the cab and i think it's cleaner i think it's better for our

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01:45:56,960 --> 01:46:05,760

health i also think that we can still do the same job just as well with them outside of the cab so

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01:46:06,480 --> 01:46:13,680

you know you're i think that we can debunk that that mindset and uh again for the same

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01:46:13,680 --> 01:46:21,040

same people that are out there that think that way uh you know just put yourself in somebody's

1012

01:46:21,040 --> 01:46:25,040

shoes you who's start talking to people that have had cancer and you'll think differently

1013

01:46:25,040 --> 01:46:29,040

those are the people you need to be having conversations with and not thinking you're

1014

01:46:29,040 --> 01:46:33,840

you're you're you're tougher than everybody else around you because i tell you what you get cancer

1015

01:46:33,840 --> 01:46:40,080

you won't be as tough anymore well firstly thank you because that's such a powerful testament from

1016

01:46:40,080 --> 01:46:45,680

someone who is the voice that we need to be listening to but i've talked about this a few

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01:46:45,680 --> 01:46:51,040

times you know i went to fire academy and i think i'm sure thinking back you know you're all dressed

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01:46:51,040 --> 01:46:55,200

up and ready to leap out the engine when you get to your scenario because it's fire academy you

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01:46:55,200 --> 01:47:00,640

know and then went and worked in the miami area for about a year and the packs were in the cab

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01:47:01,200 --> 01:47:08,640

and then i went to california and firstly the way that we were taught to throw ladders in florida

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01:47:08,640 --> 01:47:13,760

which was like a suitcase carry with the 24 lay in front of the building lay it down walk up the

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01:47:13,760 --> 01:47:19,200

rungs you know turn it around you button it from the side which never made any fucking sense to me

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01:47:19,200 --> 01:47:24,000

fucking says to me whatsoever you know and then you go to california you know and you're spiking

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01:47:24,000 --> 01:47:30,320

the ladder and high shoulder throws and you know all the things you go this is better this is just

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01:47:30,320 --> 01:47:35,600

better than the way i was taught that's a simple fact you know now i can actually navigate in an

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01:47:35,600 --> 01:47:39,600

alleyway and throw a ladder i can throw a ladder if there's cars or hedges in the way the way i was

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01:47:39,600 --> 01:47:45,920

taught in florida i couldn't and then i become a tillerman on a truck company and so my pack now

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01:47:45,920 --> 01:47:49,840

the packs were in the inside and anaheim's engines and the front of the truck but in the tillerman

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01:47:49,840 --> 01:47:56,720

position you had to have it down in in the cabinet and it took 10 seconds to throw that thing on

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01:47:56,720 --> 01:48:01,120

and so when this conversation came in and i had david and stefan from the healthy firefighter as

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01:48:01,120 --> 01:48:05,200

you know and and got to hear the whole you know story behind the swedish model and the cancer

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01:48:05,200 --> 01:48:12,080

deaths that initiated that and they're not creating surgical sterility at the cab they're just removing

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01:48:12,080 --> 01:48:17,280

anything that's going to off gas from you and where you're sitting and breathing but you hear

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01:48:17,280 --> 01:48:23,680

this say you know clean cab stops grabs bullshit and i say exactly the same thing that you just did

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01:48:23,680 --> 01:48:29,200

if you are leaping like a gazelle from a fire engine right through the front door of a building

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01:48:29,200 --> 01:48:33,600

you are gonna fucking die it's that simple because you have no idea what you're doing

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01:48:34,400 --> 01:48:39,760

chances are you need to stop look at where you're going to go in listen to your company officer get

1038

01:48:39,760 --> 01:48:44,560

with your partner make sure you've checked each other's gear you know when you actually mask up

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01:48:44,560 --> 01:48:51,200

and then you make entry and the other thing is the um the seat belt the the time that i was not

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01:48:51,200 --> 01:48:56,720

seatbelted in a moving fire vehicle wasn't my jacket because i'd already put my jacket on before

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01:48:56,720 --> 01:49:02,240

i stepped in it was putting my straps on so now you add that element too if you wreck and we're

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01:49:02,240 --> 01:49:08,000

all bunkering up in the back you're going through the windshield versus you sit down it's ergonomically

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01:49:08,000 --> 01:49:13,600

sound you don't get an scba in your back if you do wreck and then you get off you take that tactical

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01:49:13,600 --> 01:49:19,760

pause you throw on your gear and you are a better firefighter that way as well as adding in the

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01:49:19,760 --> 01:49:25,600

preventative element of not being exposed to car signatures or minimizing that exposure so i want

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01:49:25,600 --> 01:49:30,400

to thank you because you've mirrored exactly the way i think and again that ego narcissism

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01:49:30,960 --> 01:49:37,680

cancerous element that is putting all this bullshit out we have to have the humility to say i was

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01:49:37,680 --> 01:49:48,080

told this way but that way is better yep 100 and just add one more thing with that is you know think

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01:49:48,080 --> 01:49:52,560

of the time okay if you have an scba in your seat if you're going to move over into that seat now

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01:49:52,560 --> 01:49:57,120

you're dealing with some you're dealing with all your straps and messing with all your things right

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01:49:57,120 --> 01:50:03,680

are you paying attention to your approach into the incident are you catching the your interior size up

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01:50:03,680 --> 01:50:09,280

of the building when if you're not sitting in that seat messing with all that gear you're looking at

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01:50:09,280 --> 01:50:14,480

the fire you're getting an idea you're starting to develop what's what you're going to do what's your

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01:50:14,480 --> 01:50:19,360

approach how much hose do you need to pull what what what is what is going on with their your read

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01:50:19,360 --> 01:50:23,520

on the building do you have bars on the on the building do you have you know all those things

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01:50:23,520 --> 01:50:28,240

that are going to go through your head that's another little tactical pause is before you exit

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01:50:28,240 --> 01:50:32,800

the cab and if you're fussing with your scba that's in the seat that sometimes gets strapped in and

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01:50:32,800 --> 01:50:39,520

you get stuck and all these different things i mean and you're a better firefighter we can throw

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01:50:39,520 --> 01:50:44,640

scbas fast i mean if you're good at your job you don't need that i don't care how you throw it you

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01:50:44,640 --> 01:50:50,320

throw it over your head you do the shoulder method or whatever your department does i mean you should

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01:50:50,320 --> 01:50:55,040

be able to throw that scba fast it shouldn't be taking you more than like you said about 10 seconds

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01:50:55,040 --> 01:51:02,560

if that you open the compartment it's on your back and you're moving um yeah i mean people can

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01:51:02,560 --> 01:51:07,600

come up with all kinds of um i guess it sounds cool in the moment it makes me sound tough and

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01:51:07,600 --> 01:51:14,000

you know i'm i'm i'm the big firefighter bad firefighter but talk to people that have um have

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01:51:14,000 --> 01:51:18,720

lived some really unfortunate things and you know you want to start to do is think about how can we

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01:51:18,720 --> 01:51:26,080

best integrate the best of both worlds and make it work better for our people i was supposed to have

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01:51:26,080 --> 01:51:32,480

a firefighter i think he was california anthony ben alisha on the show um and we had talked i think

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01:51:32,480 --> 01:51:39,920

it was late last year um he was fighting you know a cancer batter of his own um and then we'd

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01:51:39,920 --> 01:51:44,320

scheduled a time and he actually messaged me is that james i'm going through you know this chemo

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01:51:44,320 --> 01:51:49,360

is a little rough um you know can we can we reschedule and he was dead three weeks later

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01:51:50,720 --> 01:51:56,000

this is the reality of why you're so passionate why i'm so passionate about this i lost one

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01:51:56,000 --> 01:52:02,240

of my my uh fellow firefighters in orange county carl andreano i think he was 23 or 24 years old

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01:52:03,040 --> 01:52:09,120

you know i'm i'm about to turn 50 i've had two of carl's lifetimes right now so this is why i get

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01:52:09,120 --> 01:52:14,960

so wound up about this fucking ignorance in the fire service because until we stop this mythology

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01:52:14,960 --> 01:52:20,880

this chest beating and saying it's for them it's not it's for you you want to look a certain way

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01:52:20,880 --> 01:52:26,800

you want your mustache and your helmet and your dirty gear you know and your your bullshit rhetoric

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01:52:26,800 --> 01:52:32,480

when if you truly think it's for them then start doing it for not only the people you serve

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01:52:32,480 --> 01:52:36,640

but your family when you come home and the men and women to the left and right of you

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01:52:39,040 --> 01:52:44,720

that's what matters the most when all said and done here's one of the things i'll tell you is we

1080

01:52:44,720 --> 01:52:52,160

have uh what i remember as you know pillars of the department you know legacy members of the department

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01:52:53,680 --> 01:52:58,400

that i would remember now and if i started to share the story in a fire station

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01:52:58,960 --> 01:53:05,360

these young guys don't know who i'm talking about and kind of a sad reality is is that

1083

01:53:05,360 --> 01:53:12,240

nobody remembers those people after a certain period of time and those are my memories and those

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01:53:12,240 --> 01:53:18,240

are things that i have of those people being just influential in my my career but when you leave this

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01:53:18,240 --> 01:53:23,440

job what matters is your family they're the only one that are going to be left for you after you

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01:53:23,440 --> 01:53:27,920

retire you may still have some of your fire department friends but what matters is your

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01:53:27,920 --> 01:53:35,200

family they're they're the most important thing i can tell you if you think about anything in your

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01:53:35,200 --> 01:53:41,760

career for those members here that may be younger or even older i mean think about the lost time

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01:53:41,760 --> 01:53:49,440

i i tell you what i i never will get that year and a half of my life back i can't replicate that i

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01:53:49,440 --> 01:53:55,120

doubt that little girl that was six months old is two years old i lost that time you don't get it

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01:53:55,120 --> 01:54:02,160

back i have to try to make i feel responsible for making up for it right as a husband and father you

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01:54:02,160 --> 01:54:07,200

know i have to do my part but if you're not even if you don't have kids you could think about your

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01:54:07,200 --> 01:54:12,320

family members who don't they don't want to see you go through that they live it too they have to

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01:54:12,320 --> 01:54:20,880

go through it with you all these things that are trying to um if you're trying to overshadow

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01:54:21,600 --> 01:54:28,240

something that's not a cool concept or a cool idea and it's not fun and it's it's just not cool

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01:54:28,880 --> 01:54:35,280

i'm going to say things that just devalue it you know that that's just inappropriate right

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01:54:35,280 --> 01:54:39,680

talk to the old guys start listening to them those are the guys that have been there and those are

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01:54:39,680 --> 01:54:45,360

the guys that know what to do and when those old guys are telling the new guys that man i really

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01:54:45,360 --> 01:54:50,960

wish i would have had this cancer prevention stuff in my career that would have really really would

1100

01:54:50,960 --> 01:54:56,160

have made a difference then then you're starting to really focus in on what matters your family

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01:54:56,880 --> 01:55:02,800

uh doing things the right way the saying of there's always time to do the right thing i mean think

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01:55:02,800 --> 01:55:07,120

i mean think about it there's a bigger picture and when you i guess maybe through age and

1103

01:55:07,760 --> 01:55:15,360

through time and experience you start to realize that those that mentality of that i'm
indestructible

1104

01:55:15,920 --> 01:55:21,920

you're not let me just tell you you know what right now today if somebody comes up to you and

1105

01:55:21,920 --> 01:55:26,160

you know hey i prayed today you had to go to the doctor's office you're not feeling well

1106

01:55:26,160 --> 01:55:31,200

and you left there today with a cancer diagnosis how much would that change your life how
much

1107

01:55:31,200 --> 01:55:37,200

would that affect you how much of that badass thinking matters now it doesn't it doesn't matter

1108

01:55:37,200 --> 01:55:46,480

at all it's it's in it's it's non-existent it your mind completely goes into another place

1109

01:55:47,120 --> 01:55:52,240

and you start to go into survival mode because you don't know how you're gonna if i'm gonna
live

1110

01:55:52,240 --> 01:55:57,120

or not it's a different if it's completely different experience it'll change your life

1111

01:55:57,120 --> 01:56:02,480

you don't want it to happen to you it's not the kind of life-changing experience you want um and

1112

01:56:02,480 --> 01:56:10,480

all that stuff you thought was cool and important not not important not cool doesn't matter the

1113

01:56:10,480 --> 01:56:16,320

reality of what matters is your life uh being able to live as long as you can as healthy as you can

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01:56:17,200 --> 01:56:23,360

um and having a family and having your family and those are the people that will be with you

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01:56:23,360 --> 01:56:28,960

from now until the end as long as they live or until as long as you live but those other things

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01:56:28,960 --> 01:56:37,120

that you think matter not important don't matter sorry that's the reality absolutely well i want

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01:56:37,120 --> 01:56:42,720

to make sure that we cover some of the incredible things that you've been able to put in place so

1118

01:56:43,520 --> 01:56:51,280

in your department if a man or woman discovers that they do have a cancer diagnosis walk me

1119

01:56:51,280 --> 01:56:56,000

through the tools that you've put in place to help that firefighter through their journey now

1120

01:56:58,800 --> 01:57:03,200

well yeah so the way i've approached them and they're all different and i don't have a written

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01:57:03,200 --> 01:57:09,840

algorithm of how to go down through it but the general flow path is you know when most of the

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01:57:09,840 --> 01:57:16,160

people when they call i know who they are i know them most of them um so i talk to them and i

1123

01:57:16,160 --> 01:57:21,040

and i can kind of hear it in their voice something's wrong and obviously realize that

1124

01:57:21,040 --> 01:57:26,560

there's a reason they're calling me and it's usually not a good one but i just i talk to them

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01:57:26,560 --> 01:57:31,920

much like if you haven't gone through any peer support training um you know just talk to them

1126

01:57:31,920 --> 01:57:36,640

and try to understand what's going on and and everyone's a little different you know some

1127

01:57:36,640 --> 01:57:40,400

people are really upset and some people are just still in shock and they're going through the

1128

01:57:41,120 --> 01:57:45,200

the stages of death or or those kinds of things that are kind of cycling through in their head

1129

01:57:45,200 --> 01:57:50,800

and since i've lived it i've been able to relate in some ways of like where they're at and try to

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01:57:50,800 --> 01:57:58,080

make sense of it for them or like help them through that process and then um get them the support you

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01:57:58,080 --> 01:58:04,320

know the i i'm the assistant state director here for in california for firefighter cancer support

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01:58:04,320 --> 01:58:11,280

network so um i have close closely work with them and getting the resources that they offer to our

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01:58:11,280 --> 01:58:18,240

members which is their cancer toolkit and then their mentorship program so kind of starting there

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01:58:18,240 --> 01:58:23,040

that's kind of a starting point is just kind of understanding what's going on the gravity of the

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01:58:23,040 --> 01:58:28,560

diagnosis of what kind of cancer they're dealing with what kind of treatment plan is going on and

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01:58:28,560 --> 01:58:36,560

i'm not really there to offer um you know health advice if you will uh but i you know it's a gray

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01:58:36,560 --> 01:58:41,280

area i kind of step out there a little bit and make sure they're they're advocating for themselves

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01:58:41,840 --> 01:58:45,920

you know what's net what's the next step in this process get them thinking of the questions they

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01:58:45,920 --> 01:58:52,160

should be asking the doctor the tough questions um you know ensuring that they're they're taking

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01:58:52,160 --> 01:58:57,440

care of themselves and that they have people to help them so kind of start there there's also some

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01:58:57,440 --> 01:59:06,720

financial resources we can tap into uh we also do meal um uh the meal uh what do you call it

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01:59:08,480 --> 01:59:12,720

we kind of like bring meals to our people we have a whole thing and i'll think of the meal train

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01:59:12,720 --> 01:59:19,840

but um train thinking uh meal train uh to support our members um you know that you'd be surprised

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01:59:19,840 --> 01:59:23,760

how far that goes to help the member and their family especially their family because they're

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01:59:23,760 --> 01:59:30,400

their caretaker right um and then you know there's the part that you got to do the deal with the

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01:59:30,400 --> 01:59:35,600

paperwork here in the state of california and all states have some level of a cancer presumptive law

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01:59:36,560 --> 01:59:42,000

here it's presumptive thankfully the the agency i work for we have really streamlined the work

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01:59:42,000 --> 01:59:48,080

comp process to the point of when i was in the position i would just i would get the phone call

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01:59:48,080 --> 01:59:54,160

i would deal with all the resources and and and you know my approach to the person was just really

1150

01:59:54,160 --> 02:00:00,640

caring for the individual and then it would stem into the hey you know since you have a diagnosis

1151

02:00:00,640 --> 02:00:05,360

we have to get the paperwork rolling and it's pretty straightforward we have a packet it has

1152

02:00:05,360 --> 02:00:10,560

everything in it from the state forms that are required to our own department uh city forms

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02:00:11,200 --> 02:00:17,200

and i would stop what i'm doing and i would go um meet them somewhere take care of that and importantly

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02:00:17,200 --> 02:00:23,440

uh very importantly get a one page summary diagnosis of their cancer so that it's indisputable

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02:00:23,440 --> 02:00:32,080

we know we we have a diagnosis and um i would we complete the paperwork and for us there's a call

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02:00:32,080 --> 02:00:38,720

in process that's a supervisory component and then i would just take all that that paperwork in the

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02:00:38,720 --> 02:00:45,840

packet signed um and i would hand deliver it to our work comp division and within within minutes

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02:00:45,840 --> 02:00:50,480

they're already in the system and in just a very short amount of time their cancer claims approved

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02:00:51,200 --> 02:00:56,720

now we didn't get to that overnight it took time to get there it took conversations with risk

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02:00:56,720 --> 02:01:03,200

with our risk management department and workers compensation division to get to a point where we

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02:01:03,200 --> 02:01:09,600

had a streamlined approach like that i've heard so many things over the over the course of my time

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02:01:09,600 --> 02:01:15,280

in the in the position and even still now that other departments don't have that they're denied

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02:01:15,280 --> 02:01:22,720

they're delayed every time and i think that there's a big challenge within workers compensation

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02:01:23,360 --> 02:01:29,280

alone and all you don't have to go very far if you just go to one of the workers compensation fraud

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02:01:30,560 --> 02:01:37,360

conventions you'll understand that they deal with a lot of fraud and um generally speaking it does

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02:01:37,360 --> 02:01:43,280

happen but it's unfortunate that a bad few bad seeds out there ruin it for the rest of us people

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02:01:43,280 --> 02:01:48,800

that are good people that are trying to do good things for this for our department and the public

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02:01:48,800 --> 02:01:56,160

and everything and then we're being mistreated because of of things like that um but that's part

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02:01:56,160 --> 02:02:01,360

of the process it's getting that work comp piece done you know it's the business part of it and

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02:02:01,360 --> 02:02:05,520

and you gotta you gotta be efficient you gotta get it done quickly and so that's kind of how i did

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02:02:05,520 --> 02:02:12,080

that and then i most of the time served as the person's mentor um continually supporting him

1172

02:02:12,080 --> 02:02:16,080

through the process i've done things i've done everything from take people to their

1173

02:02:16,640 --> 02:02:24,480

chemotherapy appointments um because they couldn't get a ride to bring them a meal to um get guys

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02:02:24,480 --> 02:02:29,680

over there to mow their lawn you know have christmas presents you name it like you know

1175

02:02:29,680 --> 02:02:34,720

give them everything that you would want for yourself you know make their lives easier

1176

02:02:34,720 --> 02:02:40,080

uh reduce the burden of paperwork um take that off their plate because they they got to deal

1177

02:02:40,080 --> 02:02:44,640

with cancer they got to deal with fighting something that's gonna it's either gonna say

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02:02:44,640 --> 02:02:48,960

they're either gonna live or they're not and you got to give them the chance and you got to make

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02:02:48,960 --> 02:02:57,600

it as comfortable and as possible and just kind of be um their wrestling coach beautiful

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02:02:57,600 --> 02:03:02,000

beautiful i mean you've you've got in place so many things i'm sure a lot of people listening

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02:03:02,000 --> 02:03:06,960

are gonna probably want to reach out to you because you've done so much work to get to this point

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02:03:07,200 --> 02:03:13,120

and the the thing that really jumps out is that you've removed as many of the external stresses

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02:03:13,120 --> 02:03:18,640

as you can to someone who's been given such a horrendous diagnosis and factoring back to for

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02:03:18,640 --> 02:03:23,840

example you mentioning having two mortgages simply just to get the medication for your daughter

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02:03:23,840 --> 02:03:29,360

in our broken health care system what's heartbreaking is someone firstly gets a diagnosis

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02:03:29,360 --> 02:03:33,920

of something terrifying like that and then they understand the financial implication which is a

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02:03:33,920 --> 02:03:39,200

kind of double whammy on this thing so by getting all these ducks in a row making sure that you know

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02:03:39,200 --> 02:03:44,240

you're getting them approved when it comes to the presumptive law and streamlining wortman's comp

1189

02:03:44,960 --> 02:03:49,440

you've taken a lot of the the stresses that arguably would make the cancer worse

1190

02:03:49,440 --> 02:03:56,800

away from the firefighter yes yeah it when i when i went through it because i walked through this path

1191

02:03:57,520 --> 02:04:04,160

um it was complicated and it wasn't as easy as i would have liked it and i i realized when i got

1192

02:04:04,160 --> 02:04:08,880

in the position that i was going to change that i was going to do something about that because nobody

1193

02:04:09,280 --> 02:04:13,360

should have to deal with oh i can't get prescriptions approved you know that shouldn't

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02:04:13,360 --> 02:04:18,560

be a problem because i'm not going to be able to do that because i'm not going to be able to do

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02:04:18,560 --> 02:04:24,800

that shouldn't be that shouldn't be an issue you know you're you're not well you're um if you're

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02:04:24,800 --> 02:04:31,600

going through chemo or radiation or any other form of cancer treatment you are sick and the last thing

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02:04:31,600 --> 02:04:35,520

you want to think about is oh i need to get this piece of paperwork in because i need to get

1198

02:04:35,520 --> 02:04:40,720

something approved you know that's that that shouldn't matter and so one of the other things

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02:04:40,720 --> 02:04:47,440

i mentioned earlier on was the nurse case managers and uh them you know all these these or maybe i

1200

02:04:47,440 --> 02:04:53,440

didn't mention it but nurse case manager so we we have them as a pre-authorized thing for our

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02:04:53,440 --> 02:04:57,520

members who get diagnosed with cancer and they're worth their weight in gold these are

1202

02:04:58,960 --> 02:05:05,200

rns that are able to you know work with you on things you need whether it's paperwork approved

1203

02:05:06,720 --> 02:05:12,320

medications approved and off hours on the weekends things like like that or or different things like

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02:05:12,320 --> 02:05:17,360

i mentioned i needed things i didn't know i needed like a commode in a hospital bed in my house and

1205

02:05:17,360 --> 02:05:27,280

and later on when i was um my last um my last uh major infection i was at home infusing for two months

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02:05:27,920 --> 02:05:34,320

um with the and i had to self-administer all this stuff for i was like infusing for like 18 hours a

1207

02:05:34,320 --> 02:05:40,000

day on these different heavy antibiotics they were the ones that were able to make that happen so

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02:05:40,640 --> 02:05:44,880

you want to provide your people at the end of the day ultimately my i think my message here is you

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02:05:44,880 --> 02:05:51,840

want to provide your people as many resources possible to give them to reduce that burden and

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02:05:51,840 --> 02:05:56,400

and just it's already hard enough let's not make it harder on them let's make it easier

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02:05:57,840 --> 02:06:03,200

so someone goes through treatment hopefully successfully they're wanting to return to duty

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02:06:03,200 --> 02:06:07,440

i don't know if i think you and i talked about this but i've certainly had it mentioned before

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02:06:08,240 --> 02:06:12,880

an element that is often forgotten is the reintegration of someone back into the

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02:06:12,880 --> 02:06:18,160

workforce whether it's a mental health challenge that they suffered or cancer or or some sort of

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02:06:18,160 --> 02:06:24,160

injury um a lot of them feel ill prepared and sometimes it may be even kind of out of the

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02:06:24,160 --> 02:06:27,360

tribe by that point so what have you observed with that conversation

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02:06:29,680 --> 02:06:36,720

well i have a firsthand experience on that one um just to share with you that so i when i got

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02:06:36,720 --> 02:06:40,880

finally got done with all my treatment and complications and everything i the department

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02:06:40,880 --> 02:06:47,680

was really good about getting me a light duty assignment um they gave me the opportunity to

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02:06:47,680 --> 02:06:56,080

i mean shoot i had i'm just i like 2000 plus emails um i had like a thousand vector solutions

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02:06:56,080 --> 02:07:02,720

assignments that were were past due i mean you think about your worst welcome firefighters

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02:07:02,720 --> 02:07:10,960

having all that red right well think about having just pages of red so uh yeah i mean

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02:07:11,520 --> 02:07:15,520

that's that's like the business side of things but then there's like the mental side of things and

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02:07:15,520 --> 02:07:22,160

the physical side of things so i think it's important to develop an um injury prevention

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02:07:22,160 --> 02:07:28,160

and rehabilitation program for your department um if you don't know what that is uh look it up

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02:07:28,160 --> 02:07:36,560

and read about it and learn about it um we are fortunate to have um physical therapists so i

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02:07:36,560 --> 02:07:41,280

didn't at the time have physical therapists but that would have been really good um and i think

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02:07:41,280 --> 02:07:46,240

just keep trying things like i my whole body hurt my whole freaking body hurt i was trying to get

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02:07:46,240 --> 02:07:51,360

back and part of it getting a little older too on top of it but i did all kinds of things that i used

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02:07:51,360 --> 02:07:57,280

to poopoo back in the day like yoga and um different things like that and it it really

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02:07:57,280 --> 02:08:03,360

helped me really really helped me i started to clean up my diet a lot um cut back and i'll find

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02:08:03,360 --> 02:08:08,720

a lot of things i don't drink anymore i'm a non-drinker and i can talk to you about that if

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02:08:08,720 --> 02:08:13,280

if you want to see some major life improvements stop drinking that'll improve your life greatly

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02:08:13,920 --> 02:08:19,840

and your and your pocketbook um but yeah i think what we really get into is the the cancer

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02:08:19,840 --> 02:08:25,520

survivorship right the you've survived cancer and you're coming back into the department

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02:08:25,520 --> 02:08:31,280

what happened to me was i went through the the the six months of light duty came back in my first

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02:08:31,280 --> 02:08:38,480

shift my first call was a terminally ill cancer patient i don't know that i was ready for that

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02:08:38,480 --> 02:08:43,280

i didn't at the time i had to step out of the room i wasn't ready i was still mentally

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02:08:44,560 --> 02:08:50,720

mentally hurting i had the i was able to step out of the room being the apparatus operator at the

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02:08:50,720 --> 02:08:56,240

time and just kind of gather myself and think about the fact that this is going to continue

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02:08:56,240 --> 02:09:01,200

and i'm going to see more stuff and i'm going to see more bad stuff too but i think going through

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02:09:01,200 --> 02:09:07,600

a cancer survivorship course uh miami did a great job um the university of miami created a course

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02:09:07,600 --> 02:09:14,800

it's online it's free i actually got to be a part of the the build of that curriculum and uh shoot

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02:09:14,800 --> 02:09:22,400

it it touches on everything the physical the the behavioral component uh things that you can do

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02:09:22,400 --> 02:09:29,760

to kind of prepare yourself to be ready to go and then to some to some degree um you have to decide

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02:09:29,760 --> 02:09:35,760

what's going to help you what what's going to help you and and getting you back and then so when i was

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02:09:35,760 --> 02:09:41,200

in the position people that were coming back and reintegrating back into the workforce i would i

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02:09:41,200 --> 02:09:45,600

would bring to bring things to light i would make them think about things like hey or you know are

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02:09:45,600 --> 02:09:50,400

you physically okay because there's a physical side of this job like we have to pass a physical

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02:09:51,120 --> 02:09:55,520

test to be able to come back after being out for a certain amount of times a certain amount of time

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02:09:56,640 --> 02:10:02,080

but we don't really talk about the behavioral side are you mentally prepared because it's going to

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02:10:02,080 --> 02:10:07,200

be hard it's going to be maybe harder and your new hundred percent of where you're at now after

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02:10:07,200 --> 02:10:11,600

going through so much treatment is going to be different than the person you were before are you

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02:10:11,600 --> 02:10:17,520

are you ready so all good questions all things that i think that cancer survivorship

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02:10:18,880 --> 02:10:25,040

online program does address and i think it's uh we can we can certainly do more hey and since

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02:10:25,040 --> 02:10:31,040

we're talking about it go meet with a psychologist you should be meeting with a psychologist if you

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02:10:31,040 --> 02:10:35,200

get diagnosed with cancer get get a phone appointment go meet with psychologists start

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02:10:35,200 --> 02:10:40,080

talking to them start start airing out your dirty laundry start getting the mental side

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02:10:41,680 --> 02:10:47,040

of the discussion going because it is very much a part of it is just as much as the physical

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02:10:47,920 --> 02:10:57,360

absolutely so sorry um one last thought there is is that at some point you're going to have to

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02:10:57,360 --> 02:11:02,160

rip off the band-aid and come back if you're planning to come back to the job you're just

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02:11:02,160 --> 02:11:06,640

going to have to rip it off and you're going to have to do it and just know that it will get

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02:11:06,640 --> 02:11:13,920

better and that's saying about time healing all wounds is is true it for me it took quite a while

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02:11:13,920 --> 02:11:21,120

longer than i wanted but it did get better i did get back to the job i'm not quite as

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02:11:22,000 --> 02:11:29,200

strong as i used to be maybe but i'm still able to do the job i'm still able to keep up and uh

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02:11:29,200 --> 02:11:38,640

it's it's uh it's something really uh if you can overcome it it's the resilience like you spoke

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02:11:38,640 --> 02:11:44,960

of earlier just to be able to overcome cancer come back to this job is is a huge lift and it's it

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02:11:44,960 --> 02:11:48,960

should be it's commendable in my mind and all the people that i've been able to help bring back

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02:11:49,600 --> 02:11:56,560

i brought more back than not and i'll never forget the the compliments and the thanks and the

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02:11:56,560 --> 02:12:01,840

appreciation that was shown to me for for bringing the help helping them through it all because it

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02:12:01,840 --> 02:12:10,160

it's a it's a it's a disaster in your life that you have to live and so if you plan on coming back

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02:12:10,160 --> 02:12:16,960

to the department in one piece you have to fix yourself and so anyway i'll kind of stop no no

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02:12:16,960 --> 02:12:20,320

it's been amazing i've got one more thing to ask you and then we'll close up because you've been

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02:12:20,320 --> 02:12:28,320

talking for over two hours now but i have had a few people on here and i cringe when i think that

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02:12:28,320 --> 02:12:33,360

they go back to the very shifts that contributed to the cancer in the first place not the only

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02:12:33,360 --> 02:12:39,280

thing but contributed amplified reduce the armor as the example you used earlier what are your

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02:12:39,280 --> 02:12:46,880

thoughts on a cancer survivor returning back to duty but if possible entering a 40 hour spot where

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02:12:46,880 --> 02:12:54,160

they sleep at night versus being on shift work again that would that's best case scenario if

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02:12:54,160 --> 02:12:58,240

you could bring somebody back and put them in an administrative assignment whether or not

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02:12:59,920 --> 02:13:06,960

having to be exposed to as many things anymore the the sleep issue as we talked about that that's

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02:13:06,960 --> 02:13:11,120

certainly the best case example and that's actually kind of what happened to me to some

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02:13:11,120 --> 02:13:16,240

to some extent although i don't think i worked 40 hours i worked a lot more than 40 hours because

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02:13:16,240 --> 02:13:23,920

of the demand and i well one thing i will tell you is i my oncologist very directly told me

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02:13:26,960 --> 02:13:32,240

you might think about finding a new a new career you know it was very obvious to him what caused

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02:13:32,240 --> 02:13:40,240

the cancer in his opinion it was the career being a firefighter the exposures he certainly told me

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02:13:40,240 --> 02:13:47,200

don't go back to busy fire stations because that that was not a good plan and not good for me and

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02:13:47,200 --> 02:13:55,360

my health but i did have a straight-to-assignment for five years unfortunately because i take things

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02:13:55,360 --> 02:14:03,360

very serious i probably stress put i had more stress in that position than normally but

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02:14:03,360 --> 02:14:08,400

uh all things said and done it's uh reducing those exposures better sleep if you can improve those

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02:14:08,400 --> 02:14:14,400

things you're you're doing yourself uh so you know you're doing your body is solid and you're and

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02:14:14,400 --> 02:14:21,360

you're staying to live longer if you do it that way i'm kind of hard-headed and uh i wanted to get

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02:14:21,360 --> 02:14:26,480

back to the job at some point just to prove to myself i could do it again and that i was still

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02:14:26,480 --> 02:14:31,440

capable and so here i am doing it again and but i don't have any ambition to go back to the busy

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02:14:31,440 --> 02:14:38,720

houses um i was in them long enough and i did my time and uh now it's more about you know doing

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02:14:38,720 --> 02:14:43,520

other things in the department that will improve every you know improve the department make it

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02:14:43,520 --> 02:14:50,560

better um and leave it better than i got it ultimately leave it better than i got it beautiful

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02:14:50,560 --> 02:14:56,480

well kyle i want to say firstly that mark was absolutely right this was such a phenomenal

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02:14:56,480 --> 02:15:01,600

conversation and that lived experience the same with the mental health conversation is what we

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02:15:01,600 --> 02:15:06,560

need it's all well and good that someone gets in front of us and gives us a you know slideshow and

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02:15:07,520 --> 02:15:12,720

you know talks about statistics and all these kind of things but that doesn't really grab us by the

1301

02:15:12,720 --> 02:15:17,120

throat and make us pay attention but when it's from someone who's been through hell and has been

1302

02:15:17,120 --> 02:15:20,960

through hell and i think one of the most poignant things that you said was that you lost a year and

1303

02:15:20,960 --> 02:15:25,600

a half with your family i hope that really resonated with people so this is the very

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02:15:25,600 --> 02:15:29,440

conversation people need to hear and then the solutions that you brought to your department

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02:15:29,440 --> 02:15:34,080

that people can learn from i think is incredibly powerful too so i want to thank you

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02:15:34,080 --> 02:15:39,040

firstly for your courageous vulnerability and secondly for being so generous with your time

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02:15:39,040 --> 02:15:44,720

and your knowledge and coming on the behind the shield podcast today hey thanks jim for

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02:15:44,720 --> 02:15:51,520

having me it's uh it's an honor to be here it's been a great experience thanks for listening to me

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02:15:51,520 --> 02:15:57,840

and you know i'm just i'm very like i said earlier i'm very passionate about fixing this problem and

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02:15:57,840 --> 02:16:04,000

so i i pull out all the stops if it if it's me sharing my story another time to benefit others

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02:16:04,000 --> 02:16:11,120

or me sharing more ideas about how we fix these problems in the fire service i'm all about it and

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02:16:11,120 --> 02:16:18,480

again thanks so much for having me i appreciate this opportunity