

Sean Evangelista - Episode 833

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SPEAKERS

Sean Evangelista, James Geering



James Geering 00:00

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much for taking the time to come on the behind the shield podcast. I know we chatted quite a while ago, this was the perfect window for us to finally have this conversation. So welcome to the show.

S

Sean Evangelista 03:37

Yeah, 100% I'm stoked to be here, man. Thanks for inviting me on. I think it'd be a good conversation for sure.

J

James Geering 03:42

Absolutely. Well, I did watch your short film, the dark edge and seeing that and the vulnerability of someone who operated at the tier one level in the military. I think this is going to be a very important needed conversation. And that parallels a lot they've been on here already. So as we sit here now where on planet earth are we finding you?

i

04:03

I'm in Montrose, Colorado right now. It's like the western slope. If you picture Colorado square, the Rocky Mountains going right down the middle on the western side of that, like the current uncrowded side of Colorado, which is pretty sweet.

J

James Geering 04:15

Brilliant. Well, I would love to start at the very beginning of your story, and we'll get to why you're in Colorado. So tell me where you were born. And tell me a little bit about your family dynamic. what your parents did? How many siblings?

i

04:27

Yeah, sure. So I was born in downtown San Francisco in 1974. And my mom and dad had me they didn't have any other kids. A couple years after I was born. My dad basically just walked out on us. He was pretty heavily, you know, involved with drugs and alcohol and kind of bouncing from job to job and making lots of promises. And eventually, one day he just walked out and just literally just left and then that left my mom and I had a pretty tough spot. We ended up lose Seeing the place where you're living in because he left because he was the other source of income, you know, hit or miss when when he was working, you know, when he wasn't out partying or doing whatever he was doing. And we ended up homeless for a few months where she was just, you know, asking friends, if we could just hey, can we can we crash the living room for a little bit. And this was around when I was, you know, three, four years old. And so I don't I don't really have a memory of this time period of, you know, being homeless with my mom. And when I say homeless, we weren't like pushing a shopping cart and like living in shelters, and she thought about going to shelters, but she didn't want to because of the dangers there. And, and she had, I think, just enough friends that would, you know, could help us out. And so we started doing that in San Francisco. And you know, she was, my mom grew

up with music. That's how she's made a living. I mean, all the way up until this day is She's a classical pianist and an opera singer, and she was a soprano. And so classically trained, and so she got an opportunity to audition for the Jim Nabors show. If something like a lizard lizard, remember Gomer Pyle. Right, Jim Nabors. He's also you know, he's a pretty good singer and musician, and he had to show at the Hilton Hawaiian Village in Waikiki. And so my mom's friend, I think, nudged her kept pushing her to go try out. And so my mom tried out. And it was the trial was for a two week gig to sing with Jim Nabors, which would like kind of get you in the spotlight a little bit like people like Carol Burnett would go in there. And and so my mom just thought it was such a long shot. But like a lot of things in life, we think these long shots are like we were not worthy or that we shouldn't do it. Well, my mom said, Okay, with another friend. I'll go do it. And I'll come back and I will make it now. And then you can shut up. While she goes. Not only does he she make it, he has such good chemistry with it. He says, You know what? He says, I've been kind of thinking about bringing on a second on my show. Would you like to join me permanently. So we're going from like, literally couchsurfing, like with nothing. And we were just like, we're struggling immensely, to. Now. She's got a job singing with Jim Nabors in Waikiki. So we moved to Hawaii and then my mom. And then like, you know, that it was it was awesome. Like, for I don't remember the moving that part. But this is I remember the stories of yours, her telling me like what a relief it was to have that after going through things with my dad. And we thought we everything was gonna be on the up and up from there. But like life, life treats all of us, I don't care how much money you have, where you come from. It's a cycle, there's always cycles, there's always ups and there's always downs. And every up doesn't last, and every down doesn't last, even though we want the ups to last forever, you know? And so you got the job started working, you started making money, and we're like, Okay, sweet, now we can get our own place. And that was awesome. And then she she meets a guy, a local there in Hawaii, and you know, was wining and dining or like, in love with her because she was a musician and, and so they ended up getting married. And it turned out that it was he was a complete sociopath. Like he was a seriously physically and mentally abusive personally. So they got married, and we moved in with with Ray. And it was Jacqueline Hyde, the person who was before they got married, it was a completely different person than after they got married. Right. And this is when I started to, this is the where my memory starts entering where I start remembering things like I remember these years when we were with Ray. And I think, you know, at this point, a couple years had gone by she was working, she married Ray, I'm like seven years old ish, right around there. And he starts immediately getting super jealous, if you think he was probably extremely insecure, and he starts beating or like, I mean, very violently beating or, like it was bad. And you know, he would rape her beat the shit out of her. And I remember just sitting in my bedroom listening to this happening, like, What the hell is happening? Why is this going on? You know, like, it was, I didn't know what do you think when you're seven, you just don't have a lot of examples in the world other than what's currently happening to you. So I guess, you know, I'm like, well, maybe this is just what life is like, it's just terrible. And that went on for about six months. They were married together, they were together for six months. And the day we left was a was the the craziest day out of the entire six month block that we were with this guy. So sort of being the shit out of my mom and they got a huge fight. He grabs me He fills me up on the table. And this isn't a film I talked about this in the film. There was me on the table and then like, like Alien read the Bible or something like you knows about like the you know, you know that one of the one of the patriarchs of the Bible throws his son up on the table like, oh, well, we'll cut them in half. So he does that. He goes like well, if you want to if you're going to leave then we're going to split everything in half. picks me up putting him on the table pulls a knife out and like we'll cut him in half to you take up I'll take half and he's holding me down on the table with this knife and like, like I remember this. This is like, I don't remember feeling anything other than pure We're like darkness and terror. That's all I remember feeling. I didn't, I couldn't do anything. He was a strong dude. And my mom, she

just real call me just says Ray Put the knife down, she gets me grabs her purse and we go out, we get her vehicle and literally drive away with what we were wearing. Like we there was no packing of a suitcase. And then he started following us and and then we're like, Okay, well, at least we're away from him. Then my mom met some other friends there in the community that like really like helped us out, put us up in their place. And then we we ended up shooting, renting your own spot. And then things started to stabilize. Couple years later, she met Paul, who was a sergeant major in the 25th idea infantry division. And they started dating. And he was awesome, super stable. And then that gave me something like look up to because I'm like, Okay, this dude at first, you know, I was little, obviously a little, you know, little in trepidation. Like, I don't know who this person is. So you start to develop these walls, right? Well, it turns out, he was an awesome person. And he still he died a couple years ago. But he's a he's a great man, you became like, the first role model in my life, really. And that's what the connection with him being in the army and he was in Vietnam, he was in the loops. And he didn't tell me a lot of stories and he never encouraged me to go in the military, but he would he would answer my questions. And so I would go to the base with him every once in a while I get to see what he did the base and stuff and I was like, that all started to represent to me like security, doing the right thing, being a good person, having a team like having people around you that support you and you can support them. And I'm like, This is it like this is this is amazing. And so that I started thing about the military thing and you know, years went by and we ended up moving back to the US back to back to San Fran. He got stationed at the Presidio a lot you know, some people remember the Presidio is still there in San Francisco, but now I think it's a national park at the time it was it was an army base. And we went there and then went with the you know, what up there High School in the high school in Maryland, we ended up moving Georgia and Maryland and in high school. There's a bunch of stuff I just skipped over in my life, right? Like it was just stuff that happened to me like I was in the boy scouts and like ran and like our assistant Scoutmaster was was a complete pedophile. And so me and a buddy, you got wrapped up with that dude for, you know, he was a better part more, probably two years or something a year and a half ish, sort of timeframe where he was like, kind of abusing us. And in a nutshell, the first time it happened, we went to his trailer of course, it's in a trailer park, right like some seedy fucking trailer park. And but we're looking up there was assistant Scoutmaster, and like 13 years old or whatever. And we get in there, he starts feeding us Jack and Cokes. He puts porno on the TV, and then he starts taking us back in the back room and trying to have his way with us and doesn't Yeah, so we've ran into that. So that was like another incident. That not incident it was a it was a time period where we're getting abused by this guy. And like it started to add on to like the mental. I was putting a mental like fortifications I would say, where I became, I came to the point where I didn't trust anybody. And I was started to get really violent. Like, I was sitting in your super defenses I was everything that I cornered dog would do. Like that was me. I was a human being that was a corner dog. Right. So everything I see I started to see as a threat. And then, you know, we'd love that was in Georgia, and then we left got in high school and in at that point, you know, there's there's been a bunch of other stuff I hadn't covered, we'd be talking for hours. But it was pretty pretty. I would say I was I was isolating. You know, when I got to high school. I wanted to fit into a team environment. And I tried out for I wanted to try out for for high school for high school football. But I had missed I missed the cut off. So we got the high school and like all night talking to Coach like he just missed, you know, you missed August, you know, two days. He's like, you can try it again next year.



14:11

So I was like, Okay, well, should I miss that? Well, so then I joined this search and rescue group

and it was an E SARS. It was it was like a branch of the Boy Scouts, the Explorer, the Explorer, so it was the Explorer search and rescue. And that was where I got my first real taste of outdoors. There were two guys in there. And they were climbers. They were rock climbers, and I had heard of rock climbing. And then my freshman year and I started meeting these guys and like everyone in the search rescue group like respected them because they like bend to Alaska. Like they went to a nose course in Alaska. I was like these dudes went to Alaska and climb like holy shit. That's amazing. And so I started to like look up these guys. I'm like, Yeah, we do like you want to climb on like definitely yes. When are we going? Let's go Glen. So they went we went to like Patapsco State Park I think in in Maryland or Virginia, Canada. which, which part that is, but we set up a top rope, we started doing it. And then I was in search and rescue, and I was like, This is awesome. I'm going to do this and met a really good a mentor within this search and rescue group at the complete opposite even though it's associated the Boy Scouts, it was the complete antithesis of the experience I had in my younger days in the scouts. And P McCabe was his name he passed away, but he ran that explorer search and rescue group and he made us fucking tough. I'm talking, we would go and climb in the White Mountains in New Hampshire in February. So New Hampshire, the White Mountains in New Hampshire, if you ask people that know about mountains, they know about the White Mountains in New Hampshire. They're not the big, you know, 14 years we have in Colorado and all that. But at one point for a long for decades, they had the highest recorded wind speed on Earth on the some of the Mount Washington. And so Pete was like, I'm gonna take these kids up here, we're gonna get tough. And so we've first year we go, we climbed Mount Madison in the wintertime, and we're wearing these big Mickey Mouse boots that you would see in like a world war two black and white films. And we're like, trying to like strapping crampons onto these. They're basically like, they're balloons on your feet with thick rubber. That's what they are. And so we would go back every year we do winter training up there. We were not sleeping in hotels, we're sleeping on a frozen river that's like popping and cracking all night. Intense and you wake up and it's 30 below zero 40 below zero 20 below zero in the morning. So you get up and like everything's frozen, right? And equipment back then we're talking 1988 At night it was not like it is today. And so we really got tough doing we went there every year and and and so a buddy of mine, we wanted to become climbers and Mountaineers and started reading like rock and ice magazine and in climbing became a high school. My thing like that is what like it. Like I just let it engulf me like I just went down that road. And I was so happy on it. At the same time that was also reading a lot of books about like Special Forces and stuff like that. And so, going going through like high school, we were so inspired working these other friends, my friends and I started making personal trips up to the White Mountains and tried to claim we wanted to get mountain Washington in the wintertime. And the fifth trip that we had all made to the White Mountains we made it and three other attempts we got blown off, got lost in the white out still to this day, the most scared I've ever been in the mountains was on the Washington winner attempt. We got into a white out we in you could hold you could put your arm out and touch the person in front of you and the winds were blowing. We were above treeline there. When we turned back all these times and one time that one time we got the light out it was it was kind of terrifying. We know GPS back then, right? We're just looking for cars, the rock stacks, well, I can only see to the tips of my fingers pretty much so we just start heading down. And we had heard stories about like there's a climber named Hugh Herer. He had he had a similar thing had happened to him. We were we were taking the Lions Head trail up that splits to ravines, there's Huntington's and Tucker moments. You don't want to go into either during a whiteout. Tuckerman is a super steep Huntingtons on goes into like a huge forest with no civilization. And that's where her went and got lost for a couple of days and ended up losing his legs below the knee. And that story was in my head while we were in this White House. And we're the why that why don't your 11th grade in high school. So we got down, we went up the next year and we made it at the end of high school. I'll back up a little bit in high school. I kind of barely graduated. I was like, I didn't

care about going to class. And I wasn't I wasn't stupid at all. I was a pretty intelligent kid. I just didn't care about it. And I also had a big problem with authority, which is odd that I went into the military but Special Operations is a little different. So it was it was a tough, it was tough enough to where my guidance counselor, he got me into that. Remember that Scared Straight program where they would take school kids, they would take him to a prison the prisoners, you know, intimidate them and be like, you know, I was in your shoes. If you keep doing what you're doing, you're gonna end up right here. And what we'll really did that on a Saturday went to Jessup State Penitentiary in Maryland. And we went right in there. And it's a maximum security prison. And we were all pretty like, ads gonna be a good time on the bus. And on the bus. It was all the troublemakers at school. There was like, 2025 of us on this bus. And it was like, Oh, you're all the kids I know from detention, getting suspended. And like we're always seeing you in the office, right? We were like, the shitheads of the school 100% And so I was like, that was the first like, real reality check was like, Oh, I'm in this group, like, like they see me like as the person I'm with these people. I'm one of these 25 that are basically the kind of the worst of the kids in high school. They just, they just haven't been expelled yet. So we go in there and we were bowled until all the doors started shutting. Behind us could do good dish, good dish, all these signals and officially, you know beeps. And currently a guy's talking to walkie talkies. And we're just sitting there with just our jeans and a T shirt and we got real. When we got in there, they yell at us, we sat down at these, they were like picnic tables in this big block. And these guys that came out that had been in there for decades and decades, and they basically described us without even us even talking, they're like, Let me guess you guys are doing this, this and this, you're, you're breaking into things. You're doing small thievery stuff because you think it's fun. He's like, Yeah, I was doing that, too. And then pretty soon I was stealing cars. And then they, they basically just described our lives up until getting to their point, sitting there in a maximum security prison talking to us. And it was like, holy shit. These guys know exactly what who we are like and what we're doing. And that was a sobering thing to me. So after that, I was like, I need to at least put some thought and effort into maybe cleaning my my thought process up and get some goals, like for real and figure out what I'm gonna do my high school. For me, college was never it was never on my plate. I just didn't want to go. And I my philosophy was later on in life college will make sense to me, probably. But right now, the way I am and the way things are going, I have no interest in doing it. And it would have been a total waste of my money or anyone's money to send me to college. And so I had a decision to make senior year, I was either going to move to Jackson Hole, Wyoming, and it was Jackson Hole, because that's in the magazines, they had a lot of public, they had a lot of like photography and stuff out of Jackson Hole. And that's really, like 1992 91 that's where all the extreme skiing was happening with Jackson was like the hub of us extreme skiing and mountain things. And I'm like, I gotta go to Jackson, or I'm gonna go try to become a seal. And I still didn't know on graduation day of high school, I still didn't know which way I was gonna go. And I was right there at the doorstep. It's like, Hey, dude, it's time to make a decision here. And so that I graduate high school the next morning at 06, I flew to Alaska to go to a Knowles course and National Outdoor Leadership School. That's my parents sent me there, because I wanted to go to Alaska. So they signed me up for this as a 30 day Alaska mountaineering course. Two weeks into that course, we were just sitting on the Chugach glacier, we're up there, and that you guys mountain range, kind of south of the Alaska range where we're Denali is where most people know where Denali as we were south of that. And so it just, it just basically became super clear to me, I'm like, No, I want to go, I'm gonna go try to make it into the SEAL teams, I'm gonna go for it. And my mindset was not, I'm gonna go, I'm gonna make it because I'm me. And I'm badass. I never had that mentality. I my mindset was, I'm just gonna go and I'm gonna give it everything I got.

 James Geering 22:45

Now, why, why Navy SEALs are not PJs, or some other group that maybe does a lot more mountain stuff.

 22:53

Yeah, it was. It was the books of the books that were written about the seals in Vietnam, like in the Mekong Delta, that I really started getting into that. And there was the thing that attracted me was the guys in the book, like, the things they were doing were like crazy. The missions they would do were like super dicey. Very crazy. It was pretty much all offensive operations. They weren't like training other armies, really, it's a fight, they will just go set ambushes and the Mekong Delta and just, you know, fight VC and NBA. And that attracted me and then how the the bugs course was perceived, I perceived it as being like, one of the most difficult military selection things, you know, around, so I was like, Okay, well, this is gonna be one of the hardest things. And so I like, I want to see if I can make that because I wanted to, I wanted to test myself to see if I was capable of being a unit like that, you know. And it was if I got to the Navy recruiter, and they said they wouldn't give me some sort of contract saying that wouldn't go to the fleet wouldn't go to Hayes great underway and go float, and they, they wouldn't say we'll at least get you to the Naval Special Warfare Center at Budds to check in as long as you don't have an alcohol related incident. You pass all the tests, we'll send you there. If they didn't do that. I was gonna go Green Berets or marine recon one of those two or Rangers. So I had I had like a plan A, B, and C and D. So I didn't go in there with one plan, that if they shot that down, all my hopes and dreams would collapse. I've been fairly good about having a plan BMC in my life, not because I'm smart, just because I'm paranoid about bad things happening. So I'm like, Well, I'm assuming something bad will happen. So I'll have a plan B and Plan C. And so I just decided to go down that road and then we two weeks later we get out we got to Alaska, or we get out of the Alaska that you got dreams, get back to Anchorage. And I literally go to the recruiter in Anchorage going okay, I'm ready to join the Navy. I'm ready to go to buds. So how soon can I leave? And they're like, where are you from? I'm like, Why live in Maryland? Like, oh, man, we can't sign you up. You're not an Alaskan resident. You got to go to Maryland and talk to those guys like well, can you just call them? Because like, literally I wanted to go to the Navy from Anchorage. Like, I don't need to go back. I can go now. Like,

 James Geering 25:10

I got my backpack with me. Yeah.

 25:14

So they're like, no, no, you gotta go. So I went back out and delayed entry program and they went in and you know, went through buds and then I ended up making it through, didn't get rolled back. So a lot of what happens in buds in any of these other selection courses, a lot of guys get hurt. And they'll get they'll get rolled back to the next class and kind of join the next class roughly around where they left their, their, their class. I didn't get rolled back and made it through. And then I went into the teams and this is the 90s. And it was great for a while but it actually got really boring the 90s to be in the military was pretty boring, honestly, for it was for

all of us. And like everyone I knew was pretty much kind of getting over it because there wasn't, there wasn't this, this is gonna sound maybe like kind of crazy with this, the reality of it. There wasn't a war going on. There was Bosnia, there was some small things happening in Bosnia. But those were only like the top tier units and I wasn't there yet. And so I ended up getting out, I left the Navy in 1998. I did six years in the Navy. Five of those were at a SEAL team got out moved to Colorado moved out here to Fort Collins 98 started doing commission sales like like outside and inside sales for a cell phone company, which kind of sell like, Okay, I figured I'd open like, okay, I can talk, I can talk to people, I'll just do it. Let's figure it out. I actually did really pretty well at it got bored after about a year, I told my wife, Hey, would it be okay if like, we just went back into the Navy. And she's like, what? I'm like, Yeah, this is I can't keep doing this sales thing. It's so it's just not me, I don't want to keep doing it. I can't do it. I mean, I was making decent money. And I was the one of the top sales reps actually, just because I was I had a family at that point in kids. So I had to make money, like there was no like, oh, I don't feel like selling something today, like I had to. Um, so we went back in and went back into teams, we went to the East Coast, and did went through to three teams in East Coast. And I finished my last decade at like the top tier unit. And that last decade was your post 911. running and gunning, go and you know, just constant combat deployments. So you're training going back to combat training, go back to combat Iraq, Afghanistan, other places over in that region. And, and then then, like, that was a May that time period of that war was when I saw myself, all my friends on the team, like literally 95% of people get divorced, and become different people. Because we we became different while we were overseas, and we started to change the family that we had before the war kicked off, also started to change. Because they were living under a an extreme level of anxiety. Because you know, watching the husbands and a lot of cases, you know, the wives who are who are service members go over. And it was real, you didn't know and son, sometimes you go into plan and some people don't come back and people that aren't yet and people we knew really well we're getting killed. And and so the stress of that started kind of family started falling apart divorces were just like happening, like, I mean, like, all the time, like every almost everybody know that divorce. And it makes sense. When you look back on it, you're like, you know, back home, they're developing, you know, they're they're raising the kids the way that you know, they see fit, and they're they're running the household the way that makes sense to them. And it doesn't make sense. And then we come in, and we're like, Hey, why is all this happening? And they're like, whoa, pump the brakes here. Big, big cat like I'm running the show here. You come and go all the time. Don't mess up the system. And they have a good point. Right? So yeah, so then finished that, you know, got out of the military right at 20 and moved immediately to the mountains. As soon as I got I moved to the mountains and moved to Ketchum, Idaho, Sun Valley, Idaho, where there's a ski area and all I wanted to do, the primary thing I wanted to do is I wanted to get away from big populations and I wanted to go in the mountains and be and just be still and go skiing. And I just needed to like I needed a place I guess to heal mentally, and the outdoors. For me, we're always that place. And I think for most people, even people that don't know it, that's the place that they should spend a lot of time. And so in that was in Sun Valley, live, you know, I was there for eight years and then I ended up moving to Colorado about a year and a half ago because I started working on Mount Got certifications and I needed to get good at climbing. And it was hard to get good at climbing and catch them. Because there wasn't a lot of climbing right there in town that was easily accessible. So it's hard to go in, like, Hey, I'm gonna go climb for two hours and come back and do some work kind of thing. So basically, I moved to Colorado to help get good enough so that I can get into these guy courses so that I can, you know, keep working on my mountain guide certifications for skiing and climbing, all that sort of thing.



 James Geering 30:20

Well, I want to go back to buds I mean, you open the short film is kind of a, you know, a montage of of what Bose was like. And a lot of people on here talking about that don't want to spend too much time on it. Because there's 1000 documentaries. Now, however, you've had this little boy who's had so much trauma from your near death experiences to sexual abuse, you have this amazing role model that becomes your father that adopts you, who is a military member. And the your passion is climbing and then you enter the SEAL teams and there's a lot of aquatic events in you know, buds and selection. What was it that allowed you because I know you weren't a behemoth of a man, you know, you were kind of like my size, basically a little bit smaller than me. What was it that allowed you to progress through and graduate when so many people did ring the bell.

 31:17

I felt I felt I had this feeling that I was going to beat all the bad things that happened to me and become something. So that gave me a lot of endurance to like, take pain. So I was really like, in a good in a weird way. I was in a good headspace to make it through something really difficult. Because I had been through difficult things. And I'm like, Oh, this other Spring is in the water. At least I'm not in a trailer park with him with a fucking pedophile. You know what I mean? Like, like, this isn't that bad. So it's all relative, right? Like what what some people go in that might go into buds that might have been the worst thing they've experienced, like the most discomfort, the most anguish the most mental physical challenge. But if you've been through worse, it puts it in perspective for you. And it gives you more endurance to take it I think if you choose to let let things like trauma like that, if you choose to somehow help it fuel your fuel you in a positive way. And I don't think that's super easy, I think you you just you take that sort of that energy and it's the energy there. For me, it was always a combination of extreme hatred, distrust, and a drive to save myself from ever feeling that again, and wanting to become a strong and basically an indestructible person. So that it could not be hurt, which is not possible, we can all be hurt, look, you're who you are, you know. And so going through it in my head, at the low moments like and how we can all that. We went, like, all my friends quit. Like all the guys were like, We're all gonna make it we're trying together beforehand. Everyone didn't make it was really fun, because there were some really good dudes. So I made all new friends, but you know, in that process of, of going through it, you I just wanted to let myself become the person that I needed to make it through. So losing friends, just keep enduring. Just keep putting one foot in front of the other, do your best every day, even though you have your super low days where your knees are swollen and you can't keep up with the pack and they're gonna drop me you just keep going. Even if you're running one mile an hour, just keep plodding and let them tell me I can't do it kind of thing, right? Don't volunteer it would make them kick me out. And they never did. I mean, he tried but you know, making it in the the thing was, is when I did that documentary, a lot of guys, I knew the teams have a very, very similar like parallel path in life that I had growing up. I just had a guy texted me two weeks ago that I know who's a team guy. And he goes Dude, I'm so glad you did that Doc because like, pretty much that's what happened to me growing up and like I was watching you was like watching basically a parallel of my life growing up and so we find like in these communities, cohorts, right because seals be able to go to seal these as like a cohort of people. There's a lot of crazy kind of childhood things that most people don't talk about. But after you meet guys for a decade, we share stories and stuff and I'm like No shit. Yeah, that was my childhood was like it was a lot less of your high school quarterback with a pretty girlfriend valedictorian, coming from a very stable Chuck, you know, family. There was a lot less of that than I expected when I when I got in there and people were more like me and I had that feeling like when I got to the mountain

buds, but when it got to the team, like oh, I mean I kind of I found my people here I'm like these people they're like me, they're like, I know people that would go to punk shows like I used to go to punk shows and DC and the 930 Club and and I get found my people in there. was awesome. Like, I loved it, it was, it was the best. Yeah,

J

James Geering 35:04

doing this podcast and interviewing, you know, initially I'm obviously I'm a firefighter. So that was the, the initial thing I thought I was going to be talking about. But as I started, and I realized, well, there's so much value in the military and these other professions that may just expand this, this lens a lot wider. And so I started seeing commonalities with the stories of men and women in uniform. And when you look at it, if you want to bury down trauma, than subconsciously, you're going to find a profession that is, you know, high energy, high adrenaline, because you don't have time to think about it. Maybe if you're, you know, accounting in some office and you're self employed, maybe you got time to sit there with your thoughts. But if you're being screamed at, in a, you know, fire academy or in buds, and then progressing through where the incidents are life, you know, life threatening is very little time for dwelling on the past. You also have the armor element. And the better I get at the skills that I mean it is the tougher I become, whether it's combat, whether it's firefighting, whether it's, you know, the paramedic side, but then it's also that subconscious voice as well, I think where that afraid little boy or little girl is that I don't want people to feel like that anymore. And I think that's where the real service and empathy comes from. Even though I was hurt, I don't want anyone else to get hurt. So I'm gonna go down this road. So then seven years later, you and I have in a conversation today, the number of people that have the stories, some of them are extremely acute, some of them are less acute, but there's still that feeling of trauma that sends so many when men and women into uniform. And I think where we do a big disservice in the first responder of mental health conversations, is we don't ask about the time before you put the uniform on.

U

36:48

Yeah, yeah. I agree. 100%. Yep. And, and you don't know when you're in the room with people doing the same progression as you, you don't always know their backgrounds. But if you dig into it, there's a lot more commonalities in the background growing up that got them there. Same kind of things got you there. And you're like, Huh, well, we kind of have very similar things in the background and most ended up as firefighters or Commandos, odd, right. Yeah. But I that feeling of not wanting other people to feel like that Robin Williams has as a quote, and I'll butcher it, but somewhere along the lines is some of the most depressed people become comedians, and they want other people to feel good, because they don't want anyone else to feel like they feel. And, you know, obviously, obviously, you know, Ron Williams struggled with depression his entire life, and then ended up ended up winning in the end, right. But it's that same kind of feeling like you're like, I know what it's like to not be protected. I want to protect people because not being protected is is it's not really an option. I don't want to see people go through that. And so you want to help and and it removes like the money making thing also, like what I was in pretty much my whole life, I've never gone, I'm going to go into this profession, because it's going to make me a lot of money. I've never thought like that. It's just not the way I think I don't I don't think there's anything wrong with thinking like that. Because I don't think is anything wrong with wanting to make a bunch of money. It just wasn't

my drive. And it was never a driver for me. And it still, it still isn't to this day. I mean, it is, you know, once I get my, you know, Maslow's hierarchy of needs taken care of maybe some extra cherries on top, I'm good, right. But, yeah, wanting to protect people want don't want people to feel like you felt and it can make some really amazing first responders and military people, because you're willing to do a lot in that job and take risks, to ensure that you're number one kicking ass in your job, you're, you're an asset to the team, you're protecting your teammates, and it feels amazing to do that. It really does.

J James Geering 38:53

So you're one of not very many people really whose career I've had on the show has spanned either side of 911, especially transitioning out and then going back in again. Talk to me about if there was any at all, you know, what kind of training focus there was pre and then what your 911 story was and how that shifted through your eyes as far as tactics, training, etc.

i 39:18

So like, I think all militaries not just the US military, but we we look towards the most recent conflict, and we get our we get a lot of our training methodologies and tactics and techniques and procedures from the previous conflict. Well, you know, prior to 911, and the previous conflict with me, there was the good the Gulf War, but we're talking about like a significant decade of heavy combat was Vietnam. And so we would have people in the 90s that, you know, we'd have some trainers that were in Vietnam, and so we did a lot of things focused around the ways that they fought in Vietnam, right, because you didn't know what the next war was going to be. You know, what's the next war going to be? Arctic is going to be in the desert. Is it going to be everywhere it's gonna be the jungle. And all those places are really hard to train to be to be adept at and, and to thrive in. Like, if you've never been to the jungle, like you go to South America, you think it's gonna be one thing, the jungle, the jungle will kick your ass and like 12 hours, 24 hours, you got sores everywhere, you're like, everything's trying to bite you, you've already stuck your hand through blackpoll multiple times, you got infections, like, it just starts to erode you immediately. You know? So, like, those getting getting like, the opportunity or like the, the, the to like train and like to do something in all those different environments, I think it was an enticing type of thing. But go back, what was your question? I want to make sure, Amelia?

J James Geering 40:47

Yeah, it was it was how did it pivot? So what what was your 911 experience through your eyes? And then what was that shift your training for Vietnam? Now all of a sudden, that landscape is very different.

i 40:57

Yeah. And so it's kind of funny, like when I'm on 911, when 911 happened that day on 911, we were at a training thing, and we were doing a jungle training thing like to train for the jungle. And we found out what happened. We were out in the field for a couple days. And we didn't

actually come back on the field for three days until like, 915, I think, or for 914 ish. But we were told I'd rather this exercise this what happened first, we didn't believe them, then they like no, this isn't part of the exercise. This was really happening. And then we went back to Virginia Beach and just started, we just were just like, Okay, what are we doing? who's doing what? And then the focus was, okay, well, it's Afghanistan. Right. And there might be some other spots too, because we're gonna go and try to crack the whip on, you know, we're gonna shine a light in Afghanistan. And basically, for lack of a better term, all the bad guys are gonna scatter with the light comes in, right? And so there's gonna be a chase, like a global kind of thing going on, probably. And so we at that time, we were not a top tier unit, we were just a regular regular platoon. And so we still ended up deploying, like we ended up not going to combat on that deployment. And we were all super bummed, right, we were like, it was it was a huge bummer that we didn't go over Afghanistan, or at least go on, you know, one of the Navy ships that was heading over in some capacity just going over to where it was going on. And then the as the war unfolded, we were all and I'm talking to coalition is not just the US learning on the fly and learning live. And so like, okay, Afghanistan, is it the desert? Yes. Is it the mountains? Yep. Not really jungle but so like, okay, so desert mountains, altitude, right, and then training, you start training for that environment afterwards. And then Iraq was basically just mostly desert there's some mountains in Iraq, but not like Afghanistan. And so we started looking towards literally old books would come out on desert warfare like back to like, World War Two World War One like, wow, you know, just to learn things that they may have. No, I mean, yes, we have way better technology and all that, but you start studying, okay, it doesn't work or history. What are we like, what? What works or what doesn't work? Well, we know that you know, 1980 when they tried to desert one, they tried to rescue the hostages in Iran. They didn't have the right filth sample, there's only helicopter right? And they flew in the sands got sucked in helicopters went down. Little things like that, like how do we how do we get around in the desert. And so we started learning to fly and, and we would, we started sharing information with our within the unit and other units as well. And it got to the point, there were so many missions happening, that the whole holding close, and like not wanting to share things with other people, because you're trying to, you're competing for the very few morsel of missions that might come down, right, and you want to grab it immediately. It was not like that there was so much so many missions, it was just raining missions. And so we were sharing ideas like hey, we've been doing this, this doesn't work this kit works that one doesn't. And so it a lot of back and forth sharing with the UK forces like no coalition us, other other branches of the US military. And it was a it was a we're all in this together kind of feel because we definitely were. And so that's kind of where the changes started to come and just learning how to fight new environments and fighting an enemy that was similar to Vietnam because they weren't always wearing uniforms in Iraq and Afghanistan. They were almost never wearing uniforms of those wearing uniforms. A lot of times weren't actually part of the you know, IP Iraqi police or the and a Afghan National Army. Maybe they were maybe they weren't. So is it was that who's the bad guy who's not kind of thing, right? It wasn't, it wasn't the cut and dry. There's the bad guy and his bad guy uniform will shoot him. Right. It's a confusing battlespace?

J

James Geering 44:42

Well, you ended up joining the tier one unit and you know, not again exploring what they did and all that stuff. But I think the real takeaway that parallels fireplace and I think there's an important perspective is from the other men that I've spoken to. There's an element of r&d when it comes to that, you know, you guys are at the tip of the spear and finding the best equipment, the best tactics, the best weapons, you know, whatever it is strength and conditioning, nutrition, rest and recovery. Talk to me about innovation, you're now in this spot

where, you know, the team that you're a part of is hopefully raising the bar when all those parameters to make you even more efficient. What was the mindset on moving the needle when it came to that in that particular group that you are in?



45:28

So we were we were very fortunate to be in the group we're in because we were, we had a lot of leeway in creating new things and questioning current tactics, where if you take a conventional military unit and pretty much anywhere in the world, like a conventional military unit, your individual you know, you know, private sergeant, you know, you're, you don't have as much say on what that unit is going to do. Because there's no 510 1000 people in that unit, when you get it down to where there's dozens or 100, or a couple 100, you're more agile. And in that that is what it requires to be innovative. You have to be small, because trying to be innovative. In a massive organization, it doesn't matter if it's corporate America, or a massive armored unit in the military. Those big things are like big tanker ships, you're like, oh, we need to flip a UE like, okay, hold on, that's gonna take about an hour, right? Whereas if you think SpecOps, we're basically in we're basically on a jetski. We're like, oh, we need to flip a you can do it in 1.5 seconds. Right. So we had speed, and we had the permission, and we had the funds. And we had the, I would say the we had the clout to where we were believable, because generally, we're a bunch of pretty experienced and capable intelligent operators and commandos at that level. And so we could question everything from every uniform items we wear every day, to the tactics that we've been using, and changing those tactics as war goes on. Because every war is involved, the changing of tactics during the war, if, you know, there might be some more they didn't say psychics, but I would imagine that they probably that that mentality gets people killed in droves. So we had that authority, where you, you'd see like, a direct example of that we'd been being Iraq, you know, it'd be like whatever summertime and you see a marine center on a street corner at a checkpoint. And he's wearing you know, it's, it's 130 degrees outside, he's got full wraparound armor, you know, he's got his sleeves all the way down big, heavy cotton, and he's wearing all of the required on paper equipment, right? And it all does have a purpose. But it can also become your coffin because you heat stroke, heat exhaustion became super real. And so we would offer like, Hey, do you want like, I can get you all kinds of gear, like, I'll give you my stuff, man, because you guys have a really hard job standing here in broad daylight in a defensive position, waiting for a car to roll up for the for fertilizer, right? Their job fucking sucks. And a lot of those guys will get killed, and they don't even see the person to kill them. They didn't they didn't even see it. It was a blast. And they were gone. And but they're like, we'd offer more stuff. And like, I'd love to have this but we can't wear any of this stuff. Like it's not authorized. I'm like, Well, do you want to like not get heatstroke like, Well, yeah, but we have rules and stuff and like, and so that right, there is an example of the difference between agility and you know, your big, slow moving ship that doesn't adapt fast enough. And I was very glad to be on the Agile side of like the US military effort, for sure.



James Geering 48:41

So I want to put to you the question that that I asked everyone who saw combat and again, it's not about delving into, you know, specific events, but the more of an overview for the civilian. And the reason is, we get a very polarized view of war through our screens from 1000s of miles away. So it's either very, very pro war stalking bodies that got them sought them out very anti

war there or baby killers. And then we have, you know, our men and women, children, arguably sometimes that we send overseas who see and do things, you know, and it's not often reported. So regardless of the politics in this could be any of the arenas you found yourself in, regardless of the politics. Was there a moment when you did you know, witness atrocities or whatever it was that you realize, okay, this this particular action is justified at this point.



49:29

Um, so there was, I mean, yeah, we saw like, you know, doing like, you know, I guess dozen combat appointments. You see awesome things like, you see, like, really great, awesome, like heartwarming things happening, or you really do and then coming from our side and coming from the Iraqis of the Afghani or you know, some of the other spots that we would go to. The, the thing is, is realizing that, as a military person, you have to Swallow this pill and everyone has to Swallow this pill is that we are not politicians, and we don't make policy. We are a tool in a giant toolbox of the United States government. And there's a bunch of tools that they decide to pull out. And the politicians are the ones who pull the tools out. We don't pull the tools out, and when they serve, but we do want to be 110%, ready to execute, when they when they say, Hey, you guys, we're going to use your tool to solve this problem. Our job isn't to go, hey, yeah, but have you thought about how this is going to impact? That's not our job, our job is to go Roger that. Get get the mission and figure the best way to do it. And then we go and do it. We don't like debate the politics of it, or the rightness or the wrongness of it. I mean, we do on the side and all that, but the end of the day, you're you're on an order to go do something, and you can give some pushback, when you're at the higher levels, you can tell, you can tell braestrup, they're like, hey, in so many words, like that is a stupid fucking idea. And here's the reason why. Because you're spending most of your time in the Pentagon with three screens in front of you, and you're not here on the ground. And the reason we're not doing that is this. And if you can articulate it, then it's soul. Right. And so, realize you're not a politician, you just go and do the best job you can. And that's where, you know, you hear like, when you get to war, you've heard that you share this in movies and everywhere else, pretty much as you end up fighting for the people alongside you. And that has a lot of truth to it. Because when you're there, the commitments already been made, you're already on the ground at that point. It doesn't matter if you want to be there or not, you're fighting for your lives a lot of times, and not most of the time. But a lot of times you are fighting for your life. And so your job is just to get back to the base that night. And you're going to do within reason what it takes to get everyone back to the base that night. And going and going through that, you start to get this pole where you start seeing bad things happening or you'll you'll go in after a bombing right? And there's, you know what, what it would be like if after a bombing with people involved, right? And you go in there, you see these things, and you're like, holy shit, like, okay, yeah, there was some bad guys here. But you know, I'm pretty sure like, you know, these people in Detroit here, they don't look like fat guys, they look like they're fucking 10. You know, I mean, so that becomes a little bit of like, What the fuck are we doing here? Like, can we be a little bit better? Like, how can we? How can we crack the whip and just as like a precision like the US military crack the whip versus Oh, there's a problem in the country. Let's go build a 10 army bases there and get a bunch of tanks, let's basically just move into this country, which is I think, most of the time an extremely stupid idea. When you look historically, an occupying army just can't last we get worn down, right? That's just a throughout 1000s and 10s of 1000s of years, like occupying armies don't do well. Because it's hard to sustain. And our goal, there was not hey, we're gonna make you know, Afghanistan or Iraq, the 51st and 52nd. State, there was never the plan, right? So we got to the point where I called the crack the whip through what I just mentioned, I'm like, you know, maybe we should have done is just identify, like, the peak problem kids over there that are

causing the problems and just crack the whip, just get them. Right, and then come back and not try to move, you know, hundreds of 1000s of troops and live in that country and and wonder what's going to happen What the fuck do you think's gonna happen? People that didn't even not like us before? Definitely don't like us now because we're in their neighborhood. And we just bombed their fucking friends, you know? And so they're gonna fight us and now we have more enemies, right? And, but while you're there, you don't have those thoughts and those experiences you always just push them to the back of your mind because it it matters but for you in that time in that moment, it really doesn't matter you're fighting so you go fight you do the best job you can you try to do the best that you can on target like while you're when you're pulling the trigger and when you're making decisions. Everyone else with like literally trying to make the best decisions that you can that night like is that a shoot target? Is it not? I can't tell. Can you see that guy? I don't know if he's got a gun or not. You know, so, like, we spent a lot of time trying to do the right thing for sure. You're kind of torn because honestly, the job while you're doing it, it's an amazing job. And we loved it. We love going on deployment, because you're doing what you trained to do and you feel good with the people you're with because I'm like, Dude, I'm like Carl is not going to lead me anywhere so many bad habits. I mean, he's going to eat like he will his legs will be off and he'll still be trying to drag me to safety right the dudes are going to back you up. So going in with that sort of strength with a team is amazingly empowering. And so we wanted to go and do good and we wanted to get the you know the get the people that were, you know, a direct threat to the United States. And then we did that we're doing that first where you're the target deck is like super important high up people and then pretty soon you're kind of just going after gangsters. Right. You got the dude's got seven series BMW and Mercedes. He's in a mansion like and you get the guy he's literally wearing gold like he's on like he's on some hip hop video. Like Seriously, like, they're gangsters. And like this guy is like, definitely not like a Muslim extremist. He's just getting money. And he's bringing in suicide bombers and ripping them out dude, like blast themselves, right? But he's just, he's just getting rich. So like, I hated those guys More than I ended, like, you know, you're you're 17 year old kid who just rolled in from Saudi or Yemen to join a cell so that he could martyr himself. Like the kid is like, he's basically just been on boarded, like, like a gang kid in a big city, United States. They, they recruit, just like they recruit from just like gangs recruit, you find a kid from an unstable household, maybe dads out there, that bread earner is gone, hey, you join us, we'll just keep saying a little money and your family will take care of them, you know, and you'll get a chance to become a hero, you'll be a martyr for the cause. And that's a hard thing for you know, 17 year old kid doesn't know anything different in his life, to turn down. You know. And so that's how a lot of those a lot of the the young people that would come and fight, they just got on boarded. And they basically were joining gangs with a promise of, you know, the standard promise, they're going to go to heaven, and they're going to enjoy the rest of their lives. And then the family gets money, and then everyone will look at them, there'll be like a little devoted spots somewhere in their household to his martyrdom, you know. And so weeding through all that you get to the point where it's such a complex problem, and it's so fucked in so many ways. You just go well, back to the tool thing, when they tell us to do something really good, go and do and do the best job that we can that night, and, or that day, or whatever we're doing, and let them figure it out. And you know, that's it, that's when we contrast with Vietnam, soldiers come back from Vietnam and spin ship, their mom and baby killer thing and all that, when, you know, all those people that went there, they got drafted and went over, and a lot of them were poor, they're like, I don't have any money, like, I'm gonna get some money. If I come here at least, and I can send some back home, or go fight, maybe I can gain some respect from a group that I fight with, you know, and, but now we have, it's a lot better now. So like coming back from the war nowadays, there's so much support in the US for, like, I don't think anyone knows how many pro veteran groups there are in the US right now, I don't think anyone actually knows that number, it is a lot. And it's awesome. Because there's a

lot of support out there. And it's gotten to the point where I mentioned this, I was chatting with a buddy of mine, Andy, it's, it gets, it gets kind of to the, to the point where you're, you're like, you get a little bit lost, I would say, with what you're doing and who you are, and who you're gonna be common. What are we doing over here. But at the end of the day, we, we all knew the mission were we held to that 911 thing, like, let's go get the guys that are part of this, and then the cells that are growing, because our presence here and all that. So we stayed focused on that. And that's a that's a very respectable target to keep going after, because it does represent a direct threat to the United States that yeah, we should go get those people. But you don't need to move an entire military into another country and take over an entire country to do that.

 James Geering 58:07

That mirrors what I've heard from so many people, that surgical approach, you know, get the targets, get the training camps, and then get out. And I think this is this is why we need to hear these voices. And I'll get to the kindness of compassion next, because that's another voice we don't hear. But even with this, it's like, there's sometimes there's a necessity. And we need, you know, as I say, a rough man to do things while people sleep in their beds, and women. But at the same time, I mean, I'm completely naive when it comes to the role of the military. But I can see if you move people into another country, that is now a breeding ground for enemies that you never had until you move into another country. So you've just made it exponentially harder to achieve that mission. And what I hear over and over again, about Afghanistan, specifically, just it's a single that out, so many of your community from all the different branches have said, our team should have gone in executed, you know, Mission X, Y, and Zed and then got out again, which is kind of like you know, if I'm on a roof of a structure fire, I go up there, cut the hole, and then get the hell off of them thing collapses underneath me. So you know, you get the people that are trained for that you send them in, as you know, with minimal visibility, they take care of it, you come back and then and then you know, and I'm simplifying it but that seems to be a resounding common denominator from so many people on here. And the reality was 20 years of occupation.

 59:31

That's good to hear. I like I like to hear the other people think like I think this is it makes me feel like I promised okay, this is like this is like a legit thought, even though I've talked about with my close buddies, but we're such a small group of people like it's good. It's good to hear that I'm kind of late.

 James Geering 59:48

So the other thing that we don't get on our screens is the kindness and compassion that is shown whether it's from our military to others, whether it's from the the indigenous people because you Again, the media does a great job of tiring an entire nation with the same brush. So we're at war with Afghanis Well, no, I mean, now, as I've been educated by people like yourself, Afghanistan has an incredible amount of tribes. And most of these people are being oppressed by you know, the, the extremists few. And so I hear so many, I mean, all kinds of

stories from us taking care of the dogs in Afghanistan, you know, the the veterinary surgeons in in the US military. So, you're, again, amid this map this battleground, what are stories of kindness and compassion that really kind of resonated with you.





1:00:38

So, some, some, depending on what your your your job was there, you may have seen a lot of that, or you may have seen, like, small amounts of it, I would say I saw less than maybe, let's say, you know, doctors that were over there, both military and civilian nurses, PAs, that went on med we call med caps, so they would go to a village and they would just say, Hey, where's the village elder, hey, we're just here to do medical stuff. So if you have anyone in your village that needs some sort of medical care, like we're not saying that you're limited by anything, just get in line. And then the lines like we'd see him every once in a while the line some of these med caps were like would be considered like blocks long, right? And people just lining up with with a lot of like very curable like very kind of simple problems that they just don't have the the technology the capacity, or they don't have the permission to get the medicines that's required because of ideology. And so I would say that those med cap people double edged sword, right, they went out and helped a tremendous amount of people like during the mid cap also be great time to build a well Alright, okay, let's drill Well, all right, delegates, you guys have better water and stuff. But then they would also see like, the bad things that were happening, people coming in with amputated limbs, you know, eight year old stepped on Russian landmine, you know, that the Russians dropped decades ago. And, and so I could see how being in that position would be extremely rewarding and extremely traumatizing. Because at the end of the day, when you you see a kid who's eight years old, I don't care what language he speaks, what color is he I see my son, I see my friends, kids that ride big wheels down the street. That's what I see when I see a kid, you know what I mean? And so the things that, you know, because we were our job was pretty much offensive operations. And so it was just just raids that was are we just doing raids, right? And so little things that you'd see guys do big, tough motherfuckers man, like, just just I mean, like Vikings, right? Like dudes are just burly big, huge, looks scary. And they are scary. Right? Like, you see some, you know, some bad guys got dropped, you know, they're, they're no longer living, they're laying out. And then you got to move the kids and the women from like, and they have to walk by them because we need to get them to another area that's safer, because maybe there's more there's a potential, like, explosive situation over here, or God needs to check for something. Right? So we've got to move these kids past what we don't know the relation between the kids that maybe it's his dad as Uncle maybe he doesn't know maybe maybe they're dudes, they just rolled in from Yemen did a house basically just did a home invasion and said you guys are going to houses here. Don't tell anybody because we're gonna go do activities that for the jihad. So you don't know. And so what is big burly dude, like take a blanket and, you know, throw and I would do it to like, throw it over a kid's head. So they don't have to see that. Who knows what else they see in their lives. But if we can maybe just save him from seeing if that's his dad right there or something like that. Even though we're like enemies, the dad, the kids, not my enemy. I don't want him to see that shit, you know. So you kind of protect their eyes and like, hey, let's get them over here. Let's give them some water and give them some snacks and give them a ball to play with. If they have them to play with play with something new. They usually didn't usually just so traumatized, like, crying they want to, or the look in their eyes is like they're beyond crying. They're just in their learned shock. You know? And so things like little little things like that really don't think they don't have a big impact, but they have like that micro impact where, you know, maybe the maybe someone there like saw it, and it was like, you know, these Americans, like why would they cover the kid or they don't want to see him like, maybe they're not

complete. Barbarians, like, you know what I mean? Maybe they're, they're humans do like like we are. And when you first go to war, right, you're just up you've been trained for a long time to do it right and you're ready to do your mission. Press your buddies, you want to be an asset to the team you want to pat on the back afterwards. You didn't get scared, you know, when the firing started, you're you were like there on the spot. So you want to do a really good job. And so your your your focus there is, you know, becoming an asset to the team as the As the years go on, and you've got deployment after deployment after when you start forgetting how many deployments that you've had, you become your mindsets a little bit different over there, you definitely are still going to be an asset to the team that never loses the number one position, right? You always want to be an asset to the team. But you your your judgment, I would say, and your sort of hatred for the people we're fighting. For me anyway. And for a lot of the guys I work with, it kind of that fire kind of gets tamped down a little bit. You're like, you know, at the end of the day, like, who's to say, if I grew up in this village, here in this town in the mountains, or were in Afghanistan, and I grew up in, like, literally, in a Taliban Village, I would probably be Taliban. It's not like, I'm some genius, like, No, I'm an I'm a born again, Christian, and I'm gonna go to America. And we're, we're really our products of how we're brought up, you know, I'm like, I'm like, What's the difference between me and that person right there. Like, he's 19 years old, I'm 28, or whatever it was at the time. 35? Or, like, there's not that much difference. We're both fighting, right? We're both fighting for what we believe in. Right? And we both believe we're right. Right. So and I still we're right, we're right, for the most part. And so that's a it's a more mature view. And it's an experience view. And it takes the little, a lot of the sort of patch on the back wore you out, we're fighters type guys. And it kind of for me sort of dumb, it's sort of like it dim that that light a lot where I was like, I don't really need to prove myself anymore and be a tough guy, I just want to do the best job I can for my team here. And keep learning, make less mistakes next time. And just be a good Commando, right and represent the United States and represent the unit that's down there Don't you want to, because you're, you're to them, You are the United States of America. And even prove it, we got a big old flag on our chest, we got flags all over the place, I don't know, like, like five flags going or something, right. And so you want to do the best job you can. And you look forward to getting back home to the family. And you think you're you haven't changed, but you're definitely changing a lot. And you don't see it, right. Because we it's hard for us to see ourselves and to be be real with ourselves. And to even somehow have someone help and get the visibility like, Hey, you're changing man, like you're and it's not for the better your family is maybe get a little scary you because you're you start you know, snapping really quick, you know, you're short with them, you there's the joy is gone, you don't do fun things anymore. Everything's like a task that needs to be accomplished. And so that's in my case, that's what happened to my family, like I sort of became the person that I became like, I suck the love out of the family. And so you still have that kindness and that, that, that desire to be a good person, right. But also you want to be a good soldier. So sometimes being a good soldier afterwards, you don't feel like a good person. And sometimes when you're a good person, maybe you didn't feel like you're a good soldier that night. Maybe you're too good of a person, you know what I mean? So there's, there's, there's no win there. Really, I don't think there's a win. There's, there's a, there's just degrees of right or wrong, you know, and you're never always right. You're never always wrong. But there's always wrong in there somewhere during war, like there's always something that are done better, or, you know, and that's when it took me a few years after getting out but started meditating. Even though it seemed like meditating, this is what all the weak people do, right? Until you start, like paying attention to like the athletes and the really impressive business people in the planet that meditate. And it was Tim Ferriss podcasts, and I've been listening to him for like ever. Where I first started hearing him talking about meditation, like, Okay, this dude's like talking about meditation. He's got some pretty legit people on here that meditate, you know, like, CEOs, one of the most successful

companies on the planet, and I was like, Okay, well, maybe there's something to this. So I started doing that. And it takes a long time to sort of shake your, your, your commando self, if you've been doing a lot of war, or you're a cop on the street and in a bad district, and you've been seeing crazy things for years and years and years. And it becomes normal to you. And so you don't feel like you've seen a lot of crazy things necessarily, because the people you're with have seen them too, until you start talking to other people that haven't and then you're like, oh, that the story was a little too crazy. I probably shouldn't ship

 James Geering 1:09:35
again, please stop crying.

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Maybe there was a bit too much like and I've done that before. I've been guilty of that. We're like, Okay, that was way too much. I shouldn't say anything. Now because it was classified as an unclassified information in those situations. But it's just gnarly. It's just brutal. And you forget that other people haven't not necessarily seen things like that. And so you start to find I tried to find your place to, you know, rent reenter the atmosphere of becoming a successful civilian. Right. And I didn't want to do anything past 20. So I got out and started meditating. And for me going to the mountains was where I needed to go to heal, I needed to go heal myself. And it was not going well for me like at the end, we, we had on my last, my last deployment was 2011, we have one of our ships shot down, extortion, one seven, we lost, basically half our team that was in Afghanistan. In one, in one, one operation, they got hit really thoroughly got hit, they went through a three RPG ambush and they hit the ground, and no one's arrived. And that was my it was already planning my last deployment. And then that happened. And that would just put me and then that combined with a divorce was going through. My kids didn't want to be near me because I was I become like a I became an asshole. Yeah, I was an asshole. I was I was short. And this isn't me realizing at the time, this is me talking to my kids and my ex wife years later about what I was like, because I believed I was good to go. I'm like, Hey, I'm doing a good job out there for the country. I'm trying hard, like, my intentions are great. But that's not who they saw. They saw actions of a person that I didn't think I was, but I was that person. And it took years for me to realize that. And so once, like I, I realized that I wasn't the awesome, really good person that I thought I was in the great dad and a husband. And I thought I was that was a really good thing for me to learn. Because I was like, Okay, what else about myself, am I not seeing that other people are saying, and so moving the mountains, doing the meditation thing, and sort of letting the letting that aggressive mindset sort of fall off of you. But it doesn't fall off at once it comes off in layers, kind of, and you can feed it and you will lose those layers. If you keep feeding it, you'll it will grow. It's almost like it's a fungus. Right? That, that that tension, and that wanting to be like indestructible, indestructible soldier that never gets heard, that executes mission that has no feelings, like you think of yourself almost like kind of a terminator kind of person. That's why need to be to be strong. And that is not who you need to be. Right? Not even in war, you don't need to be that there's certain times for that, like these slivers of time where you do you do need to be a machine, but 95% of the other time, that that doesn't help you in anything, really. And so once I found that out, I was already meditating. And I was already started doing yoga and started like to read other books and like, Okay, I need to figure myself out because all I know, is the being in the military for 20 years, and I was gone, I did the math was I was gone seven months out of

the year for 20 years. So my ex wife, she raised our kids, I would show up here and there and you know, buy tickets presents and you know, take them to hockey and do some dad things and then be gone again. So I was just a sort of an unpredictable dude that would show up sometimes. And I lost those years with them. You know, I gave those all of us that do a job that you're gone all the time. I mean, firefighters, those shifts are gnarly, 24 hours, you know, on 48 on and 24 offered that all those different combos, you're gone a lot, sir cops are gone all night, you know, firstly, to work in the night shift, you're not home. And so you you're creating a situation and you have that is not going to go the way you idealize in your head when you first started a family, because I pictured us like riding off to the sunset retiring together, we'd all move to the mountains and, and it was high five, and the family is great. And that's how we would finish life. And that did not happen at all. And it was my fault. Because I was the one driving attention. And I was the basically the source of the pretty much the troubles at home. You know, and not 100% But I would say probably 80% maybe more, right? If I'm being totally honest. And so the best thing, the one thing that I have avoided, and I don't know if it's necessarily a good thing, but for me, I felt like through the years since I got out this was healthy for me is I don't I don't engage a lot in veteran activities. And I have done it a few times. And I'm sure that some psychologists can explain this to me. I'm not trained in that whatsoever. But when I would go to those things, I felt like I was losing ground and going back and we would sit around and drink and tell war stories, right? And I felt like every time I did that I would lose ground the ground that I've made to heal from war I feel like I'm like okay, I just went right back and I'm starting over again. I feel the same feelings. I'm frustrated. I'm not sleeping, being xiety is fucking crazy. You have like, all these scenarios, these hundreds of scenarios playing in your head that you've been through, you're watching people die, you're killing people. And you're living in that in that state, it's a state of stress and tension. And it's unhealthy completely. And I'm sure it leads to disease, it has to like, I mean, sure, it's not good whatsoever. And I know people that don't leave that and they you get so you can get stuck in it, you get stuck in the bottle, you get stuck, if you start doing drugs, to like, distract yourself. And it's a people have to do what they think is the best way to heal. And for me, I decided that I'm gonna go to the outdoors and skiing and climbing and get back to what I was doing in high school that brought me so much joy and so much happiness. And it also fit well with the military. Because in the military, you have a team, you're doing something dangerous in the mountains, as a team, you're doing something dangerous. It takes planning beforehand. So you got maps out software programs, you're planning a route, you're checking the weather, it's like, it's a little miniature operation, like going in, you know, not going like, you know, climbing rock, like down the street kind of thing. I'm talking like going to Alaska or going to like bigger, doing bigger things, it is pretty much just like going on a special operation. There's not a lot of people, limited resources, you got to go quick. And the margin for errors, or the margins are kind of Slim, you got to kind of nail it or bad things can happen. And so I like that aspect of climbing that it's still it doesn't pull me back in a negative way. I take the tools and push them in my mind, like in a positive direction. So I take what I learned in the military doing that. And now we're doing this for something positive, we're gonna go climb this mountain or get up this, this hard ice line that's hard to climb or something like that. And that's rewarding. And so each person is different. And I don't think that has gone through jobs that have trauma and dropped jobs that are really heavy on you and your family. You have to find the path for you that feels right. And not everyone's path is going to be the same. Some people should go to veterans groups regularly, maybe weekly and chat with guys. Maybe that's the part of their healing process they need to do. But you need to find that the one thing that I guarantee is not the way is heavy drinking and drugs. That's a temporary it's like, yeah, you'll feel good. Real real real briefly. It's like It's like putting a BandAid on a gunshot wound. You know, the bloods gonna come out? Yeah,

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we talked about Tim Ferriss as someone I listened to him and Joe Rogan Barbell Shrugged in the squad room of the four I was listening before I started this. And Tim, I love the way Tim interviews and he's very different than Joe Rogan, he put those two together, I think you've got a pretty, you know, middle of the road, which is kind of how I try and go, but you hit the nail on the head, you were like, I tried meditating, because these high performers use it. And this is the thing, one of the problems with the mental health conversation with the guys and girls that haven't bought in yet, is like, alright, so you still believe that it's weak. Let's shift for a second. We are in in psychology and neuroscience. To get into a flow state, you have to have a clear mind. So you want to be the absolute top of your game and a tier one organization or as a firefighter or a police officer, then do the same things that the athletes that you love doing same things that some of the most successful business people do. And this is what's interesting is it's not about just undoing some of the trauma in your head, it's moving the needle on your performance as well. So you don't have to go Oh, I think I'm healed. Now I can start meditating. Meditation, new calm is a new thing. I just discovered, you know, all these things, they're going to keep benefiting you. And I'm sure as a climber, I'm assuming that the more calm that your mind became probably the better climber you became to

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100%. Yeah, 100%. And seeing seeing examples from the pro athletes are very successful business people. It has legitimacy. So I'm like, Okay, I'm gonna, I'm gonna listen, I'm gonna listen to at least listen to him. And when I started meditating, I didn't get it at all. I'm just now starting to get it like eight years later, because I would be like, I don't know how to do it. Right. And then you're watching these videos on how to meditate on YouTube. And like, this book says, You're doing it wrong. And so you get worried about doing it wrong, but don't want to just resign myself to is like, I'm just gonna sit here. I gotta tune out all this whole how to meditate thing. And I'm just gonna, like, just sit here and I'm gonna think of a bunch of crazy things because I can't think about nothing, because I don't know how to do that. And so now, I'm learning that that is the point of it, right is you can sit there and let these thoughts come in and just let them go. Don't don't come in, grab it, box it up, nail it to the floor and start yelling at it and dealing with it and getting stressed out about it. Just go okay, that's that's the thing right? There was let that slide right out the other side. And then what that does is what I've noticed, I just noticed that this year actually, what it does is it gives you mental durability, for problems in life. Because when you sit there, it's a lot of times those problems while you're meditating and if it's like Really quiet in your house or wherever you're doing it. They become kind of loud like, Man, I don't know why I just thought of that even thought of that in three years. And that is a crazy thought something had happened you. But in that those thoughts, they almost want to come into your mind and then anchor in like a parasite and grab you again and be like, Nope, I'm not leaving. But meditation like teaches you like, No, it's okay. You don't, they don't have permission to like, take up space in my head anymore. Like you have to let let that happen, right? Just gonna let it go. And so realizing that that also gives you mental turmoil in other places in life, like in climbing or dealing with, you know, stressful problems that happen in business because, you know, I'm an apparel brand and so like, was stressful problems happen I get, I literally can feel like, okay, here comes one problem. And I used to, I used to like go, oh, shit, another fire to put out of course, right. And then almost like you have this victim mentality. Like, of course, that's happening to me today. And you start to get rid of that little bit of like, reactive victim II mentality, everything is always going to be bad and you have a better

calmer, like reasoned, look at the problems of life, because the problems are never going to stop coming. There's times when they'll come faster and closer together, and other times where they're like, further apart and easier, but there's always gonna be problems, we don't get rid of the problem. That's what we're doing right. And even then, I don't know.

 James Geering 1:21:20

Ex Wife is up and having like,

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in in the one thing that I keep saying one thing, but this is another one thing that I did have, and I feel really fortunate that I had it is I easily had goals. I I never really struggled with having like actual goals, because I would pick something that would excite me and it seemed really hard. And so getting out of the military, I was like, I want to get on ski patrol. I didn't want to ski so like I gotta look over husky, it'll take me a couple of years, you know, I work on it. And all I can all they can do it. Tryouts is just telling me Oh, you didn't make it, you know, try again, whenever we hold trials in two years, or whatever they they do it. And so my goal is going to ski patrol and then that gave me drive. So as soon as I got, you know, out to the West Coast, I had to drive basically patrol, so ski like 100, over 100 days a year. But I wasn't completely healthy. I was also sitting at the bars in town, most days of the week drinking gallons of beer, and cocktails and just drinking every day. And then I was getting fat, right? I'm down like down to like my low 180s right now. But at that point, I was like to 25 You know, I was I was heavy. And I was also still lifting weights, because that was what we did a lot of squats deadlifts, like big three lifts kind of thing. And I'm like, I want to get faster in the mountains, when 225 is not super conducive. And all these mountain people around here that are mountain goats, none of them weigh 225 You know what I mean? They're all like lean, fit. And so it took me it didn't take me years to like, kind of get out of the bar scene where that was, my social environment basically became hanging out at the bar, right? Let's see my friends at the bar every day, like cheers almost every day you go to a bar and you start drinking. And I don't do that anymore. I still I still drink but nothing like I did back then. And so that was you have to heal yourself. Really. You can use input and people can tell you everything. But ultimately, you're the one that drives past the bar doesn't Park and go in, right? You're the one that goes not not today, I'm gonna go I'm gonna go on a run today, I'm gonna go to the gym. Not today, I'm gonna go on a hike, and incur like little tiny changes over time is what I found myself doing, which I did not want to do. I wanted everything to change immediately. I'm like, Okay, I'm gonna stop drinking. And then so I would go knee jerk on everything, right? I'm gonna stop drinking. And then I'm gonna just start training and then I would I would stop drinking, I would last for like two weeks and then start drinking again. And then it would be back into bars. Right? And so then I it wasn't by design. It might have been like a combination of like, reading some books about that process. But I said, Okay, I'm just gonna try to do one good decision for my goal today. Like what can I do? I could not. I'm gonna instead of drinking six beers, I'll drink two and go home. And then eventually I stopped just being at the bar, right? And then so eventually, you find yourself in a better position you're like, oh shit, it kind of worked. But it took like seven years you know, because sometimes it's not as fast as you want especially if you're like a stubborn asshole like I am. You know, I want it now and I want it to be instant and we all kind of do to a certain degree. And so those small changes started to add up in that is one of the biggest things that really helped me was having a goal in like doing just one thing today that's going to

be a little bit better towards go into getting towards that goal. And then am I got remarried is awesome woman Tamra, my wife and I've been together six years and she's recommended I started taking guiding courses because I was rock climbing a lot and ice climbing and skiing a lot just like winging it, like just starting guide quarters and from a mountain guide. And I was like, That's a great idea. I'm definitely doing that. And then like I think that night I signed up for my free Of course, like, I was, like, that's such a good idea. And I thought about it, but having her support, it meant a lot to me. And then it was like, okay for me to do that like, right, I was like, okay, I can go like, go do it, because it's going to involve not being at home, right. And I was kind of hyper aware of not ditching her at the house all the time, like I did my first wife at 21 years, I was gone seven months out of the year, I didn't want to, I don't want to become that person again. And so having the goal of becoming a mountain guide, now it's, it's become something like extremely healthy for me, because, like, I have, like a training program I'm doing and I have all the gold climbs that I need to do to get me ready for the next guy course kind of thing. And so if you don't have those goals, like if I got out, and they didn't have like, a lofty goal, and the goals have to be lofty, like you should, it shouldn't be something that you think about and you go, Oh, if I could do that, fuck yeah, I don't know if I can do it. But man, if I could do that, that would be something study something else, like it would put me in a really cool place in life. If you don't have that. I think one or two things are happening, you just haven't thought hard about what brings you joy in life. And maybe you can't see what brings you joy in life. Because you're so miserable from past experiences. You don't have the space to feel joy anymore, right. And maybe you're just not ready for that. And the other. The other thing is, you may be trying to live a direction of life that other people want you to live. But it may not be healthy for you anymore. If you come out of something, and hey, you're you had the chance to go join a law firm, but you have no interest in become in being doing lawyer work anymore. Because you're you were miserable doing it before, but it makes money and you want to do it, you have to balance Hey, yeah, you do have to make money. But you also can't be completely miserable. Because you're if you are coming to miserable, you're not going to be good at that thing anyway. And so finding what brings you joy, and also figuring out a way to make money while you're doing it is important. The whole follow your passion thing is great if you're a trust fund kid, or you just simply somehow have money, right? But you have to make money, especially if you have family, right, you have responsibilities. And then you have what's a good healthy thing, if you're trying to find a line those two is really difficult is difficult. And especially in the early years, when you're fresh out of coming out of really shitty situations where you need to heal, but it's doable, and everyone can find it, you just have to find your version of that and find a balance of producing money. You know, so I can have a good living, I can have medical insurance. So my kids and wife can have medical insurance kind of thing. But then also doing something that I'm passionate about that really brings me a lot of joy that maybe doesn't involve them. You know, I'm saying

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James Geering 1:27:38

I just made a video today because I had some inertia come in, I had everything from the hurricane coming in. So there's an element of preparation, my son turned 16, I was preparing him for his driving tests and getting his birthday ready and having to catch up on interviews. And my wife's been going through some stuff. So it was just one of those things where if I'm prioritizing, there were things more important than driving all the way to the gym and doing an hour and a half workout, you know, etc, etc. So I got in and I was still doing I coach a class every week and I take part in them and I was still doing jujitsu like once or twice a week. So it wasn't like stopped completely. But that guilt and that shame of like, oh, you're supposed to be doing X, Y and Zed every single week. And I just went in today and I moved for 30 minutes or

the wolf brigades programming and you know swinging mesas and doing kettlebell stuff. And so I'm like, this is a really good time to make a video not when you're crushing whatever movement it is, you know, and looking good and your hair is done everything in my head look fucking mess, and I was sweating. And I was just like, I just showed up and did some stuff. If you fall off the wagon, it's okay. And as you say, I did the point. The reason I'm saying this is, you know, you get some people's perspective of Jocko David Goggins? Well, I need to change everything. I'm going to start tomorrow, to underline what you said, choose one thing and do that and then you build up a routine I was you know, abstaining from from drinking, I was meditating every day, I've found this new calm thing between foundation training for my back, I was doing really, really well. And then I just, you know, hit a wall and a week and a half went by and I was like, fuck, I kind of the wheels fell off this. So you just go pick up the wheels, and you put them back on and don't beat yourself up because whether it's you know, your addiction, your your health journey, your stopping cigarettes, whatever it is, the only thing you can affect us today, and you don't have to start at the intensity that you fell off. It's okay to have a little on ramp as long as you said in selection, one mile an hour as long as you're still moving forward. But I think with this Instagram highlight environment that we live in, it's like well, you know, it's all or nothing is that you know, if you've if you had momentum and it stopped for whatever fucking reason it's okay just to do go back to how you started before. Then we do two beers instead of four and and work your way back up again.



1:30:02

Yeah, yeah, there's a, I just watched this two days ago. And this is a, it's like, this is the, the most legit that I've seen video about why you should meditate. And it's a documentary but Jerry Lopez the surfer. And so Jerry was called Mr. Pipeline, right? And so I didn't know this about it was like never well I've never I lived in I live in Oahu. And you know, when I was in the Navy, I actually lived in Holly Eva and the North Shore for three years served all the time. I was not good at all. But I was good enough to serve up there on medium days, I would say. And so the Jerry Lopez documentary, they show pictures of Jerry, right and pipeline it to this day, if you just like watch people right pipe, like there's all kinds of different like body styles, right guys are like super active super tense. But the thing with Jerry was, he would meditate on the beach before he would go out. And people would like make fun of him because he was meditating. And it was like not a tough guy thing to do. But then you watch him drop in the pipeline, right? And he would just go, you'd stand up. And then he would just be motionless. Like his upper body. He wasn't like, Oh, I'm in this huge barrel like it was there was no like, panicky stuff. He was he did yoga, and he meditated. And he would just stand up and watch him. And he was like, just standing there, like he was standing on the street. But you know, there's, there's this angry barrel behind him. It's just like, trying to eat him. And he's just standing amongst this completely chaotic situation. And the reefs only, you know, four to six feet below your feet of pipe. It's right there, like people hit it all the time, and people die hitting. But he's standing there, completely calm, like he could like, like, he could light a cigarette, you know, and I'm like, that is what meditation gets you. I just saw that two days ago. I'm like that right? There encompasses calm mind in a storm. And you get there by by meditating is one of the ways you can get to that. And it's probably the most common way to train your mind, I would say to get to that point where you let things go. And you just focus on what needs to be done. And don't waste a bunch of energy, mental or physical, doing a bunch of stuff that doesn't add to the direction you're trying to go. Right you become more efficient, and more calm and kind of a cool person to be around obviously.

 James Geering 1:32:11

Well, the way that is portrayed in the documentary and in a way, you know, you've told the story today, there's clearly an acknowledgment, acceptance, an element of healing about your early life. What you talked about climbing, he talks about meditation, how did you start unpacking not so much, even though I'm in the combat as well. But those early years when you have so much trauma? How did you get to this point now where you're able to be open and vulnerable and accepting about those elements as well.

 1:32:41

The first time I told anyone about what all the things that happened to me as a kid, I've been married to my wife, I want to say for about 14 years. And I told her, I started to tell her one day, like I got to talk to you about something that probably has a lot to do with the way I am. And it blew her she was like holy shit. Like we've been together 14 years, dude, like, because I just like, there's nothing I can do about it. So I'm like, well, I'll just, I'm just gonna leave it there. And hopefully it'll just die on its own. It doesn't those things don't die on their own, you know. And so I talked to her, and then it felt good after that. And then after that, I started sharing my story in appropriate situations with people, right? Or if somebody would ask me, and it felt better, because you're kind of like, like even talking right now. Like you're offloading that tension a little bit. But then also, I started to see, the other side of that is, maybe there's value from someone else hearing about this, that's gone through what I've gone through, and probably worse, that's out there that needs to hear someone like me, not because I could easily like my public persona, because I have an Instagram account, I could easily just be flexing all the time and showing myself lifting weights and be tough guy, right? And just be like I was in the teams are badass. Like, a lot of people do that. And I know who they are, like, unless I'm like, You're not that forget that I shut the fuck up. But I think being being more real, because it just feels better to me, just to be honest, because I don't see there's any value in putting out there that, hey, look how good I did. I was in the Navy for 20 years. I made it through selection courses and look at me, no one gives a shit. It's not me. Yes, it's okay. But let me do there's so many people doing so many impressive things out there. I think what you want to do is if you have something to tell, or you can provide value and maybe help someone else out of the situation, so they don't have to like go through as many dark years as you did. Because a lot of people they don't make it through the dark years until they find a way out a lot of people they don't make it out to the light they kill themselves. Or they drink themselves to death. Or they they just become destructive right. And everything they do is like they're just self destructing. They're not going to blatantly go and kill themselves but they're just waiting to die. You know? I know people like that in In a way, I had a lot of years, well, I was like that to where I would just feel like if I died, right, like, I'm not really a very happy person. So fuck it. You know, it doesn't very unhealthy place to be. But I think once I talked to my wife, and then she may have actually mentioned like, you know, if you have a chance to tell people about this, it might help somebody she might have told me that actually. And so now let's get into the documentary on K rom studios, they contacted me and I said, Hey, I'm not going to tell you guys like a bunch of Seal Team stories. There's like 12,000 books and movies already. Like, there's no value in anymore. Everyone knows what we do like your Commando, and you kick doors and you do whatever. I said, I'm willing to talk about other things that might be interesting and might be of value to people that Congress similar to me growing up and they said, Okay, well, let's chat and see how it goes. And so I basically just put the wall up of things I wasn't willing to talk about, and then, but they were still willing to say, Yeah, let's let's, let's see if there's a story here that we think is interesting. I'm like, okay, so we had a bunch of zoom calls, and like, there's a story

here, we're gonna do it. I'm like, okay, cool. I was really relieved, because I thought for sure, as soon as I said, I'm not gonna tell one SEAL Team stories, they're gonna go, oh, well, we'll go find someone else that will. And there are guys that that will do that. But I've gotten contacted by so many people after seeing that documentary. And literally just today's gonna get contacted by someone else. Like, dude, that is me. Like, I'm looking at my life like that. Not exactly, but that's pretty much me. And I'm so glad you said that. They're like, I've never told anyone about what happened when I was little. I never told him about my struggles. My kids don't know. I'm going to I'm going to I'm going to talk about it to somebody, or at least go get a therapist or a counselor. And so I need to offload this because, you know, I'm drinking, I'm slamming, you know, half a fifth to a fifth of vodka night. Maybe not directly because of that, but that is in the mix of the energy that's driving that mentality. And so I'm stoked that we did it. It was seriously nerve wracking to have that phone come out, because I'm really exposing myself. But I don't care really like if someone what somebody's gonna say to me, like, oh, you're a pussy, because you, you told everyone about your weak side. And I don't know that person exists. I'm like, I don't even care about that person. I know, there's, I know, there's someone out there and likely hundreds, if not 1000s, they're gonna go Oh, my God. This dude can talk about it, I can at least go talk in private with someone professional and start healing myself a little bit and maybe become a better person for my family and my friends, and fucking get healed and live a better life and be happier and have more of a joyful household, you know?

J

James Geering 1:37:36

Absolutely. So one last area, over and over and over again, positive common denominators, really showing themselves after you know, 800 plus interviews, when people have been able to navigate whatever their darkness looks like, whether it's actually you know, near suicide or not quite there. One of the most healing elements is realizing that you can serve another way. So you were a firefighter, you know, you wore the uniform, you were clearly serving on an engine, you know, every time you got called out, you transition out, you're lost. And then you find your church or nonprofit, whatever it is, and you realize, oh, I have I've got a different costume on, but I'm doing the same thing. You find yourself testing for ski patrol. So firstly, talk to me about that journey in and then was there a healing element about being of service again in that capacity?

o

1:38:28

Yeah, it was. It was an amazing experience. So I got there. I knew one person when he moved to Sun Valley, my buddy Mike Torres. And so I moved to Sun Valley. And my funny story, I told him I was gonna move to Sun Valley because he, at the time, he was working for Smith Optics, so And like, I wear goggles, and he was out of the team in Virginia Beach, like with his Pelican case showing his wares and I saw skiing stickers on his laptop, and I'm like, I'm getting out in a year and I'm gonna move to Truckee, he's like, Why are you moving? Truckee? I'm like, I don't know. I just liked Lake Tahoe. I was like, Do you know anyone there? I was like, Oh, he's like, why don't you come on, check sunvalley out, you know, you can come out, you can stay at my place and just come and see what you think about the area. So I did. The first day I was there. I was like, I'm definitely moving here. So I told him like, Hey, I'm moving there. He's like, Yeah, cool. I call him when I'm in Ohio, literally driving and I'm like, I dude, I'll be there. I'll be there in like two days. He's like, beware like, well, Sun Valley movies. Like, wait your mood and like,

yeah, All my stuff's in my truck. Like I'm in I was towing an RV. I had already gotten divorced. My wife stayed back and I'm driving and he's like, holy shit. So I get there. He's like, you know, does it forward? I'm like, Yeah, I want to go ski patrol. So I just need to, like start skiing. At the time. I could snowboard like very mediocre snowboarding but super tall doesn't take snowboarders at most resorts just because of the mobility, the mobility factor. And so I just got a season pass and started skiing. I started meeting people and then they were like, what do you what do you train for again, like I heard you're like trying to get on like a you're trying to skip. I'm like, I'm trying to ski patrol. And like, we can't you're skiing sucks. I'm like Yeah, no, I totally suck. Like, well, you'd like come on man, let me and like these people like that helped me ski like Waylon Barrett was on the first guy said he's level four psi like ski instructor like, you know, people pay me \$800 a day to teach them how to ski. He's like, let's go, I'm gonna help you ski. So we started out in pizza, you know, you got pizzas, french fries, on the little bunny slow, these little kids ski and backwards, the ribbon past me. And that's those moments where you're like, well, it's just a new world. And I'm not the top dog at all here. So I'm just gonna just suck that up, you know, and then just kept going and just kept doing it year after year. And after three years of that I'd probably have definitely had like maybe 333 and 20 Something days of skiing, and they held trial. So they want to try out every year. I said, Well, they're holding trials, they gotta go for it. And it was literally like a dude there with a clipboard like number 45. Go lose like ski, a mogul field skin, easy groomer ski the trees, get it to bog and ski with that thing. And they're like judging you and giving you a score the whole time. And then I ended up making it. And I didn't make it because I was a good skier. I was in the lower half of the pack on skiing ability. Because most of the people trying out were ski town people like they've grown up in a ski town. They like ski I grew up on a ski racing team. So like their form is like, flawless, almost right. But I think that they were honestly they liked my background coming from a special operations unit. The way I carried myself there, the professionalism, and them knowing that I knew how to work in a team. I knew how to get a job done. And I wasn't there to show them how great I was at doing a backflip on skis. Because ski patrol doesn't even should about that. It's utilitarian, four wheel drive skiing, they don't need Ferraris they need they need off road vehicles. Right. And so I made it and then getting on that immediately back into a team every morning, you go up, you're up before sunrise, you're making coffee, you're getting a morning brief, it is a lot like being in the military The Morning Brief. What's the mission for today? What are we looking out for? What's the avalanche risk? Do we gotta go? You know, is it a control morning, we're gonna go throw two pound penalty charges and try to, you know, mitigate the hazards in bounds. And, and we get to use, you know, like it just mentioned, we could use explosives, you know, you go out and two man teams and you go out and test look at the snowpack and see if it's stable to open up certain runs and things like that. So you have a missionary day. And it's awesome. Like, it was it was it was so good. It doesn't pay shit, right, you're poor as hell, like you're not making any money. But every day when you wake up, you're working with great people, for the most part. I mean, there's shady people, every organ, they're shady people in every organization on the planet, right. But the vast majority awesome people great experience. And I did it for three years. And then it was kind of time, I had to make a choice between my business and being on ski patrol. And it was a tough choice. And I had to give up ski patrol, because my business required more of my time. So I was you know, I did the adult thing, essentially.

J

James Geering 1:43:00

Well, speaking of that, I think there is a lot of value as well as a lot of people wear a uniform, that the organizational stress is arguably sometimes more traumatic than the things that we've seen and done. So when I transitioned out the fire service to do this full time, and again, he

talks about being poor start a podcast, it's a great way to be poor. But it's that burning desire is that service is trying to you know, fix problems and make a difference. But at the same time, so fucking liberating, to not have to answer to the dickheads of the world either anymore. So talk to me about 30 seconds out and your kind of entrepreneurial journey up to today.



1:43:43

Yeah, so even before I got into the Navy, I knew I was gonna get out at 20. And, and so my two years before I got out, I started you know, going, Okay, I want to I want to get something together, I got to figure out what I'm going to do next. And I knew it wasn't going to be training firearms training tactics, because I didn't want to teach the tactics that I knew. So people like I thought the tactics that we learned were for our unit and for our unit only. So I'm like, I can't go out on a range because all I know are our tactics. And so I didn't really want to do that because I'm not really uh, I have guns, but I'm not I'm not I don't still go to the range or anything like that. Like that was never a passion of mine. Even though I looked at weapons in the in the United States basically like just just tools. No, I'm pretty much I didn't want to contract and all that's that was like the easy button like easy moneymaker because we had security clearances. There's any number of companies coming from the unit that I was with, you know, you can get on a lot of places and, and make some decent money, but I didn't want to do that. I'm like, I gotta figure out something different. So I was reading the paper. It was we're in Virginia Beach, and we're like there's a startup competition in Norfolk, Virginia. And so I'm like I tech startups, and I'd already started to listen to Tim Ferriss podcast already read four hour workweek, right? So I'm like, Alright, I tech stuff, apps, hacks, you know, systems,



James Geering 1:45:04

investors.



1:45:06

Totally. So I'm like, I'm gonna dig into this world figure out and I'm gonna go through the get to the weeds and see what's going on here. So I'm like, okay, cool, I can build a team, we can build apps. So I just started piecing it together, got a programmer came down, went to the startup competition, that was 72 teams. And I was, it was so intimidating, I was laughing, I was like, this is just, we're just gonna go for it and do the best we can. And we end up getting second place out of the 72 teams, we kind of crushed it. And then we got invited to an accelerator, which to take those ideas, we basically launched two apps on iTunes, right? We iPad apps, one with their both for like public speaking. Because my partner at the time was public speaker. And so he's like, Yeah, we need this. Absolutely. Alright, we'll try your idea. If it doesn't work, we'll do some other idea later. And so we launched them, and then with the incubator, and then within a year and a half, I had to pull both of them because our programmer was not a stakeholder, he was getting paid hourly to program which is smart on his part, because most tech startups completely funnel and do not work at all. And so I started running out of money, like, every time, Apple does an update, it does something to your app. And so a month before they released the new bill to the public, Apple will send developers to build like, Alright, here's the new iOS update, you got a month to figure your shit out and see what kind of bugs it creates in your app. So every time that happened, which is every month, I

just ran out of money paying my programmer to fix these problems. So I just pulled out of that, stopped doing it. And then was like, I gotta figure something else out. But I learned a lot in that process. More so than I realized at the time. So then I moved west, got to Idaho, had to get a job. So first off, I got was driving a 30 ton crane on a tree crew, and you know, running chainsaws and Dragon logs, and basically just chopping big trees down up in Idaho. And did that for six months. And then I met a guy there who ran this business called the violent little machine shop. And there's a guy named Yan. And he's like, Hey, why don't you come on work with me, I sell patches on the way in patches like, like, patches that you were in the military like, and he was actually in the military for a short period time. And like you're selling patches, like, that's market because we did more patches, because we had to like unit identifiers, right. And every once awhile, you see a funny patch someone had but I never really like knew there was an industry of people selling badges. So he brought me in, and he's like, I just want to teach you a new skill if I can. And so I was there for you know, half a year. And it got to the point where it's like, Hey, I'm ready to start my own thing I want to make do t shirts and stickers, and I still do patches. Even though it's like our like our last moneymaker, we make most of our money selling designs on T shirts. And so I took what I learned there, then built off that and then started my own brand, because I wanted to work for myself and started making stickers with just ideas I had that from the commando world, that would translate well to the civilian. Because at the end of the day, we're we're honestly not that unique. Doing commando operations is really not that different from trying to do really difficult things in any other pursuit, whether it's business or being of becoming a firefighter, or you know, doing a startup kind of thing where you're on the business, but you're working in it. And so I just just went for it and started learning and making mistakes and losing money than making money and, and working for myself became addicting, where I didn't like to work for other people. So the next job I got working with someone else was I was working in my business, then I got a job on ski patrol. So then I had both of those things going at once a super busy man. And so the idea of creating 30 seconds out the name is actually it was a placeholder until I found a better name. And I was with Yan one day up in his office, and he's like, You got to think of a name for your business magazine. You want to help me get a business going, I'm like, I will just call it 30 seconds out from now. It's because I can't think of anything cool. And then people started telling me immediately they liked it, right? I did a little Shopify website and like two stickers on there. And then I'm like, I will just keep it until people told me they hate it. And like, it never happened. So I just kept the name. And then just kept growing it and just creating ideas, and putting those ideas on things. They really like, what we're selling is we're not selling apparel and stickers we're selling. We're selling an idea. And we put it on things like you put on anything I put on we're gonna put put these concepts on anything. And they're just ways of thinking about dealing with tough situations like really, really tough situations where like lives are at stake. And it just kept growing and building and it's stressful. And it's also super rewarding all at the same time. We're still doing it and we just opened our first brick and mortar retail shop here in Montrose and been in business nine years now. And I have a business coach I just got two months ago. So I actually have like someone that knows about business helping me which is awesome. And it's actually not them. It's a group. It's like a group of different coaches will come in I've applied My coach with different coaches will come in, that have expertise that will help me through things that are obvious to them that are very obvious to us. Because working, you know, like, if you're in a business, just like, being in a mental health situation, you don't see what you don't you can't see it from the outside because you're in it. And so when you're in it, we're always we can only see like, a percentage of what's going on. And a lot of times it takes someone on the outside to go, Hey, tapping on the shoulder, like handleless, you've been a real stressed out the past year, let's let's chat if you got a chance,

you know, maybe we can dig into that and kind of alleviate make you happier person a little bit. And the same thing in business. Like, I can see the problems here. Like, I mean, can I help you? Yeah, as long as you really let people help you, right? You can go a long way.

J James Geering 1:50:45

I wrote a book three years ago, and one thing that I got from all my friends that I asked, you know, who written books, or, you know, were very well versed in, in, you know, just the the art world, I guess you could say, it was the same exact thing. Get yourself an editor to not edit your book yourself. And you write this book and like, well, I've done it, you know, five times now, this seems to be good. I don't think there's anything wrong with it. And then you send it to an editor and it comes back covered in red, and you're like, Ah, okay, now, now I see. Because, again, that objective set of eyes on this is the right set of eyes, you know, but that takes humility thing. And that's the hard thing in an organization, you know, professions, where we were the ones mitigating the problems. We were the problem solvers. We were the fixers, and now you're like, actually, I need to ask someone else, because they're the true expert in this field. So yeah, I mean, I can, I can see that I haven't got a business mentor, because I don't really, I hate the business side of what I do. I mean, as long as someone sponsors the show, then I'm good. I can pair it co focus on these kind of conversations. But definitely from the creative side with the book. I asked everyone, because I mean, what the hell do I know about writing a book, I kick in doors and pull people out of fires? It's called one more light and life, death and humanity through the eyes of a fire fire. wouldn't live. Yeah, one more life. But it was really it was just 12. I think there's 12 chapters. I remember now 14. But anyway, it was it wasn't a biography. It was stories from my career. So I could illustrate a wellness concept whether it was mental health in a sleep deprivation, obesity, all these things. So that was the point. So it was a lived experience. So I knew what I was writing, but as far as turning it into a book that was engaging, the humility side was let me ask lots of people and let them you know, tear it apart, and I'll take someone's advice. I'll disregard that person's advice. And and eventually, you've got this thing.

 1:52:42

Yeah. And taking advice, you got to be careful with that, too. Because sometimes you can get bad advice from very well meaning people, you have to know yourself, you know. And so, being able to filter through advice, but when you're when you're vulnerable, and you're just coming out of it, like I would like listen to just any advice, I'd be like, Okay, what should I do to like, okay, stop listening to Slayer and Pantera, four hours a day and drinking. Okay, that's, I could see how that could probably lead me to become aggressive, right. And that's what I was doing, like heavy metal was my thing and drinking, right. And so I actually had to tone it down. I still love heavy metal, but it doesn't consume my ears all day long.

J James Geering 1:53:21

I can listen to Rage Against the Machine while I'm driving, because the likelihood of me getting angry behind the wheel increases exponentially. Totally. Well then. Talk to me about the concept too, because I know we chatted a few weeks ago now. There's ironically, there is a store that just opened in the mall here and cat in Ocala that has all military T shirts, or grand

style and all those other ones. But I know your philosophy is slightly different. And I'm not saying that those T shirts are on this this category, but there's definitely a tactic cool. You know, demographic that love though, isn't assurance, but I know you've got a little bit more of a twist on your line.



1:54:00

Yeah, um, so my, my, am I a patriot? Yeah, 100% I was willing to die for this country, hundreds and hundreds of times for sure, on missions. And I feel there's different ways to view what patriotism needs. And to me, it's changed through the years, right? When we're in the war, you're very focused on getting the bad guys and that is the main focus of you. And so therefore, you think that is the main focus of the United States, there's actually a lot more problems going on, that the US is dealing with, then a conflict or a war. And, you know, for a lot of years, it was definitely the main thing happening, but there's also a lot of other things happen, how happening that require our attention, and a lot of times those the thought that we're always right in America It does no wrong. And if you say that we, if you try to say there's a chink in our armor anywhere, you're a traitor, and you should leave the country. There's a lot of people here that think like that. And it's really unfortunate and the people that I've met, for the most part that things like that haven't seen a shot fired and anger in their life. It's generally the people that didn't go and do the heavy shit for a fucking decade of see what war is, what do we do there? What are they doing so us there. And so if I have the sobering view of US foreign policy, and I love this country, I don't think the best way to demonstrate what America really means at its core, is to shove a flag down someone's throat, and tell them that they don't say the things, say the things just like I want you to say I'm in demonstrate patriotism, the way I view it, then you are, you should basically die, or be kicked out. And there's obviously tons of polarization right now. And I think that is absolutely not the way that we shouldn't be this country. So my philosophy with creating designs is subtle. patriotism. I don't need to put a I don't need to flags on every shirt. Right to let you know that I love this country, and I fought for it, and I'm willing to die for it. And I, I'd die for it again, I'd go fight again, if that's what it took. But I also value things from other countries. I have friends in the UK that are SpecOps guys from the UK, and they love the US and I love the UK, we're both you know, we think our sides are kind of like a little better. And we point fingers at each other a little bit like you guys got problems and you have problems too. But I think there's also value in, in leaving room for other people to see the the freedom of the United States and what freedom really, really means. And we're getting to the point now where we're getting less freedom because we're siloed, right? In kind of two camps, we'd like to, like I mentioned before, we like to stay in them. We like to clump people because it's easier for our little, our little bonobo brains to think of people in groups. Because if I tried to think of, you know, 100 million people, that's way too many individual thoughts is either it's easier just to go, Oh, these people are all blue. Those people are all red. And then we can hate them. Okay, boom, problem solved. We hate all them their traders next. Right? It's psychologically it's a simple, it's simple for us to do that. And it's, it's, it's honestly, it's fucking lazy. It's lazy thinking. And so I look at more of what what would I want to demonstrate to someone thinking about coming to the United States? What is this place, like, if this is a black person from Africa that has nothing. And they're coming here because they want to make something they want to send money home, and they want to possibly bring their families over here to live a better life? Because the exact situation they're in is not bad, like how intimidate is that person going to be here, you know, you got dipshit fucking Neo Nazis, and it's all over the news, you know, racism and all this bullshit. And the vast majority of those people didn't serve a fucking day because there are math and they're idiots. You'd like I've met some of them. And they are fucking idiots. Like, for real. And so there's a there's a,

there's a different way we express our patriotism and things we value. And so I focus on the positive, get things done at attitude and ideas that I experienced in 20 years in the military and going into combat for a long time. And when I see that, just the heavy duty flags flying and metal fingers in the fuck you attitude, if you don't like vote for Trump, and if you don't, you know, think like we do and you don't look like we do. And you don't go to the same church that we do. And you don't believe ethically like we do. So what does that start to sound like? It doesn't sound like a fucking Republic or a democracy democratic process to me. You know what it sounds like? Right? This is this is this is the this sounds like the formation of the armies that we this country has fought. You know. I'm pretty I like feel very strong that like I'm, I'm in a very strong position, like, I love this country. And I want to I'd like to demonstrate to people like, America isn't all the fucking crazy shit you see on TV. America is an idea. And it's in process and there's no point where we're going to arrive. We have to protect what we have here. But we should also when we see things that are we should obviously make some and changes and tweaks. Let's do that. For example, Hey, maybe we should let women do activities like back in the 50s and 60s, right? Women should be allowed to enter races. Now what do you guys think? If you think about the Taliban is crazy, or like in Saudi Arabia when they wouldn't let women drive cars? That was us fucking 5060 years

 James Geering 2:00:19

ago string and black people from trees in the South.

 2:00:22

I mean, like, how far away removed? Do you think we are from the Taliban? Like some ideological religious groups here? Not that fucking far at all, like scarily close. And so I think there's a, there's, they'll never be an answer to it. But I want to like the the messages that I put out there, right, like personally and with our brand to be, we're from the United States, and we believe in freedom. And here's kind of where we're at. And if you have some different ideas, I'm willing to listen to him if your ideas are totally different than mine, I'm not going to freak out because I feel very grounded in my ideas and what I believe. But if you present a very good breakdown scientifically, of why I should think something differently, I'm going to, I'm going to entertain it, and I'm going to dig into it. And I'm certainly not going to take and do any action based off of a single source. Right? So you have this people that went to a single source, QA non, that's a single source. And then they rated the January 6, capital based on a single source. Like how fucking stupid you gotta be, honestly, like, come on a single source, and you're gonna go Yeah, and you just gotta keep feeding your brain information from one source and go, Yep, I think we should go raid the US Capitol say, That's a great idea. So I think those dudes sitting in prison now or just in the gun, they gotta be just going, Why was I such an idiot? Why didn't I look into this more, put more, put more intellect into what I'm about to do, and really vet this thing that I'm really believing shot.

 James Geering 2:01:51

I don't even like buffalo helmets. So I mean, this, this comes up over and over and over again. And it's, you know, through so many different lenses people on here are super diverse as far as their background, their occupation. But it's the same thing over and over again, these these

extreme, whatever they are 10 5% seem to get so much fucking airtime. And I've asked you a lot of people that are that are well versed in history, like, why, why is it that we do not learn from history, and over and over and over again, the extremists who mathematically are a very small number compared to the rest of the country, managed to Dupas. And I think I've repeated this a lot of times, I think it's just a great analogy. One of my guests said, Imagine you're a medieval England, and you look down the village in the villages, because you've told them stuff or arguing with each other. You said, where are they not looking at the castle where your fucking sin. And this is it is that, again, both sides as last six years, have deliberately divided this country. And so a real patriot takes a step back and goes, I love so much about this country, but you know what, our education is a bit shit. And have you seen how many people are overweight? And seems like we've got a fentanyl problem here. Let's all put a band together and start fixing it because a patriot doesn't, you know, a real patriot stays there, and brings out problems and said, let's change this. You know, they say nationalisms when you just fly flags. And if that, you know, no one agrees with everything you say, then, you know, what are you going to do originally, originally you, you hate them on the keyboard. And there's one day does that involve trains and giant ovens. I mean, who knows. So this is the conversation and to also add weight to that the number of people I've had that have traversed a nation, whether it's the UK, whether it's the US, whether it's the world, and they like I was blown away by how much kindness and compassion I was met with, on my run my motorcycle ride, whatever it is, for this particular event, that is America, the Middle 80 plus percent, are really fucking good people, but the extreme 10 on each side, get all the fucking yap yap. And another one of my guests was like, think of it also this way. We are the poster child, we are the advert for democracy and from the outside looking in, and I know this because my British friends and family are like, What the fuck is going on? I'm like, this isn't what's actually happening. You know? So we have to as a collective band together and just fucking stop these fucking idiots from having so much airtime and actually reclaim our country and start fixing things and make it great again, just like that Jeff Daniels speech from newsroom. You know, we're not the greatest country in the world. And to me, it's not a competition. But if we all work together, we will absolutely elevate it and get it up to where it needs to be again.



2:04:50

And I think honestly, a lot of it is marketing, because conflict sells right and sells ad space. And so if you Put a friendly story on that's a good, you know, feel good story. And you only get, you know, 2 million viewers and you put on a crazy story about a protest and somebody shot somebody and there was the cake cake. Kay was there, you know, you get 6 million views. And you charge more for your ads. And so you're like, well, we kind of go, you know, you just look at the, the margins are better if we show the, the crazy shit. And then that's what the world sees is like, Oh, looks like Americans. But literally, it's a dumpster fire. Yeah, it's. And it's not. Yeah,



James Geering 2:05:32

I mean, the fact that that fucking mugshot was all over my Instagram wall a few days ago. I'm like, I thought we got rid of this. Why are they? Why are we paying attention? This is old news, ancient history now. And you're surprised that a politician is corrupt. That in itself is an entire conversation left and right, the system is broken, you keep letting shitbags into the top, we need to talk about that, too. Anyway, we could go down that rabbit hole for a long time. But I agree with you completely. You know, patriotism is a pride that we've earned a community that

bands together, you know, and I think that you know, your, your profession, my professional, we, we do literally risk our lives. So I think that these voices are important for the people that have truly served that see it. Like, there's so much good, don't let them tell you there's not there are some evil fuckers in this world. But most people are phenomenal. And we have to remind them of that and lift them up, rather than just keep dividing and scaring them over and over again.



2:06:28

I haven't I have a challenge for people. And I bring it up to friends and people I know. And the challenge is this. If you if you don't have a friend in your five to 10 persons circle that you see on a regular basis that you're around, that doesn't mean basically the opposite side politically as you are, you are taking the easy way out and you're coasting. Because you know, you're not going to get challenged mentally by that by anybody. So it is more comfortable to be around friends. And you all agree and you all think the same thing. But we need to have the courage to bring someone else and be like, Hey, that's my buddy, Jeff. He doesn't think like we do. He's totally different. He's gonna sit here and crack the code one with us. And tell us what you think about this subject, Jeff? At the end. here's the here's the challenge. They can say things you don't agree with. And you can't storm out emotionally. You can't come unglued, emotionally, you have to sit there and listen to what they say. And intelligently respond and be friends with them again the next day. And maybe you convince them with some of your ideas. And maybe, you know, their ideas will rub off on you. And that's very likely, because there isn't one person on the planet that is 100%. Right. I think I'm 100%. Right? But realistically, I'm probably like 60 to 70%. Right?



James Geering 2:07:54


Yeah, my wife knows on the way she reminds me all the time.




2:08:00

So I think at the grassroots level, I don't think it's like a government thing that's gonna happen. It's a challenge that I like to I like to issue and I haven't myself, I have friends that think completely different than me politically, and I love them. And I respect them because they'll sit there and tell me what they think. And they know I don't agree. You know, and we're so when we stay friends at the end of it, we're like, Alright, enough fucking politics and shit, news talk shit, what do you want to do? Let's go climbing let's go skiing or something. So you can be friends and disagree politically. And let let it be a process. Let the convincing them or them convincing you take its course and use logic and reason and listen and make your point. If you get emotional, and you have to storm out every time, you're not ready to handle those conversations, you're, you're like a you're an infant, you need to grow, right? It's really true. Like you're a child that needs to grow and understand the world and be more mentally durable, and be able to hear ideas that fly in your face and piss you off a little bit. And stay calm and go home. Here's why I think that that idea doesn't work for me or doesn't work for the world while I think you're wrong. And so that's a challenge. I like that it's a good challenge. And I think we start doing that. Right? That's I think we'll start the glue will start to bond us we're going to


start to get more glue between each other from the families in that day is because we them and they we call up each other, you know, the clumps will start to come together a little bit better. And then things will get better in the country.

 James Geering 2:09:32

out of 815 16 people so far. You know, there are some people that lean very hard on each side. None of them are like extremists, but they you know, they're pretty hard leaning. And what I found just from from this position from interviewing is if you start in the middle, like you know, you want to see your kids grow up, you want to feed them you want to clothe them, you want to make sure they're taught that pretty much everyone's going to agree and then you just kind of expand out a little bit and you dip your toe wasn't each side and you're like, Yeah, I'm not sure about that. And then like, you see, you go back and forth, and someone's like, you know what, I'm gonna agree to disagree on this. And I'm like, Yeah, sweet, okay, and then you move on to something else. And I think that's when you realize how many commonalities we've got. And the differences really are a very small part of most of us, you know, I am not sure about abortion, or whatever it is okay. But, you know, that particular topic isn't your entire world, your entire existence, it might come up, you know, if your daughter gets pregnant, and now all of a sudden, it's a very real thing, but the rest of the time, you know, focus on all the things that are that you're sharing, and then explore those extremes. And that's what I found from this, you know, when someone goes that far, be like, Okay, we didn't get anywhere there. And that is, okay. Let's go back to the middle. And let's carry on talking about some other stuff.

 2:10:48

Yeah, yeah, then you just have it. And I think it actually is happening, because you're talking to people, people are doing that, and you hear more, you hear a lot, not on the news. So much, but you hear a lot from people that we have more common than, you know, we have differences. You've heard that so many times over the past few years, as things have gotten really crazy, and we really do, but you just don't hear about it. So instead of us having the view of like, hey, we need the news to stop making us like this. We just need to stop fucking being like us. Absolutely. The news is gonna do what sells ad space, they're gonna, they're gonna, they're following the margins, like, they're not gonna start producing content, because it's the right thing to do. Every once in a while, sure. But at the end of the day, they have investors and they got, they got to put numbers out, right, it's up to us to do it. Like we have to do it. And you got to start like real small, like the Gandhi model, right to start with yourself kind of thing. And that's really that's, that's where it's gonna have real

 James Geering 2:11:43

100%. Well, I want to throw some closing questions at you quickly, if you've got time before we wrap up. Oh, brilliant. All right. Well, then the first one, I'd love to ask, is there a book or other books that you love to recommend? It can be related to our discussion today? Or completely unrelated?

 2:11:59

Yeah, some of them are more highbrow than others. But I tried to read like, you know, a dozen books a year roughly. And I mostly do. I mostly do audiobooks when I'm driving. Just because that for me, I feel like I absorb information really well, on that. One book is principles by Ray Dalio. And so Ray Dalio is an investment banker started Blackrock capital and most successful firms in the history of man. And he breaks down. It's not a book about finance. It's a book about the principles that got him that level, and how, as he went through life and made mistakes, he learned and would write mistakes down and solutions. And so he started building this archive of how to not keep messing up in the future. So that the trajectory was constant improvement instead of improvement with a lot of reinventing the wheel. And that's an improvement in reinventing the wheel. So it's just mostly improvement, which is how it skyrocketed and became extremely successful. Another book here, I'm going to look at more than once I've read recently, I'm working on one right now. I'm gonna look at my list here and tell you what we're looking at here. So crucial conversations by Joseph Grandin, how to talk to people. That one I love. Going through it in the books, I usually I try to listen to them twice, because my mind wanders a lot. And I've always been like, kind of hyper. And so I'll like, zone out and we'll come back. I'm like, Okay, I missed that section. But I'll get it on. I'll get it on the next lap, coming through. The other one is for business, the E Myth Revisited by Michael Gerber, really, really good. And that basically breaks down just basically why business is crushing you and how to get out of it. If you've started a business already, or if you read it, and you go into business, how to avoid even being crushed. I think there's so many like business books out there. Trying to think of another word. So the four hour work week was what that would definitely was one of the first the first books I read right before I got out trying to figure out what my life would look like. And I tried some of the things in it, and then ended up not doing those but the amount of the amount of like with using technology in the way. Like Tim in there talks about thinking about making money really changed how I was approaching things because I used to think like, I hit the hammer 20 times and then I get \$20 for an hour work and then I hit the hammer some more. And then I give me some more money. You know what I mean? Into let's create systems and repeatable processes and outsource things and have other people do things that are repeatable, that we don't need to be doing so we can focus on other things. And I was like, oh, okay, this is how I need to really be thinking about this There's another one really. There's so many good ones like I'm deleting I delete so many from my audio book thing. I was in a lot of climbing books too because I need to kind of different books, books that helped me with business and like the technical technical aspects of in the, like the doing life better kind of books and then the books where I don't have to like think about anything other than these guys having a gnarly time climate in Alaska and listening to their stories at night, right? So at night, I try to listen to like, less, like, things are gonna stress me out like business type of books that just get my gears turning, and I gotta do this, I gotta do that. And more like kind of take it easy. The other thing is probably probably my favorite author is Harare, Yuval Harare, who wrote sapiens and Homo Deus and Sapiens, one of my favorite books of all time. And it basically just describes mankind. If you're if you're religious, it's you're not going to like it. But it's, it's a very hard, I would say, very excellent look at where we came from, and why we are the way we are and why we believe what we believe, for example, what is an LLC, a business? We're like, where is that? Is that? Like, is this the LLC like this thing I'm holding in my hand? Or is it actually just an idea? And someone wrote about it on paper? That's all it is. It's an idea. So like our monetary system, we believe in it? It's an idea. Yes, I have \$1 in my hand, but the whole system works because we believe it works. And so, like, author, like Harare, like gives you a new way to think about like, Oh, this is that's a very good explanation of why we behave like we do and why we're still very sort of tribal minded, and why we group up and make enemies over here, because our tribe needs to be safe. And they're a threat over there. So if they attack us, we should attack them. Maybe



2:16:51

we should attack them first. Because that way, they don't get the initiative and get us. Right, politically, that's what we're doing. Right? We're, we're we have little enemies that we're fighting, literally, you know. But yeah, and there's there I would say for people that have to like when I was when I was in high school,



2:17:09

I didn't read anything they told me to read, I hated reading, because I didn't want to read the books they were telling me to read. I was reading the books about like, you know, seals and Green Berets and marine recon, Vietnam, I was reading those books. They like, like, okay, Grapes of Wrath? Where are we at that shine, like, I lost my book, I'm not sure what happened to it. I mean, those are classics, but I didn't want to read them. And I wasn't interested. And so I didn't. So I think, to get someone to read just to get started reading, just read something you want to read, don't listen to other people, what do you want to read, it's better, it's fiction, or just start reading. And then you're gonna read that, and you're gonna get ideas, and you're gonna get curious. And if you can develop curiosity, that I think is the beginning of a completely better life for you, if you become a curious person, like, I'm going to admit, I don't know about these things. And I'm going to read about them and try to learn more about those things. I think I know about those things. But do I really know what those things are? Am I just regurgitating what I heard on the news last night? You know, and so becoming a curious person is extremely important. And you can see people that are not curious people, they're very, nope, this is the way it is. And that's great. If you're in like a system at work that like know that there are processes here. And that's how we do it. That's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about being set in your ways, and not being curious at the moment in life, you lose your curiosity, I think you start dying, you start dying mentally, you start losing touch with the people around you, your kids who are in a totally different generation than you are. Now you're the old, cranky old man that's complaining about why things aren't the way they used to be. And I do not want to be that person. Right? Absolutely. I just don't want to be that guy. I want to I want to learn new things. And there'll be things I learned that are new that I don't agree with, and I'll just be like, Okay, I just don't agree with those. But I don't want to become the old crotchety veteran dude. Even though that's a very catchy hat and shirt for some companies like old grumpy old Vet Guy, I don't want to be that fucking person. I want to be a mountain guide. And I want to be an asset to my grandkids, and I want them to keep up with me in the mountains. Like, you know what I mean? I want to be telling them about new ideas and concepts that they should know about that were written this year. They feel like oh, maybe I shouldn't learn about that. Like you want to be you want to be a leader. Because if you get set in your ways, you lose curiosity, and you sit there and you plant your flag and sit on the couch and pop, pop a bottle and say, Nope, this is the way it is. I did my time and now I'm just gonna believe what and it stops right fucking here. You're not leading anymore. Now your family is sort of looking at you. Probably like kind of like man, like, I love grandpa. I love dad, but we're gonna go so and so but he's just fucking mean. He's not interesting. And he doesn't bring anything new to the table. He's not really an asset other than complaining about politics and he watches the news all day. The fuck is that? What the fuck you teaching? Are you teaching kids don't do that you're setting example of how not to be in my mind right there. Yeah, don't don't become like that. Stay curious. Have goals. Be a leader lead, even if you're fucking 87 years old, lead, be a leader like, challenge their minds, even if they're old beliefs, challenge them with them. But also let them

challenge you with their new beliefs and like, Hey, here's your 15 year old that's out there that's You don't understand. Listen to him. Why do you think that? What like ask them and get to know why they think what they think it doesn't mean there's a threat they're gonna you're gonna get absorbed? Right, like people that are that are homophobic they don't want to talk to gay people, because maybe they're worried that Dell somehow the game is gonna get on them. Like, it's like, it's almost like an insecurity. Like, you should fully be talking to people and like communicating with them. You have to agree with them. But learn, be curious.

 James Geering 2:20:49

100% Well, what about movies and or documentaries that you love?

 2:20:55

Should? Oh, man, I kind of got to the point where I think in the military, we watched all the movies on deployment. That's what you hear military people, and I'm sure it's the same at the firehouse and this, you know, is quoting movies, right. And so like, Yeah, I mean, still to this day, if I had to, like have on my heads headstone favorite movie, Saving Private Ryan, I just can't. And that that's also indicative of what's wrong with the world because you've looked if you look on Rotten Tomatoes, I think Saving Private Ryan only has a 96 or 97% approval rating. Who the fuck are the three to four percenters that don't like Saving Private Ryan? Like, those people are out there? How is that possible? Those to me are the same people that don't return the cart, at the grocery store in the parking lot. They just let it coast in to the vehicle down the hill.

 James Geering 2:21:46

I'm gonna share that next time I see someone do that. Oh, what do you fucking hate Saving Private Ryan to ask?

 2:21:55

I watch a I watch a lot of of like TEDx talks. Not because like I'm like, oh, I want to tell people to watch a TEDx or a TED talk yesterday. That's at all. I want to watch it. Because once you start being curious, it's so humbling. You realize like you don't know a lot. Like I'm like, holy shit. Like I thought I was like really knowledgeable, because we're really good at doing commando stuff. And that's what we did all the time. And we focused on it. And we became pros at it. We did it. And then you step out of that. And you're like, Hmm, actually, people don't really give a shit about that. Really. I mean, they think it's cool. It's like, oh, you're a commando at a cocktail party. Cheers. Cool. It's kind of guys here. That's great. But learning things you don't know. And being curious and just keep challenging your brain and your beliefs is, I think, super critical. So watch a lot of like, Ted Talks and watch a lot of YouTube videos and just things I'm curious about, I'll just throw it on there. Like, what's this thing about? I watched some entertaining shows, like, you know, through the pandemic, I think we all kind of had to watch a lot of movies and, and show so like, my wife and I, we did all the sopranos and that was awesome, you know, and we select shows that we'll watch there. It's our nighttime kind of thing. We watched like

shows that don't really have to get you to think a whole lot about your life and make you sort of give you anxiety about things you should be doing. We kind of watch things that are like an easy watching my wife what my wife likes horror movies, I can't stand or movies they freak me out. I will watch them. Little girl coming out of a TV. No, no.

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James Geering 2:23:28

Let me ask you this. I mean, you've you've been involved in a lot more violence than most firefighters have. But obviously we see grotesque things, you know, when people are having their worst day, I was into horror movies when I was in my, almost like late teens, like of Washington all the time, became a firefighter came out the other end or during it and like I can't watch it, because I think it's just simply like, you shift now they're like, Wait a second. So you're being entertained by watching people being bludgeoned to death. When you've seen people being bludgeoned to death or you know, the results of all of a sudden it completely reframes it. And it actually kind of sickens me that this is even an entertainment and you talk about psychology, where the fuck did that come from? You know, I've had a hell of a day in the office, and we sit down and watch a cabin full of, you know, college kids get murdered by a dude with a chainsaw.

o

2:24:16

Right? Yeah, I think I've never liked horror movies my whole life in it. I'm sure there's a connection there between, you know, things that were done to me when I was a kid, and having complete clarity on what it's like to be a completely helpless person to be at the hands of somebody else doing things to you. Like, I don't wish that on people. There are certain people I would wish it on. And those are the people that are doing it. I would wish that what happened to them right, even though that's an unhealthy thought, and I'm trying I'm working right now. But if you've seen those things, I don't see where the the entertainment value is. And I honestly Don't think I know of a lot of people that have been in you know heavy combat or have seen really fucking bad shit that are like watch a lot of horror movies. I don't think so. We're mostly watching like cowboy movies and oddly war movies like the same Ryan Ryan and black are down here like always like reading more books and stuff, which I don't so much anymore Ay, ay ay, ay ay, ay trend towards trying to trying to curate what I what I put into my eyeballs in what's going into my head because I got goals and I watched things that I think were gonna help me get to my goal and how to do things like technical system with climbing and, or watching this person that's overcome something really difficult what their psychology was like, like, I read up David Goggins first book, I've never met David. But I loved his first book, like in the stuff he went through with his dad and the bowling alley as a kid is normally unbelievable. And I could, I could relate to him on a level, you know, and I was like, Man, I, I know what I know what that feels like. They're growing up with insecurity and you don't know what's going to happen and you just don't have stability in your life and bad fucking things are happening to you and the people you love and you want your mom things happen your mother and and so there's a there's no reason to like that. I don't feel bad. But people like I think it's like harmless, I think, I don't know. I personally do it. freaks me it doesn't make me feel good. It gives me a really sick feeling in my stomach. Like, I don't want to watch people get carved up and show like, why

J James Geering 2:26:33

Yeah. Yeah, exactly the same. Before we get to where we can find you online. And where we can people can find 30 seconds out what you do to decompress.

 2:26:46

Climb runs ski, my go to is always physical activity to de stress, right? Because we can decrease our cortisol level. So doing doing, not overdoing it. But doing good exercise regularly is going to decrease your cortisol. Right, it's going to bring your body a little bit more into a balance where it's healthier, a little bit more towards the homeostasis. We're like our ideal state, you know what I'm saying? Physical activity, the easiest thing for me is, is going on trail runs, because I live in, you know, I live in Yurei, Colorado at 7700 feet. And there's trails all over the place, like or, and so and then also picking a decompress. By having short term goals. I always just like so cliché, you gotta have short term goals and long term goals. But I've actually found myself doing that little short term goals that helped me get to the longer term goal. And so like, just last Saturday, I ran my first I ran the farthest I've ever ran in my life on Saturday, 40 miles, for 14,000 feet of vertical gain, the Telluride mountain line. And I had been training for that for you know, eight months. And I had it coming up. And I even race as I did before that. So that keeps me engaged on this whole path. So I'm, like decompressing every day after stressful things. Because I'm like, Well, what am I gonna do, we'll show you get that race coming up that you committed to you better do it, or else you're gonna not make it right. And so having those goals in those short term goals, and long term goals, inform the activity that day that I think is the best thing for me to do. Sit and if I don't have a goal, I'm just gonna go oh, well, I guess I can just do whatever feels the simplest grab crack, crack a beer, open a bottle. Just lay around like and just sort of figure out what I'm going to do next week or whatever. That's not a good healthy place. For me. It's like, you know, idle minds. And I'm one of those idle minds. I can't sit idly probably just listening to me talk you, you realize that I'm like, you know, I'm like high energy all the time. And it's just, it's just my DNA. It's just the way I am. And so physical activity for sure. Yeah. And I think that's the best honestly, like if, if they were to, like, wave a wand and say, What's the best thing to heal veterans and to help you know, first responders have been through trauma, it's physical activity, go outside, go running, you got to get it literally, it makes such a big difference. You know, yeah, take your take your pills do what they say with that. Listen to the doctors, you know, to the extent but you got to you got to take care of yourself. Physical activity is is the way out.

J James Geering 2:29:22

Absolutely. It's definitely a common diet. And as you said outside as well. I mean, that's the thing. If you're amongst nature, you got you know, Vitamin D from the sunshine, you're breathing fresh air. Maybe you're doing it with a few other people. So then you got that camaraderie as well. You know, it's all the heating element, which ironically, was everything people were told not to do during COVID. But that's another conversation for another time. All right, well, then, the very last thing then, I'm sure people are kind of, you know, really blown away by a lot of the elements of this conversation. Were the best places to find you online and on social media and then also 30 seconds out.

 2:29:56

So I like my personal Instagram is even 30 sec, even three zero sec. And it's basically just most of that is just like I post up like mountain guiding stuff that I'm doing. And as I'm working my way from the bottom of the mountain guiding world, which is where I'm at now. And then our website is 30 seconds out.com. And it's just all letters, the word theory, the word SEC is the word out. And that's our, that's our apparel brand. Yeah, that's where I can be found. And if if somebody if you get on there, if you let's say, you go on the site, and you do watch it, it's a 15 minute documentary, called the dark edge. Don't watch it around kids. I cuss in it a lot. There's real, there's some gnarly topics covered in that. So it's a it's an adult's only rated R for sure. And if you have questions about that, or if you think you want to have a conversation with me, just email me. And it's even UVA n at 30 seconds. out.com. And it's just the word 30. The word seconds the word out, there's no numbers in it. 30 seconds. out.com. And, yeah, just hit me up. I've been hit up by lots of people ever since then. And that's how you can get ahold of me. And I will respond. If you email me there. I'll definitely respond.

 James Geering 2:31:06

We'll show and I want to say thank you. We've been chatting for two and a half hours now. gone all over the place. Yes. It's crazy, isn't it time flies when you're when you're engaged. But you know, I've talked about this all the time. And I think it's important to underline every time we have a crisis of the facade of masculinity. And what I mean by that is the John Wayne Rambo bullshit, a lot of us were raised. And that's what a man is. And so now I have this smorgasbord of high performers, warriors in all kinds of international spaces. And when they are vulnerable, which they have, so many times, it debunks that myth of well, I'm too tough to, you know, deal with mental health or whatever. So that courageous vulnerability of rip excuse me vulnerability that you've, you know, brought to this conversation, as well as all obviously all the all the fun stuff we talked about, and the ski patrol, the mountaineering is so, so important, and obviously, your video has hit home. And I know this conversation Well, as well. So I want to thank you so much, not only for two and a half hours of amazing conversation, but being what a real man is, which is a warrior, but also having the vulnerability and compassion and empathy to actually talk about these things. So thank you so much.

 2:32:20

For your favor, having me on this was a really fun conversation. And it's awesome to be able to talk about all these things. All in one, two and a half hour period and diving deep on things. It feels good and I feel like we're putting good information out there like your people. Listen, this we're gonna give value, I think from pieces of this conversation, so I'm stoked you brought me on. Thank you