

# Rick Rochelle II - Episode 853

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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## SPEAKERS

James Geering, Rick Rochelle

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James Geering 00:00

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science has spanned, but also see for yourself the incredible health impact of this life changing software. And you can find even more information on [nucalm.com](http://nucalm.com) Welcome to the behind the shield podcast. As always, my name is James Geering. And this week it is my absolute honor to welcome on the show. mountaineer wilderness medic, Director of Knowles and president of all American leadership, Rick Rochelle. Now, Rick and I actually sat down with Rob Nielsen back in episode 33. So this time, I got to dive a lot deeper into his early life and some of the attributes that led him to where he is today. So we discuss a host of topics from wrestling in high school and college, his journey into mountaineering. Some of the notable saves as a medic, his own powerful mental health journey, leadership within the first responder communities, his work with wildland and municipal firefighters, the National Medal of Honor Museum, and so much more. Now, before we get to this incredibly powerful and important conversation, as I say, every week, please just take a moment, go to whichever app you listen to this on, subscribe to the show, leave feedback and leave a rating. Every single five star rating truly does elevate this podcast therefore making it easier for others to find. And this is a free library of over 850 episodes now. So all I ask in return is that you help share these incredible men and women's stories so I can get them to every single person on planet Earth needs to hear them. So with that being said, I introduce to you, Rick Rochelle, enjoy Well, Rick, I want to start by saying, firstly, thank you for coming back. Secondly, I listened to our first conversation was with you and Rob Nielsen. Originally, it was Episodes II three. So that must have been seven, eight months into the journey of the behind the show, and it just hit seven years yesterday. So when I was listening to it, firstly, I'm thinking of a bunch of things I didn't ask you. Secondly, I'm kind of cringing a little bit because of bouncing all over the place with my experience then. But I am so excited because we did skip over a lot of very important areas of your life, because there was two of you. So today, we're gonna take a deeper dive. So I want to welcome you to the show.

 R

Rick Rochelle 05:53

Thanks a lot, James. And thanks for having me back. It was a it was a great conversation last time. And there's always a learning curve and everything we do, right. Absolutely.

 J

James Geering 06:02

So I want to say thank you to Steve Sekiguchi, as well, we'll get into that. But I know through the show, I think which is which is beautiful. He was connected with you and what you do with the All American leadership. So we will unpack some of the experiences that he had down the road as well, but just want to give him a shout out now.



06:18

That's great sex a great guy.

 J

James Geering 06:20

So let's start the very beginning that were on planet Earth to be finding you today.



06:27

I'm in Lander, Wyoming, small town West Central Wyoming at the base of the Wind River Range.



James Geering 06:32

So I want to start at the beginning of your timeline. Now, obviously, you're in Wyoming, you know, we'll get into the wilderness medicine as well. But tell me where you were born. And tell me a little bit about your family dynamic what your parents did? How many siblings? You



06:47

bet? Well, I grew up in Cleveland, Ohio, and I grew up in a mixed family. It's kind of complicated there for parents. And they each had kids before my parents got married. And then my parents had three kids. Turns out, the other two parents actually remarried each other as well. So unusual setting back in early 60s. So there are nine kids from four parents. And there are full siblings, two brothers, full brothers, a half brother and half sister that I grew up with, that I have always called my brother and sister because I just grew up with them. And they're my brother and sister. But then there are three other half sisters that I've been in and out of touch with over the decades. So it was a long period where we were not in touch. So now



James Geering 07:43

with that dynamic talk to me about your experience growing up, we kind of touched on that before we hit record. But you know, there's so many things that so many elements of our childhood, then factor in later in life, with this mature lens that you have now, what was the kind of family dynamic as you were growing up in that very diverse, unique family?



08:06

Yeah, boy, thanks for asking. That's a really good question. And you said mature lens. Perhaps it's mature, but still maturing, but after years of therapy.



08:21

And I was a subtext. And



08:23

working as a coach and that sort of thing. And I've done a lot of reflection. And yeah, I grew up in what I perceived as I don't know if my siblings perceived it this way. But it was a tumultuous upbringing, my father was an abuser, certainly emotionally abusive to everyone in the family.


And, and it was a setting of sort of conditional love, where if you achieved then you receive love, and, you know, if I want a wrestling tournament, my dad would be happy, because then he could go brag about me. And same with grades, like I remember, you know, in 10th grade, if I got straight A's, I get \$10. And if I got all A's and a B \$0. And so So I early on excellence became really important to me, and I didn't know this time, I was just trying to do things well. And I think some of my siblings have some of that as well.

 James Geering 09:31

Now, what about when you didn't win the wrestling tournament when you got that? B? How did you process that perceived failure even though to a lot of people listening? You know, nine A's and a B is still pretty amazing.

 09:47

Yeah. You know, I, I didn't have great self reflective tools back then. And I think, you know, one of the neuronal superhighways I created, sorry about the dog now. Are

 James Geering 10:00  
you fine? At sage?

 10:03

One of those sort of neuronal superhighways I created was I beat myself up a lot. You know, I was I was my biggest critic, and probably still am, in a lot of ways.

 James Geering 10:17

Yeah, that's as a parent. Now, that's one thing that I'm trying to balance. My son is in the JROTC program, he runs varsity track and was doing cross. And then academically, he's in AP and honors, but he doesn't have all A's. And you know, I don't know how his mother perceives that it's better that way we are, we are divorced now. But for me, I keep reinforcing that if I see you not working, that's a different thing. But if you're working hard, and you get, you know, two A's, three B's and a C, and you're doing these other things to me, that is, that's good. You know, we want the all rounded one, I told him, he's never going to win the attendance awards, I'm going to take him on trips. So, you know, there's the kind of the version of excellence that some of the schools portray, and I'm not saying it's a negative, but you know, the kids see the the 4.0 presentations, and the perfect attendance presentations. Sometimes it does put a little, you know, undue stress on kids, especially if one of those 4.0 kids gets up, you know, 3.8. So, as a parent, you know, it's trying to find that balance, and I can see, because there's a little element of that even in my childhood with my dad. You know, it can be a little detrimental, you know, if you if you're then shaming a child because they didn't reach a standard that you created for them.

 11:35

I absolutely agree. And, and I'm fast forwarding to the work I do now, in the seven month Leadership Academy, the first text that people have to read is Carol Dweck mindset. And it's about having a growth mindset versus a fixed mindset. And I definitely had a fixed mindset. You know, it was all about, you know, I'm either I'm either smarter, I'm not, and, and I had to work really hard to appear smart. But what I realize now is that working hard is what as a parent, you want to praise that, not the A. So, you know, we do this a lot with with first responders in this academy and, and one of the most gratifying things is they talk about how to do this in the workplace, having a growth mindset for yourself and having a growth mindset for the people around you, which is even harder. Because you know, you get the engineer has been there for 29 years, and he's holding on for just one more year. And it's like having a growth mindset, that person can still change their basic attributes. That's hard. But as a parent, it's even more important. And one of the really gratifying things is when a firefighter says, I'm doing this with my kids, and it's making a big difference. So it's great to hear that. That's your perspective.

 James Geering 12:59

Well, speaking of the growth mindset of a 29 year old guy, or girl, that is a group of our profession, I think we really need to do a lot a lot more work with, you know, the transition from their entire, you know, adult life, in that role wearing that uniform to literally one day, the door closes behind you, your ID doesn't work anymore. And that's it, you don't have a seat on the engine anymore. So with that growth mindset, I can see and please, I'd love to get your feedback on this. How getting that engineer maybe not to trying to persuade them that they can keep growing as an engineer and working on there, you know, pumping mathematics, but more. So what are you going to do next? You know, because it's so many of us are so myopic, when we transition out, the police become security officers and firefighters, teacher fire academies, but that engineer 29 years, now let's start thinking about growing and changing your mindset to something awesome that you can keep doing when you leave, rather than thinking that playing golf, the rest of your life is the be all and end all.

 14:04

Yeah, I think you're absolutely right. And now I want to interview you and talk about your transition out of the fire service and into what you're doing now. Which has been, you know, wildly successful, but it may not have felt that way 10 years ago when you're thinking about it. So, I end up interacting with a lot of people who are, you know, 30 year career, whether it's first responder, military, whatever, and they're just getting out, and the thing they're really looking forward to is sleeping in on Monday. And, and that's a wonderful place to be for a week or a month or even maybe six months if you're if you're just physically and psychologically exhausted. But come year two, you need a new sense of purpose and clarity of values and, you know, what legacy Do you want to leave beyond your professional life or is there a second career that you're looking towards? And So I think that people who succeed in retirement are the ones who are clear on their purpose, you know, their, like, deep sole purpose in life? Absolutely.

 James Geering 15:13

Well, I think firstly, service, you know, most of us enter the fire service or law enforcement or EMS, wanting to make the world a little bit better. And there's no question in my mind that fast forward 1015 years, there's an element of, of degradation. I think that's mainly from the shift work and the stress and maybe the organization that you work under. And there's a shift and when you start to lose that purpose button, so many people I've had on the show military first responders that have successfully transitioned out, it's not just a job that they've gone into. So for example, a navy seal that goes into the world of finance, or real estate, tends to be pretty unfulfilled. But then they go and start a nonprofit, or, you know, work for the Medal of Honor museum or something like that. And now, you're still making the world better, it just is in a different uniform now. And I think that is imperative for a Healthy Transition. If you were a person of service before, it can look like 1000 things. It could be a podcast, or a lemonade stand or whatever it was, but but something where you're not just, you know, chasing \$1, or something like that. But there's, there's an inbuilt element where you're still making the world a little bit there.

 16:28

Yeah, no, I completely agree. And what you have to say about services is really important to me, it's, it's, it's really core to who I am, is I like to serve others and make the world a better place. And the joy for me is providing service to those who serve others, it feels like a multiplication effect. And, and so I'm used to working around people who are all about service, and I think you're right. Part of the identity shift that happens when you retire when you leave the service is, is what's my point? You know, how am I being useful? Who am I serving now? And a lot of people don't even ask that question. At first. It's like, Well, I'm just gonna move on to this other more relaxed phase, and then you get a couple years into it. And it's like, I've got to find something else here. And it's part part of it. I think it's the tribe that you were in, you know, the department or the unit you were serving with the part of it's actually the service itself.

 James Geering 17:31

What have you seen if anything? Regarding the skill set that a first responder I know, you work a lot with, with my population, with firefighters, with the skill set that they perceive they have when they transition? Because again, touching on that job that copter security? I, it seems like a lot of first responders don't realize the absolute gamut of skills that they have acquired through that service, and how that can be applied in 1000 ways out of uniform.

 18:01

Yeah, well, or maybe you can help me brainstorm this. But some real quick ones I think of are just technical skills. Like these are people who've learned an immense number of technical skills early in their career, whether it's medical, or you know, how to run an engine or that sort of thing. But then as you move up, you start to think, okay, situational awareness. What happens when I come upon a scene? How do I manage the risk here? How do I approach people and, and that transfers, there's a, there's a near transfer in academia, we call it near transfer,

which is like next time I'm on a scene, it looks like that other scene I saw. And so I'm going to park a little bit further over here. But there's far transfer, which is, when I walk into the boardroom, at this new organization, I can tell those two people are talking over there. And there's some stress in this other corner of the room, and these people are laughing. And so there's a situational awareness and that and that includes coming upon a scene, and you've got bystanders, some of whom are totally stressed out, some of them aren't. And you figuring out which ones are family and who are you going to delegate to go interact with those people. So there's that set of skills. And then I think as you continue, there's leadership so you become captain or chief. And there are all sorts of leadership skills, starting with self awareness on up to organizational leadership skills.

**J** James Geering 19:30


Yeah, I think problem solving is the other one. You know, we literally have a group of people that my profession if it doesn't involve arresting someone, we're in I've done snake removal. I've removed humans from trees, tree trimmers that got stuck up there. I mean, you name it the the crazy stuff that we do, and it's like you've got your engine and you've got two or three people with you and all right, off you go you're at. So I think that application are really having to be innovative and think outside the box. arcs could be applied in 1000 kinds of ways in the corporate space.

 20:03

I think you're absolutely right. So,

**J** James Geering 20:06

I want to get back to you mentioned wrestling. So you were, like you said, kind of having almost a bargain for affection and attention. You get into wrestling, how old were you and kind of walk me through that wrestling journey for you?

 20:20

Yeah. So I did a bunch of sports when I was like, you know, in grade school, like Little League, and I was never good at any of them. And I always, I always joke that I had horn rimmed glasses, and was not socially. You know, acceptable and wrong are a bit socially desirable. But I used to make that joke. Now, I realized that foreign rimmed glasses again,

**J** James Geering 20:46

social status just plummeted when he changed glasses. Right, right.

 20:49

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So, so I realized that, you know, scholastics were important in my family, and athletics, we did a lot of stuff outdoors, you know, hunting, fishing, Boy Scouts, that sort of thing. But I wanted something that I could be good at and work on. And I, you know, I had to real mentors, when I was growing up, are pivotal people in my life. And one was Mrs. Ely. She was my sixth grade teacher. And I need to get in touch with her and thank her for this. But she taught us things like goal setting, and Maslow's hierarchy. And the idea of the Greek scholar athlete, and this is on sixth grade. And so I thought, okay, scholar athlete, that sounds great. And, and, and then it's, I took up wrestling, really, in seventh grade, I probably rolled around a little bit with my older brother before that, because he was wrestling too. But he was actually a kind of an impetus, like, he was two years ahead of me, and I always had to compete with him. But so I took up wrestling in seventh grade. And Mr. Kirschner, the coach said, this is a sport that if you work really hard, you can be good at it. And I thought, I know how to work hard. I'm not an athlete, but I know how to work hard. And so I just started working at it. And that was, you know, I was on the B team, and I didn't start and then you know, and then work my way into high school. And eventually, I started going to wrestling camps at University of Iowa. And by the time I was a senior in high school, I was it was pretty good. You know, and, and but I really committed to doing it all through college. And so I wrestled for 11 years. And first, I'd say seven of that it was the most important thing in my life. I like to I like to say that I majored in wrestling and minored in civil engineering.

 James Geering 22:52

Yeah, I can relate to that. Yeah, I think my degree is PE. And that wasn't what my degree was. But with that being said, a lot of people who potentially could have gone down some bad paths, or maybe they did for a while, there was always a mentor, there was always a figure maybe could be a, you know, female history teacher or a male wrestling coach, or whoever it was, but someone who made them or help them turn a corner and gave them that self worth and that motivation, was wrestling. Did some of those coaches kind of act as that role for you?


 23:27


Yeah, you know, I didn't, I don't think I necessarily had one person that I can point to. But I would say those two that I mentioned, and then of course, going to University of Iowa, it was the Iowa wrestling team, and you go there for four weeks, and they work out with you. And the thing that struck me is everything they asked us to do, which was hard. I mean, we were working out three times a day plus watching films, and they did everything with you. And, and of course, their mentor was Dan Gable. And, and so Dan Gable was a hero of mine back then, even Arnold Schwarzenegger, the education of a bodybuilder, you know, I was go to the YMCA and work out really hard. And so I just I just got enamored with all these people who were doing things at a really high level. Early pretty early on. And you know, there were really positive effects from my family as well having a whole bunch of siblings you it made me a little bit more competitive. We all ate fast because you wanted to get enough food and and there were great things from my mom and my dad. The things they taught us and encouraged us to do. So. So really, it was the whole environment of a number of different people. I was never real close to going down a bad path. I flirted with things that probably don't work. Want to talk about but one story though, one story from high school that my mother never knew and my mother was, she did a Master's in Counseling while I was in high school. And she did her her internship my senior year in high school, which is like a high school seniors nightmares to have your mom in the high school, right? But one thing I did that she only recently found out that I did is I went up





on the high school superstructure on the roof at two in the morning on a Saturday night with this guy who's now a firefighter, now a retired firefighter. And he was an Oregon, just east of Portland. He's still on the Mount Hood rescue team, Tom Gall, and he was the inspiration for this. So we all got up there. And I was the lightest guy. And so I was going to be the one who repelled down three storeys of plate glass windows. And it was basically Australian repel, so put on a harness, backwards chest harness seat horns, and I got lowered down the windows, face first barefoot, and he repelled down next to me and painted the bottoms of my feet with bucket of mud. Every step. And so and we didn't do any graffiti or anything. But you come into you come into school Monday morning, footprints pointing down the windows.


 James Geering 26:26  
That's genius.

 26:28  
Yeah, so I got into some shenanigans but nothing serious.

 James Geering 26:32  
I just saw there asked me why this came up on my my social media feed that I saw. Obviously, it was a teacher or a custodial or someone with a long pole most likely find a swimming pool, trying to knock off for deal those that have been stuck with suction cups onto massive play glass windows. I'm assuming that was a senior prank as well. But they were all they were doing was just, you know, arousing these for the autos. They weren't actually that was a pretty good one too. If you're listening Good job.

 27:03  
You know, it was funny because I hadn't been in touch with Tom in years. And and I was out working with clacking this fire and had dinner with Steve Sekiguchi and Tom gall.

 James Geering 27:16  
Oh, that was him. He told me that he reunited with with a friend. So there we go full circle now and as a story. Brilliant. Well, speaking of school, we talked about the athletics. What about career aspirations? What were you dreaming of becoming when you're still in high school?

 27:32  
Well, it's funny because I wanted to be an astronaut. When I was a kid, my first memory of television. And I like this. When I meet new groups, I asked them, what's your first memory of television? That's not a cartoon, or your first memory of politics. And it really puts people into generational spaces, because it's like, you know, I remember Richard Nixon resigning. I was a

kid, but I remember it. And for other people that's in a history book. And so my first memory of television was the lunar landing. And so I wanted to be an astronaut. And, and then I went to kindergarten and my teacher was Mrs. de pollo. And I figured Mrs. Depaolo had something to do with Apollo. Clearly, so I was, I was really into math and science. And so I decided I was going to be an aerospace engineer. And maybe that would open a door later to space travel or something. But after a semester and a half, and a bunch of fluid dynamics, and, you know, various math courses and so on, I decided I was going to switch to civil engineering. So, but I studied engineering, and I and I love that, like you mentioned, problem solving. And for me, people have said, Did you practice engineering? Did you use your degree? And it's like, well, I didn't practice but I use it every single day. It's about problem solving. So, so math and science were really important to me. Well,

 James Geering 29:03

I know now you have you do work with NASA. Was there an aha moment? Years later, when you actually started working with our organization? And you realized there was a kind of a full circle from that wide eyed little kid?

 29:15

Yeah, there absolutely was, you know, leading expeditions that the National Outdoor Leadership School. I've had great opportunities living in Kenya and traveling and doing things in the Himalayas and getting to Antarctica and all sorts of things, but probably the greatest honor has been working with some of the clients I've worked with towards the well in the last 15 or 20 years in my career. And NASA is one of those. And so it's just been a wonderful partnership. And I've had the opportunity to go to Johnson Space Center several times and the entire Artemis two crew group. That's the For they're going to go around the moon next year. All four of them have been in the wilderness with amazing, two of them in the canyons, two of them in the mountains. And one of them, something you could link to maybe is Reid Wiseman, who is the commander of Artemis two, he was mentoring the next class of astronauts. And I was going in the mountains with that next class, and asked him if he wanted to write a letter to that class about what they should learn on their own, of course. And, and so Shannon, my wife and I went in the mountains with nine astronauts. And it's actually one senior astronaut candidate. So the astronaut candidates, they call themselves ask cans.


 James Geering 30:51

It's endearing.


 30:53

And, and so he wrote this letter. And what he wrote about was expedition behavior. And expedition behavior is a phrase that the founder of Knowles came up with, and the founder knows he was within 1000 feet of the summit of Ketu in 1938, held the world altitude record, help train the 10th Mountain Division, he was a sergeant in World War Two. And then he was the lead instructor for Colorado outrebound when it was founded in the 50s. And then,

**J** James Geering 31:25  
the second guesses done I guess, when you put your thumb up, thumbs up

 31:31  
scaring us all. Thumbs up really should be and then he founded the National Outdoor Leadership School,

**J** James Geering 31:36  
now we go ding.

 31:39  
But he coined this term expedition behavior, which is having the awareness of others needs and the character to act upon them. Sounds like service to me. I mean, this is what this is what firefighters do, this is what military folks do. And so expedition behavior has become a really important thing. And it, it has been adopted by NASA. And so I was talking to Peggy Whitson, who at the time was the chief astronaut. And she said, we have two challenges and getting to Mars One is putting water between us in the sun to block radiation. Otherwise, we'll get fried during the two year round trip journey, and Expedition behavior, how do we get along in a tin can for two years without killing each other? No matter how much you love each other at the start. So So anyway, Reid Wiseman, the commander of arms to wrote this letter about expedition behavior. And and I can send you a link to it, it's up on a on a Knowles blog. And it's a beautiful thing that he talks about, you know, it's about, it's not, it's not just about being really nice to each other. It's also like emptying the trash can on the space station. And it's also about how you interact with the executive assistants at Johnson Space Center, and how you interact with the 10,000 engineers that are supporting you. And so anyway, it's been really neat to come back to that, and realize that I can support the space program a little bit in some small way. And there are a lot of other people that no one's doing that as well. And then a funny thing with with parents, you know, back to childhood, is I, my father, I always got the question when I was going to get a real job. When I first worked with astronauts, he stopped asking.

**J** James Geering 33:39  
Beautiful. So with that, I mean, I will definitely put the link on the website V. James geering.com. In this episode. Well, when I think of that, I mean, literally what you just said, empty the trash can is something that we talk about in the fire service, you know, sadly, some people expect the probie to always empty the trash can, to me, it should be, you know, whoever's closest to the trash can and he's been emptying. That's what you do as part of the team. But then you think about you know, that that tin can Well, obviously, a fire station is a version of that, and then you have a virus sweep through and now, how do you stay in that to

encounter that fire station when there's a pandemic, and you're not allowed to sit and eat together anymore? You know, so it sounds like it'd be a huge amount of value, and then the wildland community, you know, that's another group that are shoved together for weeks and weeks and weeks at a time. So I will definitely add that to the webpage. It sounds amazing. Yeah,

 34:31

I mean, boy, the analogies there are really amazing because another aspect of what Knowles has done is tried to help the divide between Mission Control and the astronauts. And I've had astronauts say, you know, they they scheduled me down to the 15 minutes and another one say I had them scheduled me for a six minute test one time. And these are people who are basically camping on orbit. And there are people on the ground or going home every day. ain't telling them what to do. It's sort of the gold badge silver badge, you know? Absolutely. And frankly, it's not just the fire service or officer enlisted, it's, it's in every organization, as a leader, how can you have empathy for the people that you're leading, and show it?

 James Geering 35:18

Well with them, that's a great segue for a moment. One of the problems I see and I just actually had a weekend with IHMC, I don't know if you've worked with them, they do a lot of work with NASA, their Institute of Human Performance and technical cognition, I think it is, and robotics is somewhere in there. Already butchered that name anyway. And the whole point was, they were paid by a local businessman to try and figure out why we're having firefighter mental health crisis. And so you had everyone from firefighters, to neuroscientists to psychologists, but they were all same kind of, you know, organization that works with NASA works with DARPA and works with the seals. But when I'm in that room, and I'm trying to storytel the work week, to either a people that now sit behind a desk and go home every night wearing a gold badge, or be our scientists, the disconnect was was very glaring, the scientists talked about data. And I'm like, you know, with all due respect, you want me to, we need a study to show that 56 hours a week is more detrimental than 42, that you can't see the common sense portion there. And then, you know, the the administrators that the the chiefs were dancing around that subject, because that was going to be more challenging, and no disrespect. But what you realize is, when you've worked those grueling shifts for decades, you understand that to your core, but if you've transitioned behind the desk, and maybe you did it early in your career, maybe you've never done it. There's a point where it's like, well, you don't should you be making some of these decisions for a group that you don't even understand, and the load and the stress that puts on not only them, but the family dynamic when they get home, too? Yeah.

 37:04

And that difference grows over the years. Partly, it's a generational difference, you get new firefighters coming in, who are two generations divided from the fire chief, the part of it's just that you haven't been out on calls recently. And, you know, one thing I did when I was a director, and most professional training, which was a group of 20 of us who manage the relationships with NASA and the Naval Academy, and Wharton and so on. And, and I just swore that I would go in the field at least once a year, because I did not want to be the administrator

who made up rules that were just ridiculous when you got out in the wilderness. And, and so closing that divide, I think, is really important. And I think it has to happen in both directions. You know, empathy from the top down, continually trying to be humble and say, I don't understand what's happening. You know, like, I've never been through a pandemic, before while on the rig, telling me what that's like. And then from the bottom up as well, trying to get firefighters to realize, and I had a supervisor, Don Ford, he was the Alaska director for Knowles. And he was a real instill as a mentor to me. And he said, always try and think of the stresses your boss's boss is under. And so, you know, if you're a firefighter that means, you know, the captain or maybe the chief, but if you're a captain, it means you're thinking about the division chief or the fire chief, and what stresses are they under and in the fire chief, can't just give you more budget, they're actually trying to compete with the police department, and the public works department and, and they're dealing with politics. And so if you can get empathy going in both directions, it helps the whole organization. Yeah,

 James Geering 38:56

no, absolutely not. It was it was good. By the end of this two days, I think people were starting to get on the same page. And understanding is what I was trying to storytel. Like, we our own worst enemy. At the firefighter level, we even tell everyone fairytales we work, you know, nine days a month, we have the best schedule, when you actually look at it like no, we don't, not at all 56 hours a week with a mandatory making 80 is not a dream schedule to the average civilian. So we're a foul, you know, and then, you know, some of the unions, we've kind of pushed against wellness programs and that kind of thing. And then so it's I think when it's ownership of, of the areas that each one of us is lacking, then you're saying, Well, we're all messing up. So let's get together and actually figure out how we can move forward rather than pointing at admin union chiefs, you know, ground ground personnel, whatever it is, and what actually fixing an issue which, sadly, is what we've seen, you know, nationally for the last few years, coming together, fixing things doesn't seem to be very popular conversation in some of our government buildings at the moment. When

 40:00

it's really interesting, we do a actually one of the emails that came in right before this, and I need to get back to this person is scheduling one of these culture snapshots and the culture snapshot. It's just a handful of questions. It takes, you know, five to 10 minutes for employees to answer. And we ask them, What do you want leaders to start doing? What do you want them to stop doing? What do you want them to continue doing? And the most useful question is really that continue? Because the leaders already have the capacity to do it, you just want to do more of it. But we're thinking about starting to ask three other questions or even replacing the questions. What conversation should we start having? Which ones should we stop having? And which ones should we continue having, so it creates ownership from the whole group, it's not just the onus on the leader. Now, we know that from leadership science, that the leader has undue influence on the group that they have more authority, they have more responsibility. And everyone looks to them and follows their body language and everything else. But it doesn't mean that everyone can own the situation.

 James Geering 41:10

I like those questions. And immediately, mental health is what pops in my head. You know, if someone asked me that, what should we stop talking about is removing stigma. That is, you know, that has been at that point has been made. It's been driven home. But it doesn't take us anywhere. It's just literally like, I'm here. Okay. Yeah, I see you. But But now what? So then, you know, what I think is beautiful about that is that well, what conversations do we need to be have? Well, how can we remove barriers to entry from people that need help to the help itself? And making sure it's the right kind of counselor? And you know, how do we have conversations about post traumatic growth, giving hope to people that are struggling? So that would be right off the bat, if you gave me those stop talking about stigma, and crises and start talking about how you find help and how you can be stronger on the other side of that help? Yeah,



42:03

you know, I really liked that. And it gives me this metaphor, if you're tree skiing, you know, in and out of the trees, aim for the open space. Don't think about the trees. Yeah. Think think about the post traumatic growth, and what the possibilities are in the future. I think that's really important. There's an organization I wanted to just mention to you, it's a newer organization. But this woman, Laura McClatchy, she's a nurse practitioner, and I think she's board certified in both emergency medicine and psychiatry. But she started an organization called the responder Alliance. And it's for a group of people, that sort of, it started out for a group of people that are sort of in this hole between Outdoor Education, Recreation, ski patrol, maybe paid maybe not, but first responders, and people in that space who get traumatized. And so the name of the organization is the responder Alliance. And, and it's growing quickly, and our local search and rescue team, one of their administrators, one of their leaders is on our search and rescue team. So we've started a resilience team within our search and rescue team, and they're just doing great work, they've got a lot of great ways of thinking about, like, you show up, you show up for rescue. And voluntarily, you can put a chip in a bucket, that's green, yellow, orange, red. And green means like I'm living, I'm living high on the hog, everything's great mental health is perfect. Yellow is some kind of stress, this is kind of where I live. And then you know, orange, you're starting to have symptoms of a stress injury. And red is, you know, you're in full on post traumatic suicidal ideation, everything, but so there's a range there, and they're well defined. They're just a great set of tools that this organization is gathering from a lot of different places and trying to get out to these groups.



James Geering 44:12

Brilliant. Well, I'll add the link to the web page as well for that. Will we speaking of you know, the outdoors? When did you get into mountaineering, and then how did that take you to wilderness medicine coming from a civil engineering background?



44:27

Well, like I said, I had majored in wrestling. And I wanted to redshirt but the the league I was in the rules where if you're in college, you're using eligibility. So I thought, Okay, I'll take a year off. And so I spent most of the year wrestling. And I was as the head counselor at the US Naval Academy, and I travel around and live with people who are training for, you know, they're way better than me, but training for the Olympics and that kind of thing. And, but I thought I'm

gonna take time off and take an Little scores. So I took a course. And, and during that I realized that mountaineering is not something that you just it's not just an athletic endeavor, it's a team sport. And you really need to get along well, you need to have good expedition behavior, you need to think about who needs what and when, and logistics and all that kind of stuff. So that's when I got interested in it. And, and that was boy, mid 80s. And, and then I became an instructor and did a lot of that during the 90s. Also did a master's in ecology at that time. And that was a lot about systems thinking. And that informs a lot of what I think about leadership and how organizations interact with each other, and individuals interact. So I'm not sure I'm going back to your question was, no,

**J** James Geering 45:59

no, that was it. That was how did you find that work in the first place? So I know there was a pivotal moment for you in the Himalayas. But before we get to that, you mentioned Kenya. Talk to me about the the buffalo gorge injury and some of the rescues that you've had to do in that role. Yeah.

**i** 46:15

Yeah, you bet. I mean, I've I've been involved in some interesting rescues over the years. And in that one, that one sounds really fascinating, but it played out fairly quickly. Like in 24 hours or so. There was a student who was actually the leader of the the student expedition, he was leading this four day trip that these students were doing. And he was physically leading down the trail and he yelled out and a cape buffalos stood up, charged him and threw him in the air, he did a couple of sunless somersaults, landed on the ground. And, and he's laying on the ground. He was a VMI graduate, or Virginia Military Institute. And he was so composed that he was laying on his back saying, Okay, you are the best map readers. So you should lead the two of you out. And you're the best at first aid, so you should stay with me. And, and so he directed this. So these two people came out and said, We need help. And, and so about a half dozen of us went back in my wife and I and a guy who's now an ER doc went in, and we were just EMTs at the time. And we went in with a couple of Mount Kenya park rangers, and we had just taught an 11 day first aid course to these guys a couple of months before. So we go in, and we had to hike up the tree line across a couple of valleys, and then down elephant trails into the bamboo. And so you're like in this hallway that the elephants had made. And we and we get to him and he later said the most comforting thing was the three ad rifle that the Ranger was carrying. But we back boarded him and, you know, he had a hoof print bruise on his kidney area. And he had a pretty, pretty good laceration here with subcutaneous emphysema. I mean, it's like you listen to it, and as long as sounded okay, but you pressed on it, and they're crackles. And so anyway, we back boarded and carried and five kilometers down the bamboo trail, getting water out of elephant footprints and stuff. Got him out flume to Nairobi. And he's now he became a faculty member at Knowles. And then he became a nurse. So so often you have these pivotal moments where, you know, like, the other guy became an ER doc, and you have these pivotal moments that lead to something in your career.

**J** James Geering 48:54

Amazing, where you talked about 24 hours being a quick one. Now, for most of us listening? Well, you know, an hour is a good turnaround for a paramedic and EMT in the urban setting.

Obviously, you're talking about wilderness medicine. So talk to me about the Himalayas, much longer rescue and obviously had a pretty significant impact on you and your psyche as well. Yeah.



49:15

So this was the year 2000. And again, this was of course, I worked with my wife and an Indian instructor who to this day is one of my best friends Ravi Kumar. He's now the head of the India knows India program. And another fella Dinesh who was an aide and training. And so the four of us and we had a large group of students, we had 17. And this was just a backpacking course we do mountaineering courses over there, too. And I've had some misadventures mountaineering over there as well, but this one was backpacking, and this particular student had a series of injuries. She lacerated her finger on a fan on the way in. And we saw a doctor and the doctor said, he has a bad laceration, we're gonna put you on antibiotics, you're gonna have to clean it twice a day and, but what I'm really worried about is your jaundice. And we had noticed that she was kind of yellow. So something was going on systemically. Few days later, she had a little heat exhaustion episode, recovered from that hydrated, and then we got up to 13,500 feet and she had she had lung symptoms of some sort of pain on breathing and, and we had a couple of resources with us at the time medicine for mountaineering was the thing everybody carried in. And I talked to her and I said, you know, it doesn't seem like you have high altitude pulmonary edema, and we were 13 Five, so that was a concern. It doesn't seem like you have pneumonia, or bronchitis. But it sort of fits this thing called pleurisy. And she said, I was hoping it wasn't pleurisy. And this is a college kid. Right? And like, Okay, tell me how you know the word pleurisy. She's, well, I've had pleurisy before. And, and, you know, young, tall male quickly growing athletes and the idea of a spontaneous pneumothorax. Well, she was that except female. And so she had something that wasn't matching up in her pleura in addition to jaundice. And so anyway, that happened, huge storm came and washed out the trails. And, and we got, we were coming down in elevation. And there were two Indo Tibetan border police. So to Indian army guys. And and I'm talking to them through Ravi, who's translating into Hindi. And I remember asking, how long will it be before the trail is fixed? And he actually answered in English, he said, Oh, no problem one month. What this meant was, we're going to miss our airplane flights. But that's not our biggest problem is students are at this point, they're saying, what are we going to do? What are we going to do? So the first thing we're going to do is we're going to list our problems. And in us the problem solving that you were talking about, and so we realized we weren't gonna get resupplied food. And it but there were some, there are probably, I don't know a population of probably 30. Shepherds and people who came up there in the summer, and we could buy rice from them, or we could, whatever. And we then we realized that we had left our iodine water treatment in the resupply, so we weren't going to get that. So we were going to have to like ration out that and pay people to boil water for us. They're boiling water, but they're living in like sheep dung floor rock huts. And so anyway, that was a sense of some of the problems. And so we moved down to a little below 11,000 feet, I think. And that night. Three in the morning, she starts vomiting, vomits four times by seven in the morning, and it moves from upper middle of the lower right quadrant, and she's got rebound pain, and you're all the classic signs of appendicitis. And, and we don't have a communication device. And you know, every north course now has multiple communication devices. But at the time, the Indian Army would not allow us to carry a satellite phone or even a ground air radio. So we had no way of communicating out to the the world. So we started making plans and gosh, we had to split, we split the group, I sent Ravi up to the highest elevation in the valley where this colonel was that was in charge of a unit near the Chinese



border near the Tibetan border, and asked if his radio would reach the outside world. And would he be willing to ask for a helicopter if we needed it. And then Shannon, led a group down to those two soldiers at a lower elevation to ask if their radio can reach this radio. So then we can play telephone and ask for helicopter from Downloader. And then I went with the patient who was ambulatory at the time, but not eating, and she could we went to a place to assess a an LZ and, and then we all got back together two nights later, and we're just working our way down Valley and she's getting getting weaker and weaker. And that and then the next morning, we went to say this is what we're going to do, but she had a rigid abdomen. And we thought her appendix had burst and so we asked for help. And we threw the Two soldiers asked the colonel and said we want, you know, what I said to my, my co instructors is I want everyone to know, I want to help from everybody I want, I want her parents to know I want that person in Bangalore who oversees the program to know I want the person in Seattle, who's that person supervisor know what the head knows to now, I want the US Embassy to know, I want the Indian Air Force. Now, in the end, it was the Indian Air Force and the US embassy that helped us out but it took another it took a week to get her from, from when she vomited to an Indian Air Force helicopter. And we had to go up 4000 feet off trail down 5000 feet off trail, she actually fractured the tip of her femoral condyle on the way down and, and had bleeding in odd places. And turned out that was leeches. And I mean, so you know, the the richness of this story. I'll cut it short for you. But we got down to the bottom of that 5000 foot and was raining the whole time. And then we had to build a, we got a little bit of help from some more soldiers who allowed that allowed us to use a stretcher for 10 kilometers, but then they had orders to bring it back. And then we built a stretcher, like a machete in the woods, you know, and built a stretcher out of an old chair and two poles. And so she's like in this reclined chair with an umbrella. And so it took a long time to get her out. And I actually, I guess a key moment there. And I'll just say in therapy, and for me EMDR Eye Movement Desensitization reprocessing was really effective. And the first moment, the moment of highest stress that we talked about, was a moment that I briefed my co instructors, because we were about to split the group into different speeds of egress. I briefed them on what to do if they get word that she had died. And when I said that out loud, I kind of choked up. And, and somebody said, are you okay? And I said, Yeah, I just need to be alone for a minute. And, and I went, and I sat for just a couple of minutes looking at the river. And, you know, I was kind of overcome by emotions. And what came to me this is crazy James, but was something over the locker room in seventh and eighth grade wrestling that said, if it is to be it is up to me. And I thought, These emotions are not useful. I need to I need to, you know, I didn't have the terms at the time, but I need to dissociate and just stop having a motion. It's just like showing up on a scene, your emotions are not going to be useful, you need to stuff them. The problem is you need to unpack them later. And talk about and that's and that's that's the missing piece often is that we get really good at stuffing emotions. And when I say we, I mean first responders, military, men, I think, tend to do it more than women. But women who are first responders get pretty good at it. So, so I stuffed my emotions until several days later, when the helicopter took off, and I was sobbing and in relief, and she made it out she lived she had her appendix removed. But that was the beginning of a journey. I had three more traumas in the following four months, which included another helicopter off a glacier in the Pacific Northwest. And that was quote, easy because I just had a ground air radio on talk to United pilot and next morning a helicopter showed up.



58:57

That was for a dislocation. And then the third one seems the smallest but my wife brought our dog to a resupply to say goodbye because it was dying. And in the fourth one, I was actually supposed to go work with some astronauts. But I went to visit my father the weekend before

ended up taking him to the hospital and watched him basically drown the congestive heart failure over the next 22 days. And you know, and and so what did I do? Two weeks later, I led a winter expedition and it was fine. And then that December I cleaned out my dad's house and then in January I was leading a winter expedition south in the Tetons and three in the morning I had my head and my first anxiety attack. I didn't know what it was. I told my my co worker that it was like there was a grizzly bear 10 yards away. And it wasn't standing there. It was charging with the intent to kill me. And that was the emotions terror. And so I'm up at 20 below three in the morning while rocking around in the snow. And finally, I, when I got back from that trip, I made it through that trip. But when I got back I saw therapist and really what gave me the impetus to see a therapist was an EMT course instructor in 1988. Todd shim authentic. He's a paramedic, and he's big on our search and rescue team. He was known as Risk Management Director for many years. And head of curriculum for the wilderness knows wilderness medicine. He said, If you ever go through something that's crazy, and your emotions don't work, right? Go see a pro. It's like you broke your leg. And he just normalized and this was in 1988. Which back then it wasn't that normal. So that's when he said that, but 12 years later that echoed for me. It sort of opened the door of like, oh, I should go see a pro. And I talked to her Pro. And she said yeah, this is called an anxiety attack. And you're suffering from something called post traumatic stress. And, you know, and then sort of opened the door well, okay, what do I do I, okay, I need time off need to reduce the stress needed, work through cognitive behavioral therapy, EMDR, and so on. It really was, you know, you mentioned post traumatic growth, it really was hitting that bottom that led to post traumatic growth. Because that's when I started studying neuroscience and the mind body connection, and so on.

J

### James Geering 1:01:39

We talked about stuffing, we mentioned it briefly before we started recording, but I just flew to the UK was on the tarmac about to fly back passenger has a cardiac arrest. And I ended up working him with you know, and, and kind of trying to guide a couple of passages couple of the crew, and they did a phenomenal job. But, you know, we weren't, I don't think able to save him, they took him off with the Lucas going, but up until that point, that was the first code I run out of uniform prior, you know, I'm with this highly trained group of people, we all know what we're doing, you know, once on the airway, one's got the monitor one's you know, getting an IV, when I Oh, and then, you know, whatever the result, and sadly, with me, every one of them died in cardiac arrest in my career, but um, you know, then you clean up the gear, and you kind of offload a little bit, maybe you talk to doctors and nurses, you know, what do you find what was some of the, the issues trying to learn from it, and there's a little decompression, and then, you know, as you you kind of alluded to, then boom, you're back in service, and you get banged out to something else. And I've had days in my career where numerous people have died in 24 hour shift, and you clean up your shirt, and you go and do another one. But what was really interesting, I did a little video about it on social media, because I thought it was fascinating, was I was actually shaken the first day or two by this, because I mean, I'm sitting on a plane, do CPR, and drag this poor guy through the plane, keep working. And when the the firefighters and the medics arrived for a while, and then I realized, Okay, it's time for me to hand off CPR. Everyone here is you know, as trained, if not better trained than me, they will equipment, this is their, you know, this is their place that I'm in now. So then I said, You need me at all, now we're good. And I went, wash my hands, got the blood off my hands and then sat back down on my seat. And so I didn't have that crew. And I had all that self doubt. And you know, we didn't have drugs didn't have this didn't have that, you know, all the things that would have happened had it been in an ideal world with the paramedic crew showing up immediately. And so it took me a little while to kind of process it. And I saw the impact it had on the crew as well

and was able to talk to them, which was which was healing for both of us. But then I had a realization Oh shit, this is this is how you're supposed to feel when you literally have someone die in front of you, and you worked really hard and they still die. But like you said, it seemed weird because I was used to the stuff it down, clean up the gear, go back and service go scrape another one off the ground. So it was an insight into you know, the shame that some of us feel I'm struggling why that call bother me so much. That was your humanity showing through that moment. That's how we're actually supposed to be feeling and I didn't lose my, you know, I was stuffing it down when we're working this and trying to help guide other people and you know, trying to even get my own algorithms straight in my own head after five years. But after it did hit me, and that was a good thing. So I was trying to kind of impart in this story like this is, this is what's supposed to happen, but this is what we suppress, over and over and over and over and over again. And this is why you know, eventually the kettle boils over. So I was trying to share my story with that and be like, you know, this thing that we're so ashamed of is actually your humanity. It's the normality showing through. So like you said, That's a great time for you to go and get some help and that offload some of it because if you keep stuffing it down, as A Mexican proverb proverbs I quote a lot. They try to bury us. They didn't know we were seeds, you know, eventually it will, it will bloom. So right, right.

 1:05:08

Yeah. Boy, that's that's a powerful story. It makes me think a couple of things. One is, with the responder Alliance, we talked about checking in with people three days later. And three weeks later, and three months later. 333. And it makes me wonder, and different things work for different people. You know, we used to think that CISD critical incident stress debriefing was the best thing. But for some people, that's really traumatizing. So absolutely, you know, now, now we try and give more agency is one of the important things, you know, five things we talked about at the responder Alliance are creating a sense of safety, a sense of calm, a sense of connection. And this was a question I was going to ask is, do you have connection to any of those crew? You know, here's,

 James Geering 1:05:58

here's the interesting thing now. Yes. So I get back, I wrote a letter to the the airline company, because I wanted to just to make sure a that they were recognized because two of them went home and, and I'm so proud of them for going, I'm struggling, I don't think I can do this flight. Excellent. That's exactly you know, why the options go home is there. But the other ones then cleaned up, and then serve the plane full of passengers for 11 hours, which is I mean, so admirable. I mean, it was a nasty, ugly code, it really was. And so I wanted to make sure that that was the case, but also that just to underline, Hey, make sure you're reaching out to this crew. It was it was bad. But then I get a left some business cards, and because I've been talking to some of them, and then I started getting Instagram messages from most of the crew that I'd spoken to. So yes, we are still in contact. And I think that's, that's the connection part. Like you said, we had a shared experience. And that carried on way beyond me disembark in the plane.

 1:06:59

Yeah. I'm glad to hear that. I'm glad to hear that. Yeah. So the five safety comm connections, so important community, and then a sense of efficacy, and hope. And, you know, if you can

provide those five things, to fellow caregivers or to patients, that's really helpful.

J

James Geering 1:07:18

Yeah. Well hope, especially with the post traumatic growth, I think that is the thing. You know, if you just like, Yeah, well, you know, Rick, you probably are right, you know, we will put you on some meds and you'll be able to deal with your PTSD. That's not inspiring anyone. But if you speak to someone who was in the same kind of place you were in, and now they're thriving, and they've started, you know, a first responder, Mental Health Alliance, and they're, they're a beacon of hope. That's what we need. So you know, when people are struggling, now's not the time to be that beacon. But being inspired that there's actually an even better place on the back end of this. I think that that hope conversation really needs to be bolstered.

o

1:07:56

Yeah, and the post traumatic growth part is so important to me. And it's the thing that's been helpful is to be able to help others to help others see that this is a process that we work through. It's it's sort of beyond grieving, it's post traumatic growth, is post traumatic stress and growth. And it's an injury that you heal from and there's something that gets stronger afterwards if you if you're headed down the right path.

J

James Geering 1:08:27

Absolutely. That reminds me of that. I forget the term but in Japan, you know, they they they repair broken ceramic with gold glue. So you're proud of the scarves? You know, I think that's that's a part of it. Definitely. Right? Yeah.

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1:08:41

The other thing it made me think of is Levine's sigh bam, model si ba M, and I'll just say the five words, that picture a pentagram with all five of these connected, it's the, the images that are incoming to your brain, could be sounds could be smells, the sensations in your body, the behaviors that you want to exhibit or you are exhibiting, you're an effect your emotions in the meaning. And when all five of those are connected, that's a well associated memory. And when they're not all connected, it's dissociated. And what's interesting is a prerequisite for post traumatic stress is that you have to have dissociated. Well, it turns out part of the job description for a first responder or a military person is you must dissociate. You can't, you know, you trained to tamp down those emotions. You do your 478 breathing or box breathing or whatever, to calm yourself in the moment. So you can ignore those emotions and do what you're trained to do. But then you have to come back and reassociate all that and and so much of that is recreating meaning And when it's dissociated, and it's dysfunctional, then it's, I've got bodily sensations and my heart is racing, my mouth is dry, and breathing shallow. I sense that, oh, I'm having a panic attack, I'm gonna die, and you think you're gonna die? And then what does that do to your adrenal system? It just amps it up and makes all the sense in you get in this cycle. Whereas my favorite saying about anxiety is, and I don't know who I'm quoting here,

but I am terrified, and I am not in danger. Because you're saying that the emotion is real. But the danger is not. And if you can, if you can, you know, visit that paradox, then you can stop the anxiety attack. Yeah.

**J** James Geering 1:10:48

It's interesting in in my career, like early on, you know, the panic attack patient was the MCI rolling our God, not one of these. But then, as we've gone further into the responder, and military mental health, now we're seeing how many people like yourself have had that and they're like, No, I literally fell. I've been at war. I was in Fallujah, I was, you know, in Belfast, in the 80s, wherever it was, and I literally thought I was dying. So when you hear a Navy Seal, or have seasoned Firefighters say that you look back and go, Oh, you know, not that I was ever a deck on a call, because I wasn't but, you know, you have even more compassion now. Like, wow, okay, this, this must be really bad, because I know some very, very tough individuals who got shot and all kinds of stuff and still say that their panic attack their anxiety attack is one of the scariest things they've ever endured.

 1:11:41

Yeah, yeah. Yeah, you think you're gonna die? That's pretty real. Yeah.

**J** James Geering 1:11:49

So you talked about that being a pivotal moment, you've you sought help walk me through that immersion into neuroscience? Where did that take you that pivotal event? Well,

 1:12:02

you know, I was one who, you know, I grew up thinking about Schwarzenegger and Gable, and in emotion wasn't something that we were encouraged to talk about my family. And so I was a big stuff your emotions fan. And so I was I didn't want to get into emotions. I didn't understand emotions. I didn't want to get into them. But my therapist was brilliant. And she said, Well, I can point you to some scientific papers. And so I started reading peer reviewed papers on the mind body connection, and what is emotion and that sort of thing. And I've recently a few years ago, I did a certificate and an executive certificate and leadership coaching at Georgetown. And, and a lot of it was about the mind body connection. It's like what is going on in the, in the body that that we summarize and call emotions. And so you know, if you feel that dry mouth, racing hard, it's like, okay, that's fear. Well, let's start giving people a broader vocabulary for fear so that they can talk about it with, like, this phrase, emotional granularity. So is it terror? Or is it you know, mild anxiety, or something in between, and they're all these flavors of emotion. And I find people are people who have come from sort of masculine macho realms are good at stuffing emotion, and especially young men, you ask them how they feel, they say, good or bad. It's like, okay, let's, let's expand your vocabulary. You know, a classic five is mad, sad, glad, afraid, or disgust. Like, let's use those five words. Okay, let's now let's expand that. And then. So with coaching clients, they, they start to be able to name their emotions better, which is good going into a meeting, but even earlier, is the bodily sensations. And so it's even harder

to get people to sense that and often, you know, if someone's frustrated, which is a sense, something should be faster, easier. You ask them where they feel it and it's like, all that's up here, it's like, and it's literally wanting to get something off their chest. And so when people can start to name their bodily sensations, and then with emotional granularity, name their emotions well. So, and that can just inform, you know, informed leaders on what to do. It's, you know, if you're sitting in a boardroom and you're noticing that a conversations happening, that's against the values of the organization or your personal values, you're going to have a gut feeling, literally a gut feeling and 90% of your nerves are afferent. They're sending signals from your gut to your brain, not the other way around. So and I'll give a caveat which is intuition can be misinformed. You know that the vast majority of people I take rock climbing or rappelling for the first time, not not the vast majority, the vast majority are happy and excited, and they're an inflow. But there's often one person in the group is pretty sure they're gonna die that day. And, and they're wrong. Their gut feeling is just wrong. It's ill informed. And that's where experience and training comes in. To give you a sense of, you know, what's right on a scene, what's wrong? Something here is not right. We got to get out of the building now.

J

James Geering 1:15:45

Absolutely. Well, with that example, talk to me about American leader, excuse me, all American leadership, my apologies. And then how you ended up starting to work with my community, because I know now especially in the Southern California area, working with multiple multiple agencies. Yeah.

o

1:16:03

So I actually started working in the wildland fire community first, and that was through Knowles. And it was the national welfare coordinating group up in Boise has done a lot of good work on leadership. And if you go back to the South Canyon fire, you know, there was an after action review there that that said, Well, this was just a communication problem. They didn't communicate that the weather was going to change. And somebody refused to sign that report said no, this was a leadership failure. We had multiple problems, because we had, you know, the Prineville hot shots. And we had local people. And we had, you know, a number of different groups, and they weren't well coordinated. And they weren't. Yeah, communication was a problem among them. But that was the impetus for the leadership curriculum in the wildland fire service. So now they talked about 182 8380. So I 380, is leading leaders and Knowles got involved in running courses for wildland firefighters. And so we would do what was normally a 32 hour classroom PowerPoint program, but we would do it on a one week expedition. And I can tell you, if you know, the required reading for that was Shackleton's endurance. You get stuck in the ice in Antarctica for a year. And it's one thing to read the book, it's another to be sitting under a tarp when it's 19 degrees in there, 18 inches, 18 inches of snow. And in you're reading the book, and it's like, we have nothing to complain about, because we're going to be in a van in three days. So anyway, that was the beginning was with wildland firefighters. And that was wonderful. And then when I left Knowles as an administrator in 2015, I ran into Rob Nielsen, who is the CEO and founder of all American leadership, and he wonderful guy, very thoughtful, introspective, values based, purpose oriented, purpose driven. He came on an old score. So I actually met him before he came on the Knowles course. And we hit it off, and he invited me to come start doing some things with the organization. And at some point, a fire department asked for us to interact with him because all American leadership works with private

organizations just as much as we do the fire service. And Rob said, you know, you know about firefighting, don't you? And I said, both wildland. He said, close enough. So that was, that was about eight years ago. And it's been a wonderful journey of learning since then, in interacting with fire departments all over the place. And in learning what's the same and what's different. You know, there are a lot of service oriented folks in both arms of firefighting, a lot more medical stuff in the urban realm, of course, and the vast majority of calls. And I was I was certified as an EMT for 26 years, but only road ambulance for training and research and that sort of thing. Mostly, it was wilderness stuff. So that's how I got started in the fire service.

**J** James Geering 1:19:17

So may have asked you this six and a half years ago, but it's pertinent to ask it again, because you've worked with so many more agencies. Now. When an agency approaches you, obviously, there's, you know, a desire for leadership improvement. Are there any common denominators that you see frequently when it comes to my profession or some of the challenges that obviously then you are going to help them overcome?

**i** 1:19:43

Yeah, absolutely. Two quick ones come to mind. One is does the organization have clarity on their purpose and their values? And often these are called Mission and values we call it ethos, which is values that are behaved upon. So like an you know, you're on an expedition, you behave a certain way, that's expedition behavior. At the Medal of Honor Institute, we call it you can have values. But if you act on them, they become virtues. That's not a virtue until you act on it. So, so does the department have clarity of purpose, and not just a plaque on the wall. But does everyone know this is what we're trying to do here. And, and then clarity of values. And that way, if you're in an ambiguous situation, the firefighter on the scene can make a decision without top down leadership. And so the decision making can be faster, which is really important in our volatile world that we live in now. So that's one thing that comes to mind. Another is just often there's just a lack of leadership training. And I should say that leadership training at all American leadership, we like to call it education, not training, because training sounds like a rote thing. Whereas education requires practice in a lot of environments and a deep understanding. So we talked about leadership education, but really leadership education is the vehicle to get to a better culture. And so we talk about having high trust, high alignment, that's the purpose and values leads to high performance. So trust, align, perform. And in order to get there, one of the biggest levers you have is better leadership. And so then we walk people through a leadership curriculum. Which I can go into if you want, but that's it. Yeah, so so. So one of the things you do with organizations is to de purpose and values workshop, we often will come in and do a one day workshop. But our favorite thing to do, the most impactful, I would say, is a seven month Leadership Academy. And what we do is we walk people through four levels of leadership, and we start with leading self. And so, you know, we go back to mindset and self awareness and character, and what are your values and that sort of thing. So So leading self, which always makes me laugh, because it's like, come on, Rick.

**J** James Geering 1:22:34

If you're bipolar, it's fine.



1:22:37

So leading self, and then leading in relationships, and so in relationship is two people, you and me, are having a relationship? How do how do each of us lead well in that in that relationship, and we think of leaders as anyone who influences, so it's not the fire chief? It's not the chiefs, it's not the union eboard it's anyone who's influential in any way, and everyone's influential in some way. And every, whether it's in the breakfast room, or whatever. So So in relationships, how do you lead and communicate well, how do you create trust? How do you listen actively, how do you so so leading in relationships, and then then leading in teams, is three or more people and, and that's, you know, classic engine or something, and, and then leading in organizations, and leading in organizations, is multiple teams with multiple levels of hierarchy. And as you go from leading self to leading in organizations, it becomes more important to think about the culture. Because you're not interacting one on one with everyone, you just can't have as much interaction time, there's a proximity problem between the fire chief and the captains are even more between the fire chief and the firefighters. So trying to figure out how to close that gap. And in those academies, we have everyone from firefighter to fire chief sometimes but uh, but always battalion chiefs. And, and they can create empathy by talking about what their jobs are like. We finish this seven month Academy by coming back to leading self. And so at the end, folks have to give a 10 minute presentation on their their leadership journey. And so we encourage them to reflect in their continuing continually reflecting throughout this academy and what led them to be the person they are and the leader they are, and then talk about their personal purpose and values and who they want to be. And finally, what do you commit to doing in the next year to move in that direction? And those are really powerful talks that people give, and we invite their fire chiefs and supervisors and families And so often you have, you know, people PA, you get like eight people pop in to watch so and so's talk. And it's like, now it's on camera. You know, I commit to reading this leadership book and being more patient when I come off shift, and I go come home, and I'm gonna listen better, and, you know, whatever it is, so, so you've got seven months, and, and recently, we've added coaching. So we try and give a coaching session between each, each monthly, eight hour session. So people can get one on one coaching on what they're actually working on.



James Geering 1:25:40

When you talk about the need for leadership training, I think about promotional testing, and they're basically memorizing from books. And then like, you know, for example, the lieutenant level, there's the inbox and scenarios and all these things. But it doesn't seem like you said, to really get the skills of you know, human relationships and, and training and trusting crews and trying to, I would argue, remove the ego from some of these decisions and allow people below you to make decisions for themselves. With that disconnect, what have you seen as far as how, how the system was? Now, obviously, each department is gonna be a little bit different. But a lot of us we have rungs on the ladder, and they are educational, and they give you a bugle. And then that's it. So what, if anything, have you viewed as far as the disconnect between what they think they're being taught leadership wise, and what they're actually being taught?



1:26:37

Yeah, I mean, people working through their Task Books and getting all the certifications they need. And then they're competing, you know, you get engineers competing to be captain and



need. And then they're competing, you know, you got engineers competing to be captain and they become captain. And they actually have to deal with a personnel issue. Or they actually have to be communicating. It's one of the hardest jobs there is to be a middle manager, and they're trying to communicate what the chief is saying about the budget. When you got people, you know, that you're supervising saying, we need new this, we need new that and we need better hours, and we need, you know, we need everything. And, and if you're in the middle, you're you're sort of facilitating those discussions of what what's most important. And, and people come into those roles, having no experience with that. And they have no experience with coaching. Coaching, I think is often in the fire service a pejorative, it's like well, coaching is right before disciplinary action. Coaching and counseling. Yeah, coaching and counseling and, and really the coaching we do is developmental coaching. It's like how do you become a better human being? Who do you aspire to be? And how can you get there? So it's a really good question, James of I think people often just don't have models, mental frameworks, you know, like emotional intelligence or, or how to delegate well. One of the one of the textbooks we use is turning the ship around by David Marquette is he was a nuclear submarine captain who had to take over a submarine that he didn't understand. And his method of leadership was always knowing where every valve was, and every detail of every of the entire submarine, but they put them on a different one, with just a few months notice, and he had to delegate and say, Tell me, tell me what you think we should do. And get information from below. So I think I think a lot of mental frameworks

**J** James Geering 1:28:47

are useful when you said delegate that really reminds me of what I would argue was the best leadership that I had. So that was actually Anaheim down the road from from where you guys are based. And the level of training in the academy was extremely high and they lost 25% of each new hire class through attrition if you couldn't reach the bar then thank you, but you know, we'll see you later. But that level of training coupled with the trust of you know, the that point the captain and then the BC and up you really just went to work. You know, when you got on the scene, you'd wait the captain would say Alright, do this, this and this and that was it and then off you go radio chat was really low. And you got the job done. And at the end, it was kind of tell Borka cheek, you know, what could we do differently? But you felt like a professional you felt like a grown up. And I've heard for example, Jocko and some other people in the seal community say that it was almost like a rotation of leadership within the teams, right, who's going to plan the next ARB? With that being said, and again, I don't want to put words into your mouth, the worst fire department that I worked for a different one. Shelby, named anyone is tall guys knows exactly what I'm talking about. They were taking them out. It was so micromanage that everyone was completely shackled. And morale was terrible. I mean, even, you know, the standards at the front door were terrible, but it permeated all the way through. And it was because there were fragile egos at the top. And the reality is the people in in the the chief positions at that particular place and never even done the job, you know, one that come up through dispatch, another one come up through fire prevention, and they're making decisions on paramedics and firefighters. So, you know, my own kind of white belt perspective was a high level of training, coupled with trust creates great morale and great leadership, even you know, at my level at the firefighter level, a complete lack of trust coupled with poor training is a recipe for disaster. I don't know if you've got any perspective on my random monologue them? No,

**no** 1:31:00

you're absolutely right. I mean, and trust. Trust is such an important thing. And, you know, I like to ask people, is it a noun or a verb? And the answer is, yes, it's both. It's something inherent in an in a relationship, but it's also something you can choose to do. And I also like to ask, which takes longer earning trust or giving trust. And earning trust, can take a long time, like, you just have to be really consistent. But giving trust is something you can just choose to do. Absolutely. Doesn't mean it doesn't make it easy. It's simple, but not easy. And so, giving trust, you know, you can think about the elements of trust. And there are different ways to break this down. But we talk about having competence, caring and character, or the academic literature, calls the same things ability, benevolence, and integrity. And it's important to have all of those. So competence is what the fire service is always training on. And, in the example we'd like to give there is like, I trust you with my life, but I don't trust you to give me a root canal. But you just so that's, that's competence. That's the That's the easy one to talk about. But caring. And having compassion is one that it's harder to show when you're under stress. And that stress can show up, as, you know, multiple calls, over 48 hour shift with lack of sleep. But it can also be a fire chief under budget, pressure and political craziness at the council level, and so on. And, and when you're under those stresses, it's harder to show that caring and compassion, and you just have to take a deep breath. And remember, this is one of my values is like, as I'm going to care about these things. And then the character is, you know, having the integrity that doing what you say you'll do, even when nobody's looking, but also just showing up and being you know, being on time, that sort of thing. And, and I know you interviewed Kevin basic, a few months ago, and Kevin basic talks about being in integrity or out of integrity. And I just love his model. And I have gotten to work with him in all American leadership in the Medal of Honor Institute, and in his model is not that I have integrity or don't have integrity, it's that I'm in integrity, or out of integrity with my values. And he even uses it to the point where he'll be on a phone call and say, I'll record amount of integrity, because I told you, I'd send that email last Friday. I'll give you I'll get it to you tonight. And so having integrity. So So trust is so important. And in order to delegate you have to trust and actually give authority away to make the decision. You can't give the responsibility away. But you give the authority away. And that's the scary part is that you've given control away, but you're still responsible. And I think that gap is where leaders have to become more comfortable with that. Because in the long run, it increases morale hugely. It decreases turnover, which reduces training costs. And it also creates new leaders. It means takes your followers and turns them into leaders.

**J** James Geering 1:34:35

Absolutely. Well, you hit on one point as well. I've heard a few people I mean people have come in talking about implementing wellness and fitness programs in the fire service leadership programs but their stipulation was if we're going to do this, we can do this properly. And I want everyone from firefighter through to fire chief in the same room now you can mention that yourself. Talk to me about the the importance of that

**o** 1:34:59

you Yeah, it's it's actually been fascinating. Because with COVID, we actually moved online with this academy. And now this year we're going to be doing while we do it, we've done them in person for private corporations for a long time. But we're going to go back to doing it in person for a set of folks in Southern California. But we're also doing it online. The advantage of the online is that we have departments from a whole bunch of different states. And so they have

different regulatory regimes, different politics. You know, we've got Colorado and Washington, Oregon, California. And, and so they're getting points of view from different departments. They're also getting points of view, from different positions in the department, from battalion chief to firefighter. And it goes back to what I was saying earlier about trying to understand what your boss's boss's stresses are. And, you know, you get, you get a battalion chief in the room, and they're listening to these firefighters talk about what their stresses are. And it's like, oh, my gosh, I never really thought about that. Because I didn't have a pandemic when I was a kid. And, and then you get, you know, an engineer, a brand new captain, hearing from a fire chief, about the budget and the council and and we have to we create trust in our cohorts to you know, confidentiality, because you're, by the end, you're hearing all these stories about what's functional, and what's dysfunctional in organizations, just like any organization not to fault the organization's themselves.

 James Geering 1:36:41

I don't know if that answered your question. No, it does. It absolutely does. Well, I want to hit one more area, and then we'll get to some closing questions, so I can let you go. I'm curious. I mean, you've worked with multiple Fire Department, numerous fire fire departments over as you said, seven, eight years now. What are some of the success stories it might be individual might be departmental that you've had through your program?

 1:37:05

Such a good question. individually. I would say it's people who who gain a sense of clarity around who they're trying to be, who is the person I want to be? Who is the leader I want to be? And how am I going to move in that direction. And and you see people get promoted. And they come into that position and thrive rather than struggling for a year, they come in with a vision of how they're going to lead. You know, I think of a woman who just was it was a captain, and she just got promoted to Chief at a different department. And, and so there's that professional success, but also on the individual level. And it's just as gratifying for me is, you know, you hear someone talking about growth mindset. And they've got a graphic, and they show you a picture of the growth mindset thing behind the toilet in their bathroom. So their kids see it every day. And they're talking about parenting and how I realized I was telling my daughter that she just wasn't good at math. And we need to focus on other things. And it's like, I stopped saying that. It's like, we just need to work on this, we need to work harder. And, and so things shifting on the individual level is really exciting. at the departmental level, it's really fun when you any one of the most gratifying things I do are these two day purpose and values, workshops, purpose and ethos workshops, where we come in, and we help people define their purpose, their values, and how they're going to live their values, not just a plaque on the wall. But how are we going to talk about how we live those values in the after action review? How are we going to talk about how we're going to apply those values to this big decision we're going to make, whether it's the union talking to the command staff about how we're how we're going to interact or you know, those sticky problems? Is it new apparatus is better ours? Is it a new station is got all these competing priorities? Well, if you have clarity on your values, not just clarity, but consensus, a sense in the room that everyone's headed the same direction. Boy, if you take that and then do follow up through these culture, snapshots, you know, what discussions should we be having? And then you have a a group of people who over the years have been

through this academy, and they have similar language around leadership. And so we have a number of departments who've been involved for a number of years now and that's just really gratifying to see them thrive.

**J** James Geering 1:40:00


really well for people listening, then where are the best places for them to learn about all the different courses and even expeditions that you guys offer?

 1:40:13

Well, I like to say, Kevin, basically I mentioned before, he asked people for their one word, and my word is, is synergy. Because I do four things. I do little executive coaching on the side. But if it's Knowles, you can go to knowles.edu. That's National Outdoor Leadership School. And you can look for expeditions. And you might specifically look at executive expeditions, which are a week long, the traditional Knowles course is 30 days long, and which I recommend for any young person or any person in a career transition, but the one week course, for executive so executive leadership expedition, is

**J** James Geering 1:40:56

that the one that Steve did? That's one Steve, he told me about the Bosque about llama losers.

 1:41:05

Oh, yeah, that's, yeah, that's another story. But we had the short version is we had to bring llamas down a snow slope and the bottom of the snow slope was 50 degrees, there's no way you're getting anybody or Lama down that. And but we were able to dig a trench, using our towels that we use to bury our feces, dig a trench into what's called the moat next to the mountain. And it was just wide enough to fit a llama down but not with it's packed on. So we had to unpack the llamas and dig this loose into the moat. So. But that was a special case of the executive expedition, which is through all American leadership. So Rob Nielsen, when he came on the Knowles leadership expedition in 2015, he said, I want to do this every year for our clients and our friends, and our staff. And so every summer, we run an expedition for all American leadership. We being Knowles, so Knowles and American leadership partner, and that's the one that Steve was on. And a number of there's two or three firefighters on that every summer, and then leaders from other organizations and so on. So that's knowles.edu. But then, the third thing I do is all American leadership, and an All American leadership, I just am so grateful for the opportunity to work with folks. It's mostly retired military officers. A few enlisted a few of us who are not in the service, but have the privilege to work with them, and never be all American leadership.com. And, and I'd look under I think it's products or solutions, I think it's culture solutions. And in you could find, for instance, the Fire Academy, you have to scroll down just a little bit to find it there. Or you can write to me are Rochelle at all American leadership.com. And in the fourth thing I do is with a Medal of Honor Institute, and that's the work I'm doing with Kevin, and Medal of Honor recipients and so on, and you can find out at the National Medal of Honor Museum.

**J** James Geering 1:43:20

Beautiful, we talked about it. It's in Texas, isn't that when does it open? Is it already open? Or is it still being built?

**o** 1:43:28

In Arlington? It's still being built. The groundbreaking was last spring. And you know, President Bush was there and they had a flyover from the Thunderbirds and the Blue Angels and so on. But it will open in March of 25. Okay, and, but they're doing three things. They're building Museum, it's right across from Cowboy Stadium Stadium in Arlington, Texas. They're building a memorial, which will probably be at the base of the Lincoln Memorial. The details are still being figured out. But Lincoln was the one who said a country that does not honor its heroes will not long last. And so this is tied to Lincoln and and then the third is the Medal of Honor Institute, which is, you know, inspiring Americans to live according to their values and the values of the Medal of Honor.

**J** James Geering 1:44:21

Fantastic. That was a great conversation with Kevin I'm looking forward to visiting it when it's finally done. So a couple of quick closing questions for you before I let you go. You mentioned mindset cow, the WIC any other books that you love to recommend?

**o** 1:44:36

Well, I mean, I can I can send you the name of the names of the six textbooks we use, which I can name off here now if you want but Mindset by Carol Dweck triggers by Marshall Goldsmith. turn the ship around David Marquette the culture code by Dan Coyle, if you talk to him I

**J** James Geering 1:45:00

have not no sounds like I should though, I can

**o** 1:45:02

introduce you and Team of Teams by Stan McChrystal. I think I got five there. What am I forgetting?

**J** James Geering 1:45:10

Well, you mentioned endurance, Shackleton, but was that one of the attacks was that separate? No, that's



1:45:14

a great book though. Love that book. It's not one of the six it'll come to me. Other ones I really like our



1:45:31

de cartes error. It's technical, but it was really important to me when I was actively post traumatic and trying to figure out and de cartes error is the mind body split. And it's written by a neurologist. And he found that if you exercise the anterior cingulate this part of the brain right behind our executive function, part of the brain, you take that out, people don't have the gut feeling to finish a decision.



James Geering 1:45:59

Oh, so you find that a lot in DC then Hmm.



1:46:05

Exactly. And then a book back then that I really liked was the body remembers by Babbitt Rothschild, and you're probably thinking of a book called the body keeps score, which is also excellent. And I'm forgetting the guy's name right now. But he is a luminary in the stress field. Primal leadership that's in the sort of emotional intelligence, Daniel Goleman. realm. And I know off camera we, we talked about not going towards politics, but but two of my favorite books are the righteous mind by Jonathan Hite. And it's, it's about how we're selfish beings. And we're group ish beings, and how do those interact? And that sets us up for discussions about politics and religion and all the hard things in, in, in culture. And then the other book I like in that realm is a recent one called the politics industry. And Michael Porter is the second author. He is the most cited business author, he's at Harvard Business School. And one of his clients, Katherine gel is the primary author. And she looked at our political system over the last 810 years, whatever and said, What is going on? And, and she asked him to cobra, co author a book and he said, I hate politics, I don't want to write about it. But his ways of thinking about business, if you apply him to politics, he said, we have a duopoly and, and we are set up to split ourselves when most of America is in the middle. But our structure is set up to communicate in ways that make each other hate each other. And so anyway, it's great, but politics industry,



James Geering 1:48:05

he sounds like someone I should get on as well, because I've talked about this all the time, you know, it's the way that we choose our I'm doing air quotes, leaders, the last, you know, few cycles, which obviously is both sides of the aisle. Yeah, you know, you to be very blunt, you have to be a millionaire or billionaire. And you have to be devoid of ethics, because lobbyists are paying you X amount. So it's not choosing the best leaders and our system is broken, and then you get people, you know, trying to die on their sword over this one or that one. And the

thing most of the normal people are like bloody hell, you know, I mean, how many times have we heard that we got to choose the lesser of two evils out of 350 or 40 million people now, the lesser of two evils? So I agree, 100% it's not it is a democracy. But the way it's devolved is we, we have lost control of actually selecting good good human beings that would be, you know, absolutely invaluable at the helm of this country. Yeah.

 1:49:06

And there's, you know, there are a lot of reasons there's gerrymandering, this book goes into the history of primaries, why do we have primaries? We have primaries to empower the parties, like what you know, and so they're all these systems set up where the leaders choose their voters instead of the other way around. And so there's, there's some solutions in there. So it's a good book.

 James Geering 1:49:29

Brilliant book to read that. So thank you. And I often look at trying to get them on the podcast. This is what it's about. It's not about bitching on this podcast is pulling troubles out of the shadows, but then bringing people to have the solutions, whether it's leadership or fitness or mental health or whatever it is. So same question, what about documentaries and or movies that you love?

 1:49:49

Oh, boy. That's a good question. I'm actually more of a nonfiction guy. You know, the movie that came to mind was Gladiator. It

 James Geering 1:50:00

comes up a lot. People love that film.

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I love that movie because he's values based. And you know, it's a friend of mine who's a Navy SEAL captain, Bob Schultz. He says, you know, these books about leadership, when you dig into them, a lot of times they're cleaned up, and they're simplified stories. And there's a backstory that you don't know. He said, but we all need our mythology a gladiators a great myth, you know, a great legend or something. It's a you know, the slave comes back as a stoic and makes things right. So

 James Geering 1:50:42

absolutely. All right. Well, then speaking of great people, is there a person that you recommend that come on this podcast as a guest to speak to the first responders, military and associated

professionals of the world?

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Yeah, I mean, I can think of a number of people. Colleagues, I mean, it's Thanksgiving. And I just, I want to give thanks to you, I want to give thanks to my my mother, who is an inspiration. You know, our relationship has shifted over the last 60 years. And, and she's 95 years old, and really an inspiration and the my five, the five siblings that I grew up with, we all got together for her 95th birthday in September, and it was just a joy. But I'd also want to thank like all the colleagues I've had, it knows all the colleagues have handed all American leadership in the middle of honors to and so I think of a number of people at all American leadership, or the Medal of Honor Institute. And I can get you some names later, but one that comes to mind is Jim Lydon. He's a retired two time retired fire chief, and acting city manager. And he's kind of my partner in crime when we do these leadership academies. So he and I are there every session, but then when we bring in guests, and and so we have a number of different guests that way I can name any one of them would be great to talk to BP McCoy's. He's an AWS instructor. He's on the American leadership, all American leadership faculty. And he was the one who gave the order to pull down Saddam Hussein statue, that will really lead the First Marine unit into Baghdad. Wow. And he saw these locals working on the statues like, Do you need help? We've got equipment.

 James Geering 1:52:38

And we got desire to we're gonna help you. Yeah, and

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we are aligned here. So a number of people like that. And then of course, you've talked to Kevin basic, get the Medal of Honor as to. And there are other folks there. You know, my main co facilitators, Dave Keller, he's the head of the Corps of Cadets at Texas a&m. And then this woman who goes by Ooch, Kristin Hoover, Kristen Bucha. Mara Hoover is a professional coach in Denver and retired Air Force Colonel. So but yeah, you know, I could just think through the whole faculty at all American leadership, and it would be interesting to hear from any of them. Yeah,

 James Geering 1:53:24

absolutely. Well, I will, yeah, we'll get together and say we make some connections. I get some more of the Yeah. All American leadership family on here. So that'd be amazing. Thank you. All right. When the last question before we make sure everyone knows where to find us, specifically, what do you do to decompress?

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That's a good question. You know, we shared at the middle of honors two, we shared what's our morning ritual to get oriented to the next day, and, and I always start my day with meditation. I



morning need to get oriented to the next day, and, and I always start my day with meditation. I tried meditating, like in the middle of the day for 20 minutes. I couldn't do it. My just, you know, rat, race brain is just going too fast. So So I try to meditate for five minutes when I wake up. And I know my respiration rates 14. So I just tried to count 70 And I usually make it to about 30. I get distracted by something. Another thing I do real early in the morning, and this is like sacrilege, but I pick up my phone, and I go to my email, but I look for this one email called grateful living. And so you can look that up and grateful and it's just a one sentence thing about gratitude every morning. And it helps me set my mindset towards what am I grateful for? And and that's that's what I thought of when you asked me this question. That's why I wanted to share a gratitude. And sometimes I go to the daily stoic, I really liked that. Control, what can you not control? And then try to come up with three things. So I'm trying to accomplish today because, you know, my list usually looks something like this. But what are the three things that that if I get them done today, today, it was a success. So if I can stay focused, and then connecting with the natural world, and an exercise, those are two of the main things.

 James Geering 1:55:27

You shuffle, I do a very similar thing. And while I did, till somewhat recently, the meditation in the morning headspace, I'll do 10 even went up to 15. So I actually wanted to do longer, but the guided meditation, there was great. And then the Five Minute Journal, which has a gratitude element to it, you know, I think that I think that's perfect. And when you first wake up, you'd be like, Oh, I woke up. That's the first thing to be grateful for. And then you, you know, you set that bar so that, you know, you spill your coffee on your shirt, it's not a big deal. You're breathing, you know, you've got all your limbs, or maybe you don't, but you're still alive. Yeah, so I think it's hugely important, specially in this, again, divisive and arguably, superficial world that we're kind of forced to the power of, you know, reminding, especially nature, I think that's why people find it. So healing. You know, you sit there and you watch a bumblebee around a flower, and you realize what a miracle that is, you know, all of a sudden, you're, you know, Instagram not working that day isn't quite as traumatic anymore.

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And I think I think we all need to figure out ways to do that. You know, when I was born, there were 3 billion people on the planet, now they're 8 billion. And we're hyper connected with the Internet. And the internet's algorithms are set up to amp up our emotions. So we've got 8 billion people with untying, you know, 200 countries and however many religions and and then crazy politics, all designed to amp up our adrenal systems, we need to invoke the parasympathetic.

 James Geering 1:56:56

Absolutely. Actually, speaking of that, just before I let you go, I recently was introduced to a technology called New calm. Have you ever heard of that? And you see a LM

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I, you're the second person who's mentioned it this week, but I had not heard before. In fact,

the person who mentioned it is Jim Lydon.

**J** James Geering 1:57:13

Oh, really, I wonder if you happen to hear it through, through anything that's been on the show, but very long story very short, extremely intelligent, you know, one of the greatest minds that America seen for a long time, figured out the frequency, that the brain has a certain emotions from flow to anxiety, etc, then spent another 10 plus years figuring out how you could manipulate the brain to go into those states. And this originally was just a massive machine that whoopsie bee and NASA and Dev grew in some of these, you know, high, high, very well supported financially, organizations. Well, technology has advanced so incredibly well that about a year ago, they were able to put that technology on a smartphone app. So now, you can lie there. And this is what I do in the middle of the day, the mornings is meditation, but kind of the punctuate the day or and I always tell the responders to punctuate a shift, you come off 24 hours, take 20 minutes, you literally put on a sleeping mask and headphones, and in your car and a bunk room, you know, wherever it is, and you just listened to music for 20 minutes. And it takes you almost like either say they say dancing around where you sleep, but not. And it downregulates. And there's other programs that are longer that will do even more. But I mean, one of the most amazing technologies, and I didn't have any confirmation bias. I was meditating and doing all the right things before. But such an amazing way of also downregulating I mean meditation, and those things work well. But even work with some monks in LA and they said, man, we're able to get into our meditative state so much quicker with your technology. So if you haven't, we're talking about downregulation. That is an amazing, amazing tool and even used it traveling, you know, on the plane, you know, changing time zones or being jet lagged. It's been absolutely, absolutely amazing. And then the focus side, they have one where if you're working, you put it on, you're trying to focus on writing a paper or whatever it is, that works incredibly well, too. So even some of the upregulation there are excellent. I'm

**o** 1:59:18

really interested in that, you know, one of the most interesting talks that I ever went to, it was at the International Leadership Association Conference, and it was a combination of a neuroscientist and a Buddhist monk from Nepal. And they were both working at I think it was Emory, outside Atlanta, on what's going on in the brain when you're meditating. And I just love this connection between ancient wisdom and modern science. And then trying to simplify the science so that you can teach it and helping people connect the dots brains in their bodies, I asked a Master Chief Petty Officer of Seal Team Six, about which kind of breathing II thought was more important, you know, like, I always teach for seven, eight, which is for in hold for seven out for eight. That way, breathing out longer, so that your parasympathetic is invoked on the outbreath for a longer period of time than the than the sympathetic, or box breathing, breathing, which is commonly associated with the seals for in hold for for four out old for four. And he said, it doesn't matter. The differences between the people who do it and the people who don't do it.

**J** James Geering 2:00:42

If they're the same with a weight with their training routine, isn't that the one that works is the

one you stick to. Exactly. Yeah, brilliant. All right. Well, just to wrap this up, we've talked about the website for all the courses. What about you specifically, if people want to reach out to you? Where are the best places online?



2:01:00

You probably just go to our Rochelle at President or I'm sorry, at all American leadership.com. And you can also find me, then I've got, you know, a whole bunch of my background there. I don't have my own website or anything. I do have my own LLC, integrated consulting. But if you look it up, you'll probably find some oil company in Texas or something. And I don't have a website. I have been too busy for that. It's in my Sunday realm.



James Geering 2:01:31

Absolutely. Well, Ray, I want to say thank you so much. Firstly, I think this is a much more fluid conversation than me as an interviewer six and a half years ago, but we got to really delve into some areas that we didn't before we you know, some of the storytelling and kind of go through the journey a little bit more. In interestingly, and obviously, the last time it's a different dynamic completely, but some of the takeaways, some of the stories, the the solutions, and the success you're having within my community, I hope is going to inspire and excite people listening, because there is a disconnect between promotion and leadership training. And I think that you guys certainly have a solution. And as you come out of the pandemic, with some of the fragmentation of organizations and communities in general, some of the things that you guys offer, I think, are going to be healing for the individual as well as the uniform itself. So I want to thank you so much. You've been chatting for over two hours now. So for being so generous with your time today. Well, it's



2:02:29

been a joy and I hope I hope there's something in here that's useful to someone. So thanks so much, James. I really appreciate your time. It's been fun.