

Sebastian Junger IV - Episode 840

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SPEAKERS

James Geering, Sebastian Junger



James Geering 00:00

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number four of the behind the shield podcasts. You've come on the very first one was episode seven. So literally, I had zero episodes when you reached out. And here we are now I think this will be in the eight around 840 range. So seven years later. So I want to start firstly by saying thank you for coming on yet again.

S

Sebastian Junger 03:58

My pleasure. I love talking to you.

J

James Geering 04:01

So first things first, the last time we spoke it was only a few months. I think since you had your near death experience. Obviously we're going to talk about the book. But how how have you been physically since that point? I mean, you went to a very unique place mentally spiritually. But I mean, it was so soon after I'm sure it was still very raw. Has there been any kind of progression as far as the health the identification of what happened or anything like that?

S

Sebastian Junger 04:32

Yeah, basically, I almost died of blood loss I lost like the doctor guessed about two thirds of my blood. I needed 10 units of blood to survive and so I had I had an an undiagnosed aneurysm in my abdomen and my pancreatic artery and it ruptured and those are abdominal hemorrhages that kill is a killer right and I in my odds are very low when I got to hospital but I managed to do it. I mean healthy, athletic person. Shouldn't I had great doctors and I squeaked by it. But I had, you know, as an atheist, as a non mystic, I'm an anti, in fact, as an anti mystic, I think I could almost say, I had the strangest experience, which is my dead father appeared above me, my dead father who is a physicist of all things. And, and an atheist himself, appeared above me in this sort of strange form in you know, inviting me to fall on him, you know, into the darkness, which is what it was, it was a huge black hole underneath me that I was getting pulled into. And I was terrified. I had no idea I was dying. But I but I didn't want to go into the black pit, who would and my dad, my father appeared saying, It's okay, you don't have to fight it, you can come with me. And I was horrified. I was like, come with you, you're dead. I'm not going with you. Like what? We have nothing to do with each other. I love my dad. But I was in that context, I think we have nothing to say to each other. And I said, you know, I was still conscious. I said to the doctor, you gotta hurry. You're losing me right now. I'm going. And then when I woke up the next morning, the ICU and all that came tumbling back to me. And I've been puzzling over it ever since. And so since then, I mean, the thing about a ruptured The good thing about a ruptured aneurysm is that aneurysms don't really reflect a health issue, right, there is a weak spot in the, in the, in the artery, and the problem I had was completely structural. And once they put a, once they embolize, the artery, I, it's as if it never happened, basically. And so it's not like a heart attack or a stroke, where the thing that produced the hardest tagging stroke, those conditions are still there, and could produce another one. That's not true for me. And so, most of my recovery, after, you know, I had, I had 10 units of blood in my abdomen or whatever, I bled into my own abdomen after I my body process that humans called a hematoma, after my body process that a bit most of my recovery really was psychological and, and in some ways, maybe even harder than a physical recovery might have been, I really struggled psychologically with the aftermath of that.

 James Geering 07:14

Well, I know that's gonna lead to, you know, the inception of the book, and it's going to be coming out next year. You in previous conversations, you're an avid runner, you're an avid boxer, what impact is that near death experience have on the physicality and your ability to be physical? Because I know a lot of times an injury or near death experience can infuse a lot of fear and hesitancy to go back into that movement space.

 07:40

Well, I you know, again, if I had a heart condition, I'd be a little hesitant to really, you know, gun it on the on the, on the running track when I'm running my interval intervals, but that's what kept me alive was the fact that I do that stuff. So I, I, you know, I, you know, after I recovered, I didn't I have no issues around it. I mean, I if anything, I redoubled my efforts out there.

 James Geering 08:05

So I guess, you know, I've kind of segue that's right into the boat now. So we'll do that first. And I got a whole bunch of other things I want to ask you after then. So as you said, you were somewhat, you know, agnostic, or atheist, when it came to your beliefs, you see your father, when you were literally trying to be dragged down the tunnel, the tunnel of death? Talk to me about the following months and years, and that internal metamorphosis that you started having when it came to your own mortality and your spirituality?

 08:38

Well, yeah, I mean, if, you know, I'm 61 had this happened when I was in, you know, 30. My, it might have affected me differently might have affected me less. But basically, this happened at a time when most people are starting to acknowledge and face and deal with their mortality. It's a very abstract thing until, for me it was a very abstract thing until I got into my 50s, you know, 60. And so I've been thinking a lot about my mortality, I think mostly as a function of my age. And being an older dad I have, I'm 61 I have a six year old and a three, almost four year old little girls. So makes me very aware of the circle of life and when I'll, you know, be leaving them, and I hope it's after they've finished growing up and can take care of themselves. You know, I'm terrified of it being earlier than that. So, but in terms of the sort of more spiritual intent of your question, I think I, you know, I didn't see God, right. Like, I didn't see Jesus or anything like that. I saw my father, right. And so, people have asked me does that make you question your atheism? Well, here's the way I think about it. A atheist means you don't believe in God. Right? You don't it doesn't believe in God is not part of your daily existence and And that's still true. I do not believe in God. Right? I can imagine that such a thing would exist. But I don't myself practice a belief in such a thing. And it's entirely possible that there could be a what humans call an afterlife that exists at some kind of quantum level subatomic level that we don't understand. And there'll be no God at all in the universe, right? I mean, that's entirely possible. We're, we're biological beings were made, we're made up of mineral dust, right and molecules. And it's possible that when we die, there is some continuation of our conscious existence. Conceivably, but you don't need God for that. Right. It's also possible that there is a

God who created a world that includes biologic, biological humans, made up of minerals and water, that when they die, that's it. So there could be a god and no afterlife as well. You don't need what one doesn't necessarily dictate the other. Right? So what I what I questioned, ultimately, when I saw my father was, do we, you know, later I was like, do we really understand the nature of reality? Do we? Do we really understand what life is and what death is? Like? Are we really so sure that when you die physically, when your body stops functioning, reaches maximum entropy decomposes? That there is absolutely nothing that continues of the individual? Are we so sure? And for me, I'm like, No, now, I'm not so sure. But I'm open to the idea. Like, I can't prove it. I don't particularly want to prove it. You know, I don't know, I know, what it Gatewood. What it made me do is adopt a position of, of, of, of humility, and end up not knowing, right, it certainly didn't produce a position of certainty, like, yuck, when we die, that's it, or Yeah, wow, there's a God, like, it didn't produce any of those kind of places of certainty that I think a lot of people are sort of seeking.

J James Geering 12:15

It's interesting, when you talk about the quantum realm, you know, the more science evolves, the more we realize that there's, you know, the what they call the spirit molecule, you know, that when they go now past electrons and atoms, that there's vibrations. So, you know, it seems like, in some spaces, the spiritual and the scientific is starting to kind of meet in the middle again.

o 12:41

Yeah, and I, you know, I, when my book comes out, I'll get more into this, because I, but the book is deals quite a lot with quantum physics. And, you know, I really sort of explored that. And it's the weirdest rabbit hole you can imagine. And, you know, I don't want to go into too much now. But But yes, that's, it's a fascinating component of this conversation about existence and reality, and, you know, life and death and all that.

J James Geering 13:05

Yeah. Well, as you say, you can't speak too much at the moment, we're going to do another conversation, hopefully, when the book does come out, and then we'll die Homer bofi, I want to kind of hit a couple of surface levels, areas around that though, I am 49. I'll be 50 in March. And I look back at my own perception of mortality. I had a jarring moment when one of my school friends died in a in a car crash, he kind of lost control and drove into a house. And I was 18. I went to the funeral and the coffin roll by and I mean, I got just hit in the face by the concept of mortality. But then, some of the self talk was, well, you're eating, you know, you don't have to think about it for a long time. Now, you know, you talk about a bleed, for example, you might get hit by a car, you know, something, a war breaks out in your town, then yeah, it might be a lot sooner, but most of us can kind of stick our heads in the sand a little bit about the mortality. But then when you get to the Teter point, and arguably, if you're fortunate you get 100 year lifespan. 50 is pretty solid, like okay, you're on. You're on the downslope now. So what is your perception of the midlife crisis? And do you think anything? Do you think any element of that comes from that mortality and realizing that you cannot escape aging?

 14:22

Yeah, I'm guessing some of it does. I also think there's a lot more Prosaically that a lot of people marry their 20s and have children. And then, then suddenly, the children are, you know, come of age, and the persons in their late 40s and 5050, whatever, you're basically your age, and they're like, What do I do with my life? Like, boom, all of a sudden, I'm like, the novel I wanted to write, you know, I wanted to backpack across Asia, you know, et cetera, you know, like, we I'm 50. Now, like, now I like, and I think that you know, I know that time goes by in a kind of blur when you're a parent, and I don't Have you are or not, but you are you have children, right?

 James Geering 15:03

Yes, I do. Yeah. Well, he's 22 steps on 116. So we're looking at probably less than two years. And he may be on his way to military college, you know, whatever it sends

 15:12

him. Oh, so you're right on schedule, right? Yeah,

 James Geering 15:16

I'm getting ready to break down about 18 months. Yeah. So I mean, I think

 15:19

I think people are very good at being in a kind of state of denial about mortality. And there's a wonderful book called The worm at the core, about how this awareness of mortality is amazing book, you know, basically, as we evolved from primates, we are pretty much primates. But as we evolved, we we developed a sense of our own individuality, which made us very, very intellectually capable. But that idea of individuality, like my, my dog is dead now. But my dog Daisy, from years ago, didn't have really a big, great sense of her own individuality, and therefore no sense of her own mortality. Right, she was a dog, and she lives from moment by moment, you know, the very young children do as well. And but as you develop the intellectual apparatus to understand your own individuality, by definition, you're also understanding that individual individuality will end. And there, it's very hard to hold both ideas in your mind at the same time. And so we're very good at being in denial about our, our life ending. And so I think what I think at age 50, I certainly wasn't denial about I was in really good shape, right. And I, you know, I'm 50 years old, but I had my body function. And, you know, I couldn't tell the difference between 50 and 30, and 20, right, it was all, you know, my mild time was a little slower. But essentially, like I didn't, I wasn't having a changed experience with my physical with my body in life, right. Which allows for a lot of denial. But what I think happens, a lot of people just didn't happen to me, because I had children at 55. But I think for a lot of people, a lot of things get put on hold in order to have children. And those things that are put on hold are sort of the, you know, the the point of life when you're young, right, oh, I want to do this, I want to do that, you know, like, and at all, you know, that sort of like, put on hold, and then all of a

sudden you're in the middle of your life. And you're like, Oh, my God, I'm, you know, I'm not saying of course, this about you were allowed to be like, Oh, I'm not, I'm not that into my spouse. Like we live in a suburb somewhere. I'm not my neighborhood. It all worked for a while to raise children. But now boom, here I am. Like, there's this amazing talk talking head SOG. Like, this is not my beautiful wife. This is not my beautiful home, you know, what am I doing here? Like, you know, I think that's like, that's a midlife crisis. Right there. Yeah. So I think there's a couple of things going on with that. And one of them is mortality.

 James Geering 17:54

Well, I think I was talking to someone the other day, and I was thinking about this principle that really, by the time your children turn 18, you should be exhausted, if you've done it, right. I mean, you're pouring your heart and your soul into this potential adult that could either bring the world together or could destroy the world, depending on your parenting style, and you know, what you're infusing on him. And so it is that sense of selflessness. Again, that sense of giving if I think if you're a good parent, it's very, very selfless to raise a child. And having had and you and I have had this conversation before that, that service, especially when we transition from uniform, and find another purpose and other sense of service. There's no greater service than pouring yourself into raising a child. And then all of a sudden, one day you know, the car drives away with whatever university stickers on the back, and now you kind of empty nesting going what's next. So I, I can't help but feel the empty nest syndrome actually is quite a powerful parallel from the transition from military or first responder out.

 18:57

i Yeah, I'm sure I'm sure and I. So I, I was an anthropology major in college, I sort of fit continue to think, see things through that lens. What I would say is that our society, our meaning, sort of like modern Western society, is really an anomaly. Right for most of human history. Humans, we're social primates, we really evolved to live in groups. And then parents, if you know, and people were not necessarily quite sure whose child was who's right. I mean, you know, I mean, even today, with modern birth control and all that apparently, 10% of children are actually not from their father. I mean, of course, you know who your mother is, because he came out of her. But there's no you know, it's a little bit of an act of faith that like, Oh, that's my kid. That's my dad. Right? And apparently something like 10% of children. It's actually not what they believe is actually not true. Right. So So just imagine in our, in the last 100, a couple of 100,000 years, we lived in fairly small, very tight communities where people relied on each other for their immediate daily survival needs. And there was a lot of group parenting. Right, there was aunts and uncles and grandparents, and people in the next lean to over and what have you. And in poor countries, that's exactly, you know, all over Africa. I mean, they're, you know, parenting is this sort of collective endeavor. And the, you know, the poor people are, the more they rely on each other. And at that level, that economic level there, I mean, my, the first one, when I was very to my first marriage, she grew up in, in communist Bulgaria. And there was a lot of collective parenting and communist Bulgaria, even though people lived in individual apartments, it was extremely poor. And, you know, moms and dads had jobs in factories, and they were, you know, whatever, there was a lot of collective responsibility by the community for the children. And so the stress and you didn't have to completely pour yourself into your child, because you weren't doing it by yourself. Everyone was raising everyone's children, right. And the, that sort of, I'm here for my children, which is what I'm the way I'm doing it as well,

right. But that's a very much a modern, a modern idea. And likewise, when you get out of the quote, service, whatever that is, in a small scale, pre industrial society, or sort of small scale, tribal, organic society, you don't get out of service, right. I mean, it's all one thing, right? The Warriors, the farmers, the the midwives, the elders, the this that that name, it's all one big thing. You don't get out of anything. Right. So and, and so I think what what you're looking at is a very, very modern phenomenon, that we're not particularly well suited to that we can do it because we're, as a species, we're very adaptable. As a very modern phenomenon. It's very hard on us, compared to the sort of historical and alternatives. And it's, it doesn't have good solutions, right? You're experiencing something that I think most people in human history probably didn't experience is the empty nest syndrome. Like, what are you talking about? There right over there? Like, you know what I mean, they're 18. Yeah, he's on a horse. He's on a horse. He's about to go kill some Comanche. Like, what? What are you talking about? There's no fdns, like, so this is all very, very modern, and a reflection of the highly individualistic nuclear family structure that our society is sort of built around.

J

James Geering 22:45

Now, obviously, you know, the first book that you and I discussed was tribes, second one was freedom. When you look at the seemingly continuous effort to divide many people in this country, we seem to get further and further away from that tribal element and tribal in a positive way, not a negative way. What is your lens, your perspective now of of that, when you've written so much about that small community, it takes a village concept that you've witnessed and research so much, and other other tribes and other countries?

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23:23

Well, first of all, it doesn't take very many people to ruin a system that depends on good faith and trust. Right. And so I feel like there are a few politicians and I, you know, I'm not going to name names and get into political parties. But I think there are a few politicians relative, a relative handful, who have actually decided that partisan division in the country and even maybe outright civil war, or to their political gain, and they are going to push for that. Right. So I think in a small scale, tribal society, people that were endangering the unit cohesion of their own society that badly would be picked up and thrown off a cliff. Right? I mean, it's a matter. It's, they're they the people like that are an existential threat to the society, right? Because they're dividing the society. And when you divide a society, it's vulnerable to attack. And so I think those people would be killed. And there there was a wonderful anthropologist named Bon BOHMPO. Hmm, something like that. And he wrote, he's written about this sort of evolutionary origins of morality. And what he found was that capital punishment at the tribal small scale tribal level was extremely common. And his guess is is that people group together to kill Basically predatory self serving abusive leaders who were trying to coerce the entire group to act in their individual benefit. And there's petroglyphs, this is paintings on Ron cave walls, showing the killing of one individual by many, bristling with arrows clearly killed by a volley of arrows. You know, the interesting thing about humans is, of course, we have language. So the biggest, the biggest male in the room, actually, cannot, as in other primate species dominate all the other males. Because all those other males that are smaller than him can actually get together, have a conversation and say, you know, what, Zog is being abusive. If we stand together, he doesn't have a chance, right. And that's not really true. It's barely true. And chimpanzees, there's a little bit of that collective behavior against the alpha male. And so So,

you know, I think there's politicians who are exploiting these differences, augmenting them, amplifying them for their own political benefit, shame on them, right. I'm against capital punishment. But maybe I'll make an exception for this, you know, because it really is a threat to the entire country. I don't care what your political party is. But I'll also say and then sorry, it's a long answer. But it's a complicated question. I'll also say that as soon as there's an existential threat, no matter how big the tribe 40 million, 400 million, it doesn't matter. No matter how big the triad those internal divisions collapse, until the threat is over. And we're seeing this in Israel right now, Israel was an extremely divided society. It was basically basically, as I understand it cleaved in half, by a radical right wing initiative to strip the Supreme Court of its rightful powers in a democracy. Its powers which are meant to keep powerful people in line like keep them from abusing their authority, and a right wing coalition tried to change that it divided the society, boom, 1300 people dead in a terrible tragedy in Israel during the attack by Hamas, and now they have a unified government, a unity government to deal with that threat. You know, likewise, after 911 I mean, George Bush, either did or didn't win the election, but it will, you know, it would come down to some hanging chads. And so a few 100 votes in Florida decided by the outcome was decided by a Republican judge, you know, it didn't. For Democrats, it didn't really feel that fair, right. But he was the president. And then we got attacked, and all of those divisions disappeared after 911. And for a while, we really were all one on one thing, but for a few outliers. And so it's unnatural to live in a society that's big, it's unnatural to allow people who are actively trying to divide you to survive. And a big enough, but a big enough threat will reverse all that. And you know, God forbid, I hope it doesn't happen to the United States. But if it did, if we had the kind of attack that Israel suffered, and certainly proportionally to our population, it will be 10s of 1000s of people. I think all of the divisive nonsense that we're watching right now, would, would disappear, at least for a while.

J

James Geering 28:26

Now, with that being said, if there wasn't going to be an attack, and obviously that's best case scenario, what other principle, excuse me principles, can we pull from history to bring people back together again, because this is, it's heartbreaking to me and one of the guests I had on not too long ago made a great analogy. Imagine you're a medieval England, and you are standing in the castle, looking at the peasants and you've got them arguing with each other. He said, Well, where are they not looking at the castle? So it's such a blatant obvious thing, you know, and we wave flags and beat chests and say we're the greatest country in the world yet, you know, we're so divided even to the point where my profession we have the firefighters Union, but there's the black union, Hispanic union, the female union, it's like, well, that's not the term union. Now, you're pigeon holing yourselves within the literally the antithesis of the word. So, you know, there have been great people in history that have pulled the nation back together again, what needs to happen in the US to get the people of America to understand that we are the base of the pyramid and that person at the top? Is there only because we allow them to be?

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29:34

Well, you know, first of all, I you know, I think we need to understand that the elites of both parties. The elites of society, regardless of party have a lot more in common with each other than with the people of their own. Demographic, their own party, right. So Republicans and Democrats, they go into this they their kids go to the same colleges, they vacation in the same

Caribbean islands. They invest in this Gamestop so give me a break, right? Like they have very, they have a lot in common with each other and very little in common with the sort of little people within their own voting bloc. Right? So I mean, the first. Okay, I'll just like confess here, I was raised liberally, you know, politically as a political liberal, I remain that. But I remain enormously critical of liberal thought and the Democratic Party. And, you know, one of the complete moral failures and tactical blunders of the left is to refuse to talk about class difference. They talk about gender. And they talk about all kinds of explosive things. They will not do a class based analysis of American society, because the left wing or elites, right, they wound up as at least, you know, 50 years ago, 100 years ago, the left, there was a lot of the left wing, which were like working class people in factories, right. I mean, there was sort of the sort of, you know, weren't you know, Socialist Workers unite kind of thing, right. And there was a very, very working class based political movement. It's completely shifted to the elites, shame on them. Right. And they will not. You know, they say they talk about sort of white male privilege, and those are all things worthy discussing, right they mailed us and whiteness do come with can come with certain privileges. But they, you know, they're really not doing the analysis of like, a white male coal miner actually doesn't have a huge amount of privilege, I'm sorry, and the left will not have that conversation. Right. And, you know, the right wing refuses to have other conversations. We don't need to get into it. But I, so how do you start? How do you unite all this? I mean, first of all, divisions happen through lack of familiarity. And I think if there was, I mean, when I saw in the military with his people, you know, the military sort of 10s right wing, but not exclusively, there are plenty of Democrats in the combat unit I was with, you know, but because they were with each other in the, you know, literally in the trenches. Those political differences didn't really mean much. Yeah, Misha, he's a friggin liberal. But what he's Misha, right, he's like, It's my friend. Right. Like, well, whatever, like, and and so, you know, I think how do you give Americans the experience of being together? Given how politicized the country is? And how stratified economically, that's the other, you know, these horizontal divisions and vertical division? How do you get rid of that? Because that's how you get a sense of collective endeavor going? And, you know, I think one one really good way to do that barring a 911 type emergency. is mandatory public service, mandatory national service. Not necessarily with a rifle, right? I mean, if you're, if you want to be in the military, for your national service, great, go for it, we need people in uniform. But I think you should be able to serve your country as well with a shovel or with a notebook or, you know, with a box of diapers at a daycare center for you know, low income people that need to work, and they what do they do with their kids, you know, whatever. I mean, it's all, it's all honorable work. It's all unnecessary, dignified work, if we choose to see it that way. And if it's mandatory, it really puts people of every creed, every color, every religion, every economic background, every political stripe, it puts a ball, you know, it puts them all in the room together in the back of a truck together, whatever it may be. And that's enormously healthy. And I actually think the political elites, Dunning, the corporate elites, that the elites of this country, actually don't want that I think they actually would be against it, because this is my little paranoid moment of paranoia here. But I actually think that I think they do not want the the commoners as it were having the chance to compare notes and talk about what's best for the, quote, lower third of the of the country.

J

James Geering 33:54

One of the things that I kind of had an aha moment on not too long ago, was we think about the mental health crisis. And you and I have talked obviously, about the impact of, you know, everything from childhood trauma to what we see in uniform, etc, etc. But when you're pulling your hair out, and trying to understand why Richard Sackler can sleep at night, when you know,

his pills are killing 10s of 1000s of people or cigarette companies or politicians, that I kind of realize what because we're not addressing mental health there as well. So my philosophy is that we've got a lot of almost sociopathic behavior in some of these elites, quote, unquote, probably because of this reoccurring, you know, trauma that's unaddressed, even if those people happen to be extremely wealthy.

 34:40

Yeah, they're all I'm sure. I mean, I'm guessing you're saying, Look, you know, as long as I'm not breaking the law, I mean, the laws are there for a reason. I mean, this is what Trump said about his taxes, right? Like, yeah, okay, dodgy, unethical, you know, shady, whatever. But was it illegal? No, I you know, I exploited loopholes in the law. All right. So I'm guessing that that, I mean, I would, you know, my first book was the perfect storm. And at the time, there was a big crisis, there still is in the fishing stocks. And there were, you know, there were laws to sort of like protect the fishing stocks. I remember some sort of like, liberally minded people will they don't say to me, like, Don't those fishermen know that they're raping the ocean, and it's like, look, they're earning a living, right. And they're earning a living and following the law. And if you don't want the oceans to be raped, change the law, but don't ask fishermen to voluntarily fish less, even though the law allows them to, because they think they're raping the oceans, right? I like, change the law. Right? And I get the same, I would get the same conversation with liberals. I sound like I'm sorry, I sound like a conservative, I really do vote democratically, every, every day of election. Right. But, you know, bear with me, like, I would have the same conversations from liberals about soldiers like, don't they realize that they're like, subject to you know, we're an empire subjugating the world, blah, blah, blah. I'm like, no, they're 19. It's not their job, to decide what wars to fight. Are you kidding? It's Congress's job. And it's the you know, it's the job of the adults to decide what to do and how to allocate money to do it. The fact that a 19 year old is following orders doesn't make him the criminal, right. Like, I don't you know how this works like you don't want to give the soldiers you don't want to get 90 year old soldiers the vote on whether to fight a war or not. They're 19 Like, come on, give me a break. And so anyway, there's that sort of fallacy of the people, again, at the quote, quote, at the bottom, being responsible for the outcomes that a fairly elite affluent society is collectively deciding on and basically because of benefits that

 James Geering 36:55

Well, speaking of military, since we spoke, we had the Afghan withdrawal, which I want to get your thoughts on, but before we do, I was doing some research, you know, again, for this interview, and I didn't realize that you were in Afghanistan before 911, when the civil war was going on. I was basically unaware of the civil war till I had an Afghani on the show and Afghan on the show. Rasul rest Rusik made sure I get that, right. And he's still advocating for the people now because what's going on in Afghanistan, after that avoid is horrendous. But I'm intrigued what your perspective was in that country prior to our conflict. And then kind of let's walk through to the other side and what you're observing, having been there before we ever even entered?

 37:42

Yeah, so my first trip, there was 1996. And it was the summer that the Taliban took over. And I

actually was staying in the same hotel. I was in non Taliban territory they'd had they had about a third of the country. And I was in the part of the country nominally controlled by the government and the government, which was a corrupt piece of shit, right. I mean, you know, they got they'd managed to get the Soviets out. But so the Taliban delegation was staying at the same hotel in Jalalabad, and I was staying at. And there were these very severe white robed men with white beards who would sort of glared at me from the other table. And while we all ate the same thing, because it was all they had, every meal, including breakfast was chicken and rice. So we sat there eating chicken and rice, cleric and each other, and I was young, and I pretty short here, I'm sure they thought I was US intelligence or something, you know, whatever. But and then I got, you know, I got shot out by Taliban gunners on the outskirts of Kabul when I got too close to a frontline because they were right around Kabul. And and I remember the guy after we got the young Pashtoon translator that I have, we got shot at but you know, Taliban machine gunner, we started got behind cover, and he was like, well, that we should pull back and, you know, totally destroyed blown up city. And he said, you know, we hate those people, the Taliban, we hate them. But we're gonna we're gonna let them in. Because the civil war will end and they promised to clean up corruption. Corruption is the great evil of Afghan society. And whatever the Taliban is, problems are. They're harsh, they're, you know, they're dogmatic, et cetera, et cetera, they stone adulterers, you know, in the stadium, Baba, but but they will stop the corruption that's ruining Afghan society. So we're gonna let them in. That's how he phrased it. Right? You know, and indeed, the Taliban came in and I loathe the Taliban. Right? I'm I'm a good human rights believer. Right. And they, you know, they're, they're a human rights travesty, right. But they did stop corruption. But they actually did do that. Not completely, but they, they really reformed Afghan society in that sense. And so when the then, you know, a couple of years later, I was with Ahmed Shah Massoud in the north, as he was fighting the Taliban and al Qaeda in Barak Shan and I Um, very intense experiences there. And, and then 911 They then right before 911 Masood was assassinated. And 911 by al Qaeda 911 happened, I rushed back to Afghanistan. And I was with the Northern Alliance when they took Kabul, you know, with basically the US Air Force above them in the skies and a few special forces on the ground. And when we walked into Kabul, and when people found out that I was American, they would come up to me and hug me in the streets, like, Thank you, basically, thank you for what your country did for us. We got you got rid of those bastards. You got rid of the Taliban, right. And then I watched American policy just completely fail, right. And the one thing that they did not address was corruption. And so the, I mean, the Bush administration, Obama, Trump, Biden, none of them, none of them dealt with these, the central driver to the problems in Afghanistan, which is corruption, and we, you know, we supercharged corruption, we gave them hundreds of billions of dollars, or whatever the price tag was, with no monitoring right? Here, here's \$10 million to build a dam. What do you do, like a year later, in any country, in any society? If there's no dam a year later, like, where's the money, like, what, like, where there were no repercussions. And I spoke with John Kerry about that. At one point, I was like, listen, you're gonna lose this, you're gonna, this is not going to work. If you don't follow up the money you give them with some repercussions with some, you know, cut them off. He's like, Oh, we can't do that. Or that you can do that. If you if you cut them off and threatened to leave, they will reform because they know that if the Taliban come in, they're all dead. They're all hanging from St. Posts, right? Like Najib bola did when the Taliban came in, in 96. So all those administrations failed in, you know, a war that had enormous Afghan backing. I mean, there was an enormous gratitude by the Afghans, for us for what we were doing to rid the country of that blight. And basically, we allowed the conditions that gave rise to the Taliban in the first place. We allow those conditions to reform under our watch. And at the very end, when the Afghan government pulled out, President Ghani left on a helicopter with \$40 million in some canvas bags, like give me a break, he was our guy, we let that happen.

 J

James Geering 42:35

Well, that mirrors what Russell was saying, I mean, multiple things that you said, ironically, he was one of the Northern Alliance fighters with Massoud. So you may have literally have met him before. Quite possibly, oh, but um, but he was saying that he was he was, you know, giving gratitude to obviously the Americans in uniform that actually lost their lives to try and help his country. But also, he was saying, look, so much of the aid just wasn't getting to the people that it needed. And with the tribal element, and this kind of vying for power amongst all these different groups, this is what I think we the average, you know, American British Australian citizen to understand, as it's not a nation, you know, come together, it's all these tribes that are all kind of vying for, for the power void. So, you know, it's so much more complicated, and it sounds like even when our troops first went in, they weren't really given that information. So, you know, they had to then play the Cup game and all these different groups.

 i

43:33

Yeah. And, you know, of course, George Bush was already eyeing Iraq. Right. I mean, he, you know, we the Taliban militarily were a paper tiger, and they did they collapsed very, very quickly. In the fall 2001. And then we left 15,000 troops in Iraq, in Afghanistan, and moved on to Iraq. I mean, 15,000 troops, there's 40,000 cops in New York City. Are you kidding? 15,000. The Afghans knew that wasn't going to work. Right. Like, and, and still they trusted us. Even though we left a troop level there that was guaranteed to fail. They still trusted it. They still said, Okay, we'll try knowing that if it failed, it was their heads on the block. Right. But they still, they still try. And it was just such an incredible American arrogance. And, you know, Iraq was such a just a tragic diversion from the war that we could have won in Afghanistan, the country where we're at, I believe it actually did originate right and the 3000 roughly 3000 American Americans and firemen and policemen to died in the towers and on those planes. Like they died because of things that were happening in Afghanistan. Not In Iraq, and we had a chance to make that work, right. And now, it's Taliban again, like, Give me a break. I mean, how failed can US policy possibly be?

 J

James Geering 45:10

So what has been your observation then of the withdrawal? I mean, you talk about a lot of the the areas that you discuss in tribe, I mean, so many people that I've spoken to are proud of their service. But you cannot, you know, pretend that there's not a huge impact of what do we do that for when men and women died on Afghanistan soil? You know, when people came home missing limbs came home with PTSD? And then, you know, there's this complete abandonment not only through their eyes, now their back in America, but the incredible men and women that they served alongside when they were in Afghanistan.

 i

45:48

Yeah. I don't know what to tell people I like when they asked me that. It was a complete failure and an unnecessary failure. You know, the sort of like, the sort of truism, all like, Afghans were empires go to die. You know, it's just it's not true. Like, I mean, the we could have made this

work. Right, it failed, because we failed, not because Afghanistan is an unsolvable political and military problem, right? We failed. We were stupid. We were brave and stupid. And that's, I say that as a Democrat of all, both Republican and Democrat, Democratic administrations, both of them were equally stupid. And it's an insult to our military and to the good people of Afghanistan, that we would act the way we did and be as stupid as we were. And so I don't know what to say now. Like, like, Oh, what was all that for? I? I don't have a good answer. I mean, I got nothing, right. Like, I don't want to say it was worth nothing. Because that's just too painful. So but I don't know, I don't know what to say. And I, you know, Biden, yeah, I was on his watch. But he was fatally compromised by Trump, who had an agreement with them, that the pullout was done disastrously badly, right. I'm like, Oh, my God. Are you kidding? This is the US military, like doing it this way? You know, but Biden was fatally compromised by Trump, who was fatally compromised by Obama, who was fatally compromised by Bush, like, Give me a break? They're all you're all idiots.

J James Geering 47:33

Yeah, well, it goes back to what you said. I mean, you know, this, this version of leadership that we have, you know, I've said that the system is broken. And I mean, it's not a democracy is a demonstrate cracy, you've got to be wealthy, and you've got to be devoid of ethics to actually survive in that game. So until we change that system of election where you can actually vie for that position, because we all know, great leaders, we all do. But none of them they always say oh, they wouldn't they wouldn't be able to get to that point was not because of the lack of leadership. It's because their attributes that are valuable, basically deny them from success in that particular game.

 48:11

Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. I, you know, I mean, I think corporate money in politics is the Citizens United decision was disastrous for democracy. You know, I think gerrymandering which both sides do, but I think that Republicans recent in recent years, it really weaponized it is a catastrophe for democracy. And now it's a catastrophe for the Republicans, right, they're completely paralyzed in the house, because gerrymandered districts allowed for really, really non democratic extremists to get themselves elected. And now they're dealing with basically they're dealing with their own their own people acting in bad faith within the Republican caucus. Right. So there's ways to reform this, but there's a lot of corporate interest is invested in not reforming it. And, and politicians, you know, I mean, with some accent, with some exceptions, and I know a few but there's, forgive me, there's a joke about politicians told by politicians, and it's something like, don't tell my mother of a politician. She thinks I'm just a prostitute, right? Like, there's a little bit of that going on. I'm sorry. Like, on both in both parties.

J James Geering 49:30

Well, you obviously come from the world of journalism. I mean, you've not only written for papers, you've made documentaries, you've written books. I had a guest on Larry Doyle. And Larry was the very first person who got to interview Nelson Mandela after he came out of Robben Island. So back from the time where journalism was journalism, and I was asking him

about, you know, how do we get here? How do we get two news air quotes being screened divided in four and four, for lack of a better Word assholes arguing with each other, and then telling us That's the news. So from a media perspective, again, king for a day, what do we need to do to get back to educating the population of the facts that are going on in our country and overseas, rather than using it as a political tool like CNN and Fox? 10?



50:21

I mean, I think the long term solution, I mean, it's a generational problem. And I think we have to think, the way the Chinese supposedly do what's gonna, what will what will work best 100 years from now, 1000 years from now, right? If we really want to, if we pretend, if we like to think of ourselves as as a nation that will continue on into the indefinite future, we have to think about the indefinite future in our outcomes, right, or we're not a nation of that sort. Right. So it think the first thing we have to do is implement national service, mandatory national service. I think, responsible legislation that keeps social media out of the hands of children. By children, I mean, up to age 18. Are our children are not allowed any touchscreen devices, no tablets, no iPhones, nothing. We don't even have a television. Right. And once in a while they can watch a child programming on our laptops, but they're completely off. It's an addictive, it's an addictive thing. And it's extremely damaging. Particularly, I happen to have two young girls and particularly the girls, but it's really destroying people. And they're deeply they are deeply addicted and psychologically dependent on social media. And it's also destroying people's attention spans their capacity for critical thought, I mean, all the things that a democracy needs, wow, how strains are all being destroyed right now. Like, you kind of have to wonder like, hey, and the people that are benefiting it are private, or private citizens that own and run these enormous corporations that have an amount into the the Googles, and the Facebook's of the world that have an amount of money that rivals most nations in the world, they kidding. This is like, so we're sacrificing our youth, our psychological well being for their profits, right, the province of those people, right, it's disgusting. And so I would say, mandatory national service, responsible legislation that protects children from the harmful effects of social media and smartphones. I think they have to revert, they have to go after the grotesquely incestuous relationship between corporate money and politicians. They have to tackle gerrymandering in a real way. So that extremist can't get elected in the safe districts, and then pollute the process of functioning of Congress, I think you have to do all of those things. And ultimately, you have to invest in the education system. And I mean, one of the reasons people accept this nonsense is that because they're poorly educated, they're, their diets are bad, their intellectual diets are bad, they're physically unhealthy. They're psychologically intellectually unhealthy. All that can be reversed in schools, and those bad, those bad practices start in schools. And look, I live in a low income part of New York City, I see it all the time. Right. And, you know, the lower income the family, the more the kids are likely to be on on a on a on a smartphone or a tablet, even at age two, right? This is not something the elites are doing. And so if you do all of those things, you know, when why my children are old lady, old women, right? And when they're in their 70s, and 80s. America might be starting to write, you know, like, come back up to an equilibrium.



James Geering 54:03

Now, what about on the physical side? To me, another areas being attacked is health in our children, you know, we're serving absolute shit. And the scores were cut and PE, what how do we pull ourselves out of not only the inactivity through devices, but also just nutrition and

movement? That was so kind of organic 50 100 years ago?



54:28

I mean, I don't know. I mean, it comes down to how schools are run. And that's a bit of a mystery, and teachers unions and all that, but I mean, I mean, the idea I mean, particularly with boys, I mean, the sexes are different, and and those differences start very small. They're not even for newborns, they're not exist. I mean, those differences are there even in newborns. And then the differences get bigger and bigger between boys and most boys and most girls, and then when they hit puberty, the differences are really profound and And boys. I mean, I'm sorry to be sort of like generalized in these sort of like, untutored ways. But boys have a really hard time sitting still in class like I'm sorry, like they just they constant at 810 1214 Day concentrate way less well than girls do. And the idea of depriving those boys of the release of even 30 minutes of recess where they can tear around the, like the playground like, is insane. It's completely insane. Like no society has ever run like that, like we are reinventing something, it clearly is not working and the rates of mental illness. And the rates of men of medication, right, in our population are astronomical, what, like a third of boys are on ADHD medication or something. I mean, I don't know exactly what the number is, it was incredibly high number. I mean, are you kidding? Like, you're giving children pills to modify behavior at that level, and not changing the circumstances that's producing the problematic behavior? What, like, that's insane. And so I how do you, you asked me how to change that I have no idea. But the first step in changes, is understanding the problem. And that's, I feel like we're not even at that stage yet.



James Geering 56:28

I've had a lot of people from around the world, one of them was from Finland, Pasi Sahlberg. And he's an educator from Finland, he now lives in Australia, but he travels the world talking about the Finnish system. And if you look at academically, performance wise, the Finns do, usually number one, you know, it might shift 123, but they're pretty much at the top the whole time. And then their whole model is looking at the child holistically. And they have a lot of recess and physical education, they have shorter school days. So we seem to be stuck in this, you know, sleep when I'm dead mentality, even with our kids, but actually less is more as we become more and more educated seems to be the solution. And even in the corporate space. There's a lot of people now that have tried four day work weeks, same same nine hour day, realizing they're as if not more productive, because you're not having to kind of fill that day with work. So this is what's so sad is you know, we beat our chest. And we say we're the greatest in the world and the things that we do in this country that the world you know, wants to emulate. But there seems to be an absence of humility to go Finland. Tell me again, how you doing this because we seem to be failing or Norway, tell me about your prison system. The UK tell me about this health care that everyone gets health care. That's that's a, you know, strange concept to us. And actually learning so that so that you have that kind of the rising tide lifts all ships mentality. But it seems like to me, there's so much arrogance, again, with some people, not not all of America, that gets in the way of us simply asking another nation that's doing something well, you know, how do we do that? How do we implement that? Yeah, because I mean, the solutions are there. You don't have to reinvent the wheel.



58:08

Yeah, I think there's a sort of silly like of the left wing, there's this silly idea that if you don't hate America, you're not you're not a proper human. Right, you're you're immoral and the right wing, there's a silly idea that if you criticize America, you're not a patriot. It's just complete garbage thinking on both sides, you know? And so, you know, with Finland it's interesting, like, I'm wondering what their, their their rates of what their mental health numbers look like, you know, I'm guessing that they actually, as a people, they consume proportionally less anti depression medication, you know, ADHD medication. I'm guessing they're on probably fewer people are on weight, but proportionally fewer people are on weight loss, drugs, diabetes, medication, you know, blood pressure medication, you know, you go down the list, like, and, and I'm guessing that I don't know. But I'm guessing that all those by all those metrics there I quote, healthier society than we are. And so not only not only is there, like intellectual and physical benefits, there's psychological ones as well to living a healthy life. And again, we're, we're social primates, we are primates. We are animals we evolved over the last hundreds of 1000s of years. Our last common ancestor with chimpanzees was 6 million years ago. It's not that long ago. Like, we have physical needs. We have a physical reality. Our site our psychology, is adapted to survive in a hostile environment. Our intellect is designed to figure out problems that allow us to survive day to day in a complicated threatening environment like when those things are not engaged in our daily existence. Um, we in fact, when they are denied, you know, sort of you that do that at your peril. And you clearly if you look at American society, physically, psychologically, terms of mental health, happiness levels, income distribution. It's a very, very sick society with many, many amazing victories behind it, but it, there's a lot that ails us.



James Geering 1:00:32

I'm kind of incurably optimistic. And when I look at books, documentaries, even podcasts now, I am hoping there's going to be a paradigm shift. I feel like the curtain has kind of been pulled back to a lot of people, not everyone, there's, there's extremists on whatever side, we want to create whatever trench you feel like you're in, but the normal people in the middle, I think they're having an awakening now. Now, through your eyes as a filmmaker as an author. Do you think that we're on the crest of maybe another Renaissance when it comes to the empowerment of the individual to actually learn rather than be told what to think?



1:01:13

I mean, I don't know. I think social media, AI and social media are real threats to our intellectual autonomy. And I mean, I, I don't I don't have a smartphone, I have a flip phone. I don't, you know, I know that I'm as addictive as anybody else. So I'll get psych stuck right into that damn thing, right. So, you know, I, you know, likewise, I don't walk around with a pack of cigarettes, because I'll smoke them. Right. And I smoke a cigarette once in a while, right? It's nice with a friend or whatever. But I knew if I had a pack in my pocket, I would just spoken and I would feel bad. Right? So and so I don't walk around with things that I know I have an addictive response to. Right. And and so I don't, I don't think society is going to go in any kind of good direction while we are collectively addicted to something, anything, including social media, and smartphones and all and all that that whole sort of like constellation of sort of digital candy.



James Geering 1:02:11

Absolutely. Well, I want to get to your book, and then go to some closing questions. So I know that the title shifted from what you originally were going to call it to what it is now. So what is the book called? What can people generally be looking forward to within those covers? And then what is the release date.



1:02:28

So my book is about almost dying a few years ago. And it's called in my time of dying. And the subtitle is how I came face to face with the idea of an afterlife. And it comes out on May 21, next May 21. And I'll be doing a book tour and all that. Hopefully, people will hear about it and be able to get it very easily.



James Geering 1:02:56

Fantastic. Well, I want to throw the same closing questions at you I did last time. So obvious. I think it was two years ago now since we last spoke. So is there a book in the last couple of years that you love to recommend? It can be related to our discussion today? Or completely unrelated?



1:03:11

Yeah, so there's an amazing book by author named Sarah Ken's, you're called the new and it's about the essentially the conspiracy of powerful elites against both liberal and conservative American citizens. I mean, basically, she's dividing society, not between left and right, but between top and bottom. And she makes it a very, very good case. And, you know, she was she is equally critical of the left wing and the right way, right. So she sounds like you know, of course, she sounds like a raging lefty but she's really not she's extremely critical of the left and thinks that the left wing is incredibly corrupt. I mean, let the democratic Democrats in government are incredibly corrupt like on in financial terms along with the Republicans, right? So Sarah, Ken's your, they knew is a phenomenal book. It's really readable. It's a little bit of Joan Didion to it like it's a phenomenal book. And I also am a longtime fan of Cormac McCarthy and you know, he he amazing novelist who died some months ago and his last book and I'm sure he know, knew he was his last book was the was the passenger. And it came, it came out with a command slim companion volume as well. And I recommend that you read them, reading them both, and it's a it's confusing and extremely profound book.



James Geering 1:04:42

Brilliant. Well, thank you for that. What about documentaries and or films?



1:04:49

You know, I have two young children and I not sure I've seen it, since I talked to you. I wouldn't However, I managed to watch a wonderful film called transit is a German film that takes place

in France during the, during a German occupation of France. And it's both 1940s and current day. It's an ingenious blend of the eras. And it's quite a wonderful film. But no, I mean, I'm recommending that because I think it's the only film I've seen it to

 James Geering 1:05:22

use. What do you what do you trust your children with when it comes to entertainment? Do you have a sort of filter as far as the you know, the kids shows that are out there?

 1:05:34

Well, we oh, I should also let me just also say that there was there was another TV series called What was it called? I will come back to me remind me to tell you what it is because an amazing TV series about an escape from Dannemora. It's about those two guys. Matt and sweat who escaped like almost 10 years ago from Dannemora. And they did an amazing, amazing. Ben Stiller was the director. He did an amazing, amazing TV series called Escape from Donna Mara. Absolutely phenomenal, like the best acting I've seen in a long time. So anyway, how do I keep my children from? I mean, we live in extremely small apartment. It's 550 square feet. I think it's like we're living on a boat, and we go sleep. Everything we do is like we're camping or something like everything we do is within earshot and sight of each other. And so we don't need parental controls. You know, they're allowed to watch a little bit of child programming on the laptop, on the couch after dinner, right, like things like Okta, knots and stuff like that very sweet child programs, right? Any parent would know these things. If I were right there in the room, like we don't we don't need parental controls on the laptop, because we're the parental control. There we are, and, and we're not on our devices, really, we're sort of engaged. And so, you know, I don't know what criteria do we use? Nothing ugly, nothing disparaging of other people. Nothing violent. Nothing that undermines human dignity. I mean, I, you know, I was I was gonna love it, but you can you know, when you see it?

 James Geering 1:07:13

Absolutely. Well, just when we're talking about how you're living, I know if my memory serves me, right, you used to be out somewhere in the woods. And now you're back in the city in a small apartment. It was there a kind of minimalist element to that move? Or, you know, what, what's the what's the reason from going from one address to the the current one?

 1:07:33

Oh, well, we we have a property in the woods in Massachusetts, it's it's an old old house and quite deep in the woods that have kind of a dead end dirt road. Part of it's an organic farm that some friends of ours, some young couples live on and work, it's their property to raise crops on and, and so we went there during COVID. And it and we came back after COVID ended. I mean, the apartment we live in, my wife has lived here for 20 years, it's in a mixed income, mixed race, mixed everything neighborhood in the Lower East Side, and my girls are in public school. And we're very, very much part of the neighborhood and suspended predominantly Spanish speaking, predominantly, but substantially Spanish speaking neighborhood and building. And,

and, you know, the, you know, these are the old tenement buildings from 100 years ago. And when, you know, when immigrant families were living in these apartments, you know, 810 12 people stuffed into an apartment this size, there's just four of us, so we're good.

J James Geering 1:08:43

Perfect. All right. Well, then the next question, is there a person you recommend that come on this podcast as a guest to speak to the first responders military and associated professionals of the world?

i 1:08:55

Oh, god I mean, if you want to if you really want to get upset about the American polity, you know, I wouldn't have Sarah Kenzi are on I'm sure she's pretty easy to reach. And by but in terms of think I'm, you know, I have slow moving brain and I may come back to you, I may come back to you with an email of some great people that I've thought of, and they're out there but right now I'm so drawn a blank but but my old old friend Sarah Shay's Cha y es has also written about the corruption of American politics. And I grew up with Sarah, she, she and I met when we were three, four, maybe we're like brother and sister and she lived in Afghanistan for a long time as a private citizen, she wrote in, she was an NPR reporter, and then stopped doing that and started doing some interesting work in Afghanistan when she wrote in on a motorcycle right after 911 into into Kandahar, and the Taliban were still there. And she rented a house and bought a pickup truck and And in learned Pashtoon and just made herself part of Afghan society. And she eventually had to leave because of threats to her life from the Taliban. But she was there for about a decade. And she wrote about corruption in Afghan society, how it was aided and abetted by the US military and American foreign policy, and and then heard her eye on corruption in American politics. And she and Sarah Kenzie are collectively the two of them are devastating and amazing, amazing minds. And you know, I would have both of mine if you really want to kick us panties into twists. Oh, yeah. Both of them on? Well, I

J James Geering 1:10:40

mean, it goes back to education, though, I think this is the problem is people label issues that need to be discussed politics, so they can discourage discussion, you know, like the obesity epidemic and the mental health crisis and some of these things, and it's like, it's not politics, COVID. It wasn't politics to address things that were killing people, whether it was the virus itself, or whether it was the fact that we have such a sick, you know, mean, like, health wise, sick society that that needs to be addressed as well. So I think that you know, anything that educates the average person, like myself or you on some of the things that are going on behind closed doors that are affecting our children's future, it's an important conversation to have.

i 1:11:20

Yeah, and you know, I would say, just to circle back, and I know, we're winding this up, but to answer a previous question of yours, like, how do we fix all this? The politics of division are certainly not not working particularly well, right. Like, I mean, I was not a big fan of Hillary

Clinton, I thought she was a little bit of a divider herself. And, you know, likewise, Trump, and, you know, Trump, I mean, Trump and the diverse sort of divisive GOP has it have essentially lost three elections in a row, Jim Jordan has just his effort has just collapsed. Sidney Powell just pled guilty, you know, that that, you know, that's not success. That's failure. And, you know, I'm hoping that eventually, that the sort of radical I mean, there's, there's radical left wing, there's radical lefties as well. They're just not running the Democratic Party. The radical right wing is running is running the Republican Party, and I'm just hoping with enough failure behind them, that the Republican Party, God bless it will come to its senses, and put those radical people on the periphery where they deserve to be. And, you know, I think it is headed that way. Just because that strategy, they keep doubling down on the strategy and it keeps failing and more and more spectacular ways. And now they've turned on each other. So, you know, I think there is a sort of balancing a balancing out happening right now that will have a good outcome.

 James Geering 1:12:45

Absolutely. Again, I'd like I said, I think it's important to be an optimist, otherwise, you just become a cynic. You know, so I'm hanging on to that glimmer of hope and trying to have great conversations with people like you and educate us all on on, you know, things that we can do creating that autonomy again. One more question before we make sure everyone knows where to find you and your site, what do you do to decompress these days?

 1:13:10

Right now, my children are screaming in the other rooms, like decompress. You know, I you know, I love the wilderness in the woods. And we you know, the family goes, we as a family, we go hiking and camping a lot and I play accordion and so I love music and all styles, Irish, Balkan Eastern Europe. And, and I, you know, I was an athlete from when I was very young, I was a pretty good miler, and in high school in college, I ran for 12 ran a 221 marathon. I, you know, I've loved running. I started boxing about 10 years ago, and, you know, I'm, I'm decent, you know, whatever. I mean, I'm not, you know, I'm very light sparring. You know, I'm not going to, I'm not going to get hurt, and I don't want to get hurt. But it's an amazing sort of art form discipline. Like it's extraordinary. Boxing is an extraordinary thing. And so, I don't know if you could call boxing decompressing, but if you guess it could be.

 James Geering 1:14:17

I think it is. I used to do a lot of Muay Thai when I was in California, and you know, on the way there, someone will cut me up and I'd be all angry. And then on the way back, I'd be like, whatever. I just been getting hit for an hour and a half. I'm good.

 1:14:30

Yeah, absolutely. It's amazing. It's amazing. All right. So for

 James Geering 1:14:33

 James Geering 1:14:00

people listening, then where are the best places to find you online or social media? Certainly, so they can hear more about when the book is coming out. And

 1:14:43

when the book comes out on May 21, I don't post anything on social media because my loathing for social media is incredibly profound. When a book comes out, my publisher will take well post things that's not happening now. But as the day comes, I assume they will. I have a website WWW dot Sebastian younger.com that.com It's J U N G E R Sebastian younger.com. And maybe they'll force me to post things after my book is out, maybe my publisher or maybe both things after my book comes out, but hopefully not. And they'll do it for me. So you may see me on social media, but otherwise hopefully there'll be reviews and such.

 James Geering 1:15:26

Well, I want to thank you again. I mean, I know we've gone all over the place today and this is the beautiful thing I mean, this is conversation number four, you got so many great books that are revered by so many people listen to this certainly try especially that's that's still remains on the pedestal. But I'm excited to hear about the next one. I think especially being at this point in my life and having been in a career where you know, lots of people died in front of me the mortality your own kind of death experience. I'm excited to read about that. So I want to thank you so so much for yet again, coming on the behind the shield podcast and being so generous with your time.

 1:16:01

I really enjoy it. You know, make sure you track me down in the spring and we'll we'll do it again.